

INTRODUCTION. SOLIDARITY BEYOND EXCLUSION

guest editor **Ludger Hagedorn**

Solidarity is not an easy concept to deal with. It is widely used in intellectual debates and everyday discussions of political issues, but it appears to have manifold meanings, carrying a number of divergent claims and sedimented traditions. Historically, the concept hovers somewhere between its Roman origins, its Christian adaptation, and its heyday in the leftist movements of political and social emancipation. Although the proclamation of solidarity throughout the 19th and 20th centuries became inseparably linked with the international workers' movement and socialist ideals, it is significant that the very same word obtained almost emblematic meaning as an anti-communist slogan in the Polish *Solidarność* movement of the 1980s.

THE FRENCH SOCIOLOGIST Émile Durkheim famously differentiated between two kinds of solidarity: a solidarity based on kinship and similarity, which he called *mechanical* (to be found primarily in less developed, rural societies with a high degree of homogeneity), and the more refined concept of an *organic* solidarity, based on mutual interdependence and the insight that somebody else's work is constitutive for one's own well-being (characteristic of more developed societies practicing division of labor).¹ Yet the decisive question is whether solidarity should not be described altogether differently, namely as an ethical commitment that precisely goes *beyond* the confines of kinship and economy. Every "mechanical" or "organic" understanding of solidarity would then be deficient, because it omits the most characteristic trait of solidarity as an act of transcending. If solidarity is meant to designate a moral attitude, it will necessarily have to go beyond the confines of its naturalized reduction to the mechanical or organic bonds of similarity, kinship, and economic interdependence.²

In Roman law the *obligatio in solidum*

denoted a common liability of a group of people: Each person was individually responsible for the liability of the group; i.e. everybody was liable *in solidum* (= for the whole). This understanding of solidarity as a juridical obligation can still be felt today in many usages of the word. A new tax levied in Germany after reunification, aimed at restructuring the former East Germany, was called Solidaritätszulage (solidarity surtax).³ People are forced to pay, but it leaves no space for free individual commitment. The act of solidarity, in this case, is proclaimed and demanded by state law, degrading the word "solidarity" to a euphemism for enforced taxation. By contrast, an example of solidarity as an act of free support and sympathy may be seen in the case of the Swedish miners' strike in Norrbotten in 1969, when several artists donated their works in support of the strike fund.⁴ It was a gift in the original sense, given to the striking miners as a means of support, whereby the symbolic meaning of this gesture was probably more important than its monetary value. Our colloquial notion of solidarity still tends to oscillate between these two extremes: between a juridical obligation and a free gesture of moral commitment and support for somebody or for the "good cause" – the meanings are rarely found in their purest form, uninfluenced by each other, but it is undoubtedly the

second usage (the free commitment) that we would call an act of solidarity in the primary sense.

IT IS ALSO a difficult task to determine philosophically what comprises the core or the essence of solidarity. Leonard Neuger's reflections (published in this supplement) skillfully discern two divergent types of solidarity: *Solidarity against* is exclusive; it demarcates the in-group – "we" as opposed to "them" or "the others". "Solidarity against" creates identity and stability (solidity), yet it also presupposes the solid demarcation lines of who is "in" and who is "out". In this sense, it is a re-affirmative and self-affirmative action, corroborating the established order. *Solidarity for*, in contrast, is a risky and dangerous undertaking; it cannot build on any pre-established ground. It operates on a "groundless ground", trying to be open for that which is different and goes beyond the current order. It is, in very concrete terms, an openness towards those who are neglected, deprived or marginalized. Showing this kind of solidarity makes the individual vulnerable and dependent on others. One becomes dependent on trust and mutual responsibility. Yet as Neuger says, it also entails something "explosive"; it is a spark that can easily ignite the whole building.

Neuger's account of the historical de-

Loss of grounds as common ground

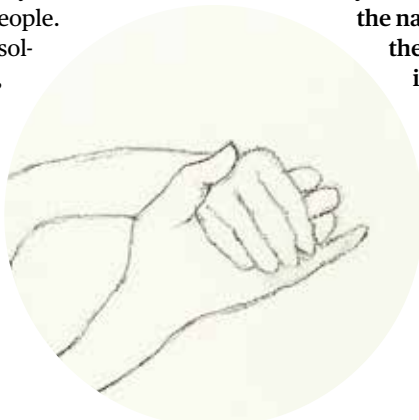
Between 2011 and 2014, a group of five researchers developed an investigation about "Loss of grounds as common ground – an interdisciplinary investigation of the common ground beyond liberal and communitarian claims".

The researchers involved: Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback (research leader), Irina Sandomirskaja, Ludger Hagedorn, Tora Lane and the doctoral student Gustav Strandberg.

Several activities took place, mainly at Södertörn University, but also at the University of Strasbourg and in Vienna at the IWM. Conferences and seminars as well as a lecture series were organized in the course of the project. Three of the project researchers received prestigious awards. Numerous books were published in the project. The researchers wrote a large number of articles and the doctoral student Gustav Strandberg is about to finish his doctoral thesis.

velopment of the *Polish trade union Solidarity* is an outstanding example of this: Starting from very inconspicuous and minor events, it grew into a solid movement of 10 million people. It is not always clear when and how and why the initial ignition takes place: “One begins by acting out of self-interest, and suddenly this horizon is transcended.” Solidarity is not calculable – it has to do with the abyss of responsibility and trust that will always remain a risky undertaking. But neither is solidarity idyllic or innocent. At some point *solidarity for* can turn into *solidarity against*, easily evoking all the evils of nationalism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, etc. Here lies the valuable insight in Ewa Majewska’s contribution to this issue. Her article examines the historical development of *Solidarność* in relation to feminist issues. Without condemning the movement or ignoring the liberating effects of *Solidarność*, Majewska nevertheless directs our attention to the flaws in these events that grew to gain global historical significance. *Solidarność* was indeed carried by a wave of *solidarity for*, but this should not obstruct our perception that such a movement is not pure and might also entail aspects of *solidarity against*. Solidarity is not immune, and efforts to idealize it are probably the best indicator that the maxims of *solidarity against* are beginning to infect it. Neuger perfectly sums up this ambivalence in his remarkable final sentences: “In its explosive phase, solidarity opens a door, takes the risk. But solidarity also contains other foundations, leading to a closed door.”

Jean-Luc Nancy’s article, bearing the straightforward title *Fraternity*, examines a similar set of issues. Brotherhood or fraternity is not only a historical precursor to the modern political concept of solidarity; it shares the same characteristics in building a community or “togetherness” among people. Fraternity appeals to solidarity among equals, among “us” who are brothers. *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, the tripartite slogan of the revolution of 1789 and



afterwards, has taken on almost symbolic status in delivering keywords for modern politics. But whereas liberty and equality express civil rights, the role of fraternity is less clear. Is it a duty, a Utopian ideal, a sentimental and deceptive illusion? It is certainly by no means an unproblematic and innocent concept, since its rhetorical power of inclusion is gained by the tacit exclusion of those who are *not among the brothers*. Jacques Derrida in particular has expressed this critique of the idea of fraternity. Originating as an explicit answer to Jean-Luc Nancy, the reciprocal dispute between the two of them finally became what Derrida called “a fraternal squabble over the issue of fraternity”.⁵ The article published here constitutes a kind of belated epilogue to this debate.

NANCY RETURNS TO Derrida’s mistrust of a term that is “simultaneously familial, masculine, sentimental and Christian-sounding”. From the beginning, Nancy makes it clear that his idea of brotherhood is certainly not to be understood in the biological sense. According to him, “being siblings” is a “social model”; it is “an association without substantial (ontological, original) necessity”, designating a model of social reality that has more to do with “having to adjust to living together” rather than with “being together”. This attempt to play the “symbolic register” of fraternity (instead of the biological, substantial, ontological) was however already explicitly addressed in Derrida’s earlier critical work. In *Rogues* he states:

In fraternalism or brotherhoods, in the confraternal or fraternizing community, what is privileged is at once the masculine authority of the brother (who is also a son, a husband, a father), genealogy, family, birth, autochthony, and the nation. And any time the literality of these implications has been denied, for example, by claiming that one was speaking not of the natural and biological family (...) or that the

figure of the brother was merely a symbolic and spiritual figure, it was never explained why one wished to hold on to and privilege this figure rather than that of the sister, the female cousin, the daughter, the wife, or the stranger, or the figure of anyone or whoever.⁶

In his answer, Nancy counters this objection with the assertion that fraternity in itself does not necessarily carry the values of the masculine and paternal. He sees the constant interpretation of family ties along this patriarchal model in itself as a projection that upholds the tradition of emphasizing the father and the transmission to and through males. Fraternity obviously includes elements of sorority (sisterhood), but Nancy’s approach is not intended to counter one with the other. Instead, *both* of these concepts should be seen as independent of “nature”, “origin” or “foundation”. Sorority and fraternity interlace just as the masculine and the feminine do in general; therefore fraternity does not necessarily have to be a confraternity of males. The differentiation of these two terms is strongly reminiscent of Neuger’s distinction between *solidarity against* and *solidarity for*: Confraternity “unites subjects tending to be identical since they are identified by a function, an occupation, a role” (and in this sense they form a *solidarity against*), whereas fraternity in Nancy’s sense is “the conjunction of chance”, just as in the case of the family, and it poses the continuous challenge of mastering that chance. Fraternity then – and this is Nancy’s final claim – will always be an insufficient term, but it might nevertheless be seen as providing a model for a form of coexistence without necessarily referencing genealogy, privilege, or the logic of exclusion.

