

## Document 208

Statement by President Reagan, May 1, 1983<sup>15</sup>

“The Current Struggle  
and Travails of the  
People of Poland Are of  
Truly Historic Import to  
the Entire World”

More than 16 months ago the Polish Government began its campaign to stamp out the unprecedented achievements of Solidarnosc, the Solidarity Movement. In creating a genuinely free and independent trade union, Solidarity and Lech Walesa sparked renewed hope in the hearts of the Polish people for attaining the basic human values that movement seeks to uphold. Despite martial law, the legal abolition of Solidarity, and a continuing wave of suppression—carried out under intense Soviet pressure—the spirit of Solidarity still shines as a beacon of freedom to people around the globe. The plight of Solidarity’s leaders and its ideals remains vividly real not only for its nearly ten million members, but among all those concerned with the dignity and liberty of a great people.

Today Poland stands at a crossroads. The Polish Government faces an alienated populace and an economy in ruins. But a policy of reconciliation, of permitting the Polish people a genuine voice in their own future could galvanize the energy and vision of this long-suffering nation to solve its economic problems and vigorously pursue a new and better life for all. As I said on December 10th of last year,<sup>16</sup> this administration will respond if the Polish Government introduces meaningful liberalization measures. But such steps cannot

<sup>15</sup> Source: Department of State files. The source text, which bears the President’s handwritten signature at the bottom, was prepared for a Solidarity Rally held in Lafayette Square in Washington on May 1, 1983. The President’s statement was read at this rally by Department of State aide Larry W. Roeder, Jr. Portions were quoted in the *Washington Post*, May 2, 1983, p. A16.

<sup>16</sup> Reference is to the President’s remarks at a Human Rights Day ceremony on December 10, 1982. For text, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1982, p. 702.

be merely cosmetic. They must represent real progress toward a restoration of the fundamental rights of the Polish people.

The current struggle and travails of the people of Poland are of truly historic import to the entire world. We will never be distracted from the significance of developments in that nation. What we have witnessed is a genuine struggle of workers in a so-called workers' state for basic human and economic rights. The Polish people have exposed the fundamental inequalities inherent in a Communist system and the falsehood of Communist claims that the workers are the true beneficiaries of a party-run state. Indeed, we salute the courage of the Poles who daily face intimidation and harassment. Their heroic resistance to their Government's attempts to suppress Solidarity serves as an inspiring display of the indomitable desire for freedom in the hearts of men and women everywhere.

We want the Polish people to know that the future of Poland and free trade unions is a matter of deep concern not only to the administration but to the American people, as your presence here today testifies. We pledge our solidarity with them and our vigilance for the restoration of human rights in that country.

I recommend to the President the waiver authority granted by section 402(c) of the Trade and Tariff Act of 1974 (after "the Act") be exercised within twelve months. Pursuant to section 402(d) (5) of the Act, the President is determined that further exercise of the authority will substantially promote the objectives of section 402(a) of the Act. The termination of the waivers concerning the Hungarian People's Republic and the People's Republic of Poland will not substantially promote the objectives of section 402(a) of the Act. The Socialist Republic of Poland today also determined that the exercise of the waiver authority currently in effect for that country will substantially promote the objectives of section 402(a) of the Act. The termination of the waiver authority is based on the determination by the Socialist Republic of Poland that it will no longer exercise the waiver authority granted to the State of Poland. The waiver authority is a precondition to emigration and will not create economic incentives for emigration. I recommend that this Record be amended to incorporate herein. <sup>1</sup>

The general waiver authority granted by section 402(c) of the Trade and Tariff Act of 1974 is an important means for the establishment of mutually beneficial relations between the United States and countries in Eastern Europe.