



## THE IMAGES OF SOLIDARITY (PART 2)

TOMASZ SOBECKI

*WSB University in Torun Poland*

---

### ABSTRACT

The sociological and political situation in Poland since the end of 2015, especially around the Constitutional Court, inspired me to compare two solidarity manifestations which happened at the same place but in very different points of the history of Poland. The first one took place on May 3rd 1981 and the second one on December 19th 2015. The place is the Old Market Square in a historical city of Torun situated half way from Warsaw to Gdansk.

The manifestation in 1981 gathered people in solidarity with farm-ers who wanted to have similar Independent SOLIDARITY Trade Union organization as workers already had. It was the largest independent demonstration in the city during communism time 1945 – 1989

In December 2015 people of Torun gathered in the Old Market Square because of the new political situation after the Parliament Election on October that year. They came to manifest their solidarity with the Constitutional Court, to support its independence.

The photo report I made in 1981 is in black and white as colour photography was not available in Poland at that time. The 2015th photos are in colour and were taken with a modern, digital camera.

### ARTICLE INFO

Available online: 31 July 2017

Keywords:  
demonstration,  
solidarity,  
constitutional court,  
independence

---

## THE IMAGES OF SOLIDARITY 1981/2015

### 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.?

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.

**Let's move forward 34 years to 2015.**

## THE HISTORIC MOMENT OF THE 2015 DEMONSTRATION

After eight years of Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) governing Poland, another party, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice) won Parliamentary elections on October 25, 2015 and formed a new government. A few months before, on May 24, 2015, PiS member Andrzej Duda won the Presidential elections. As a result, due to the Parliamentary elections, one party has been in control of the political scene in Poland. The leader of the PiS party and the main ruler in Poland is Jaroslaw Kaczyński. From a formal point of view, he is only a Member of Parliament with very limited responsibility. His goal is to transform Poland into a new country where nationalism and Catholicism are the most important values.

One of his first decisions was to undermine the role of Constitutional Court to change the political system in Poland without changing the Constitution. This is why he wants to dominate the Constitutional Court by having "his" members appointed in sufficient quantity to force through acts voted by the Parliament dominated by him, to be confirmed by the President. To achieve this, President Andrzej Duda did not accept three Constitutional Court Members elected by the previous term of the Parliament and forced three new ones recommended by PiS.

Some Poles who, since 1989 enjoyed Poland being a democratic country, did not want to accept the situation. Within a very short time, with the use of social media, they set up a new organization: The Committee for Defense of Democracy (KOD).

The Committee decided to organize events in the whole country in solidarity with the Constitutional Court and especially to support its Head, Professor Rzepliński. One such demonstration took place in the Old Market Square of Torun on December 19, 2015.

## DECEMBER 19, 2015 - THE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY (KOD) DEMONSTRATION

It was midday on Saturday, December 19, 2015, in the Old Market Square of Torun. The weather was quite nice for that time of the year, not very cold and quite sunny. I went there primarily as a demonstrating member but I brought a light digital camera in my bag. It was the time before Christmas when all Poles make preparations for the most important holiday of the year. Anyway, going towards the Nicolaus Copernicus

monument, I could see quite a lot of people. There were young parents (30 – 40 years old) with kids and quite a lot of single people aged 55 – 65 who remembered the times of the SOLIDARITY movement. There were many students (Torun is a university town) and school students, but overall, young people were scarce.





All of a sudden, around the corner of the historic Town Hall, I noticed two policemen dressed in black with large German Shepherd dogs. People were carrying Polish and European Union flags. The atmosphere was more similar to a picnic than to a political gathering; however, you could see some serious faces as well.





The center of the event was the monument of Nicolaus Copernicus. The monument sits on a stone pedestal, so speakers climbed on it to be seen during their speeches. They had microphones and a loudspeaker. Banners floating above the crowd were not professionally made, just some homemade boards to comment on the actual Polish and local Torun problems. One of such problems is the largest Polish Catholic radio station broadcasting from Torun - Catholic only in name but actually a strong political enterprise. One of the banners read: "Apologize for Radio Mar-ya!" There were also people with text printed on A-4 size sheets of paper "I belong to a worse category." This referred to one of Mr. Kaczynski's political speeches in which he divided Polish people into better and worse categories. The mood of the demonstration was not somber all the

time. One of the activities of the event involved jumping and shouting: "Who is jumping is with us." The organizers made some preparations for the demonstration.

The European anthem is not well known in Poland, especially by ordinary people. For that reason, the organizers prepared pieces of paper with the lyrics and with help of music played on loudspeakers people managed to sing.

As I got official information from the Committee for the Defense of Democracy, more than a thousand people participated to demonstrate their solidarity with KOD's ideas. According to some estimates, 1,200 – 1,300 or even 1,500 people turned up.

There were no violent incidents during the whole event. The two policemen with their German Shepherd dogs did not have anything to do. When the demonstration ended about 01:30 p.m., people went for their Sunday walks and back to Christmas preparations.

#### AFTER THE DEMONSTRATIONS

In 1981, Polish farmers were successful as their Independent Farmers' Trade Union SOLIDARITY was registered a few days after the demonstration on May 12. They were satisfied to be able to legally join the SOLIDARITY movement.

A few months later, martial law was announced in Poland on December 13. We had to wait and organize strikes all around Poland to re-gain freedom in 1989. More than 150 people were killed during that time, especially in the "Wujek" coal mine in the Silesian region. Thousands were interned and imprisoned.

In 2015 and 2016, there were some other demonstrations all over Poland in solidarity with the Constitutional Court, its head Professor Rzepliński and Lech Wałęsa - the historic leader of SOLIDARITY. The largest one was in Warsaw on May 7 under the motto: "We are and will always be in Europe." People from many cities came to Warsaw to demonstrate against the PiS government. According to the police, there were 45,000 participants while the Warsaw City Hall counted 120,000 - 150,000 people. The Polish Newsweek magazine announced that 240,000 people joined the demonstration.

A short time later, on June 23, people in the UK voted to leave the European Union.

Now, in September 2016, we still have the constitutional crisis in Poland. While writing this text, I know that the European Parliament will shortly deliver a resolution concerning the situation in Poland. What will happen in the future? Who knows?

#### 1981 and 2016 DIFFERENCES

The political system after WWII in Poland was based on the 1943 Teheran Agreements signed by the Allies and resulted in our country being invaded by the Soviet Army in 1944. It took us 45 years to overthrow the communist regime and gain freedom. Nowadays we are building Poland ourselves with the important intellectual and financial support of the European Union. Nobody but Poles is responsible for our country.

## SOLIDARITY SYMBOL IN GDANSK

If you take a look at the two photos of the Three Crosses Monument in Gdansk, you will see, in a symbolic way, the situation in Poland in 1981 and now. The first photo shows the monument as it was built by the SOLIDARITY Independent Trade Union in 1980 and the other is an artistic allegory of the current situation 2015 – 2017 created by the author.



References

- Sagarin, B. J., & Lawler-Sagarin, K. A. (2005). Critically evaluating competing theories: An exercise based on the Kitty Genovese murder. *Teaching of Psychology*, 32(3), 167-169. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15328023top3203\\_8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15328023top3203_8)
- Reitzes, D. C., & Mutran, E. J. (2004). The transition to retirement: Stages and factors that influence retirement adjustment. *International Journal of Aging and Human*