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NSZZ “Solidarity’s” notions for the state’s role in social life Their social and political roots and status in 3rd Republic of Poland

Abstract: The paper portrays the origins and ideological foundations of NSZZ “Solidarity” (Independent Self-governing Trade Union “Solidarity”) and their meaning in social life at the time of the communist regime in PRL (Polish People’s Republic). There are references to strikes (June ‘56 in Poznan, polish March ‘68, June ‘76, July ‘80 in Lublin and Swidnica and August ‘80) and, in 1980, the creation of Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee, which developed and published 21 demands aimed at the authorities. In the study, it is acknowledged that those demands are the ideological sources of Solidarity. The author of the text thinks that John Paul II sermons and encyclicals as well as Fr. Józef Tischner’s texts (published in the book *Etyka solidarności oraz Homo sovieticus – Solidarity’s ethics and homo sovieticus*) also had an influence on the formation of these ideas, which could bring back moral order, the rule of law, dignity and freedom for the society enslaved by Soviets. “Solidarity” also desired to improve the economic status of the country, particularly by ending the crisis. Those thoughts were, and are, beautiful; unfortunately, nowadays many of them exist only in the sphere of ideas or demands written in NSZZ *Solidarity’s statute*. Therefore, the article contains a sad conclusion, that in the 3rd Republic of Poland’s reality, “Solidarity’s” ideas are not attractive anymore. It happened because modern society is guided by consumerism and has become banalistic. Trade union membership is not beneficial anymore, sometimes even being bothersome and seen as exceptional. That is why people, for the sake of keeping their jobs or other benefits, are leaving NSZZ “Solidarity”. Considering the ideas behind trade unions (especially the protection of worker’s affairs) – it is a peculiar paradox.

Keywords: ideals of “Solidarity”, workers’ demands, freedom, human dignity, communist government, regime, historic paradox.

NSZZ “Solidarity” came into existence in a very special moment in the 20th century history. The balance of forces in politics, which occurred after the Second World War in Europe caused a division of the old continent into two main blocs; the eastern, where the communist party was in charge of the country, and the western, where the capitalist system was dominating. The propaganda of communist countries aimed at shaping societies where, as it was claimed, the

equality and righteous treatment of the citizens called ‘comrades’ were to be found. Communist slogans were false. They have been exposed by George Orwell in his literary conceptualisation *Animal Farm* near the end of the Second World War. The author used allegories to present Stalinism. He spread awareness and warned people of any totalitarian system, including communism. It is crucial to mention that the communist ideas and visions are not bad in themselves, however they have no application in the real world – they are a utopian vision that is impossible to be implemented in practice.

Communists, by murdering each other, acquired specific authority. Their ‘tools of terror’ were being successfully used to intimidate and oppress the Russian society. Similar methods and approaches have been used in order to cope with other countries which became a part of the Eastern Bloc after the Second World War. The citizens of the countries remaining under USSR’s supremacy noticed pressure, extraordinary abnormalities and abuses from the Soviet authorities. This situation has become a source of social and political conflicts and principles on an international scale (Kostecki, Wojciechowska-Łysek 1983; Pastusiak 1983; Łoś-Nowak 1989; Mielecki 1989; Stefanowicz 1989; Pietraś 1989; Friszke 1994). Protests, which in the countries of the Eastern Bloc turned into bloodily suppressed strikes, were an effect of the social dissonance occurring in the countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). Uprisings of workers, students and intellectuals broke out before August 1980 in Poland, giving hope for a better tomorrow, but at the same time being a source of concern. Jacek Kuroń described this moment in Polish history as a “sharp bend” on which one can easily fall out (Kuroń 1984: 151–156). After almost forty years, this apt metaphor of Kuroń about the events in which he participated, and about the times he observed, can also refer to the recent history of the Republic of Poland which, it seems, has once again found itself in a bend of history.

Rebellions were a spontaneous reaction of the society to terrible socio-economic conditions and the regime (especially the lack of freedom of speech and ever-present surveillance)¹. Demonstrations and strikes were considered to be the only effective way of showing disapproval of the government which was not living up to the citizens’ expectations and failed to perform the basic functions that were assigned to it. Neither economic, nor judicial order was present in the PRL. There were institutions like the citizens’ militia, the army, emergency services and fire departments in People’s Poland, and their role was to provide safety, but they were subordinated to the authorities and only meant to execute their politics. The government used the services and departments (aside from emergency service

¹ We can mention here the uprising in East Berlin – 16.06.1953 (GDR), disturbance and incidents in Pilsen – 1.06.1956 (CSRS), demonstrations in Budapest – 23.10–10.11.1956 (Hungary), protests in Novochoerkassk – 1–2.06.1962 (USSR) and the events of 1968 (CSRS and Poland).

