

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/552,Exhibition-quot586-Days-of-Martial-Lawquot-Warsaw-13-December-2011.html>

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Exhibition "586 Days of Martial Law" - Warsaw, 13
December 2011

586

DNI
STANU WOJENNEGO

*Wojciecha
Czesława*



*Lecha
Jerzego*

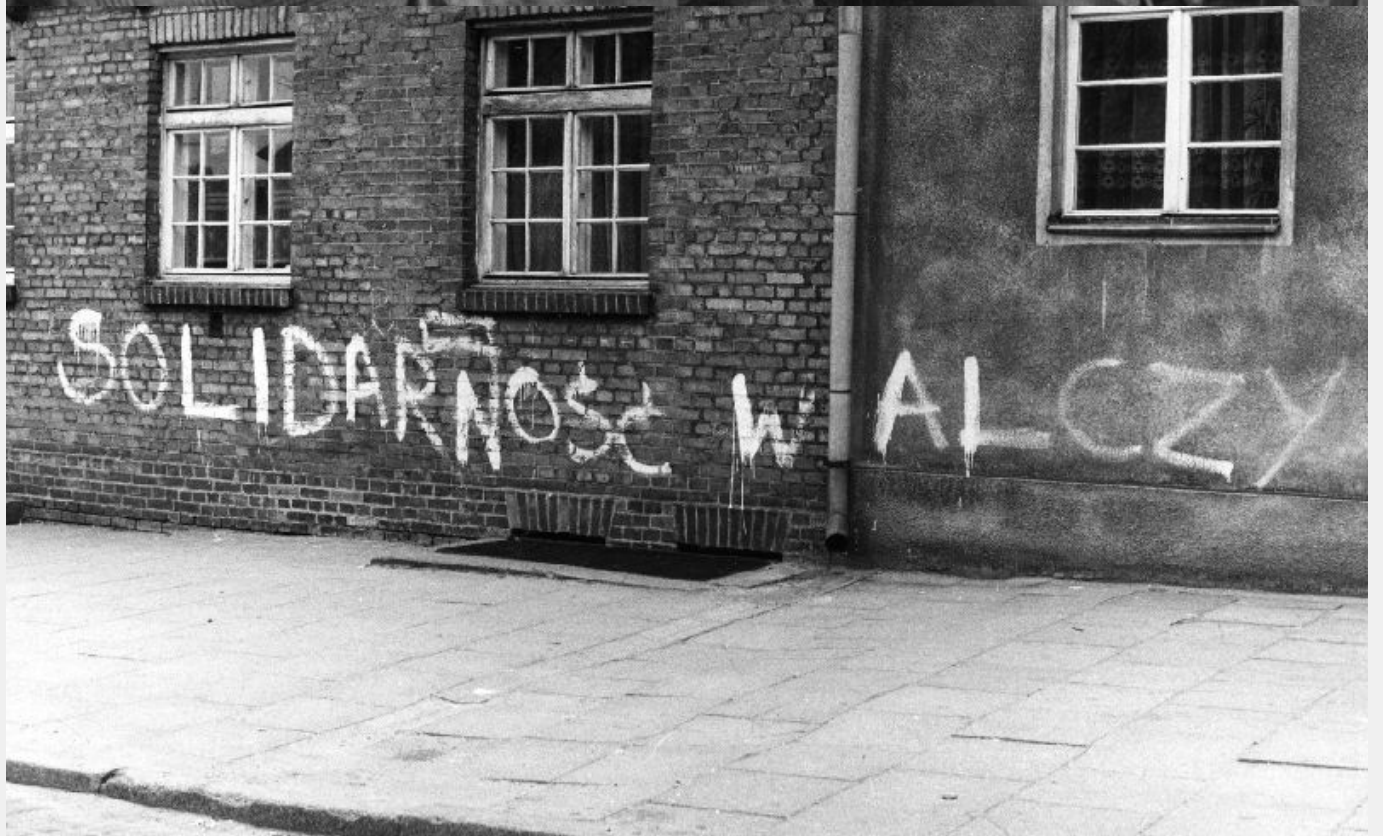
1981

5.54 ● 14.56

1983

7.26 ○ 15.26











Due to the 30th anniversary of introduction of martial law in Poland,

IPN's Public Education Office and the Warsaw Branch of the Public Education Office prepared the exhibition "586 Days of Martial Law". The opening took place on 13 December 2011.

The exhibition was on display until 29 December at Plac Zamkowy in Warsaw.

The Warsaw exhibition is part of nationwide series, during which the anniversary exhibitions are presented simultaneously in several cities in Poland, including Białystok, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kraków, Łódź, Szczecin, and Toruń. In each of the local presentations the regional aspects are expanded.

Exhibition panels, stylized to look like an old calendar, describe major events while maintaining the effect through suggestive pictures and documents, bringing closer the portrait of years 1981-1983. The exhibition commemorates personal dramas of the victims, individual acts of resistance of Poles, as well as the diversity of attitudes of a divided society. Images from prisons, ad hoc meetings of the courts and funerals, are interwoven with grand politics – spectacular military and “Milicja” operations, mass demonstrations of the opposition, street fighting – as well as images of everyday life in socialist reality. One of the themes of the exhibition also presents the reactions of the world, divided by the Iron Curtain, toward the dramatic events in Poland.

"In August 1980 a mass protest of workers, supported by other social groups, forced the communist government to capitulate. The leaders of the Polish United Workers' Party accepted the agreement, whose key

element was the establishment of trade unions independent from the authorities. Soon Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity" arose, which in time gathered nearly ten million members.

For 468 days Poles lived in hope that progressive democratization of the system is possible and that gradually sovereignty will be regained. Plans to rebuild the country were devised with great enthusiasm. The Communists, however, did not intend to renounce its monopoly of power. Since autumn 1980, they prepared to settle matters with the society forcefully. The dream of freedom was brutally interrupted on 13 December 1981, when tanks entered the streets of Polish cities.

Martial law was introduced in order to save the communist dictatorship and destroy the "Solidarity". The authorities failed to achieve any of these objectives. Dozens of people were murdered, thousands were imprisoned, tens of thousands were persecuted in various ways. The social enthusiasm was crushed as well as hope, which never reemerged with such strength as in 1981. The economy plunged into chronic crisis. Prolonged agony of the system deprived Poland of another eight years.

Postulates of the "Solidarity" were in the majority carried out after 1989. The greatest dreams were fulfilled - the Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet Union broke up, Poland is a member of the European Union and NATO. This happened owing to the efforts and dedication of those who, after 13 December 1981 did not remain indifferent and fought against evil. Many of them paid a high price for their attitude. Some of them are paying for it even today. On the 30th anniversary of the imposition

of martial law we direct towards them our grateful memory."

Dr Łukasz Kamiński, President of IPN

More on the exhibition at (Polish language only):

http://13grudnia81.pl/portal/sw/1443/9485/Obchody_30_rocznicy_wprowadzenia_stanu_wojennego__Instytut_Pamieci_Narodowej_zap.html

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