STUDIA HISTORICA GEDANENSIA

VOL. XIII (2022)

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The Great Comeback of the Solidarity Idea in 1980. Polish Social Movement and Late Modernity

Keywords:
Solidarity, social movements, history of ideas, socialism, capitalism, democracy, modernity, crisis

Abstract:
The idea of solidarity returned to post-war intellectual discourse thanks to the social and trade union movement Solidarity (Solidarność), which was born in Poland in 1980. Its originality lies primarily in the renewal of the ideal of freedom and democracy at the end of the 20th century. To understand the uniqueness of that event, I interpret the turn of the 1970s and 1980s as a new phase in the development of modernity, which is moving into late modernity. It consists of economic fundamentalism with a neo-liberal market economy (Thatcher, Reagan, Deng Xiaoping), anti-leftist politics, as well as the return of religion in political life (Ayatollah Khomeini, John Paul II). Solidarity was born as a counterpoint to the first two phenomena, drawing inspiration from leftist traditions and Christian ethics. I then reconstruct the meaning of the idea of solidarity as it took shape in 1980–1981, analysing the notion of emancipatory, agonistic and political solidarity. Interpreting Lech Wałęsa's Nobel Prize speech and excerpts from the most important programmatic document of the Solidarity movement, the *Self-governing Republic*, I reconstruct the notion of political solidarity. Concepts of freedom, equality, dignity, truth and non-violence allow to reconstruct the core content of the political notion of solidarity. Thus the Solidarity trade union movement is interpreted as the renewal of the Enlightenment promise of freedom – the universal freedom of every citizen.

The year 1980 brought a renewal of democratic ethos and marked the moment of a great return of the solidarity idea in social theory and political discourse. This was due to the Solidarity movement (*Solidarność*), which was born 1980 in Gdańsk, Poland. This is the main thesis of this article, which aims to show the importance

of the Solidarity movement in renewing modern promise of democracy. The originality of this movement becomes more apparent when we look at how profoundly the movement differed from the trends of the era and how deeply it challenged the ideological framework of its time. In the article I combine research and conceptual method, which has a form of a theoretical analysis with use of crucial historical documents from the time of the birth of Solidarity movement 1980–1981.

Solidarity mobilised almost half of adult society – ten million citizens. This social movement and at the same time trade union – an independent, self-governing organisation – became not only the largest mobilisation in Central and Eastern Europe creating a synthesis of the entire post-war history of revolt in the region, but also the largest mobilisation in the second half of the 20th century worldwide. It contributed to the process of the fall of communism and the end of the Cold War confrontation. Its importance, however, has either been surprisingly forgotten in recent decades or has been linked to the peaceful revolutions of 1989 and the realisation of liberal democracy unfolding in neoliberal capitalism.

I want to show a different picture of the Solidarity movement, which renewed the modern ideals of freedom and democracy and combined them with the socialist utopia of radical self-governing. The analysis will take place in two stages: First, I will reconstruct the ideological and political situation of the world around 1980 in order to better understand the unique role played by the Solidarity movement at the turning point of the modern era around 1980. Second, I will interpret the return of the idea of solidarity in 1980, which was expressed through the restoration of the importance of the modern democratic ideals. Third, the relatively unclear solidarity idea will be reconstructed in terms of emancipatory, agonistic and political notion of solidarity. In the last step the political notion of solidarity will be analysed in the context of crucial ideals presented in the core programmatic document of the movement, which are freedom, equality, dignity, truth and non-violence. This step will allow for a better understanding of the originality of the movement, which – by fitting into the dynamics of the dramatic changes – itself became a counterpoint to the ideological tendencies of the 80s – especially with deepening individualisation and neoliberalism emerging at that time. In my analysis, I focus on the Enlightenment tradition of understanding the solidarity idea and limit my interpretation to this tradition, recognising that it is this meaning, rather than a religious interpretation of solidarity drawn from the Christian tradition, that dominates the key document of this social movement.