and fire brigade) to reach their own goals. This has been confirmed by documents which have already been published (Hemmerling, Nadolski 1991, Hemmerling, Nadolski 1994), as well as others, not verified yet or remaining in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, which have not been declassified. There was an illusion that the authorities cared for the citizens. In reality, though, people were not defended by any institutions or laws. There was no peace guaranteed by the political leaders and state authorities and, so the citizens were let down when it came to the most basic and fundamental role, such the creation of proper conditions for economic and intellectual development, as well as providing the citizens with 1) the tools to improve existential aspects of their lives and 2) the access to cultural goods, while preserving respect toward the ethnic and religious diversity among the citizens.

The politics in PRL discredited the minorities as part of the Polish society, aimed at artificial elimination of the cultural differences. There was a status of a relic, a folk knick-knack, assigned to regional differences. Regional education almost did not exist, while new traditions were being created. The mechanisms of PRL’s systemic disintegration were brilliantly unmasked and in a Polish comedy film from 1980 called *Miś* (Teddy bear) directed by Stanisław Bareja. The phenomenal Stanisław Tym was both the main actor and the screenwriter of this movie. The grotesque scenes from bars, offices and shops put a new light on the absurdity of everyday existence of Polish citizens. The film presents the paradoxes of the life of a regular citizen (though it is possible that situations shown in it can only be understood by those who lived in those times). We may laugh at it now, but I can assure you that people living back then had no reason to laugh. The reality of Poland in the 1980s is shown in a funhouse mirror, and therefore encourages reflection on that times. Sometimes it was almost absurd and caused frustration in the society.

The economic crisis in PRL, combined with political censorship and violence could not have appeared without a reaction. Society’s protests were bloodily suppressed. The authorities used intelligence services: Citizens’ Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska*), Motorised Reserves of the Citizens’ Militia (*Zmotoryzowane Odwoły Milicji Obywatelskiej*), Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens’ Militia (*Ochotnicza Rezerwa Milicji Obywatelskiej*) and the army. Their brutal approach caused social dissatisfaction to escalate. Worker outbreaks in PRL, similarly to those in other countries dominated by the Soviets, lasted for many decades. Thousands of people were arrested. The authorities used repression and tortures which lead to fatalities. 57 victims were a result of the June ’56 pacification in Poznań. The incidents of March 1968 in Poland caused an anti-Semite purge and blacklisting of students. The pressure on Polish residents, who were not ethnically Poles, but of Jewish descent, was the strongest at that time and they were forced to emigrate. The protest of the citizen masses in December of 1970 ended up

with 45 people killed: the youngest victim, Zbyszek Godlewski, was 15 years old (Marciniak 2010; Eisler 2012; Romanow 2015)². Participants of strikes in June 1976, July 1980 in Lublin and Świdnica, and finally August 1980 did not avoid these repercussions either.

After the June strikes in Radom, Ursus and Płock, a Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) was established; it operated from September 1976 to September 1977. It was an opposition organisation whose members opposed the Polish People's Republic's policy and helped the repressed people. In 1977, when the communist authorities partially fulfilled KOR's demands (including the liberation of imprisoned workers), this organisation evolved into the Social Self-Defence Committee (KSS KOR), which operated from September 1977 to September 1981.

The strikes in Lublin and Świdnica, which happened in July due to economic reasons, as well as the activities of the Social Self-Defence Committee, started the era of Solidarity (Friszke 2011). It is worth recalling that September 23rd, 1976 was the day when the Workers' Defence Committee came into existence. It was organising legal, medical and material aid for workers and their families, victimised for taking part in the incidents of July '76. The creation of KOR was predated by a relief action initiated by the so-called "Wandering Patrol", operating within the 1st Warsaw Scout Troop "Black One" (in charge of the group was Antoni Macierewicz), supported by members of the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia (headed by Jan Józef Lipski). Apart from Macierewicz and Lipski, the third initiator of KOR was Jacek Kuroń (these are only selected activists, there were many others involved in the social and political processes beside them, such as Andrzej Gwiazda and his wife Joanna, Anna Walentynowicz, Henryka Krzywonos, Bogdan Borsewicz, Jerzy Borowczak, Bogdan Felski, Ludwik Prądyński, Zbigniew Bujak and Bogdan Lis). At that time, the dialogue with Catholic Church was established and Kuroń proclaimed an idea of peaceful disassembly of the communist system. This idea was expressed by a motto: "Don't burn committees. Create your own".