Solidarity and exclusion

This discussion of solidarity (and fraternity) takes place against the background of other attempts to define what is at the core of acts of solidarity. Richard Rorty once observed that solidarity seems to work especially within groups that have something in common or share a certain

“BUT ISN'T SOLIDARITY WITH ALL PEOPLE AS ABSTRACT AND UNDEFINABLE AS SOLIDARITY WITH NATURE?”

identity. This would mean that solidarity is predominantly felt for somebody who is like myself. Somebody might be, as Rorty puts it, “a comrade in the movement” and accordingly she/he deserves solidarity because we are working for a common goal or share the same political convictions. A striking phrase describing exactly this feeling of a common bond is the popular “people like us”. No further reason is needed – people have our solidarity simply because they are “like us”, good people. Tacitly, the claim presupposes a flip side: no need, no reason to feel solidarity for the other people, the ones who do not belong.

This is a puzzling and disturbing observation in relation to a humanistic concept which is apparently based on the assumption that solidarity reaches out to *everybody*, to every *human being* regardless of any further qualification in terms of race, religion, nationality, social class, or political conviction. For whom is solidarity felt, and who feels it? Or to put it another way, what is needed for the bond of solidarity to be established? The answer to this is not as obvious as an enlightened optimist might suggest by referring to the common characteristic of sharing an essential humanity.

First of all, one should perhaps say that solidarity can only be strongly felt in relation to human beings. This counters what for example the Swedish Green Party (Miljöpartiet) defines as its party program which, briefly, consists of three forms of solidarity: with nature, with future generations, and with people.⁸ Although the underlying intention of these forms might be plausible, all three of them clearly go beyond the concept of solidarity. If solidarity is a shared responsibility for and with the other, then nature and future generations can obviously not be the addressees of this common striving. Solidarity also seems to presuppose a mutual commitment – mutually binding and mutually emancipating. Even the proclaimed solidarity with “people” as an abstract entity is difficult to grasp: Is it possible to feel an obligation, a simultaneously emotional and yet deliberate, conscious tie to all one’s fellow human beings without any further qualification? This idea might be found in the Christian tradition (every-

body is your neighbor) and also survives in secularized universalism as in Kant. But isn’t solidarity with all people as abstract and undefinable as solidarity with nature? What would it consist in? Solidarity, it seems, always has to be concrete, directed at somebody.

WHOM THEN DOES it include, whom does it exclude? As suggested, Rorty holds that solidarity is always ethnocentric or clancentric, that it will always look out for a “fellow Roman”, for “Greeks like ourselves” (as opposed to the Barbarians), or for a “fellow Catholic”. This last example clearly shows that “clancentric” is not meant in a biological or racial sense – a “clan” does not have to be linked by blood; it may also be a common belief or conviction, the common fight for the good cause etc. Yet however the “clan” is precisely defined, it is a somewhat unsatisfactory conclusion that solidarity should always, and necessarily, be restricted to a certain predefined group, that it should always, and necessarily, be an inclusive as well as an exclusive concept. Can there be a solidarity that does not have its source in a substantial unity, however defined? Can there be a solidarity that defines a belonging, a togetherness, that may be only momentary, transitory; perhaps more in the form of a gift than of an obligation?

This is also the key question in Gustav Strandberg’s contribution. Its cogent title *Solidarity of the Shaken* already indicates the direction of his approach which attempts to develop an existential understanding of solidarity. Strandberg bases his reflections mainly on the philosophy of Jan Patočka, whose famous formula “solidarity of the shaken” was evidently inspired by his life as a dissident in communist Czechoslovakia of the 1970s. Patočka was the first spokesman of *Charter 77* (next to Václav Havel and Jiří Hájek) and for a short historical mo-

ment his name became world famous in March 1977, when the philosopher died in dramatic circumstances while under police interrogation. Even his burial was a political manifestation, forever unforgettable for all who witnessed it. There is a strong link between his thought and the historical conditions and atmosphere of that time. The opposition against a seemingly unshakable order and the fragile, yet highly explosive character of a solidarity in resistance is very reminiscent of Neuger’s account of the Polish *Solidarność* movement which was to emerge only a few years later. However, the most valuable impact of Patočka’s sketch of solidarity might be that it can also be read fully independently of these biographical and historical circumstances.

As Strandberg states at the beginning of his article, solidarity traditionally has to do with solidity, i.e. forming a union with others on a firm and stable ground of a shared identity. Yet for Patočka, precisely this solidity is shaken. Those who join in a “solidarity of the shaken” do not obtain a common ground; it is a solidarity brought about by existential upheaval and disorientation, not by sharing something but, in a sense, by sharing nothing. It is a solidarity beyond solidity. The underlying experience is that of a confrontation with finitude and meaninglessness. Strandberg relates this closely to Heidegger’s analysis of anxiety and Dasein’s confrontation with his/her own death. He therefore rightly describes Patočka’s approach as “a solidarity in and for finitude”. It is our shared experience of a loss and of insufficiency that “will forever force us outside of ourselves in the direction of other people.” One might also invoke Dostoevsky’s literary portrayals of existential occurrences similar to those that were so crucially important for Patočka. What they depict literally is the same existential experience of an uprooting within which all worldly and egotistic relations are transcended (egotistic in the sense of ego-related, not as a value judgment). It is an existential breakthrough, opening up to a “new meaning of life”, a life with others and a life in solidarity, the main event of which is to be described not in a moral

dimension but exactly as this ontological opening.

This is indeed a quite different and “new” concept of solidarity, a solidarity beyond solidity and a solidarity beyond the exclusion of *solidarity against*. It is revealing to compare this to the solution suggested by Richard Rorty. After stating that the new concept of solidarity should no longer be ethnocentric or clancentric, Rorty develops his own idea of a solidarity beyond these limitations. Solidarity, in his answer, should be a solidarity of all those who have come to distrust ethnocentrism! It is indeed a truly post-modern answer, addressing the liberal, urban and sophisticated people who have left behind (or think they have left behind) an essentialist view. But is it also a convincing suggestion? His attempt surely addresses a crucial and painful deficiency of the whole concept of solidarity. Yet it is also highly unsatisfactory: What solidarity presupposes most urgently is trust: it therefore is an almost absurd maneuver to base solidarity precisely on distrust. Would the distrusters ever do anything else other than exactly that, namely distrust: distrust the concept of solidarity and their supposed relationship of trust and solidarity to other distrusters? Although at a superficial glance, the “solidarity of the distrusters” seems to be not far removed from a “solidarity of the shaken”, it is precisely the lack of any existential dimension that makes it difficult to trust an asserted solidarity of the skeptical post-modernists.

THE MOST APPARENT contradiction to this intellectualized approach is expressed in the article by Kateryna Mishchenko, whose contribution is quite different from all the other reflections. It does not deal with solidarity from a theoretical or historical point of view, but out of a sense of the immediate urgency of the topic. Written in a Ukraine in upheaval, a country inflamed by the revolutionary events on the Maidan and at the same time stricken by the atrocities of an undeclared war, the short essay mainly invokes solidarity on two levels: first, the international solidarity with a country in turmoil and endangered from the outside (Mishchenko sees

the principle of solidarity itself under attack, inflated and hollowed out by “idle mind games” of the West and especially the European Left), second, the solidarity of and for those people bodily involved in the conflict – their only answer being the “wild savagery” of “self-dedication and self-sacrifice”. This formulation exactly recalls the idea of sacrifice in Patočka, which is not sacrifice for a purpose or a goal, but the inner necessity of a life that is in “resistance to the ‘demoralizing’, terrorizing and deceptive motifs of the day.”⁹ This sacrifice is not a price to be paid for something, but – as Derrida put it – the “gift of death”,¹⁰ i.e. the invocation of life’s finitude as a means of life in the face of the calculations of dead bodies. ❌

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references

- 1 Émile Durkheim, *De la division du travail social* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1893), 73ff; 118ff.
- 2 The most famous example of a solidarity overcoming kinship and fraternity is obviously the Biblical story of the Good Samaritan taking care of somebody who is not his kin. Accordingly, a truly solidary stance is independent of being motivated by one’s own profit.
- 3 Announced as a temporary act of solidarity, the levy still exists 25 years after the reunification and has long since become an extra general tax.
- 4 *The Miners’ Strike Art Collection* was shown from March to May 2013 in Tensta konsthall.
- 5 Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, transl. P.-A. Brault and M. Naas (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2005) 56.
- 6 Derrida, 58.
- 7 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 190.
- 8 The party program defines itself with the following three claims of solidarity: (1) solidarity for animals, nature and the ecological system, (2) solidarity for future generations, (3) solidarity with the world and the people.
- 9 Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1996) 134.
- 10 Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. D. Wills (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).