The birth of Solidarity is one of the exceptional moments in the history of freedom in Europe and the West – renewing the Enlightenment promise of freedom. Like all such moments, it was quickly forgotten, becoming the "lost treasure of the revolution," to use a metaphor proposed by the political philosopher Hannah Arendt.

1980 as a socio-political turning point

The year 1989 and the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe has been quite widely recognised as the turning point of the contemporary world. The last twenty years have produced a number of in-depth historical analyses of the late 1970s, questioning the significance of the fall of communism in 1989 as the turning point from which our contemporarily would begin. This term is used to describe the processes of transition of modernity into the next phase, which many sociologists called late modernity.[1] Or to put it another way: what events and processes are the consequences of our world today? What moments in the development of modernity opened up the horizon in which we still live today?

The Swiss historian Philipp Sarasin finds the answer to the question in 1977 as a key moment in the formation of the contemporary time, "an image of profound shifts, changes and ruptures in the structure of the present day."[2] It is, in his view, a time of cultural uncertainty, reflected in new styles in pop music (punk rock, disco and hip hop), explosive events associated with the leftist terror of Red Army Fraction in Europe, the feminist turn, the cult of the individual and the crystallisation of identity politics, the popularisation of the personal computer by Steve Jobs (the Apple II model), or the birth of the postmodern aesthetics (the opening of the Pompidou Centre in Paris).

However, the thesis that 1979 was the key year for the birth of contemporary world has gained far more supporters. The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk in his original research on rage as a key emotion in modern politics calls that year the most important for the 20th century from today's point of view.[3] The British historian Niall Ferguson, on the other hand, has defined 1979 as a "real historical turning point," contrasting it with the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 as a colourful consequence of processes initiated a decade earlier[4]. Other supporters of the 1979 theory include the American journalist Christian Caryl, who sees it as the birth of the 21st century, and the German historian Frank Bösch, who calls it the "birth of the today's world."[5]

All the above-mentioned scholars focus particularly on a few key figures of the time who have left a particular mark on the present. The list opens with John Paul II, whose pontificate began in 1978, and Deng Xiaoping, who came

[1] *Cf.* Andreas Reckwitz, *End of Illusions: Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity*, transl. by Valentine A. Pakis (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021), 7–13.

[2] Philipp Sarasin, *1977: Eine kurze Geschichte der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2021), 12.

[3] Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time. A Psychopolitical Investigation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 216–217.

[4] Niall Ferguson, "The Year the World Really Changed," *Newsweek*, 16 I 2009, https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/year-world-really-changed, accessed on 20 X 2022.

[5] Christian Caryl, *Strange Rebels. 1979 and the Birth of the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2013); Frank Bösch, *Zeitenwende 1979: Als die Welt von heute begann* (München: C.H. Beck, 2019).

to power in China at the same time. At the beginning of 1979, as a result of the revolution, Ruhollah Khomeini takes power in Iran, and in May the United Kingdom elects a new Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who will hold office for the rest of the decade. Her political companion will be US President Ronald Reagan, elected at the end of 1980. These figures are more than charismatic politicians who have left their mark on history. I call them "political virtuosos" because their personal strength was closely linked to the launching of great political and spiritual projects that still have a profound impact on contemporary life.[6] By the strength of their personalities, these figures opened up the horizon of a new reality, thus marking a definitive end to the old order of a well-developed and stable modernity. What is this new reality?

