

# MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

## NOMINATION FORM

### PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

#### *I SUMMARY*

**Twenty-One Demands, Gdańsk, August 1980. The birth of the SOLIDARITY trades union – a massive social movement.**

“The crowd before the gate was like a shield. [...] That gate did not divide people, it united them.”  
*Wojciech Adamiecki*, journalist, a fragment of an article about the strike written in the *Solidarność* weekly.

“The August Agreement started the domino effect. Like a rolling stone, which causes an avalanche. [...] We must remember that the events of 1989 really began in 1980.” (*Lech Wałęsa*, strike leader)

The 21 demands are the demands made by the Strike Committee in August 1980 in Gdansk, which led to the creation of Solidarity, the first free trades union within the communist bloc. In the course of the strike it was decided to make demands of a political nature, which was quite a new phenomenon. The striking workers demanded that:

- Free trades unions be established;
- Censorship be abolished;
- Political prisoners be released.

Such demands made in a country fully controlled by the ruling communist party were of a revolutionary character and they undermined ideological dogmas, which formed the core of the political and economic system of Poland.

Some of the demands made in August 1980 in Gdansk were very pragmatic and of an economic and social nature. Communism was characterized by constant shortages of consumer goods and bad management and as a result, workers’ protests in different countries of the communist bloc erupted. They were suppressed by force and promises of pay rises. In Gdańsk, the government keenly agreed to significant pay increases for workers but this time the strike did not stop. The consent of the communist party to implement the 21 demands resulted in a breakthrough with many consequences.

The practical result of the acceptance of the demands was the foundation of the independent free trades union Solidarity, which had more than 10 million members and became a massive social movement. It was active for more than a year until December 1981 when it was outlawed as a direct result of the introduction of martial law in Poland under the pressure exerted by the Soviet Union. However, Solidarity survived as an underground organization and formed a team of negotiators, who held talks with the government at the so-called round table in 1989. The communist party was forced to make concessions, which led to the first democratic elections in the communist bloc. Subsequently, the elections became an impetus for other countries of the Soviet bloc to fight for freedom and fostered the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989 (the Czech revolution, and the destruction of the Berlin Wall). The success of the Gdansk strike in 1980 became a turning point and the first stone to be removed from the Berlin Wall.

This is why the “Twenty One Demands” of August 1980 is one of the most important documents of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a testimony to a turning point which was of primary importance to the history of the world and which not only changed Poland, Europe and the world at that time but also changed their future fate.

Apart from the boards with the 21 demands, an important testimony to those events is also the collection of documents and recordings stored in the Karta Centre in Warsaw. The collection refers to the period of the first 16 months of Solidarity and characterizes its organization and functioning until

Solidarity was outlawed on 13 December 1981. The fonds is kept under the name of “The Birth of the Solidarity Movement”.

## **2        *DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR***

### 2.1

The Polish Maritime Museum in Gdansk  
Centralne Muzeum Morskie w Gdańsku

### 2.2      Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

The boards with the 21 demands constitute a part of the collections of the museum and are registered in its inventory. The collection of documents “The Birth of the Solidarity Movement” is a separate collection of the archives of the Karta Centre and constitutes its property.

### 2.3      Contact person (s)

Jerzy Litwin PhD, Director of the Polish Maritime Museum in Gdansk  
Zbigniew Gluza, President of the Karta Centre.

### 2.3      Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)

The Polish Maritime Museum (Centralne Muzeum Morskie)  
80-751 Gdańsk, ul. Ołowianka 9-13  
telephone: sekretariat 48 58 3203358, fax: 3018453  
receptionist: 48 58 3018611, 3018612

The Karta Centre in Warsaw) Ośrodek KARTA w Warszawie  
Telephone: 48 22 8480712,  
e-mail: [ok@karta.org.pl](mailto:ok@karta.org.pl), [www.karta.org.pl](http://www.karta.org.pl)  
02-536 Warszawa, ul. Narbutta 29

## **3        *IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE***

### 3.1

- a) The text of the 21 demands written on a wooden board (made up from two parts) constitutes an agreement approved by the government of the Polish People’s Republic and the Inter-Factory Strike Committee in August 1980 in Gdansk.
- b) The collection of texts and tape recordings, fonds August 1980 – December 1981, and some from the period between 1981 and 1989 under the title The Birth of the Solidarity Movement.