Lublin was an example of the power of protests and creativity of the participants (they welded the locomotives to the railroad tracks). Due to the events in Lublin, the strikes began to spread to nearby regions and finally to all cities around the country. The July protests in Lublin were a signal for the strikes on the coast in August. The Free Trade Unions of the Coast started the most important strike on August 14th in the Gdańsk Shipyard. The participants demanded the reinstatement of Anna Walentynowicz and Lech Wałęsa to work, as well as a raise in payments and building a memorial for the victims of December 1970. August 1980 was one

² Zbyszek Godlewski is considered a symbol of December's victims; Ballada about Janek Wiśniewski tells a story of his death. Movies that refer to those tragic events include Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Iron* (1981), in which Polish actress Krystyna Janda sings the ballad and *Black Thursday. Janek Wiśniewski fell* (2011) directed by Antoni Krauze.

of the most important months in shaping PRL’s history. It is known for the strikes and the conclusion of four August agreements.

Formally, the beginning of the Independent Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity is connected with the September events. In the evening September 16th, 1980, the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee (MKS) was formed in the Gdańsk Shipyard. Before this, the Gdańsk Shipyard Strike Committee had started consultations with 21 delegations from other plants. Soon after, MKS Committees were created in other cities in Poland, namely Szczecin and Wrocław. There were strikes and demonstrations in the whole country. The participants’ demands included system changes. MKS in Gdańsk, which later was transformed into the Independent Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity, presented the demands in detail on the night of August 16–17th, 1980 in the form of a list of 21 items (chosen out of thousands of suggested ideas). The list of demands was developed by the leaders of the strike including Andrzej and Joanna Gwiazda, Bogdan Lis, Alina Pieńkowska and Lech Wałęsa. It was edited by Bogdan Borusewicz. On August 18th, the leaders of MKS decided to make the list of demands public (Kerski, Knoch 2015: 26–27). Wooden boards with demands were placed on entrance gate number 2 in the Gdańsk Shipyard. Today they are in the former EHS Hall (Fig. 1) and anyone interested can see them (Fig. 2). The boards survived thanks to employees of the Central Maritime Museum, Wiesław Urbański (chairman of the factory Solidarity) and Dariusz Chełkowski (driver), who on December 14, 1981 took them to Urbański’s house in Wrzeszcz, where they were hidden in the partition wall in the attic. In 1996, they were returned to the museum, and since March 2003 they have been an exhibit of the Road to Freedom exhibition at the shipyard.



Fig. 1. EHS Hall of the Gdańsk Shipyard. August 31, 2018
Photo by K. Krawiec-Złotkowska



Fig. 2. Boards with demands

Photo by K. Krawiec-Złotkowska

In 2003, the boards with demands were included in UNESCO's world list of cultural heritage – Memory of the World as one of the most important documents of the 20th century. The boards created by Arkadiusz Rybicki and Maciej Grzywaczewski are an evidence of the events which had a huge influence on the political, system and economic changes in all countries of the Eastern Bloc. Gdańsk Shipyard is the birthplace of those changes.

The demands started with a call to create free trade unions. Other points on the list referred to respecting constitutional rights and freedoms (especially free press and media), end of repression towards people for their political views, abolishing party privileges and improving the general standard of living. The demands had political grounds and, therefore, were hard to accept for the authorities. Workers wanted to create free trade unions which could speak to the worker-peasant government in the name of “working people of cities and villages”. By doing that, they questioned the credibility of the Communist Party (PZPR). The party was supposed to rule on behalf of the proletariat. The workers have also presented their economic and social expectations. They demanded economic restructuring in order to lead the country out of the crisis. They called for help for the people raising children, raises in wages, as well as in expatriation and subsistence allowance. Lowering the retirement age and a reform of the healthcare system have also been mentioned among the demands. The last issue involved free Saturdays. The participants wanted to create a “socialism with a human face”. After Jacek Kuroń and KOR activists' manifestoes, they repeated the call to not burn party committees, but to set up their own (Kuroń 2010). They were certain that people's country can be reformed, and they believed that the fate and standard of living for regular people can be improved due to

fundamental changes. On August 31st, in Gdańsk Shipyard’s EHS room, an agreement between MKS (representing over 700 workplaces) and a government delegation was signed. There was a disagreement about political prisoners, whose release was one of the conditions presented by Lech Wałęsa. Finally, the deputy prime minister Mieczysław Jagielski agreed to sign written guarantees to release the prisoners. The final document was signed at 4 pm (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Signing of the August agreements

Source: photo exhibited at the Road to Freedom exhibition at the EHS Hall in the Gdańsk Shipyard (photo by K. Krawiec-Złotkowska).