Firstly, it is the time of economic fundamentalism – the ideology of neoliberal capitalism that follows the deep crisis of the social democratic order established after the Second World War. Secondly, these biographically so very different figures have one important feature in common – they each in their own unique way become part of a radically anti-leftist transformation. Thatcher, Reagan, and John Paul II do so by fighting Soviet communist authoritarianism and its imperialist politics. The first two are challenging the entire Western left-wing order built up over more than three decades, while Khomeini is fighting social democratic groups in Iran. Even – seemingly only surprisingly – Deng, opposing the radical wings of the Communist Party, reforms the economy to give it the shape of state--controlled capitalism. Third it is a time of the great return of religion, popularised by the organisation of mass meetings during the international pilgrimages of the Catholic Pope and, above all, by the radicalisation of the Islamic world, exemplified by the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and by the conflict in Afghanistan, which broke out in 1979 and contributed to the birth of Islamic fundamentalism. Without these global shifts, it is difficult to understand the significance of the opening decade of the 1980s and to see the surprisingly original role played by the social movement Solidarity.

The Polish Solidarity movement was born in a phase of modernity crisis, and its avant-garde character was the reason for the exceptional enthusiasm with which it was received at the time. It is, however, astonishing that in the works of eminent historians of the last decades, who are not lacking in competence regarding the history of Central and Eastern Europe, the role and significance of Solidarity is reduced to an element in the chain of events which were to lead to the end of communism.[7] The situation is even worse in the field of history of ideas, where

[6] *Cf.* Basil Kerski, Jacek Kołtan, "Epoch Making Changes. Reflections Around the Revolutionary Years 1980/1989," in: *Solidarity, Democracy, Europe*, eds. Basil Kerski, Jacek Kołtan (Gdańsk: European Solidarity Centre, 2021), 16–19.

[7] *Cf.* Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Vintage Books, 2010); Konrad H. Jarausch, *Out of Ashes. A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton

the Solidarity movement is marginalised or passed over in silence.[8] It seems the reason for it is that modernity then entered a phase of development whose direction was determined by the logic of the free market economy and definitely not by the utopia of radical democracy. As Alain Touraine, co-author of the most comprehensive empirical study on Solidarity[9] and important researcher on social movements, notes: "Solidarity of 1980–1981 was the most beautiful and contentious act of freedom […] not only in the Soviet bloc: also, on the scale of the entire voluntarist and political world that emerged from the Second World War. But […] without a clear influence to what happened in 1989. It marked the end of the Leninist communism era, but did not open the next one."[10]

The intellectual debate in social theory, which draws inspiration from the traditions of sociology, political and social philosophy as well as political science, is much better in this respect.[11] For many scholars in this field of research, Solidarity forced them to redefine ways of doing research and interested them in new social phenomena.[12] Solidarity became a counterpoint to the development of late modernity – it largely burst the horizons set by the political virtuosos of the time. The exception to this is the strong cross-inspiration of Pope John Paul II and the Solidarity movement with both the idea of human rights and the ethics of work connected to the solidarity idea itself.[13]

University Press, 2015); David S. Mason, *A Concise History of Modern Europe. Liberty, Equality, Solidarity* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

8 Steinar Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). See also: *Solidarity*, ed. Kurt Bayertz (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1999); *Solidarity: Theory and Practice*, eds. Arto Laitinen, Anne Birgitta Pessi (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

9 *Cf.* Alain Touraine, François Dubet, Michel Wieviorka, Jan Strzelecki, *Solidarity. The Analysis of a Social Movement: Poland 1980–1981* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

10 Alain Touraine, "Co się stało w polskim tunelu" [What Happened in the Polish Tunnel], interview by Marek Rapacki, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 183, 7–8 I 1999: 8.

11 *Cf.* Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, *On Cultural Freedom: An Exploration of Public Life in Poland and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Stanislaw Starski [Sławomir Magala], *Class Struggle in Classless Poland* (Boston: South End Press, 1982); Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983); Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Poland's Self-Limiting Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland science 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, *Beyond Glasnost: The Post-Totalitarian Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Lawrence Goodwyn, *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Michael D. Kennedy, *Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland: A Critical Sociology of a Soviet-Type Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Jan Kubik, *Power of Symbols Against Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

12 A paradigmatic example here is cultural sociology of Jeffrey C. Alexander presented in *The Civil Sphere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3–9.