### 3.2      Description

- (a) The board with the 21 demands of the striking workers in August 1980 made up from two elements.  
Material: pine plywood, 10 mm thick.  
Text: handwritten in oil paint and pencil  
Measurements: part I 211x125 cm, part II 213x125 cm.
- (b) The collection of texts is made up from documents produced by the Solidarity trades union between August 1980 and December 13<sup>th</sup> 1981 – resolutions and statements issued by the leadership of the union, reports of the National Audit Commission, court documents, materials from sessions of the regional commissions of Solidarity (regions) as well as transcripts of tape recordings.  
In all 25 volumes, 10 meters.  
The Birth of the Solidarity Movement Archive is made up from 9 fonds in 25 volumes. They include:  
- Leaflets, bulletins, posters and publications from the period of the strike.  
- Documents of the Conciliatory Commission and the National Commission, documents produced by regions, and MKZ Solidarity from 1980-1981.

- Legal self-government – statutes and manifestoes 1981-1987.
- Documentation of the students’ strike in Lodz in 1981 and other strike actions in support of Gdansk.
- Documentation of the Bydgoszcz events in March 1981,
- Documentation from the 1<sup>st</sup> convention of the Solidarity Independent Self-Governing Trades Union.
- Documentation of strikes from November and December 1981.

Collection of recordings is made up from tape recordings, which document the course of the founding sessions of Solidarity, other bodies (institutions) not mentioned in the statute of the union and statements made by opposition members. In all, the collection comprises 100 cassettes with two thousand hours of recordings.

Additional documentation:

- Computer floppy with photographs of the boards.
- Text of demands.
- Photographs depicting the strike and the demands.

“*The Days of Solidarity*” Editor-in-Chief Zbigniew Gluza, Publisher Karta Centre Foundation

Bibliography: Timothy Garton Ash „*Polska rewolucja. Solidarność 1980-1981*” (*Polish Revolution. Solidarity 1980-1981*).

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#### **4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

4.1 The boards with the 21 demands are original which is indicated by point 8 of the demands as it contains a mistake on the reverse side of the board part II that was confirmed by the participants, those who made the boards and photographs. The collections of documents and recordings are original and show opinions, and actions of individuals who as a direct result of the events of August 1980 appeared on the political scene and continued their actions to implement the ideas put forward by the striking workers.

4.2 The boards with the 21 demands are unique and the Birth of the Solidarity Movement archive constitutes a collection of documents of a unique social and political process of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

4.3 The 21 demands and the the Birth of the Solidarity Movement archive meet all necessary criteria for a document of world importance for the Memory of the World List.

- (a) **Time.** In 1980, it was 35 years since the world had been divided following WWII into two political systems, namely the communist and the democratic one. The existence of the Warsaw Pact and NATO led on one hand to the arms race but at the same time to the escalation of regional and local conflicts. The number of African and Latin American countries dependent on the support of the Soviet Union was increasing. Any protests within the Soviet empire (1953 Berlin, 1956 Poznań/Poland and Budapest/Hungary, 1968 Czechoslovakia, 1970 Gdansk and 1976 Ursus/Radom/Poland) were suppressed either by local government forces or Soviet military interventions (Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968) or internal repressions, which sometimes led to bloodshed (Gdansk 1970). Dissident movements (Karta 77 in Czechoslovakia, KOR (Committee for the Defence of Workers in Poland) seemed to be only of temporary and marginal importance. This is why the date of the signing of the Gdansk Accord became a turning point and the first rift in the totalitarian system.