As a result of signing the Gdańsk Agreement, a new movement was born. It was later transformed into a 10 million NSZZ union and officially registered on the November 10th, 1980 by the provincial court in Warsaw. Since 2006, NSZZ Solidarity has been a member of the International Confederation of Trade Unions, and since 2014, the patron of Solidarity is the blessed Jerzy Popiełuszko (based on the decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, acting under the authority of Pope Francis of August 25th, 2014). 21 Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee’s (MKS) demands can be treated as a fundament for the ideas of the free trade union. It was based on the problems concerning human rights and the respect for one’s views and dignity. Unfortunately, the fifteen-month period of Polish freedom ended with martial law, which lasted from December 13th, 1981 to July 22nd, 1983. After its introduction, NSZZ “Solidarity” was outlawed formally on October 8th, 1982 as a result of the adoption by the Polish parliament of the new law on trade unions and farmers’ organisations, which in essence abolished all union headquarters operating before December 13th, 1981. Despite the repression of strikes and the internment of several thousand activists, Solidarity was rebuilt

in underground structures. However, it was a social movement without central authorities, ideologically and organisationally diverse. The federal structure of the Union and the independence of the regions were confirmed by the secret Temporary Coordination Commission established in April 1982, and then by the overt National Executive Commission established in 1987. While operating in the underground, Solidarity assumed an attitude of gradually building an alternative society, independent of the PZPR. Union activists organised street strikes and demonstrations (most numerous in May and August 1982), published underground press, created the so-called the second publishing circuit and Radio Solidarity, they announced a boycott of institutions subject to government control (for example, state television by actors), coordinated self-help (in which the Catholic Church had a huge share), cooperated with international trade unions. Some of the activists who demanded the use of radical methods of political struggle (for example a general strike in 1982) formed the Fighting Solidarity, headed by Kornel Morawiecki. After the strikes in April and August 1988 in connection with the preparations for the Round Table, an informal political representation of Solidarity was established. It was the Citizens' Committee with the chairman of NSZZ "Solidarity" Lech Wałęsa, who participated in the talks and the conclusion of an agreement.

Apart from MKS demands, Pope John Paul II and priest Józef Tischner have also played a crucial role in shaping the image of Solidarity, as well as views and ideas presented by it.

Enslaved Poles found strength and inspiration in Pope's words. His voice, the voice of a known and respected member of the Catholic church was a support and an authority for citizens. Polish Pope represented a man of work and a paradigm of human dignity and freedom. In this context, the *Laborem exercens* encyclical (Jan Paweł II 1981) and *Holy Father* homilies, where he spoke of freedom and dignity, seem to be the most important ones.

The encyclical *Laborem exercens* was created on September 14, 1981 on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the *Rerum Novarum*. Its publication took place at the same time as the First National Congress of Delegates of NSZZ "Solidarity" in Gdańsk Oliwa (Kuroń 1991: 214; Majchrzak, Owsiniński 2011; Friszke 2014: 571), on which a proclamation known as the First Congress of Delegates of NSZZ "Solidarity" to the Working People in Eastern Europe was passed. The appeal published on September 8th, 1981 had a huge impact and reaction, social classes and nations. It called the trade unionists of the Soviet Bloc countries to fight together for the right to create free trade unions³. And,

³ The originator of this document was Dr. Henryk Siciński, and the author of the text was Bogusław Śliwa. The government of the Polish People's Republic recognised it as a "manifestation of political adventurism" and accused the unionists of meddling in the internal affairs of socialist countries. In the USSR, Leonid Brezhnev, at a meeting of

although it is widely available on the Internet, it is worth recalling its content here:

Delegates gathered in Gdańsk at the First Congress of Delegates of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” send workers: Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Romania, Hungary and all nations of the Soviet Union – greetings and words of support. As the first independent trade union in our post-war history, we deeply feel the community of our fate. We assure you that, against the lies spread in your countries, we are an authentic 10-million representation of the employees called up, an organisation formed as a result of workers’ strikes. Our goal is to fight to improve the lives of all working people. We support those of you who have decided to enter the difficult path of struggle for a free trade union movement. We believe that soon your representatives and ours will be able to meet in order to exchange union experiences.

In the “hot” time of change initiated by workers, the Pope wrote that work is the core and foundation of human life. The *Holy Father* also noticed that work ennobles people and that is why it has a very positive and creative character. According to John Paul II, it is very important because of its utilitarian nature, it is the source of the well-being of society, family and neighbours. The Pope taught that a person should constantly develop in their preferred field, in terms of culture, morality, technology. He also stressed that the first, important and undoubtedly difficult, school of work for every man is his family. At the same time, he noted that it must be honestly rewarded and provide people with decent living conditions.

