



THE IMAGES OF SOLIDARITY

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ABSTRACT

The sociological and political situation in Poland developing since the end of 2015, especially around the Constitutional Court, inspired me to compare two Solidarity manifestations that happened at the same place but in very different points of the history of Poland. The first one took place on May 3, 1981 and the second on December 19, 2015. The place was the Old Market Square in the historic city of Torun situated halfway between Warsaw and Gdansk. What is different and similar in those events spaced so far in time? What faces can you see in the photos? How were the people dressed? What banners did they prepare for the two manifestations, etc.? The photo report I made in 1981 is in black and white as color photography was not available in Poland at that time. The 2015 photos are in color and were taken with a modern digital camera.

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INTRODUCTION

Both the 35th anniversary of the SOLIDARITY demonstrations and the new political climate in Poland after the Parliamentary Elections in 2015, especially around the Constitutional Court, inspired me to compare the two solidarity manifestations, which happened at the same place but in very different times. The first one took place on May 3, 1981 and the second on December 19, 2015. The place was the Old Market Square in the historic city of Torun situated halfway between Warsaw and Gdansk.



The manifestation in 1981 gathered people in solidarity with farmers who wanted to have similar organization as workers – the Independent Trade Union SOLIDARITY.



In December 2015, people of Torun gathered in the Old Market Square because of the new political situation. They came to manifest their solidarity with the Constitutional Court and to support its independence. They demonstrated against political steps made by the party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice). Its government was established as a result of the Parliamentary Elections in October 2015. The PiS government together with President Andrzej Duda did not accept the three members of the Constitutional Court properly elected by the former Parliament and appointed their own candidates elected by the new Parliament in a very short time.

It was purely coincidental that as a photographer I took photos of the two manifestations, one in 1981 and the other in 2015. This is why the title of my speech is "THE IMAGES OF SOLIDARITY 1981/2015." You will have a chance to compare how Polish people manifested their solidarity with the important values in the early 80's of the 20th Century and 34 years later at the beginning of the 21st Century.

What is different and similar in those events so far apart in time? What faces can you see in the photo? How were the people dressed? What banners did they prepare for the two manifestations, etc.?

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THE INDEPENDENT TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY 1980/1981.

Let's go back in time to the early 80's in Poland. The August strikes in Gdansk at the shipyard named by the Soviet hero V. I. Lenin began changes in the whole post-WWII Europe. Polish workers, supported by some intellectuals, won a great success making communist leaders sign an agreement on August 31. The most important point of this document was the acceptance by the communist rulers of the Independent Trade Union SOLIDARITY. That fact had no precedent in the Soviet bloc where all organizations were under strict and direct control of the communist party.

In a few months' time, the number of the members of NSZZ SOLIDARNOŚĆ grew to almost 10 million people. According to communist propaganda, workers were the leading force in the society and therefore their position in Poland (a "real socialist" country) was quite strong at that time. In contrast, the situation of farmers (owners of small farms while in other communist countries the whole farming land belonged to the state) was different. Polish farmers did not take part in the August strikes in Gdansk and other Polish cities. Most of them were owners of small farms and therefore it was difficult to call them workers or typical trade union members. On the other hand, they were heavily depended on the state in terms of selling their products and buying means of production, e.g., tractors, fertilizers and farming machines. Remember that free market did not exist at that time. Everything was controlled by the communist state.

The Independent Trade Union SOLIDARITY was registered by the Court in Warsaw on November 10, 1980. In a short time, SOLIDARITY became not only a trade union but also primarily a grass-root movement of citizens struggling for independence from the Soviet Union and freedom and democracy, so there were still lots of things to change in the communist reality in Poland. An important goal for the Polish people at that time was to manifest their determination to get all those values.