On 13 December 1981, sixteen months after the strike had ended, the communist authorities introduced martial law in Poland. It was an attempt to stall the process of political, social and economic reforms as well as the freedom movement not only in Poland but also in the whole communist world. During the 16 months after the foundation of the trades union (August 1980 – December 1981) Solidarity became a reformist movement. It was during this period that free publications were printed and Solidarity could broadcast its TV and radio programmes. An important event of 1981 was the convention of trades union members held in Gdańsk during which the delegates issued a document addressed to the workers of countries dependent on the Soviet Union. This period is documented in the collections of the Karta Centre.

- (b) **Place.** In the city of Gdansk a new organization named Free Trades Unions was set up in working-class circles and it co-operated with the dissident movement (KOR the Committee for the Defence of Workers). The 1980 strike gathered momentum when it was spread to other factories of the coastal region and subsequently to the coalmines in Silesia. Three separate strike accords were signed in three different cities, namely Gdansk, Szczecin and Jastrzębie Śląskie but the main driving force was the strike at the Gdansk Shipyard. This is why the Gdansk demands acquired symbolic importance. It was also in Gdansk that the National Commission of the Solidarity trades union was active as documented by the archive of the Karta Centre.
- (c) **People.** The individuals who organized the Gdansk strike and subsequently took part in the negotiations changed the course of history. The person who played the most important role in the strike was Lech Wałęsa, an electrician of the Gdansk Shipyard and a workers' leader who was laid off for his trade union activities. The chairman of the Strike Committee became a Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1983 and after 1989, the first democratically elected president of free and democratic Poland. The dissident movement became a breeding ground for political elites of independent and democratic Poland.
- (d) **Subject and theme.** The "21 demands" is a document which refers to the most important political and social issue, namely the functioning and organization of society, its civic rights, scope of freedom and living conditions which are of fundamental importance to mankind. They also constitute an example of how a strike of an economic nature became a political one and how the demands of the striking workers hit the essence of a totalitarian system. Other archival documents show attempts and the process of implementing the demands.
- (e) **Form and style.** The form of the document and its authenticity known as the 21 demands are unique. They were written at the turning point of the strike when in order to formulate a manifesto, it was necessary to choose the most important political demands from a large number. The demands were to be presented in public and distributed. This is why they were written on wooden boards, which were available at the shipyard (they were used in shipbuilding) and with large lettering in colour markers (to be legible from a distance).

Also the style of the document is of note, as it is full of expressions typical of real socialism at the time when the text was written. The demands referring to the improvement of living standards (e.g. to speed up housing construction to build flats for everyone) or to the functioning of society (e.g. to employ managers on the basis of qualifications) can now only be understood when they are accompanied by a commentary of a historian. They clearly illustrate the main problems and causes of the crisis of the communist system whereas the demands to form independent trades unions and abolish censorship refer to the internal political crisis of the communist states, which was carefully hidden from the eye of the world. The documents of the Solidarity movement show the consequences of the approval of the demands and their implementation until Solidarity was outlawed. It became an underground movement and led opposition to victory in 1989.

#### 4.4

Rarity and completeness. There is only one document entitled the 21 demands and these are the boards made in the shipyard. It is complete and integral in its shape as it was produced on 26 August 1980.

The fonds of basic and original documents and recordings showing the roots of the Solidarity movement, its activities as an opposition movement, and its survival after the introduction of martial law in Poland on 13 December 1981, is a collection of original testimonies to thoughts, commitments and actions of people who implemented the ideas contained in the demands.

## 5 *LEGAL INFORMATION*

### 5.1. Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

- (a) Boards with 21 demands.

