

SUMMARY

TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY CHANGE – HOW WE IN GDANSK ARE COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, Jerzy Litwin, Polish Maritime Museum

At the ICMM conference in Philadelphia in 1996 I spoke about maritime museums in eastern Europe. Later, at Helsingør in 2000, nine years after the collapse of the communist system in Poland, I spoke about the cooperation between our museum and foreign ones after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Today, a further nine years on, again in Denmark, it is with great satisfaction that I would like to develop the theme of this year's conference – UNDERSTANDING CHANGE – COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, that is, by telling you how we at the Polish Maritime Museum understand the changes taking place both in Poland and in the rest of the world, and how we are coping with the uncertainties arising out of the risks inherent in our actions.

The mass social movement initiated in Poland in 1980, known as SOLIDARITY, laid the foundations for the bloodless revolution of 1989, as a result of which Poland became a democratic state. Similar transformations soon took place in the other countries of central and eastern Europe. Out of these political changes arose the need to reform the economy, which was beginning to be ruled by the laws of capitalism. This forced our society to look at everyday matters in a different light. It has to be admitted, however, that even today, twenty years down the road from those momentous events, many people are still only slowly

coming to terms with the capitalist economy and look back with nostalgia to the days when the state, albeit a poor one, took care of everything.

In contrast, most young and middle-aged people embraced the new reality with relish and set about to build a better future. I think that in Poland we can count the people involved with museums among those who look on our further development with optimism. The staff of the Polish Maritime Museum is certainly part of this company: mindful of their responsibilities but also with determination, they are striving to make the most of the opportunities that have arisen. They are thus actively involved in the development of our Museum, acquiring valuable personal experiences in the process.