

**Speech by Prime Minister Donald Tusk during the ceremony commemorating the 87th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War at Westerplatte
Gdańsk, 1 September 2026 (Tue)**

Every year, the people of Gdańsk and visitors from all over Poland gather at Westerplatte, the place sacred to all of us. It was here that the hell of the Second World War erupted, and it is here that, every year, we commemorate – not only in Poland, not only in Europe – the catastrophe of the Second World War and remember those responsible for that monstrous, terrifying war.

Thousands of words have flowed from here, from Westerplatte. Throughout decades, we Poles always used to say exactly the same thing: “No more war, no more fascism”. We have said that responsibility for the nightmare of the Second World War lies with Nazi Germany, as well as with Soviet Russia. There is no ambiguity here; this has been, is, and will always be obvious to any decent person, regardless of where they were born or what their nationality is.

Our task today is, above all, to learn a lesson and draw wise conclusions, so that we never again have to rely on the heroism of isolated soldiers, on the heroism of those who waited for their allies to respond. Today, we must rely on our own strength and on real alliances. Not on spells, not on myths, but on the true strength of the Polish state, the real power, resilience and solidarity of the alliance in which Poland plays such a vital role.

This lesson of 1939 is simple, although so few people still understand it. You do not need to be a historian – the President and I are both historians – to understand exactly who bears responsibility for the disaster of September 1939. Even if there had been 10, 100 or 1,000 times as many soldiers at Westerplatte, it would not have given us any chance of victory, as the world, the free world, allowed Hitler and fascist Germany to instigate war and to carry out acts of aggression without any consequences.

Remember that it was then that people used to say – “it is only the Czechoslovakia”, it was then that people used to say – “we will not die for Gdańsk”, it was then that people used to say – “it is Poland, it is only a corridor, perhaps we can avoid a great war; let’s not provoke the aggressor”.

Just as deafening as the cannon fire from the “Schleswig Holstein” vessel was the loneliness of the Polish soldiers. We must never again allow such a situation to arise. Today we feel our own strength. Today, we also feel the solidarity of the free world, even though so many in that free world, including the leaders of some states of the free world, continue to deny the grim truth that 87 years after the outbreak of the Second World War, evil is once again lingering behind our borders. Once again, thousands, even hundreds of thousands people are dying; once again, children are dying from bombs, right across our border, in Ukraine.

This lesson from the Second World War must influence the decisions and attitudes of all the leaders of the free world today. We must draw a lesson from this grim experience of the Second World War – a lesson in solidarity and unity, both for the Polish nation and for the entire free world: Europe and America and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. This cannot be an alliance on paper. Nor can we allow anyone – whether here in our own country, Poland, in Europe or in the United States – to allow a resurgence of the brown tide, aggression and contempt. The heroism of our soldiers here at Westerplatte, on the Hel Peninsula, and in the Home Army, and of those who attacked Monte Cassino, would be in vain if we were to allow fascism, contempt, hatred and aggression to arise again today, and if we were to deny this very dangerous but obvious truth that the aggressor who started another cruel war is Russia, and that it is the responsibility of the whole West to take a firm stance. It is the responsibility of the whole West to state: “Ukraine’s fate also means our fate in the near future.” Here, at Westerplatte, we must speak out loudly – the coming months, this autumn and this winter ahead of us, may prove crucial not only for the independence of Ukraine, but also for the security of Poland and the entire free world.

From here, right here at Westerplatte, bearing in mind the 80 million victims of the Second World War, 6 million of whom were Polish citizens, bearing in mind the extermination of almost all the Jews in Europe by the German Nazis driven by their own madness, bearing all this in mind, today we shout out loud from Westerplatte to the whole free world: “Show solidarity! Today we must help Ukraine to survive. We must not repeat those mistakes. Munich must not happen again. This horrific, helpless and powerless policy of surrendering to evil must not be repeated.”

The soldiers at Westerplatte and Poland throughout its dramatic history, have always demonstrated that when evil threatens us and our children, we stand up to defend freedom, truth and integrity. We must do the same now. If we say today, “It is only Ukraine”, in a few months’ time, or in a year or two, someone will say once again, “It is only Poland”. May the words from Westerplatte reach all the capitals of Europe, Washington, Ottawa and Tokyo. Wherever there are people who understand the gravity of the situation, that the most important lesson to be learnt from Westerplatte is, in fact, that those who have been attacked by an aggressor must never be left alone again.

Poland is the victim of numerous provocations. We probably experienced further acts of sabotage, arson and subversion a few dozen hours ago. Such provocations affected Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as, on numerous occasions, Poland, Romania, Denmark and, most recently, Germany. Yes, we will soon find out that it was the Russian security services who organised the drone provocation in Leipzig. Perhaps then the Germans, the French, the Italians and the Spanish – all of them, without exception – and all the nations and leaders of the free world will realise that in the face of evil no one can be left alone. I know – too many words, not enough action – I heard these words time and again, including from those who suffer today as a result of their neighbours’ aggressive behaviour and the war. So let me conclude this speech with words coming from the bottom of my heart, addressed to everyone gathered here, regardless of our differences, so that you may draw precisely these lessons

from the experience of Westerplatte: here, in Poland and across the free world, may we all be strong, responsible and united, so that we never surrender an inch to evil, lies, contempt and hatred – just as Poland had never surrendered, just as those Heroes of Westerplatte had never surrendered.