PHOTO: ARCHIVE PHOTO OF THE INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE, DATED DECEMBER 16, 1981

SOME THOUGHTS ON SOLIDARITY

Before I begin there is something I must explain. I will not address the problem of how you should deal with solidarity *against*; instead, I will focus on solidarity *for*. Moreover, I will not talk very much about solidarity as loyalty, even though loyalty is the most important ingredient in solidarity. Solidarity/loyalty can also be found among thieves, criminals, religious groups, and various minorities, which means that an idyllic view of the phenomenon is problematic. And two further explanations:

1. I will analyze the content of the word “solidarity”, not for the sake of linguistics, but in the belief that words contain memories as well as many other experiences, often conflicting ones.

2. I will talk a little about Solidarity, the trade union in Poland, which was created in August 1980 and crushed in December 1981. For the sake of convenience I will use quotation marks when referring to the union, or else use its official name: the Trade Union Solidarity, or something similar.

1.

The word solidarity is a French invention, more specifically of the Enlightenment. In the *Encyclopédie* (1765), *solidarité* was defined as mutual responsibility, but the word was also used in the sense of “independent, complete, whole” (from *solidaire*). In many other European countries, however, the word emerged and

was assimilated in the second half of the 19th century. It derives from Latin and its origin is related to capital: *solidum* in Rome meant the whole sum, the capital. As I said, it was from French that the word made its way into English and many other languages. We thus have two almost contrary meanings: The first is based on the idea of a firm point that guarantees and creates independence. Its foundation can be economic, that you own the whole sum, the capital, the lot, and in this way you become independent. But it can also mean that you jointly take responsibility for somebody or something, that you create a community of mutuality, where you as a member of the group act with consideration and without self-interest, for the benefit of this group or its individuals. Here, the personal and the common intersect. The firm foundations intersect as well. Economic independence is based upon capital, that is to say, something over which the individual has power (and which can be formulated: “I have the whole sum, which is my firm point and guarantee”); but at the same time, this refers to a guarantee that lies outside of human control, namely the economy. Everything that builds up such independence must be part of the financial exchange represented by money. By contrast, mutual responsibility depends on trust, based upon the inner reliability of the group. This was how Jozef Tischner reasoned concerning the ethics of solidarity (the title of his book), arising in the encounter with the “Other”, who can be very different indeed. Reasoning in this way, all foundations are erased. Responsibility for and openness towards that which is different becomes a groundless ground, an imperative. Tischner followed in the footsteps of Emmanuel Levinas, but tried to interpret him through Christianity.

HOWEVER, THINGS ARE not always as simple and idyllic as that: The word “solidarity” has explosive potential. Its content tends

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“Re-construction of December 16, 1981”, 2011 steel, archival materials, (Historical Reconstruction of the Gdansk shipyard gate nr 2, dated December 16, 1981, after the destruction by T-55 tanks. Reconstruction based on archival photographs, IPN materials and witnesses of those events.) The collection of European Solidarity Centre, Gdansk; publication by courtesy of the artist Dorota Nieznalska.

to find robust, less fickle grounds: ideology, nationalism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, politics, religion, etc. This is where you build “solidarity against”, when you need to find a strong identity and defend it.

Economic independence is secure as long as there is an economy. But the “whole sum”, as we know, can evaporate during revolutions, catastrophes or crises. Ethical independence too can be unstable, momentary, ecstatic, and explosive: as in a solidarity based upon closing ranks against, excluding, rejecting the other. To contain these significations in a single word, namely solidarity, seems an impossible task – which nevertheless becomes possible. In spite of everything, this is where some kind of impracticable, impossible attachment happens. Solidarity is a child of the moment. The English word “solid” has preserved this opposition: it means massive, compact, but also steady, firm, strong, stable, reliable. Not only that: “solid” can also mean affluent and creditworthy.

When the union “Solidarity” was founded in the autumn of 1980, as a result of strikes all over Poland, it was difficult to find a name for the phenomenon.

2.

The story is simple enough. In August 1980, a strike broke out at the shipyard in Gdansk. The workers, who were among the fairly well paid, wanted a raise. In the People’s Republic of Poland, such a matter was not difficult to resolve. Either you agreed to the demands of the workers, or you used the police, the military; this had been done before and required victims.

“ONE BEGINS BY ACTING OUT OF SELF-INTEREST, AND SUDDENLY THIS HORIZON IS TRANSCENDED.”

The workers demanded a meeting with top politicians in order to solve the conflict, and the politicians agreed to this. But they were in for a surprise. The negotiations took place in public: apart from the strike committee, the other workers also participated (through the internal radio at the shipyard). And the workers circulated between the room where the negotiations took place and other places in the shipyard. Every decision made by the strikers’ committee was a joint decision.

Among other things, it transpired that a female worker had been sacked from her job for political reasons. The strike committee demanded that she should be reinstated. The politicians agreed to this. But now it turned out that many of those who had cooperated with the workers at the shipyard in Gdansk were imprisoned, and the strike committee demanded that the politicians should free them as well as all other political prisoners.

To this, the authorities would not agree. Now the issue was no longer Gdansk, the shipyard or money. It was no longer a strike, but a kind of revolution: all strike rules were broken, it was no longer a struggle based on self-interest, and before the politicians had time to find a solution (either agree to the demands or suppress the revolt by force), strikes had broken out all over the country, primarily in big enterprises: mines, ironworks and other companies of great importance

for the economy. In these cases as well, therefore, the strikers were among the fairly well paid. Money, economic exchange ceased to be the foundation or model for representation. There were strikes demanding compensation for low-wage groups, instead of simply a rise in wages.

I am not going to relate the whole history of “Solidarity”. What I want to point out here is that this is where the attachment, the inner connection contained in the word solidarity is most clearly manifested. One begins by acting out of self-interest, and suddenly this horizon is transcended.

WHAT SHOULD THIS new phenomenon be called? It was clear that what had been created must be called a union. At the same time, it was clearly not a union. Those involved were conscious that the strikes had succeeded by virtue of solidarity, but the word itself had become somewhat overused through propaganda, where you had to declare your solidarity with everything that the authorities pointed to. Thus the name: “the Trade Union Solidarity” had a somewhat suspicious ring. Therefore ‘Independent’ was added: “the Independent Trade Union Solidarity”. But not even this was satisfactory. Why? I think it was because the word “independent” pointed to the outside world or, in plain language, to the authorities. It emphasized that those within the movement were independent from “those people”, who could no longer influence them. But something was still missing. Intuitively, those involved wanted to find a name for solidarity that both preserved and erased the intersection between unselfishness and solidity. And so yet another word was added: “self-governing”. Rather amusingly, then, the name of the emerging movement finally became, in its entirety, “the Independent Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity” – as a kind of explication of what was originally, from the very beginning, contained in the simple word solidarity. And so a relatively small strike by the workers at the shipyard in Gdansk turned into a very solid movement: out of Poland’s whole population of 33 million, 10 million became members.

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3.

“Independent, Self-governing”: can this be accomplished? Suddenly a new player had entered the political stage – with enormous force. Simultaneously it expressed an attachment with explosive energy. At once “Solidarity” became a troublesome player for the others, that is to say the Communists and the Catholic Church. Interestingly, when “Solidarity” exploded, it remained a democratic movement. It was extremely decentralized, in accordance with the pattern set during the strikes. Weaker organizations or companies could count on the support of the stronger ones. Strikes broke out almost incessantly. Note that the other players, the Party and the Church, were hierarchic or feudal. Decisions in such structures can only be made by one or a few persons. In “Solidarity” this was, paradoxically, both impossible and necessary: you had to adapt to the other participants. The country was on the brink of economic and social disaster.

A paradox: When the movement emerged, it was as a form of solidarity with vulnerable groups – workers, peasants, political prisoners and the intelligentsia. How is this compatible with its enormous force, which led to the movement becoming a massive majority in the country? They were also very proud of this success, so proud that it might be interpreted as complacency.

4.

Among the many literary and scientific works of Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842–1921), there is one with the title *Mutual Aid* (from 1902), in which he repudiates Darwinism’s “struggle for existence” and claims that it is not competition but solidarity that is the main driving force of evolution. Kropotkin was a Russian aristocrat. In the second half of the 1860s, he spent a few years in Siberia, where he worked as a civil servant and geographer and experienced revolts among exiled socialists and Polacks, revolts that were bloodily suppressed. Geographically, then, his writing has its origins in what are perhaps the most inhospitable areas

“AND SO A RELATIVELY SMALL STRIKE BY THE WORKERS AT THE SHIPYARD IN GDANSK TURNED INTO A VERY SOLID MOVEMENT.”

conceivable, where the conditions are extremely difficult for people and animals. Politically, it deals with Russia, that is to say, a country with an extremely autocratic and unrestrained government. Socially, the background of his work is formed by the theories of Darwin and his followers, in particular “Social Darwinism”, which claimed that the struggle for existence is the core of evolution in both animals (Darwin) and people (the Darwinists), and that the stronger, better adapted will be victorious. Everything is about competing with and forcing out your competitors (the rat race). This did not accord with Kropotkin’s experiences from Siberia. He pointed out that even the animals in these harsh conditions transcend the principle of Darwin, and that people stand by and support one another. This eventually became the core of anarchism. “Mutual aid”, regardless of one’s political stance, says a lot about our paradoxical situation: even under difficult conditions, we can show solidarity, and this might be the principle of evolution. Now, perhaps this only happens in a state of emergency, as an exception; but perhaps this exceptional state of emergency is to be found not outside, but inside of us? In that case, it happens instantaneously, and in a rift or an attachment. On this point, Kropotkin would certainly not agree with me, but I am convinced that the rift or attachment is something that can only be expressed in art, in an instant of explosion. That is to say – and here I am close to Kropotkin – in an extreme decentralization and individualization of life.

