
POLAND'S SOLIDARNOSC TRADE UNION TURNS 40: A NAIL IN THE COFFIN OF COMMUNISM IN EUROPE

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Forty years ago, the independent trade union Solidarnosc was founded in Poland. It paved the way for the end of communism in Europe. But the country is divided on whether Lech Walesa, its leader, was a hero or a traitor.

On August 31, 1980, shipyard electrician Lech Walesa, who was representing striking Polish workers, sat down at a table with Poland's vice premier, Mieczyslaw Jagielski, to sign a joint agreement.

The most important concession made by the government after weeks of strikes at several Polish companies was to allow the formation of a free trade union. On September 17, Solidarnosc (meaning 'Solidarity') was officially founded as the first independent trade union behind the Iron Curtain.

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