13 See especially the encyclical of John Paul II *Through Work* [*Laborem exercens*] (The Holy See, 1981), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jpii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html, accessed on 10 X 2021. An important connection between Christian ethics

After enthusiastic analyses of the Solidarity movement as a radical revolution in the 1980s and 1990s, its significance was surprisingly quickly forgotten. It became a "lost treasure,"[14] as Hannah Arendt calls it, showing that the true meaning of revolutionary events with their explosive character turns out to be increasingly unclear in times of stability and peace. Let us add that they are also unclear for the revolutionaries themselves, who begin to long for the clarity of perspective and sense of action experienced in revolutionary times. It is worth to reconstruct the most important components of the solidarity idea which was the core of the revolution 1980/1981.

Great comeback of the solidarity idea

The idea of solidarity is a modern idea – it was born only in the mid-19th century with the formation of early modern society. By modernity I mean here four fundamental and parallel processes that have radically changed the character of social life since the 19th century. I am thus referring to the characteristics of this epoch presented in contemporary social theory.[15] It was thus a time of (1) *domestication* – the working masses known as the productive forces concentrated in factories and instrumentally processing the natural riches of the earth, a time of profound (2) *rationalisation* (linked by Max Weber to the phenomenon of the so-called "disenchantment of the world"), by means of which knowledge and power were rationally legitimised, (3) *differentiation* – occupational specialisation, which demanded a new division of labour, the main theme of Durkheim's reflections on modernity and solidarity idea itself, and (4) *individualisation*, in which the individuals, emancipated from religious tradition and previous social orders, became the most important point of reference.

When solidarity appeared in intellectual and political descriptions of the world, it replaced the already too-discredited fraternity ideal (brotherhood) of the time of the French Revolution with its image of the human family and fraternal closeness between people. Solidarity was to express something else – the liberty and equality

and socialist ethos of work proposed Józef Tischner, philosopher and chaplain of Solidarity movement in his essay *The Spirit of Solidarity*, transl. by Marek B. Zaleski, Benjamin Fiore (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984). An analysis of the pope's social teaching in context of Solidarity was presented by Zbigniew Stawrowski in his: *Solidarność znaczy więź* (Kraków: Instytut Myśli Józefa Tischnera, 2010), 120–152.

[14] *Cf.* the use of the metaphor "treasure of the revolution" in a popular essay of Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, introduction Jerome Kohn (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). See also Elżbieta Matynia, "Lost Treasure of Solidarity," *Social Research* 68/4 (2001): 917–936.

[15] See the characteristics of modernity in: Andreas Reckwitz, Hartmut Rosa, *Spätmoderne in der Krise. Was leistet die Gesellschaftstheorie?* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2021).

of different *citizens as strangers* and not naively as *brothers*.[16] In other words, solidarity relations were a response to the modern process of deepening the division of labour and its specialisation, as well as to pluralised social models of life.

The idea of solidarity thus became the foundation of the modern democratic state of law, the concept of the welfare state, humanist and peaceful visions of the world, but also the key to the philosophy of the workers" struggle at the turn of the 20th century.[17] As an indispensable element of the welfare state in its obviousness, it began to lose its focus from the 1950s, disappearing from public and intellectual debates. Where it appeared most often, namely in trade union debates, it became an overused slogan. Finally, at the beginning of the 1970s, it gave way to the processes of modern individualisation and neoliberal economics displacing it, the rules of which quickly permeated social relations.