5.

Prince Pyotr Kropotkin died 1921 in Dmitrov. He was given a state funeral, despite the fact that he had been forceful in his opposition to the Bolsheviks

and the Communists. “Where there is power, there is no freedom”, he claimed. Masses of people followed his body on its last journey, both in Dmitrov and in Moscow where he was buried. 100,000 people turned out, despite the terror that prevailed in Russia. They turned out carrying the banners of anarchy and signs demanding that their fellow anarchists be released from prison. It has been claimed that this was the largest voluntary manifestation in the history of the Soviet Union, and the last on such a scale. Politics aside, the manifestation very much confirmed Kropotkin’s theory. People conquered their fear – instantaneously. This was what happened in Siberia in 1884, in Moscow in 1921, and in Poland in 1980. But this was also what happened in Sweden in 1968, and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. The same is true of the revolutions in Iran, Tunisia, Egypt etc. that we witnessed recently: explosions of solidarity.

6.

Jacques Derrida once wrote about hospitality. Among other things, he pointed out how strongly hospitality is connected to the regulating norms of the law and also how much it depends on the unselfishness that lies at the basis of hospitality, against a background of relations of power. We are visited by someone extremely different. In fact, in such a visitation, we don’t know for sure if the other has come to visit us or to haunt us. Derrida inscribes this event in the Messianic tradition and its way of thinking. He writes about the risks that the host takes in opening his or her door to a stranger: a stranger who might be Jesus, the Messiah, or a murderer. In its explosive phase, solidarity opens a door, takes the risk. But solidarity also contains other foundations, leading to a closed door. ✘

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BETWEEN INVISIBLE LABOR AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Women in the *Solidarność* movement and in today's politics in Poland

A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. (...) These kinds of optimistic relation are not inherently cruel. They become cruel only when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially.

Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*

The concept of invisibility always strikes me as deeply paradoxical, since most invisible things we know of have deep, materialized and often painful effects on the lives of humans. Their materialized, embodied consequences lead far beyond the basic issue of their existence. In her *Invisible Heart*, Nancy Folbre puts it as follows: “The invisible hand represents the forces of supply and demand in competitive markets. The invisible heart represents family values of love, obligation and reciprocity. (...) The only way to balance them successfully is to find fair ways of rewarding those who care for other people”. In this short text I would like to discuss the (in)visibility of women in 1980 and in Polish politics today, suggesting a feminist perspective which will not focus solely on exclusions, but also recognize participation. The context of invisible labor allows us to see the duality, or even perhaps the dialectics, of the participation and exclusion of women in the political field.

The situation of women who joined the *Solidarność* Independent Workers' Unions in 1980 was in many ways similar to that of women in Poland today. One could even argue that it was better in many respects, since abortion was legal, jobs were stable and daycare was free of charge. Women were engaged in the

movement; some of them actually started the strike in the Gdańsk Shipyard, like the crane operator Anna Walentynowicz, whose dismissal was the direct trigger of the strike on August 14th 1980, or the tram driver Henryka Krzywonos, whose famous action in stopping the tram in the center of Gdańsk paralyzed communications in the city center and led to the spread of information about the strike and subsequently to supporting protests in other workplaces. The nurse and political activist Alina Pieńkowska was the third of the women from the Gdańsk Shipyard, who helped force the continuation of the strike on August 16th 1980 when Lech Wałęsa and other men had their moment of doubt. These women became famous in the whole country, and rightly so. Subsequently they became the object of several feminist studies trying to understand the later exclusion of women in *Solidarność*. In *Solidarity's Secret*, Shana Penn focused on the women who published *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, the key periodical of the *Solidarność* underground after the introduction of martial law by General Jaruzelski on December 13th, 1981, and Ewa Kondratowicz published a series of interviews with women of the opposition in a study titled “Lipstick on the Banner”.

IT MIGHT BE WORTH recalling that in 1980 women constituted some 30% of the manual workers at the Gdańsk Shipyard. They usually operated the gantry cranes, mainly inside the shipyard buildings. Most of them led a traditional family life, doing the majority of the housework. Although most of them subscribed to the newly created *Solidarność* union, they did not usually have time to engage in it as much as men did, since they “had children” (apparently men do not have chil-

dren, women do – at least in Poland) and housework to do. During an artistic project at the Gdańsk Shipyard in 2004, I conducted interviews with ten female ship-

yard workers, some of whom had been working there in 1980. Their memories were bitter, as their hopes for better conditions for workers and women had clearly been betrayed in the economic transformation of 1989. The main thesis of David Ost's book *The Defeat of Solidarity*, published in 2005, seems fully legitimate in the context of these interviews; his thesis



Anna Walentynowicz

is that the *Solidarność* movement actually abandoned the workers and turned against them in the building of the new capitalist society after 1989. In 2004, facing their precarization on the labor market, these women were sometimes working three shifts in rough conditions and risking accidents. They were not active in labor unions, because apart from the burden of excessive paid work at the shipyard they also had unpaid housework to do. In most cases, their families were financially dependent on them, yet the traditional gender work division applied to them as much as it had to their mothers. While men working in the shipyard always had time to sit down and talk with me after their work, the situation was different with the women. I could only talk to them during their short lunch break, in the morning when they were changing clothes for work, or in the evenings when they got ready to leave the shipyard. For that reason, the process of conducting the interviews took some three weeks altogether, and I believe that no journalist interviewed women in the shipyard either before or after that, since it was so much easier to make an appointment for a long conversation with the majority of men working there.

The striking inequality in the division of labor between women and men persists not just in the working class families, but in households in Poland regardless of their class. It results from traditional values strengthened by the Catholic Church and by school education. It is also a typical effect of the precarization of patriarchal societies: When state institutions and employers cease to provide care structures and facilities, it becomes the task of women to take over these duties. These specifically gender-related aspects of precarity often escape the attention of theorists of precarity, such as Guy Standing or Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, yet they constitute a substantial part of feminist research in this field, particularly in the work of Silvia Federici.

Gender inequality in Poland is also an unfortunate result of a feminism which did not criticize the neoliberal transformations of the first twenty years after 1989, producing a narrative on gender equality which reduced women's participation in politics to the installation of the quota system and inviting more women to join political parties. Ironically, the political party which actually had the highest percentage of female delegates in the Parliament after 1989 was the ultra-conservative League of Polish Families (LPR).

THE HARSH CRITIQUE of feminism's involvement in the implementation of neoliberal politics offered by Nancy Fraser in her article published in the Guardian in 2013 most appropriately summarizes the complicity of the vast majority of the Polish feminist movement in the perpetuation of social and economic inequalities, both in Poland and globally. Her emphasis on the rejection of egalitarian feminism in favor of an individualistic entrepreneurial version also sounds very convincing in the Polish context: "Where feminists once criticized a society that promoted careerism, they now advise women to 'lean



PHOTO: LESZEK PASSIVE

Triumphant leaders of Solidarity at Nowy Targ, October 19, 1980. From left; Andrzej Gwiazda, Alina Pienkowska, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Anna Walentynowicz, Lech Walesa, Ryszard Kalinowski, Marian Jurczyk.

in'. A movement that once prioritized social solidarity now celebrates female entrepreneurs. A perspective that once valorized 'care' and interdependence now encourages individual advancement and meritocracy." Interestingly, some feminists in Poland and other countries of the former Eastern Bloc reacted to this article in a very critical way, pointing to the supposed "western-centrism" of Fraser and her possibly uncritical praise of care labor. I believe that this shameless attempt to hide behind the veil of the supposedly colonial aspects of Fraser's article only proves the inability to take responsibility for the human costs of the neoliberal transformation. As much as I agree with some feminists of color who rightly challenge Fraser's use of the "feminist we", in the case of Polish liberal feminism a more appropriate reaction to the article should consist in a sincere reflection on

"IN 1980, WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SOLIDARNOŚĆ MOVEMENT WAS FAR FROM INVISIBLE."

feminism's complicity.

In 1980, women's participation in the *Solidarność* movement was far from invisible. Women were present from the start of the strikes in the shipyard in Gdańsk, they were on strike in Szczecin and Łódź, they "took over" several highly important activities in *Solidarność* after its de-legalization in December 1981, mainly printing and distributing the underground press, organizing meetings and education, supporting the thousands of imprisoned activists, documenting the abuses of the "bezpieka" (secret police), and arranging and redistributing material help from abroad. The invisibility of these tasks was compounded by the fact that all of this work was illegal. It was a form of housework, but directed at the common good; a personal involvement, but in public matters – a form of public involvement, which clearly escapes the classical notions of public sphere, such as the one proposed by Habermas. It might be seen as a form of counterpublic as defined by Nancy Fraser or Alexander Kluge, but a hybrid form, not a monolithic entity.