The demands of the encyclical were further developed in papal homilies, especially those made during pilgrimages to his homeland. Poles took the teachings of John Paul II to heart and stood against the communists as “steadfast” (Marek 2017), although they often paid a high price for their anti-communist views (Marecki, Grądzka-Rejak 2016). The papal words were confirmed from the very beginning of the pontificate. Already in the homily (1978) after he was inaugurated, the Pope appealed: “Do not be afraid”. A year later (on June 2nd, 1979) at the Victory Square in Warsaw, the sermon ended with a prophetic call:

I am calling, I, the son of Polish land, and I, John Paul II, the Pope. I am calling from all the depth of this Millennium, I am calling on the eve of the Pentecost, I am calling with all of you: Let Your Spirit descend! Let Your Spirit descend and renew the face of the land. This land!

the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, stated: “It is a dangerous and provocative document. There are not many words in it, but they all hit one point. Its authors would like to be confused in socialist countries, to encourage groups of all kinds of renegades”. The Soviet authorities sent a letter to the Polish government demanding immediate and radical steps to cut the malicious anti-Soviet propaganda and hostile actions against the Soviet Union, <https://nowahistoria.inetaria.pl/kartka-z-kalendarza/news-8-wrzesnia-1981-r-poslanie-i-zjazdu-delegatow-nszz-solidarnosc,nId,1496417>

The Pope's appeal for the renewal of the face of "this land" was all too legible and found its way to the right ground. The "Solidarity" people understood the intentions of the Pope who in his words strengthened their actions and ideas aimed at improving working conditions and everyday life, but above all, abolishing the Soviet regime and regaining constitutional rights. John Paul II was loved by millions. Crowds came to the masses he celebrated during his pilgrimage to Poland. These meetings were also an opportunity for the society to manifest disagreement to the policy of the communist authorities (Fig. 4, 5).



Fig. 4. Gdańsk Zaspa, June 12th, 1987. In anticipation of the Holy Mass, attended by about one million pilgrims

Photo by A. Pytlak

A big part in shaping the Union's ideals was also played by Polish priest Jerzy Popiełuszko, called the chaplain of Solidarity (Czaczkowska, Wiścicki 2004). He based his pastoral activity and teaching on the message: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (St. Paul, Rom 12:21)⁴. For Father Jerzy, truth was the supreme value. He sought to destroy all lies, believed that working people could not be exploited. He was associated with working-class circles since August 1980. After the imposition of martial law, he started his charity work to support persecuted and harmed people. He organised the distribution of foreign humanitarian aid. From February 28th, 1982, he organised Masses for the Homeland at St. Stanisław Kostka church in Warsaw⁵. He proclaimed bravery to be the greatest

⁴ This attitude was promoted by the Primate of the Millennium, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, who – as the first hierarch in the history of the Catholic Church – made an agreement with the communist authorities on February 14th, 1950, for which he fell into disfavour of Pope Pius XII (Czaczkowska 2009).

⁵ Such masses – inspired by the idea of Father Jerzy – are celebrated until today in the Sacred Heart of Jesus' church in Słupsk; they are associated with the subsequent anniver-

virtue and he served this virtue until the end. He did not bow and remained faithful to his until his martyr’s death on October 19th, 1984. For the people of “Solidarity”, priest Jerzy is an icon and his teachings are a testimony of the past.



Fig. 5. Participants of Mass on Zaspka heading towards the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers in December 1970

Photo by A. Pytlak

The Pope and Jerzy Popiełuszko spoke in a tone similar to another priest, Józef Tischner. In shaping the ideals of “Solidarity”, he played a role as important as the Polish Pope. Tischner opened the second and subsequent days of the 1st Congress of Delegates of NSZZ “Solidarity” in Gdańsk-Oliwa. The first homily he gave there was a sermon about the ethics of “Solidarity”. Father Tischner repeated in it what he concluded in the homily of October 19th, 1980 delivered to the leaders of “Solidarity” with Lech Wałęsa at the head of those participating in the Mass on Jasna Góra. In this sermon, he clearly defined the essence and idea of human solidarity:

The word “solidarity” gathers our haunting hopes, stimulates bravery and clear thinking, connects people who were far away yesterday. History creates words so that words can shape history. The word “solidarity” has joined today’s other, most Polish words to give a new shape to our days. There are several such words: “freedom”, “independence”, “human dignity” – and today “solidarity”. Each one of us feels the great weight of the content hidden in this word. With this burden, we stand today on the Wawel Hill, among the coffins of the Piasts, the Jagiellons, next to the ashes of Mickiewicz, Słowacki, before the altar of the Son of God (Tischner 1992: 9–13).

