

The revolution that changed nothing and everything

(Editor's note: In commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Polish Solidarity movement, we asked Thaddeus Radzilowski of the Piast Institute to comment on what that movement meant and how it affected the course of modern history.)

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A quarter of a century has now passed since Solidarity was created out of the strike of the Polish shipyard workers in Gdansk. A generation later with the Soviet power that the embattled Polish strikers challenged now only a dim memory, historians have begun to assess the place of Solidarity in the history of the twentieth century.

The heyday of the movement was a brief one. It flamed brilliantly in August 1980 and was crushed by military power in December 1981 leaving the Communist Party still in power behind the bayonets of its soldiers. It was a revolution which at the time seemed to change nothing. From the perspective of 25 years later, we know it was the revolution which changed everything.

During Solidarity's heady days of freedom in early 1981 students at Poznan University strung a huge banner