The year 1980 marked the spectacular return of the solidarity idea, which had been fading into oblivion. Its unusual character lay precisely in the contrast between the project of solidarity formulated by workers in Poland and the direction of modernisation in the West. This was a time when Western societies were moving into late modernity – a post-industrial modernity oriented towards services rather than the work of workers in factories.[18] Solidarity evoked the importance of bonds between people working in large factories, but at the same time it went far beyond them. In a world where the social democratic order was in retreat, workers living under the conditions of an authoritarian state evoked socialist ideals of emancipatory struggle, cooperation, the common good and social justice.[19] They did so against the dominant authoritarianism of the Soviet Union, which after World War II had turned Central and Eastern Europe into a network of dependent satellite states, and the ideals of socialism into a façade behind which hid violence that degraded the dignity of human life. The workers" protest also came as a surprise to the Western left, which still pinned its hopes on so-called "real communism" in Eastern Europe.[20] It showed clearly enough the authoritarian, anti-democratic character of Soviet ideology, which was confirmed by the intervention of the military junta imposing martial law in Poland in December 1981, only sixteen months after the birth of the Solidarity movement. Let us look at the dominant meanings of the idea of solidarity from the time of the birth of the Polish Solidarity movement.

[16] *Cf.* Hauke Brunkhorst, *Solidarity: From Civic Friendship to a Global Legal Community*, transl. by Jeffrey Flynn (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 1–8.

[17] Kurt Bayertz, "Four Uses of 'Solidarity'," in: *Solidarity*, ed. Kurt Bayertz (Dordrecht–Boston–London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 16–21; Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe*, 93–164.

[18] *Cf.* Richard Sennett*, Together. The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2012).

[19] *Cf.* Tischner, *The Spirit of Solidarity*.

[20] See Michel Wieviorka, *Dziewięć wykładów z socjologii* (Kraków: Nomos, 2011), 4.

Solidarity as emancipation, agon and politics

The most elementary meanings of the 1980 idea of solidarity are linked, firstly, to *emancipatory solidarity* – liberation from social and political constraints and hardships that lead to human suffering. The second meaning is related to the notion of *agonistic solidarity* – a struggle whose participants oppose injustice by taking the side of those in need. The aim of such agonistic solidarity, which becomes an imperative to support all those under oppression, is to restore disrupted justice. It is not difficult to see that these two meanings of the idea under analysis are closely linked to the revival of the tradition of social emancipation through workers" and trade union struggles, which went back to its origins in the 19th century. These meanings are perfectly illustrated by an excerpt from the speech of Lech Wałęsa – an electrician from a shipyard, strike leader and the first chairman of the Solidarity trade union. In a speech on the occasion of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 he referred to his own worker roots: "I belong to the generation of workers who, born in the villages and hamlets of rural Poland, had the opportunity to acquire education and find employment in industry, becoming in the course conscious of their rights and importance in society. Those were the years of awakening aspirations of workers and peasants, but also years of many wrongs, degradations and lost illusions."[21]

Although the notion of equality is not mentioned directly in this speech, it is implicit, accompanying many of the formulations of it. It could even be argued that it is focused on the equality of the opportunities that the world provides and the aspirations that people formulate. At the same time, however, it recalls not only the desire for the emancipation of a social group, but the closely related second essential meaning of the idea of solidarity from the time of its re-birth in 1980. This is the *renewal of the Enlightenment promise of freedom* – the universal freedom of every citizen. This step brings us to the third meaning of the solidarity idea, namely *political solidarity*. It is characteristic that not only the records of the debates, speeches or essays of that time, but also the official documents of the Solidarity trade union organisation are filled with political passion. In order to express the discovered meanings of freedom, they break with the formal, institutionalised language of politics, and become freedom manifestos. This uniqueness of language is based on the experience of everyday life and the discovery of deep political meaning in it. It is no accident, therefore, that many statements and documents from 1980–1981 resemble in their construction phrases from the United States Declaration of Independence of 1776, or documents from the period of the French Revolution of 1789, in which questions of human nature and the place of the human being in the world political order were discussed. These Enlightenment ideas,

[21] Lech Wałęsa, "Nobel Lecture," *The Nobel Prize* (1983), https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1983/walesa/lecture, accessed on 20 X 2022.