Carole Pateman suggests that the interconnections between what has been called the "public sphere" and the

“private” are stronger than most liberal theorists suggest. Thus she not only accepts the feminist slogan “the personal is political”, but also provides philosophical legitimation for it. When analyzing the “republic of the brothers” and the “fraternal social contract” in liberal democracies, Pateman not only recapitulates the Freudian/Lockean visions of the contemporary republic, but also joins forces with the feminist psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray in suggesting that this triumphant institutionalization of organized boyhood usually takes place on the women’s (sometimes dead) bodies. While Irigaray shows how the exclusion of women is grounded in the symbolic erasure of the mother from the origins of state and society, Pateman concentrates on domestic violence and career restrictions to explain women’s de facto absence in politics.

OTHER FEMINIST AUTHORS point out that even today, the fact that affective and care labor occupies women’s time and energy, forcing the alienation and exploitation of women, constitutes a necessary element of the system of capitalist production. Domestic labor is not only exploitative, as Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici and other feminists have argued. It is also a way of sharing a life with others as depicted in the work of bell hooks, or even an element of “love power”, as Anna Jonasdottir has argued in the last 30 years. The *Solidarność* movement made at least three *explicit* claims to embrace these efforts of women, in the “21 postulates” of the workers unions in 1980: the demands for women’s retirement at the age of 50, for three years’ paid maternity leave, and enough daycare centers for all children. However, the *Solidarność* movement lacked any comprehension of the structures of gender inequalities, and I believe this is the reason for the later exclusion of women from its structures, as well as for the conservative turn of the movement and the political parties which originated in it. This all led to the neglect of women’s issues in Polish politics after 1989.

We can reduce *Solidarność* to a sexist, misogynist entity altogether, as has often been done, but before doing so we might also want to examine how

the gender difference actually worked there. We might also want to compare this particular movement with other social movements of the time in order to understand whether and how it differed from them in its gender bias. Interestingly, the outcome of this comparison is surprisingly positive for *Solidarność* which had its known female leaders in the working class – the legendary trio of crane operator Anna Walentynowicz, nurse Alina Pińkowska and tram driver Henryka Krzywonos – as well as in the intelligentsia, including counselors such as Jadwiga Staniszkis, journalists and authors such as Helena Łuczywo and Joanna Szczęsna, activists such as Barbara Labuda, probably the only declared feminist in the movement in 1980, and lawyers such as Zofia Wasilkowska and Janina Zakrzewska. How many women do we know of in the working class resistance at the time of Thatcher’s neoliberal takeovers in the early 1980s in England? How many women were there in the Free Speech Movement in the USA? In the Anti-Apartheid mobilizations in South Africa? Or in the French students mobilizations of the 1960s? Probably not more than in *Solidarność* – and I emphasize that not because I would like to idealize this particular social movement, but because I think that social and academic perceptions of it should be corrected.

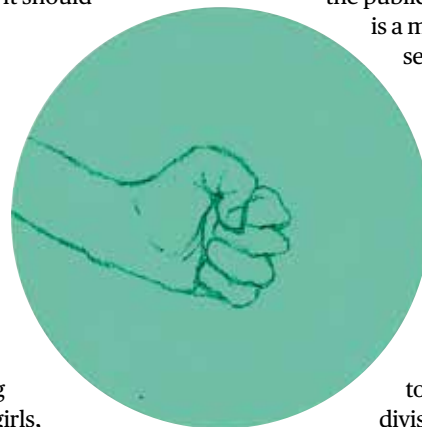
In the first days of *Solidarność*, most of the international legal guarantees of gender equality had not even been prepared. The UN Beijing Declaration, probably the most famous and all-encompassing document concerning rights of women and girls, was not even written in 1980; it was only signed in 1995. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), had just been adopted in 1979, and the EU Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic

violence would only be signed in 2011, not by all the EU members, not even by Poland (!). Feminist theory in 1980 already recognized the influence of domestic labor on the lives of women, as in the 1976 sociological study of Ann Oakley or in the short texts of the Italian Marxist feminists Federici and Dalla Costa; the late 1970s also saw the critical analysis of the appropriation of affective labor by corporate marketing and sales in Arlie Hochschild’s study from 1979. The tendency of the time, however, was for women to withdraw from male-dominated social movements and to form their own.

IF SOLIDARNOŚĆ is to be judged correctly, another comparison should also be drawn concerning the state apparatus in Poland. Women did not occupy important positions in the state institutions in 1980. They were decorative elements of ministerial salons. Female participation in the Parliament of the “2nd Republic”, the communist state, varied from 4,14% in the late 1950s (!) to 25% after the elections in 1980, which could also be seen as inspired by the political mobilization of women in the opposition.

The fact that we still know and remember the names of the key women in the *Solidarność* movement is, in my opinion, due to the radical democratization of the public sphere in 1980. This is a moment which would serve as a great example of the “*mésentente*” (disagreement) described by Jacques Rancière. The appearance of the nurse, the female crane operator and the female tram driver was, as we might say according to Rancière, a “new division of the sensible”. It was a sign and a declaration to

the entire society that women do engage politically, and rightly so. The fact that more feminist writing has been devoted to the (in-)famous slogan on the wall of the Gdańsk Shipyard *Kobiety, nie przesz-kadzajcie nam walczyć o Polskę* (“Women,



“WOMEN’S ‘INVISIBLE LABOR’ HAS BEEN THE MAJOR OBSTACLE TO THEIR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT, BOTH NOW AND IN THE PAST.”

do not disturb our fight for Poland”) than to the women actually involved in *Solidarność* is a shameful proof of the lack of recognition for these women rather than an indication of scientific and historical accuracy in Polish feminist studies of that period. The performative dimension of this sudden presence of women cannot be reduced to an “exception” and explained away as “accidental”. It was a genuine element of the early days of *Solidarność* and should be analyzed as an example of the unprecedented political mobilization of working class women. Soon more women joined the unions, and – as Małgorzata Tarasiewicz estimates in an interview concerning the “Women’s Section” of *Solidarność* – they constituted some 50% of the movement. Tarasiewicz and other feminist writers and activists seem to see *Solidarność* only through the lens of the activities of the leaders of the movement in the 1990s, when abortion was made illegal and the traditional role of women in society and gender inequality were strengthened. It could actually be true that the unwillingness to grasp the performative political importance of female leaders in the movement of 1980 derives from a more general reservation against the working class – a very unpopular topic in the 1990s in Poland. The female *Solidarność* leaders might still be waiting for their theorists.

THE “WOMEN’S SECTION” of *Solidarność* was only set up in 1990 and closed in 1991 by Marian Krzaklewski, Wałęsa’s successor. It was undoubtedly an expression of the deeply conservative approach that he and other male members of *Solidarność* showed in regard to women and their issues. However, we should perhaps take into account how women function in contemporary social movements, including worker’s unions, how their role has changed since 1980 and 1991, and also how the actual activity of actual women in actual labor unions has contributed to these changes. Otherwise we risk projecting contemporary norms and practices back onto movements that are already historic. We might also want to rethink new forms of invisibility of women in politics and social agency, far more in-

fluenced by economic inequalities and poverty than in the heyday of *Solidarność*. Today some women obtain important political positions. Does this mean that housework is more appreciated, that gender roles have changed or that we live in a more egalitarian society? I would not say so.

IT SEEMS IRONIC that the 2014 annual women’s demonstration in Warsaw, the “Manifesta”, was held under the slogan “Equality at home, equality at work, equality in schools”. Although the repetition in the slogan has often been criticized, one has to insist on the fact that equality still has not been attained. Since women in Poland today make up 96% of the victims of domestic violence and rape, as well as the majority of the 14% of the labor force who are unemployed, while their salaries are usually 20% lower than those of their masculine co-workers, the demand for equality seems justified. Women are denied access to abortion and to contraceptives; sexual education is fully dependent on cultural and economic capital and is fully privatized. Women’s “invisible” labor (housework) earns the equivalent of 40% of the gross domestic product (GDP) according to the Polish Central Statistics Office (GUS); however women are neither rewarded nor respected for it. The “glass ceiling”, “sticky floor”, and “moving stairs” phenomena, reducing women’s career opportunities, are especially widespread in business, academia, and medicine. The traditional cultural stereotype of “Matka Polka” (the Polish Mother) also forces the majority of women to comply with a heteronormative, strongly paternalistic and simply sexist conformity to

the traditional roles of mother, care giver, and sex worker which, combined with the general precarity in the labor market, makes women particularly dependent on partners and friends and reduces the urge of most women to engage politically.

Women’s invisible labor has been the major obstacle to their political participation and involvement, both now and in the past. Reducing this labor to a colonized zone where women are deprived of the value of their work dismisses an important part of the actual value of this work, which resides precisely in its affective character. It should neither be reduced to its material results, nor to the supposed “immateriality” of its affective practice, since affection, as contemporary studies rightly show, is neither immaterial nor independent of the social. This labor can, however, contain a strong emancipatory potential for those who decide to unlearn privilege, who not only claim but also practice equality. For these, the “love power” of the women of *Solidarność* and other female political activists will not just be the essential symbol of a monumentalized past, but above all a living example of political agency, strength and solidarity. From the perspective of the reduction of women’s rights in the neoliberal transformation and its cutting of social services and support, the engagement of women in *Solidarność* might be seen as a version of cruel optimism, which – as Lauren Berlant explains in her recent book – consists in an attachment to the object that was supposed to lead to happiness, yet has become an obstacle to pursuing it. But on the other hand we might also claim that this involvement is a lesson we can learn from – a lesson about the necessity of establishing egalitarian, feminist theory and practice in every social movement aiming at political change. ✘

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Dedicated to Ms. Henryka Krzywonos.