The Polish Maritime Museum (Centralne Muzeum Morskie)  
80-751 Gdańsk, ul. Ołowianka 9-13  
telephone: sekretariat 48 58 3203358, fax: 3018453  
receptionist: 48 58 3018611, 3018612

(b) The collection of documents and recordings The Birth of the Solidarity Movement  
The Karta Centre in Warsaw) Ośrodek KARTA w Warszawie  
President – Zbigniew Gluza  
Telephone: 48 22 8480712,  
e-mail: [ok@karta.org.pl](mailto:ok@karta.org.pl), [www.karta.org.pl](http://www.karta.org.pl)  
02-536 Warszawa, ul. Narbutta 29

## 5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)

The Polish Maritime Museum in Gdańsk, The Department of Scientific Documentation  
The Karta Centre in Warsaw, The Archive of the Opposition, the Birth of the Solidarity Movement  
fonds.

## 5.3 Legal status:

### (a) Category of ownership

Boards: public property handed over by Solidarity's leadership

Archive: acquired from many private individuals and institutions, non-governmental-  
organizations

### (b) Accessibility

In the store room after the director of the Museum has received a request in writing.

In the archives available to anyone according to internal regulations.

### (c) Copyright status

Boards – the Polish Maritime Museum in Gdansk

Archive – the Karta Centre

### (d) Responsible administration

Museum – The Ministry of Culture

Archive – the Karta Centre is a non-government and independent institution

### (e) Other factors

## 6 **MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### 6.1

The boards are stored in the storeroom of the Department of Scientific Documentation of the Polish Maritime Museum in Gdansk in which humidity and temperature are monitored on a regular basis. The storeroom has been fitted with an alarm and fire warning systems. Security guards on a 24-hour basis protect the building.

The Birth of the Solidarity Movement Collection is a separate part of the Opposition Archive and a part of the archival collections of the Karta Centre. It is stored in proper and secure conditions in a room of the Centre.

## 7 **CONSULTATION**

### 7.1 Provide details of consultation about this nomination with

(a) The Polish Maritime Museum in Gdańsk. The Karta Centre

(b) The Polish Maritime Museum in Gdańsk, the Department of Documentation. The Karta Centre, the Opposition Archive

(c) The National Committee of the Memory of the World Programme. Polish Committee of UNESCO

On the initiative of the Polish Committee of the Memory of World, the Twenty-One Demands have been nominated for inscription on the Memory of the World Register.

## **PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION**

### **8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK**

#### **8.1**

The condition of the wooden boards with the 21 demands is acceptable. They are stored in an air-conditioned and guarded warehouse of the Polish Maritime Museum in Gdańsk. The conditions in the warehouse are constantly monitored. Air humidity varies between 40-70 per cent and temperature between 15-25°C. The boards should not be exposed to direct sunlight. They are made available for exhibitions in exceptional cases only when proper storage conditions and protection are ensured.

The Archive of the Opposition (which constitutes a separate section of the Karta archives), which contains the fund documenting the 16 months of the Solidarity movement, is kept in separate rooms at the Karta Centre. The rooms meet all storage and preservation standards for archival materials. The archive is protected from burglary and natural disasters. The archival materials are made available only to researchers and cannot be removed from the archives.

### **9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION**

#### **9.1**

The boards are in a good condition. A part of the upper right-hand corner of the first board is missing and it has nail holes around its edges. The other board has a missing part in the lower left-hand corner and several cracks on its surface. Along the edges of the board there are also nail holes. The condition of the boards and the archive of the Karta Centre require monitoring. What should also be monitored is how they are protected against the adverse influence of climatic conditions and the passage of time as well as unfavourable conditions of storage and exhibition. The proper protection of the archival materials will be assured when they are stored by institutions financed with state or social funds which are supervised by proper controlling institutions (the museum directly by the Ministry of Culture and the Karta Centre by the Director General of State Archives).

## **PART C - LODGEMENT**

This nomination is lodged by:

Prof. Daria Nałęcz, The Head of Polish National Committee “Memory of the World”

(Signature)..... (Date) ..... December 2002