THE DAY OF HISTORIC MANIFESTATION – MAY 3, 1981

This date had a special meaning in Poland during the communism time and it still has. During communism, it was obligatory to put out Polish white-red flag and a red flag on May 1 and to remove it no later than on May 2. Otherwise, you could risk a fine

by police. Why was it so? May 3 is the day commemorating the Polish Constitution (the first in Europe and second in the world, after the US Constitution) passed by the Polish Parliament in 1791. It is also St. Mary's the Queen of Poland Day, very important for the predominantly Catholic society in Poland. For these two reasons, communists did not allow any celebrations held on that day for many years. Considering the great importance of this holiday and such a great importance of that day, farmers decided to arrange their manifestation on May 3, 1981.

A HISTORIC MOMENT OF THE 1981 MANIFESTATION

What was the political situation in Poland those days? The workers won one battle in the struggle for freedom on August 31, 1980, getting for the first time in all communist countries a permit for Independent Trade Union SOLIDARITY. However, it was only the beginning of the battle. There was a growing pressure on the Independent Trade Union SOLIDARITY and Polish society from the communist party in Poland and from their patrons in Moscow. It was important not only for the farmers but for all the society to make the SOLIDARITY movement stronger. That was the reason why workers' SOLIDARITY supported farmers' activity. The future was unknown but for the first time after many years of communism, the society was strong enough to get permission for the manifestation organized on May 3.

SOLIDARITY MANIFESTATION ON MAY 3





My photo report shows the whole manifestation step by step, from the early hours to its end. The historic old city of Torun has two Market Squares called the Old Town Market Square and the New Town Market Square. The manifestation members gathered in the New Market in early morning hours. May 3, 1981 was a Sunday and therefore a holiday.

The weather changed several times during the day, which is quite common in Poland in May. It was sunny in the morning. In an hour, it changed into a stormy weather with hail and strong wind. Then the sun came out again. There were clouds and rain showers a few times during the manifestation, with the sunny spells in between. The weather was as charged as the atmosphere.

Take a look at the faces and clothes of the participants. You can easily recognize individuals from the countryside but you can also find people whose appearance suggested very different professions. I took a chance to speak with those people and I knew they were craftsmen, workers, library employers, high school teachers, university professors and others. They were dressed in the only clothes available

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in supermarkets at the time of communism: mass-produced, gray-colored outfits without any sign of fancy design.

Farmers arrived at the manifestation from the whole Province (region) of Torun, usually from villages situated 30–40 km away. They brought banners with the names of their villages to show their pride in being present.





People marched around the city center, along the historic line of the city walls to the Nicolas Copernicus monument. Then they moved to the widest place in the Old Market Square between the Gothic Town Hall, Baroque Jesuit Church and the Gothic church of St. Mary. That place was decorated with the most important patriotic and religious symbols of that time: a cross commemorating workers shot by soldiers and police during the Gdansk demonstration in 1970, a stylized Polish Eagle with the crown on its head – it was forbidden during communism to use pre-communism symbols of great and free Poland - a portrait of John Paul II, a painting of Our Lady of Czestochowa and some symbols of farmers' job such as ploughs. Thus the Old Market Square was prepared for an outdoor mass. From the early beginning of the manifestation, during the whole mass and until the end of it there was an honor guard of farmers in historic uniforms with scythes mounted vertically. It was the reference to history when such scythes were used as weapons during Polish uprisings for independence.

The mass was celebrated by fourteen priests. Michal Grabianka, a charismatic leader of farmers' movement gave a speech during the mass. The important focus of the mass and the whole manifestation were religious and patriotic songs sung by all people. The words of the songs were prepared by the organizers typewritten on thin sheets of paper. There were no Xerox copiers available in Poland at that time.





Despite the fact that Poland was under the communist rule, you cannot see any uniformed police officers in the photos. For sure, there were very many secret police officers among ordinary people but they did not broadcast their presence.

It is difficult to determine how many people took part in that manifestation. You can see lots of people in the photos. The Old Market Square was full of people as never before and after that at any democratic manifestation in Torun during communism. The whole event: gathering in the New Market Square, marching around the Old Town, the mass with important speeches of priests and farmers' leader took quite some time, something like four or even five hours. All people from Torun and the Torun Province participating in the manifestation were drenched with rain and pelted with hail. Farmers had to travel 30 or even 40 km to reach Torun and then get back home.

Not even one violent incident occurred during the whole manifestation.