rooted in the cultural imaginaries of Europe, demanded conscious and completely unconscious recall and reformulation, especially under conditions of authoritarian cruelty in the second half of the 20th century. This is bluntly shown in the opening text of the crucial official document in the Solidarity revolution, titled *Self--governing Republic* (1981):

> At the beginning of our Union there were simply the needs of the ordinary people of our country, their suffering and disappointments, hopes and desires. It is the product of a revolt by Polish society after more than three decades of political discrimination, economic exploitation and violation of human and civil rights. It was a protest against the existing form of power. For none of us was it just a question of material conditions – although we did live badly, working hard, often for no purpose. History has taught us that there can be no bread without freedom. We also wanted justice, democracy, truth, rule of law, human dignity, freedom of opinion, a reconstructed republic; not just bread, butter and sausage.[22]

From the very beginning, the protest language was the language of everyday experience and it was in this language that political ideas and hopes about the world were expressed. French philosopher Michel Foucault, who was involved in supporting Solidarity, pointed out that human existence was becoming politicised, i.e., it was becoming politically rooted, and that people were experiencing politics in an extremely lively and enthusiastic way, bordering on hilarity. He also noted that the people involved in the social movement were not only fighting for rights, but that they were fighting by exercising them, ascribing rights to themselves, living them in their everyday lives, challenging in that way the authoritarian legal order. "The form of the movement and its purpose balance each other," he concluded.[23]

Political solidarity and its semantic field

The solidarity idea thus developed in close connection with the culture of emancipation and the ideals of freedom and equality. Hauke Brunkhorst, a German social theorist analysing the development of the solidarity idea, sees in this social movement a moment of unification of two phenomena that had long been developing too separately in the European tradition – social emancipation and political equality.[24] The notion of political solidarity is therefore the most semantically

[22] I use corrected and revised version of the translation published as "The Programme of Solidarnosc," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 5/1–2 (1982): 3, https://resistantstrain.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/labour-focus-on-eastern-europe-vol5-no1-2-spring-1982.pdf, accessed on 20 X 2022.

[23] Michel Foucault, "L'expérience morale et sociale des Polonais ne peut plus être effacée," interview by G. Anquetil, *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, no. 2857, 14–20 X 1982: 8–9, *Gazeta Gdańsk*, http://1libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault181.html, accessed on 20 X 2022.

[24] Brunkhorst, *Solidarity: From Civic Friendship to a Global Legal Community*, 3.

capacious characterisation of the idea of solidarity developed in 1980–1981. It shows how deeply ambiguous a term solidarity is and that the conceptual reconstruction of this idea must be based on the reconstruction of the meanings that appear in its semantic field. Only in this way can the semantic grid of the solidarity idea be more precisely delineated. As it was unveiled in the early 1980s, it includes a whole catalogue of concepts from the language of democracy that played a key role for the Solidarity movement.

Certainly, the notion of *freedom* – admittedly also understood as freedom of individual opportunity, but always inscribed in political freedoms (freedom of speech, free association in trade unions), which has already been cited many times – is key. One of the central theses demonstrates this emphatically by setting the movement's challenges in the context of democratic politics: "We consider that pluralism, the democratisation of the state and the possibility of fully exercising constitutional freedoms provide the guarantee that the workers" efforts and sacrifices will not be wasted once again" (thesis 19.1).

Like freedom, the concept of *equality* was also an expression not only of equality of opportunity in social and professional life (theses 8, 18 and 20), but also of political equality before the law, explicitly elaborated in theses 26 and especially thesis 23: "The [political] system should guarantee the main civil liberties and respect the principles of equality before the law for all citizens and institutions of public life." Thus, political solidarity was inscribed in the triad together with freedom/liberty and equality. Being an expression of respect for the individual freedom and equality of each citizen, solidarity became their guarantor. Without a common solidarity respect for freedom and equality, without a common solid implementation of both, a democratic order is simply not possible.