FRATERNITY

The French Republic is perhaps the only state in the world to have a motto in which the word “fraternity” (*fraternité*) occurs.

Whether or not it actually is the only one, the fact is that its motto has enjoyed a fame closely linked to the fame of the Revolution of 1789, which has always been regarded – after the English and American revolutions, which were more strictly national in character – as the inaugural moment of democracy in the sense of an appeal to all nations and peoples. This was the background for the motto attached to the Republic, not from its very start but at least from the year 1793, and which didn’t become fully functional – if that is the proper expression – or acquire all its force until the Second Republic in 1848. The historical facts are complex and unclear on this point, but it was certainly some time before the tripartite motto – that is, with Fraternity added to the other two words, and without the complement “or death”, used in 1793 – was fully adopted. Even after this adoption, groups and persons proposing other mottos could still be found, in particular within the workers’ movement. Thus the employment agency (*Bourse du Travail*) in the town of Saint-Étienne, established in 1888, carries the device: *Liberté Égalité Solidarité Justice* (“Freedom, Equality, Solidarity, Justice”).

TO SOME EXTENT, the term “fraternity” has been clearly linked to a register that could be called romantic, in the wider sense, and to a way of thinking that goes beyond the strict limits of the laws and institutions of State in that it appeals to the sentiment and idea of a “community” rather than to principles of social organization. This explains the desire to distinguish the word from others like “solidarity” and “justice”, which can be seen as developing the implications of the first two terms, in particular “equality”.

Today, fraternity is not often considered benevolently – at least not in France – as it is felt to carry too much of a sentimental, not to say familial connota-

tion, at a time when family is no longer a point of reference. When Maurice Blanchot used the word in a context where he wanted to emphasize the affective aspect of “community”, he incurred the reproach (also directed at me) of Jacques Derrida, who more than once expressed his mistrust of a term that is simultaneously familial, masculine, sentimental and Christian-sounding. Moreover, no one – apart from the two just mentioned – seems to have laid claim to the expression in the political thought of the last forty years. On the contrary, the use of this term by a candidate in the French presidential election some years ago, and its repetition by the candidate who was then elected (President Sarkozy), revived all the mistrust towards a word considered to be moral rather than political, and sugary rather than responsible.

All these analyses might lead to this argument (which incidentally can be employed not only against the use of the word but also, by some, in its favor): whereas liberty and equality express our civil rights, fraternity is not a civil right. Is it then, perhaps, a duty? This issue is not often formulated, instead giving way to the idea of a wish, an aspiration, and hence to a reality that is of little substance, if not simply utopian and deceptive. Besides, it can be said that all the well-known debates concerning the idea of a “utopia” are implied by those concerning “fraternity”. Here one can see the lasting influence of the anti-utopian tradition originating with Marx, for whom this word masked an illusion.

TO POSE THE QUESTION of fraternity anew, we must begin with two postulates: (1) It is not obvious that this notion ought to be defended, and we should not ignore the apprehensions raised by its familial, Christian and sentimental character;

(2) If there are nevertheless reasons for according some credit to this word, we must start with a renewed examination of its signification and, going further back, of the signification of family.

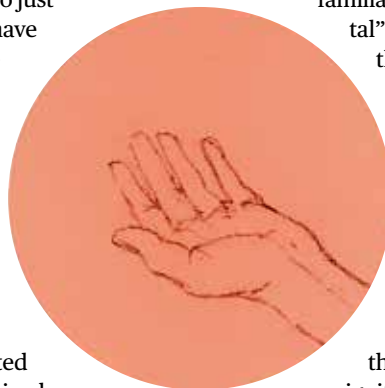
The first postulate simply recommends a certain degree of caution. It is not advisable to adopt this notion without considering the possibility of finding oneself constrained by the predicates

“familial, Christian, sentimental”. As concerns family, this is something that the second postulate will lead us to scrutinize. As regards Christianity and sentiment – simultaneously separate from but undoubtedly also implicated in each other – it is appropriate to say this: each of these terms signifies a well-known reality, in one case the dominant religion

of the non-Muslim Western world, in the other the uncertain, even disturbing and hazardous sphere of that which continues to elude the control of reason.

But these two characteristics might actually be in need of closer examination, even though it is certainly not impossible to attribute them to each of the ideas concerned. In fact, it might turn out that they have themselves been marked by certain habits of thought sedimented in the course of our history.

We will therefore return to them once we have clarified the notion of “family”. To begin with, the patriarchal family, where the suspicion of masculine sexism in the idea of fraternity originates, is not the only possible structure of that which is called “family”: it could be defined as the minimal social group for the purposes of reproduction and its consequences (raising children until they become independent). Perhaps one might even claim that it is the reflection or projection of strongly masculine and paternal social and political models onto the family that have accustomed us to emphasize the fa-



“FRATERNITY’ IS CERTAINLY AN INSUFFICIENT TERM, EVEN IF NOT NECESSARILY A DANGEROUS ONE.”

ther and the transmission to and through males.

Be that as it may, there is a more important point: “brothers” are not originally those united by the same blood. For “blood” is nothing but the symbol of filiation through the transmission of semen (of a natural identity or conformity), and filiation itself is represented according to an ancient scheme in which the mother lacked any generative power of her own (and was instead seen simply as an incubator). “Blood” is by no means a sufficient explanation of what comprises generation and filiation.

Sons and daughters are not so much those united by blood – *pater incertus*, said the Roman law – but rather those united by the community of maternal nursing – *mater certissima*: whether it be real or symbolic, nursing does not consist in the internal, continuous and immediate transmission of a vital principle, but in the external, discontinuous and mediated gift of a nourishing substance. Feeding is a process of incorporation of alien substances that the body metabolizes into its own substance. The bond with the mother is a paradoxical bond where incorporation (*certissima*) is opposed to identification (the child doesn’t identify itself, it absorbs the maternal substance into its own, autonomous substance); the bond with the father is identification, not with a body or a substance (*incertus*), but with a figure or a sign.

IT IS HERE that we must start in order to reconsider family and fraternity. Brothers – and sisters, a point we will return to – are initially autonomous subjects whose coexistence is not founded upon anything but a commonality of feeding, of nourishment (*compagnon* signifies: someone who shares the bread), and on the absence of reasons for their communal life. The figure or the sign of the father, that which is often called “the law of the father” but would be better called “the father as law”, is not determined from the start. On the contrary: the figure is an empty outline or sketch, a sign carrying a

fleeing, indeterminate signification.

It is of course possible for the father to function as a full figure, just as it is possible for the mother not to nourish, or to malnourish (all of which is of course to be understood on a symbolic level, just as “father” and “mother” are not necessarily the parents, biologically or legally). This is not the rule, however: the rule, if this word can be used here, would rather be that nothing guarantees the “community” of brothers beyond nourishment. The transition to independence, made possible by the nourishment, also signifies the recognition of being together by accident, in a community without origin or any given meaning. (In Freudian terms: the “murder of the father” precedes the “father”, who is only erected as the figure of his own absence.)

IN THIS SENSE, “being siblings” is the model of “society”, as an association without substantial (ontological, original) necessity. It is thus also the model of “having to adjust to living together”, rather than of “being together”. Finding or creating an equivalent or substitute for maternal nourishment is a task – or rather a desire – that is both more and less than social: what is at stake is “being” or “meaning” (which might pass through art, religion, love, celebration, thought – but not through the socio-political). But giving content to the figure or sign through which the instance of “the law” is indicated presents an inescapable and urgent enterprise, since their original lack of content poses a threat.

My intention here is not to continue the analyses from these premises, which would have to go in several directions. It is only to emphasize this: “fraternity” does not in itself carry the values of the masculine and the paternal as we ordinar-

ily understand them. Fraternity speaks of coexistence not necessitated by either “nature”, “destiny”, “foundation”, or “origin”. Incidentally, this is why the motif of *enemy brothers* plays such a prominent role in mythologies of all kinds. Usually, such an enmity is understood as a kind of moral monstrosity, when in fact it states the simple truth of a relation that is in itself erratic, lost, and even senseless.

At the same time, fraternity also carries the shadow or the obscure memory and desire of communal nourishment. In this, it is no doubt rather a “sorority” (sisterhood), and in this regard it must be admitted that the fraternal privileges a masculine unilaterality. Sorority would be fraternity beyond or on this side of the law, in the sphere or spheres of nourishment, which is to say of “eating/rejecting”, which are also the spheres of affect.