Putting the word “solidarity” on an equal footing with “freedom”, “independence” and “human dignity” was of fundamental importance, as it placed it among the terms that linked the highest moral values and sovereign political

saries of the death of the “Solidarity” chaplain whose monument stands in front of this temple.

status of a human being. One should also remember about the place where these words were spoken, the most important Polish necropolis, the place of coronation of Polish kings, a mythical place in the context of Polish history and the most important one in the religious sense. Addressed to people who believe and entrust their lives to the protection of Our Lady of Częstochowa, they could not remain unnoticed. Tischner's teaching that to be solidary means "to bear the burden of another man" (he refers to Saint Paul here: Gal 6, 2) became an axiom for the member of "Solidarity". Under its influence, they were ready to take this burden on their shoulders. The philosopher argued for the necessity of mutual support because no man is a "lonely island", people are fused together even when they are not aware of it. They are connected by landscape, body and blood, work and speech. According to the priest, the dignity of a person is based on their conscience, and the deepest solidarity is solidarity of conscience!

This and other homilies of the priest-philosopher, delivered in various places or printed in "Tygodnik Powszechny" were an unequivocal signpost for the public. I recall them today – alongside the demands of MKS, the words of John Paul II and the appeals of the First Congress of Delegates of NSZZ "Solidarity" – with nostalgia and sadness. The texts that shaped the ideals of "Solidarity" are of contemporary archival significance rather than inspiring us to act and put them into practice. The pro-social demands, focused on human beings and improving their living conditions in all existential and ideological aspects, have now become a political tool. The phenomenon of NSZZ "Solidarity", which was born and most actively operated in the century called "the age of blood" by Wołoszański (Wołoszański 2017) – is something incomprehensible nowadays. Archaic and almost unbelievable are the slogans about supporting oneself, feeling the community and devoting oneself to an idea or involvement in *pro publico bono* actions. And in the 1980s, "Solidarity" was shaken by the capitals of powerful empires – Moscow and Beijing. The leader of the Tibetans, Dalai Lama, recognised the idea of "Solidarity" as one of the inspirations for the struggle for the independence of their nation. After the imposition of martial law on December 13, 1981, US President Ronald Reagan announced January 30, 1982, International Solidarity Day.

Positive and affirmative reception of NSZZ "Solidarity" almost all over the world has its justification in the fact that this trade union sought democratic transformation without the use of violence. Demonstrations and protests of workers, students, and Polish intelligentsia were the result of determination, reaction to abuses and regime government policy.

These forms of protest were again used when the economic crisis deepened, reinforced by the introduction of martial law by the communist authorities and subsequent price increases. The structures of the Union went underground (Friszke 2006), and by the end of 1987, repression of these structured increased considerably. In the spring of 1988, "Solidarity" began to apply to the courts for

registration of its Plant Commissions. However, the authorities slowed down the registration process, which exacerbated public frustration caused by earlier price increases. The effect of those events was a wave of so-called spring strikes that spread all over Poland. In addition to workers, students were also involved in the protests. It is worth emphasising that they were peaceful demonstrations. On May 1, 1988, they were organised on an unprecedented scale since the lifting of martial law in 1983. The next day, a strike broke out in the Gdańsk Shipyard and the Strike Committee demanded registration of “Solidarity”. On May 3, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Andrzej Wielowieyski came to the shipyard with a representative of the Episcopate. Their dialogue with the shipyard management did not bring any results. The shipyard workers’ protest was supported by street demonstrations and an occupation strike by Tri-City students (Fig. 6, 7, 8, 9): students of the University of Gdańsk, University of Technology and the State College of Fine Arts.



Fig. 6. Students during the 1988 strike.
University of Gdańsk building, Wit Stwosz street 51
Photo by A. Pytlak



Fig. 7. Students’ manifestation in the streets of Gdańsk, 1988
Photo by A. Pytlak



Fig. 8. Students' manifestation in the streets of Gdańsk, 1988

Photo by A. Pytlak



Fig. 9. Students' manifestation in the streets of Gdańsk, 1988. Main train station

Photo by A. Pytlak

The 1988 strikes lasted until September. Their nationwide dimension and scale made the PRL authorities aware that they are not able to stop social and political change in the country. The negotiations of the Round Table (lasting from February 6th till April 5th, 1989) proved that a peaceful agreement between the communist authorities and the opposition is possible. One of the leading figures participating in those deliberations and the signing of the August Agreements was Lech Wałęsa – currently judged as a controversial figure, secret collaborator Bolek, a person involved in cooperation with the Security Service. However, in that reality, at this crucial moment in the history of the Polish state, the Round Table was of fundamental importance, as in June of that year it led to partially free parliamentary elections and the establishment of a government led by Solidarity. In 1990, Lech Wałęsa ran for the office of the President (Fig. 10) and after the victory he became the first-ever President of the Republic of Poland elected in general elections.