Other notions that appeared most frequently in the semantic field of the idea of solidarity and which movement's activists considered crucial was the notion of the *dignity* of human life, as well as the notion of *truth*. Both of these concepts appear in surprising contexts of meaning in the *Self-governing Republic* document. The union activists presented a complex vision of society, in which they repeatedly stated that improving the material standard of living was only one of many factors that made up the meaning of dignity: "The aim of economic and social reforms is designed not only to improve living conditions but also to develop culture and education of society. We want not only to eat, but also to live in a dignified and enlightened way" (thesis 28.2).

In a similarly complex context, there is the problem of truth, which was threatened not only by the institution of censorship limiting freedom of speech in everyday life, but also by a culture of authoritarian propaganda. Thesis 31 was a postulate stating emphatically that the Solidarity union "will fight against lies in every field of life, for our society wishes and has the right to live in truth." It is apparent that this theme played an important role for the emerging

political culture, as the authors of the document made the shape of the language of public life a key theme, stating: "The most dangerous tool of falsehood is the language of propaganda, which debases our everyday way we express our thoughts and feelings. The union will struggle for the purity of our language as a means of greater understanding among citizens" (thesis 31.2). This development of the thesis shows emphatically that the specificity of the solidarity idea includes not only an intellectual construct, but emotional intensity, making solidarity a deeply psychopolitical phenomenon.

Finally, the last of the concepts chosen here as central to the meaning of solidarity is the concept of *non-violence*. Most likely due to its obviousness during the development of the Solidarity movement, the *Self-governing Republic* document does not mention it at all. However, the 1983 Nobel speech of the movement's leader, Lech Wałęsa, places this concept as central to understanding the ethos of the Solidarity. Wałęsa mentions the tragic experience of the bloody protest waves against the authoritarian regime of December 1970 in the Polish Pomerania region: "The memory of my fellow workers who then lost their lives, the bitter memory of violence and despair has become for me a lesson never to be forgotten." And he develops this thought further: "When I recall my own path of life I cannot but speak of the violence, hatred and lies. A lesson drawn from such experiences, however, was that we can effectively oppose violence only if we ourselves do not resort to it." The result of this lesson, deepened by opposition circles in the late 1970s, is the development of the idea of non-violence, which becomes unique in the history of modern revolutions.

Revolution, as Hannah Arendt points out in her analyses of the modern American and French revolutions of the 18th century, makes freedom the goal.[25] The pursuit of the goal, however, is always accompanied by violence as an indispensable element of sudden and radical actions aimed at destroying the old order and establishing a new one. The constitutive moment for the birth of the Solidarity movement was the renunciation of violence and the launching in its place a culture of discussion and persuasion. Thus, Solidarity embodied the ideal of modern democracy by defining the revolutionary process as a *self-limiting revolution* and making the limitation of violence the philosophical core. "We shall not yield to violence," Wałęsa states emphatically in his speech and closes this thought with similar precision and sharpness: "Poland will prove to the world that even the most complex situations can be solved by a dialogue and not by force. […] We are ready for the dialogue. We are also prepared, at any time to put our reasons and demands to the judgement of the people." There could hardly be a clearer expression of a democratic culture coming out of the Enlightenment tradition of rationality that makes solidarity its core.

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[25] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

Between capitalism and socialism. Conclusions

The excerpts from the documents analysed above show clearly how extremely different their language is from the language of individualisation crystallised at the beginning of the decade of the 1980s, which had its roots in the cultural processes of the previous decades, but also in the then dominant neoliberal world of individual success, the key role of private property, and free market development processes initiated by Ronald Reagan called "Reaganomics" – economic deregulation, limitation of state intervention and the so-called culture of greed connected with capital accumulation.[26] In this aspect, Solidarity evoked in 1980 the Enlightenment promise of universal freedom and it did it against the then emerging tendencies of developing economic fundamentalism based on competition, anti-leftist politics and violence associated with religious conflicts. It did so, however, in the language of a modernity radically different to the one to which we have all too easily become accustomed.