Fraternity and sorority cut across each other, they even interlace, just as masculine and feminine more generally do. The carriers of these roles are never strictly identical with the complex singularities of either persons or groups: no one is simply and completely either “man” or “woman”, and a fraternity [*fratrie*] is not necessarily a confraternity [*confrérie*] of males. Perhaps these two terms might also serve to distinguish two tendencies in the semantics of “brothers”: Confraternity unites subjects tending to be identical since they are identified by a function, an occupation, a role. Fraternity belongs to the family, which is only, as I said, the conjunction of chance (meeting) and an embrace (desire) – given that the meeting on the one hand is almost always subject to preliminary arrangements (social, local, etc.), and that the desire might also have been replaced beforehand, wholly or in part, by arrangements. The idea of “marriage”, in so far as it falls under the law (that is to say, not under spirituality or a nuptial mystique), sums up the situation well: it is a question of mastering chance or – and at the same time – legitimizing the arrangements. Marriage, one might say, is the true birthplace and event of the law.

This might lead to the assumption that nothing remains of desire and that everything is subsumed under the dispositions of the socio-political. This is only a tendency, however. For one must not forget that the law – legality, the State – is always founded upon a withdrawal of every founding principle. The figure or the sign of the father, and consequently also that of fraternity, offers a vacancy that must be filled in one way or another. Brothers are originally orphans of a father and cannot be identified as belonging together by anything at all – except the absorption of the maternal nourishment, leading to their emancipation.

As soon as the paternal vacancy – the “vacancy of power”, as it is called in the socio-political register – is manifested as such, one must confront this conspicuous truth, which no founding mythology can hide (a function always imperfectly fulfilled, whatever the mythologies might be). This is the destiny of democracy: it must assume this vacancy without appealing to a mythology.

The maternal or feminine side or register does not provide a mythology – at least not for the order of the law; at least not for supplementing the absent father. Desire does not allow itself to be captured in representations. It acts, it plays, it buries or throws itself into the sensible density of nourishment: hunger, saturation, hunger again – without end. Or also: life, death. And also: art, thinking, love, the trembling of being and, if one wishes to mention them, the gods. This is the constant lesson, from Antigone and Scheherazade on to Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* and then Vera Figner, passing through *The Bacchae* of Euripides.¹

IT IS THEREFORE not surprising that democracy aspires to provide for itself, in itself – for that within itself that exceeds the strict register of the law – a dimension that provides access to desire or to affect: to that which I here name only hesitatingly, in order to designate this outside of law and of power, vacant or not,



in which being-together exceeds its own sociality and governmentality. If “freedom” and “equality” represent – on the condition of always being rethought – the minimal conditions of a civil association without any given foundation, “fraternity” might indicate the horizon of this outside of the socio-political. Strictly speaking, it is not even a horizon: it is rather an open breach in every form of horizon and delimitation. This breach is that of meaning or sense: sense in so far as it always refers elsewhere, to an elsewhere, instead of attaching a final signification.

To remain consistent with the preceding statements, however, I must recognize that this fraternity should be understood as a sorority, or even as the dissolution of principle between brothers and the reference this implies on the one hand to the law as the fiction of a connection (and as the uttering of this fiction), and on the other hand to the reality of the transmission and sharing of nourishment, that is to say of the affect through which the substance of the world is ingested and rejected (impulsion/expulsion, impression/expulsion). The sharing of impulsion/expulsion, the communication of affect: this is, once again, sense (sensible, sensual, sentimental).

PERHAPS, THEN, one should say neither “fraternity” nor “sorority” – for exploiting this oversimplified inversion would make sisters the symmetrical counterpart of brothers. But the two sides are not symmetrical: if brothers no doubt are distinct from sisters, the sisters on their part might fraternize with the brothers, in a brotherly and sisterly way. There is no symmetry between the sexes, or if so, only when they are considered exclusively from the point of view of brothers (equality in political, social terms etc.).

“Fraternity” is certainly an insufficient term, even if not necessarily a dangerous one. Nevertheless it is a signal: it alerts us to the fact that the social, juridical and political order cannot assume the register of sense. It can only provide the framework of

sense. But it is essential that it should do so, and that in order to do so, it is able by itself to indicate that it is beyond the law, in a place where sense emerges. ✕

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reference

- 1 Against the law of the Sultan, Scheherazade opposes her imagination, her spirit and her heart; she also acts with the support of her sister Dinarzade. Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Hester eschews the social law of marriage, for which she is sentenced to the pillory and the “scarlet letter”. The Russian anarchists, in particular the women (Vera Zasulich, Olga Lubatovich, etc.), originally conceived their action not so much in political as in human – thus “metaphysical” – terms, in the widest sense (in accordance with the very idea of “anarchism”). Vera Figner writes: “The doctrine that promises the equality, brotherhood, and happiness of all people would truly impress me” (*Mémoires d’une révolutionnaire*, Gallimard, 1939, 258). In *The Bacchae*, the women of Thebes leave the city for the wild forest upon hearing of the return of Dionysus. Needless to say, the list could be continued ... from Sarah laughing at God to Simone Weil, who was able to write, in 1940: “All of the changes that have occurred for the past three centuries bring humanity closer to a situation where there will be absolutely no other source of obedience in the world except the authority of the State” (*Œuvres*, Gallimard, 1999, 382), or the daughters of General Hammerstein, sisters whose story has been so well told by Hans-Magnus Enzensberger.

THE SOLIDARITY OF THE SHAKEN

Historically the concept of solidarity stems – like a number of our political concepts – from Roman law, in which the formulation *obligatio in solidum* designated joint liability for a financial debt. So the concept was initially a rather narrow term in financial law that stated the conditions of a specific form of debt, in which all the cosignatories were in a status of joint liability for a financial debt: if one of the debtors could not repay his debt the other cosignatories would, in other words, be forced to pay his or her part. This juridical, financial sense of solidarity would then continue to live on in legal discourse: we find it for example in the French Encyclopedia and in the famous *Code civil* of Napoleon from 1804.

Etymologically, the roots of the concept of solidarity stretch back to the Latin word *solidus*: a noun designating an entire sum or a solid body. In this sense, the concept of solidarity carries with it the meaning of a certain solidity. To be in solidarity with others is, at the same time, to be a part of a whole which constitutes a solid unity: that is, a unity in which the differences between its particulars have been leveled out into a more or less homogeneous whole. In other words, the concept of solidarity seems to lead us towards an understanding of community that rests upon a common and solid foundation. We would thus be in solidarity with others because we have a solid and common ground under our feet: a common cause, a common debt or a common nature serving as the solidity of our solidarity.

INDIFFERENT WAYS and in different forms we can observe how the concept of solidarity, throughout most of its history, has revolved around precisely this question, namely, what or who constitutes the common ground upon which the solidity of our solidarity can be construed.¹ But is this the only way to conceive of solidar-

ity? Is solidarity forever bound to its solidity, to the question of a solid and common foundation for its unity? Can we in any way understand solidarity beyond these parameters?

ONE OF THE THINKERS who, perhaps most strikingly, tried to develop another conception of solidarity was the Czech philosopher and political dissident Jan Patočka. In his magnum opus, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* from 1976, Patočka developed what he called a “solidarity of the shaken”.²



Jan Patočka

The starting point for his analysis is Martin Heidegger’s insistence in *Being and Time* that human existence, *Dasein*, is always and a priori a being-with: a being-with the world and a being-with others. In other words, our existence is primordially an existence together with other people; we do *not* exist as singular individuals who try to make-contact with others, in a second step or by way of some kind of Hobbesian need. But even though Heidegger’s analyses serve as an important background to Patočka’s understanding of human existence, he is nevertheless critical of Heidegger precisely in regard to his descriptions of the being-with of human existence. To a large extent, this critique revolves around Heidegger’s inability to analyze the specifically political nature of this being-with, or rather, the form of this being-with that constitutes a *political community*.

Taking his bearings from Heidegger’s analyses in *Being and Time*, Patočka sets out to trace the contours of a political community; not, however, by focusing on the paragraphs of *Being and Time* that explicitly deal with the question of the being-with of human existence, but rather on the passages in which Heidegger describes the fundamental attunement of human existence, namely, anxiety. For Heidegger, it is only through anxiety that we are brought before ourselves, that we are confronted with our own finitude and

thus exposed to the abysmal nothingness that our existence rests upon without ever being able to come to rest – the ground without ground that un-grounds us perpetually.

In *Being and Time* the confrontation with our own finitude by and through anxiety is the precondition for a proper existence, the only way in which human existence can tear away the anonymous veil that clouds it in social life. However, the proper, the own, is nothing else than our own nothingness: to exist properly is to realize that the proper is far from any kind of property, that our most proper belonging is nothing but the weight of our own finitude. But even though the “proper” of human existence therefore cannot be equated with a property, a quality or an essence, Heidegger is explicit concerning the fact that this is an experience in and of the singular: “insofar as it ‘is’, death is always essentially my own”.³

FOR PATOČKA, on the other hand, this experience is a collective and historical experience. And even though he retains the formal structure of Heidegger’s analysis of anxiety, it is clear that what he is trying to capture can no longer be equated with the phenomenon of anxiety, at least not exclusively. Patočka will instead describe this as a “loss of meaning” or a “loss of the world”; the vertiginous experience of meaninglessness that we are faced with when each and every stable support in our life collapses.⁴ In fact, for Patočka this meaninglessness is the origin of meaning – it is only by and through the experience of the complete absence of all meaning that the very question concerning meaning becomes meaningful. Meaning is, as he himself puts it, always “an activity which stems from a searching lack of meaning, as the vanishing point of being problematic, as an indirect epiphany”.⁵ Meaning can, in other words, only emerge through a radical destruction of all given meaning, and even then it only appears as something unapparent, as an “indirect epiphany” or as a sudden glimpse of that which withdraws from all given meaning:

it appears as the unapparent gift of the given.