Fig. 10. After the election results are announced. Gdańsk 1990

Photo by A. Pytlak

The model of Solidarity movement was followed by representatives of democratic movements in other countries of the Eastern Bloc – Hungary, Germany and the Czech Republic⁶. The transformations in these states took place on the basis of the ideals of a peaceful struggle for freedom, which spread and settled down through the victory of Solidarity.

NSZZ “Solidarity”, which was established in 1980 to defend workers’ rights, and until 1989 was one of the main centres of opposition against the communist government of the Polish People’s Republic, achieved quite considerable political influence in the Third Republic of Poland. One example of this surely is the “Solidarity” Electoral Action (AWS), formed on June 8th, 1996 (Paszkievicz 2004: 224). AWS’ centre-right coalition government ruled Poland between 1997 and 2001. Its founder and chairman was Marian Krzaklewski. The group gathered many groups of diverse views, mainly Christian-Democratic and centre-right. In the period from November 10th, 1997 to June 6th, 2000, AWS formed a government coalition with the Freedom Union (UW), and then, after UW left the coalition – a minority government that lasted till October 19th, 2001. Unfortunately, the period of political prosperity of AWS, and hence “Solidarity”, after 2001 was significantly weakened. NSZZ “Solidarity” as it was remembered by the participants of the events in 1980–1981 and the following years was history.

⁶ In 1989, the Hungarians organised their own Triangle Table. It resulted in free elections that took place in May 1990 and ended the communist rule. Germany opened its borders and the communist authorities of the GDR started negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany, which resulted in the demolition of the Berlin Wall by the residents on November 9th, 1989. On November 17th, protests commenced with the “Velvet Revolution” in Czechoslovakia; on December 29th, 1989, opposition leader Václav Havel was elected president of Czechoslovakia.

Contemporary society is characterised by utilitarianism and consumerism. People asked join NSZZ “Solidarity” primarily want to know what they would gain by it. They are not convinced by the fact that a trade union, in accordance with its statute, will care for their employee interests. As arguments against signing up for an organisation that has such a beautiful history and played a huge role in the history of the 20th century Europe, they give its low effectiveness in action and its politicisation, which are difficult to argue against. Unfortunately, this is the sad reality, there is little left from the 10-million organisation. According to data from 1989, the number of its members dropped significantly and amounted to 1.5 million members. In the following years there was a further decline. For example, according to Marek Wąs, in 2010 Solidarity ceased to exist in its original shape. On August 20, in “Gazeta Wyborcza”, the journalist said that the number of members in 2010 fell to about 400 thousand (Wąs 2010). However, we find a completely different number in the press four days later, August 24 – it is much larger and amounts to 680 thousand members (Sandecki, Wąs 2010).

On the other hand, in a strike log of January 14th, 2015 addressed to General Director of the International Labour Office in Geneva, Guy Ryder, there is a precise number of NSZZ members, which is 586,909. With such a large discrepancy, it is difficult to say which information is reliable. Especially considering that in recent years there has been a disturbing phenomenon of “silencing” Union membership with a threat of job loss or tangible benefits (for example in the form of 1 and ½ part time or overtime at school). This phenomenon is not only sad, but immoral, non-ethical, not to say pathological, bearing the marks of mobbing or corruption (depending on the position held).

Every year on August 31, celebrations commemorating the events from the past are held in Gdańsk (Fig. 11, 12, 13). In many churches in Poland, holy masses are paid in honour of the victims of December ‘70, commemorated by the occasional liturgies of the “Solidarity” chaplain, Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko, who was murdered by UB officers.

To sum up the considerations above, one can ask the question what role in the public space is played by anniversary celebrations and monuments commemorating the victims of the communist regime. For example: the monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers in Gdańsk (Fig. 11), the monument to the Poznań June ‘56 (Fig. 14), the monument to the Victims of Communism in Łódź, the monument at the Lublin Castle, the monument to the Victims of Communism in Prague and many others. Do people participating in these celebrations or looking at these testimonies of the past associate them with NSZZ “Solidarity” and the ideals of this union? In the light of past events, does commemorating the subsequent anniversaries of August ‘80 mean anything? The attendance at this kind of celebrations is not satisfactory nor optimistic. Perhaps the reason for this is that they are more and more often a routinised ritual, and fewer and fewer people



Fig. 11. After laying flowers in front of the second gate by the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda (August 31, 2018)

Photo by K. Krawiec-Złotkowska



Fig. 12. August celebrations in Gdańsk in front of the second gate and at the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers in December 1970

