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President inaugurates 32nd anniversary of August Agreements

President Bronislaw Komorowski inaugurated ceremonies marking the 32nd anniversary of the so called August Agreements that paved the way for the Solidarity trade union. The president granted distinctions to 40 democratic oppositionists of that era.

The ceremony was attended by, among others, first Solidarity trade union leader and Poland's former President Lech Walesa and Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

"Speaking of the victory of the agreements we should remember those who fought very hard, who deserved merit in the times that allowed for no agreement," Bronislaw Komorowski said. He stressed that the August Agreements became possible because "the then authorities felt they were getting weaker as they saw the resistance rising within the society."

Prime Minister Donald Tusk recalled signing the agreements. "It has a very personal dimension for me, as today I can see those about whom Poland and the world know little; about how much health, feelings and personal happiness they sacrificed," Donald Tusk said.

Lech Walesa stressed that the agreements were a victory of the democratic opposition generation. "Nobody believed. At that time I already talked to politicians, prime ministers, presidents and even kings, and no-one gave us any chance," the legendary Solidarity leader said.

The August Agreements include four agreements reached between the government of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) and strike committees formed in 1980. The accords were reached in Szczecin (August 30, 1980), Gdansk (August 31, 1980), Jastrzebie-Zdroj (September 3, 1980) and Katowice steel works (September 11, 1980).

In the August Agreements, Poland's communist authorities agreed to register Solidarity, the first independent trade union in the communist bloc. They also agreed to reduce censorship, re-employ workers fired after anti-communist protests in 1970 and 1976, publish the basic assumptions for the planned economic reforms and foster a public debate on the reforms.



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