Instead of an *identity politics* based on the primacy of individualism, this social movement proposed in 1980 a *solidarity politics*. It was based on a socially-oriented notion of freedom and equality, underlining the role of individual dignity that was not limited to the material conditions but also educational and socio-cultural opportunities. Ideals of living in truth and developing non-violent strategies under dramatic circumstances of violent authoritarianism was a unique philosophical project to liberate from an oppressive regime and to formulate a project of ideal society that guarantees justice to the broader scope of citizens and deepening mutual trust and cooperation.[27] It unveiled the power of workers as actors of social change and revealed the cultural significance of factories as places where "production of solidarity" takes place, as sociologist Zygmunt Bauman put it when analysing modern transformations of forms of being together.[28]

In place of the *neoliberal dogma* hidden under the famous slogan of Margaret Thatcher defeating the social democratic order called "There Is No Alternative," a culture of debating together the possible and desirable shape of the political and social future developed. It was this culture that created the *socialist utopia* of the self-governing republic. It relied on the idea of social enterprises providing work that would legitimise human existence, minimise workers" alienation and, in place of the capitalist principle of *competition*, offered *cooperation* with and for others.[29] Highlighting the ideal of "living in truth" formulated by the Czechoslovak dissident Václav Havel in his famous essay *Power of the Powerless* (1977), Solidarity

[26] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[27] *Cf.* Michael Sandel, "The Ethics of Solidarity," in: *Solidarity, Democracy, Europe*, 39–55.

[28] Zygmunt Bauman, "Solidarity: A Word in Search of Flesh," in: *Solidarity, Democracy, Europe*, 60–62.

[29] *Cf.* Tischner, *The Spirit of Solidarity.* See also critical perspective dealing with limits of Solidarity' socialist utopia in: Charles Taylor, "Several Reflections on the Theme of Solidarity," *The Tischner Institute Journal of Philosophy* 1 (2007): 68–77.

emphasised the key role of authentic existence with its intrinsic need to authenticate personal decisions and take responsibility for their social and political consequences.[30]

As part of the non-violence tradition, Solidarity challenged the western left's acquiescence to the use of violence as an element of political life. At the same time, it showed how deeply the whole post-war history of freedom in Central and Eastern Europe can be exposed by the history of violence. The tradition of non-violence was a lesson learned from the bloody protests, the most famous of which were the October 1956 Revolution in Hungary and the Prague Spring of 1968. In case of the Solidarity movement, we can see a synthesis of the entire language of revolt from Central and Eastern Europe. This synthesis was developed with the intention to create forms of non-violent struggle that minimised the victims of protests. The Solidarity movement thus left its mark on the repertoire of forms used by modern social mobilisations today, often adopting elements of its repertoire of means. Emancipatory, agonistic and political meanings of the solidarity idea crystallised during the accelerated political processes in the beginning of 1980s despite the different stage of the modernity development as an inspiring point of reference.

At a time of profound crisis of Western democracy, which has entered a phase of late-modern exhaustion – with the destabilisation of political institutions, the loss of their meaning, the sense of the absence of new political forms corresponding to the challenges of the future – one can rediscover Solidarity as a lost treasure of revolution. It evokes the power behind the desire for freedom, especially among those whose freedom was taken away. It also makes us aware of how fragile a matter of democracy is, how short-lived and unobvious a phenomenon it is, and how quickly it can disappear, replaced by systems of violence and authoritarian domination. Here too Solidarity reveals the forgotten brilliance of the treasure of revolution. Today we are once again faced with a dramatic opportunity to understand these meanings anew and to realise them as living again. The history of the Solidarity movement shows clearly how high the stakes are in this struggle today.

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30 *Cf.* Timothy Snyder's "Introduction" that deals with the notion of truth, in Václav Havel, *Power of the Powerless* (London: Vintage, 2018), 9–21.