Photo by K. Krawiec-Złotkowska



Fig. 13. August celebrations in Gdańsk. Liturgy of mass in the church St. Bridget, August 31, 2018

Photo by K. Krawiec-Złotkowska



Fig. 14. Monument to the Victims of Poznań June '56

Photo by M. Kaleniecki

remember the meaning of remembering the past. And history repeats itself. People who have contributed to the creation of NSZZ “Solidarity” and even sacrificed their lives for the Union, gave it their private time (often at the expense of their own families), were interned and imprisoned, are today forgotten and plunged into the darkness of history. An example of such process may be Ewa Kubasińska-Houée, who was sentenced to the highest sentence that was issued at the time, 10 years imprisonment for distributing a leaflet calling for active resistance against martial law. After the amnesty and release in May 1983, she received a one-way passport and could again cross the borders of her homeland only many years later (Kubasiewicz-Houée 2007).

In the context of the above considerations, unfortunately, there is a very bitter reflection that is best expressed by the thought contained in the poem *Fortepian Szopena* (Chopin’s piano) by Cyprian Kamil Norwid (Norwid 1990: 177–184). The poet, in the sounds of Fryderyk’s music saw Poland “from that zenith/ Perfections of history”, the Poland of “wheelwrights transformed” that he would have known “though at life’s brow”, because it was his homeland, “where you were raised” like the “Publica Res”. Unfortunately, the instrument, which in the romantic delight praised the glory of Poland, “crushed on the granite squares”. In the symbolic dimension “now brought low on the pavement”. Today also “with groaning – stories gone deaf” and remind us of the ideals of those who left their footprints on them, those who fled from the militias of MO, ZOMO, ORMO and the army subordinate to the regime’s power.

People who have remained faithful to the ideals of NSZZ “Solidarity” today often become the object of mockery and jokes. They are the “remnant” of a huge movement that has burned out and became history. Perhaps it has already fulfilled its historical role. But as a “leftover”, a remnant, even a relic of the past, these people give hope. Maybe if today these ideals have fallen so much that they reached the “pavement”, they may resound in the future and ring in the ears and hearts of Poles like the most beautiful music. So “Rejoice, o you child who will be” when “the Ideal – now brought low on the pavement”, enjoy, people of future generations, because only you are our hope and you can rebuild what has been lost.

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Identyfikacja NSZZ „Solidarność” dotyczące roli państwa w życiu społecznym Ich społeczne i polityczne korzenie oraz ich realizacja w III Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej

Zarys treści: W artykule zostały przedstawione geneza i ideologiczne podstawy Niezależnego Samorządnego Związku Zawodowego „Solidarność” i jego znaczenie w życiu społecznym w czasach PRL. Genezę organizacji wywodzi się od sekwencji strajków (Czerwiec '56 w Poznaniu, Polski Marzec '68, Czerwiec '76, Lipiec '80 w Lublinie i Świdnicy oraz Sierpień '80). W 1980 roku utworzono Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy, który opracował i opublikował 21 żądań skierowanych do władz. W artykule uzasadniono, że żądania te są ideologicznymi źródłami „Solidarności”. Autorka uważa, że kazania i encykliki Jana Pawła II oraz teksty ks. Józefa Tischnera (wydane w książce *Etyka solidarności oraz Homo sovieticus*) również miały wpływ na tworzenie tych żądań. Były to idee, które mogły przywrócić porządek moralny, praworządność, godność i wolność społeczeństwa zniewolonego przez sowietów. Solidarność pragnęła również poprawić status ekonomiczny kraju, zwłaszcza poprzez zakończenie kryzysu. Te myśli były – i są – piękne; niestety, obecnie wiele z nich istnieje tylko w sferze pomysłów lub żądań zapisanych w statucie NSZZ „Solidarność”. Stąd artykuł kończy smutny wniosek, że w rzeczywistości III Rzeczypospolitej idee „Solidarności” nie są już atrakcyjne. Stało się tak, ponieważ współczesne społeczeństwo kieruje się konsumpcjonizmem i staje się banalne. Działanie w związkach zawodowych nie jest już opłacalne, czasem wręcz kłopotliwe i postrzegane jako wyjątkowe. Dlatego ludzie dla zachowania pracy lub innych zysków opuszczają NSZZ „Solidarność”. Biorąc pod uwagę idee stojące za związkami zawodowymi (zwłaszcza ochronę spraw pracowniczych) – jest to swoisty paradoks.

Słowa kluczowe: ideały Solidarności, postulaty robotnicze, wolność, godność ludzka, rząd komunistyczny, reżim, historyczny paradoks.

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