This experience of a loss of meaning is not only something that affects us as individuals, but must, as Patočka emphasizes, be understood as a rupture that has the potential to shake an entire community. According to Patočka, this is in fact precisely what occurred with the establishment of the Greek *polis*. It was only by and through a radical rupture with the earlier mythological order of the world that the Greek *polis* and its auto-legislative order could be born. The groundlessness of this event, that is, its complete rupture with any given meaning and the concomitant search for meaning that it implies, is something that, in Patočka's eyes, lies at the very heart of history, philosophy and politics.

This groundless event is thus what constitutes politics in a proper sense; it constitutes the moment when each and every foundation for the political order must spring from this order itself and not from some distant and mythological ἀρχή. However, this not only holds true for the historical constitution of a given political order; it is also the event from which, according to Patočka, a specific kind of community – a certain form of being-with – can evolve. This is the solidarity that Patočka terms the “solidarity of the shaken”. This solidarity is not constituted, or grouped, around a certain foundation, idea, or ground. It is not constituted by anything or anyone. In fact, the only unifying aspect of this solidarity is found within the abyss of meaning itself, in the fragile and fleeting nothingness of a common loss: in the common loss of a common ground. Consequently, there is nothing solid about this solidarity. On the contrary, it is the seismic shaking of this solidity that constitutes the epicenter of the solidarity in question. This seismic tremor does not however give off the loud rumblings of thunder, but trembles in silence:

The solidarity of the shaken is built up in persecution and uncertainty: that is its front line, quiet, without fanfare or sensation even where this aspect of the ruling Force seeks to seize it. It does not

fear being unpopular but rather seeks it out and calls out quietly, wordlessly.⁶

The call of this solidarity is quiet and wordless, but, in fact, it is not only silent: It is invisible and intangible as well, precisely because it remains beyond sense (it is neither sensible nor sensuous). The solidarity of the shaken transcends sense, it transcends meaning, since it is that which “makes sense”: It stems from an event beyond any given meaning, an event that is the very opening of meaning as such.

To speak of a solidarity beyond sense or meaning does not however imply that the solidarity in question lies beyond the world, or beyond existence. What Patočka is trying to come to terms with is rather a solidarity at the limits of existence and at the limits of experience: the experiences of the limits of existence. As such, it can also be described in terms of a trans-immanence, as a transcendence *within* the immanence of human existence. It is a solidarity within existence, but a solidarity that touches upon and receives its form from the nothingness that is inherent in the human condition.

FOR PATOČKA THIS experience of the limit is – as it is for Heidegger – an experience of our own finitude. To be sure, in anxiety we are confronted with our imminent death, but the limits of human existence, the fragile and forever ungraspable border that demarcates and delineates our self, is something that we encounter not only in anxiety, but in love, art, and thought (this list can certainly be extended): a nothingness that permeates us, however well hidden and concealed it may be in our contemporary world. The solidarity of the shaken is, in other words, a solidarity in and for finitude. It is our shared loss of a stable foundation, our shared insufficiency, which will forever force us outside of ourselves in the direction of other people. Our co-existence with others is for this very reason, as Patočka writes, “entirely founded upon our *insufficiency*: I am not in myself, in my isolation, that which I am “in itself”, in force...”.⁷ This insufficiency is not however a lack that can be overcome, it

is not a void that other people can fill up or complete, but an insufficiency that we are bound to and that we share with others. Our insufficiency is therefore not the mere opposite of a sufficiency. It is rather an insufficiency that, as Maurice Blanchot beautifully puts it, “is not looking for what may put an end to it, but for the excess of a lack that grows ever deeper even as it fills itself up”.⁸

TO CALL FOR A SOLIDARITY of the shaken is thus nothing short of a call for finitude, but a call for finitude in a world that has palliated and repressed death to its vanishing point. This is a call that will forever remain silent, a whisper barely audible in the technoscientific world of globalized capitalism. But in spite of this it remains, as Patočka phrases it, a “no” to the forces and powers that be: the same silent warning and prohibition that Socrates, *daimonion* once pronounced. It is in this rejection that its political potential is contained: it is the rejection that marked the dissidence of Patočka both as a thinker and as a political figure. It is, in short, the solidarity for all of us who lack solidity. ✕

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references

- 1 We find it in Charles Fourier and his utopian understanding of the *Phalanx*; we find it in Mikhail Bakunin's humanistic conception of solidarity; and we find it in Kurt Eisner's “cold and steely” solidarity that is founded upon reason itself.
- 2 Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago: Open Court, 1996).
- 3 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 223, § 47.
- 4 Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 56.
- 5 Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 60-61.
- 6 Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 135.
- 7 Jan Patočka, “Leçons sur la corporeité”, in *Papiers phénoménologiques*, trans. Erika Abrams, (Paris: Jérôme Millon, 1995), 85.
- 8 Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988), 8.

SACRIFICE IS JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR SOLIDARITY IN UKRAINE TODAY

In Ukraine today, “solidarity” means self-dedication and sacrifice – and is more tangible than ever before.

Life in Ukraine today still seems unbelievable to me. This life, in its dramatic or rather tragic fullness, is much too fast to live. The countless Ukrainian lives cut short in the last six months make it especially unbearable. The spiral of violence in Maidan square in the winter of 2013/14 turned into a Russian roulette of war in spring, and then into a twister of terror in the summer. The first three deaths at Maidan were a national tragedy. The daily reports of deaths in the Donbas became a quiet routine, with names rarely mentioned; instead numbers were stated like “200” for the dead, “300” for the wounded.

These countless deaths – along with the spectacular photos of the protests – brought our country to the attention of international media, and guaranteed that this attention would not fade. But one must continuously refuel this interest with newer and more horrifying cases. Statements like “dying for one’s beliefs” or “the Ukrainians paid a high price for their association with the European alliance” reveal the principles of post-Maidan politics between Ukraine and its neighbors Russia and the EU. Ukrainian lives were used as an alternative currency in the “Ukraine crisis” – this is a politics of dead bodies.

YANUKOVYCH’S FLIGHT has cost us hundreds of lives. Daily, dozens of lives are lost fighting the Putinist counter-revolution. The latest EU sanctions are rooted in that silent field somewhere in the Donbas – the crash site of the Malaysian aircraft. Such politics reveals the way the country perceives itself and the way it is perceived. Only a generous package of corpses provides a powerful argument for granting basic rights in a country and to a

country the national sovereignty of which is not taken for granted and where the right to protest against police violence and dictatorship is not self-evident.

The true Ukraine of today is embodied by the soldier of our army. Under a relentless sun, he sits in the trenches with equipment bought by volunteers and awaits the aid that has long since been announced on TV. His corpulent general sits somewhere in his office, his deployment and his location have already been disclosed to pro-Russian squadrons, and the medication in his box was already all sold by corrupt colleagues in the Ministry of Defense in 2003. The only thing this soldier has is Hope and the solidary shoulders of his fellow combatants and helpers, who, like him, stand close to death. It is he who can best assess to what extent solidarity is a core principle of the European vision. He could have done this for some time now, as he probably raised the EU flag at the Maidan barricades in Kiev.

But the political body of the EU is itself in the trenches, trapped by economic interests. In a sense it is asking itself what the point of this Russian-Ukrainian war is, and is reluctant to believe in war against itself. What is actually being attacked here is precisely solidarity as the basis of the European structure. In this sense, solidarity after “Europe’s last war” is more tangible today than ever before. The intention is not to eliminate but to radicalize it.

“YANUKOVYCH’S FLIGHT HAS COST US HUNDREDS OF LIVES. DAILY, DOZENS OF LIVES ARE LOST FIGHTING THE PUTINIST COUNTER-REVOLUTION.”

The European Left – a utopian umbrella term that probably only holds true from the Ukrainian perspective – turned a blind eye to the uprising of the oppressed and, instead, preoccupies itself with idle mind games that oscillate between geopolitics and conspiracy theories. The leftist Subject, which in our minds should stand for “solidarity without borders”, is cozying up with anti-imperialist and anti-American hallucinations. Ignorant of its colonizing mentality, it speculates about the Ukraine question merely as a topic in the daily paper. It thinks nothing of the countless demonstrations in European capitals against the dictatorship and war in the Ukraine, where the only participants are members of the Ukrainian diaspora.

IN THE IMAGINATION of post-heroic Europe, the daily Ukrainian sacrifice lies somewhere outside its sphere of reflection and action. The only thing that helps in the midst of this political isolation is passionate self-dedication and self-sacrifice as a substitute for solidarity. The weakest take on the most difficult task. Their wild sacrifice and self-dedication, to the point of self-destruction, prepares the ground for overcoming anonymous calculations and impulses. Yet this kind of self-sacrifice has to be mitigated. Otherwise, there is a risk that this wild savagery will become the trophy, a historical price that has to be paid in a conflict of globalized politics. My country, the Ukraine, would play the role of an unfortunate and exemplary case in this conflict – including the list of many nameless bodies of the dead. ✘

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Note: This text was written from Ukraine in the fall of 2014.

FINAL REMARKS

“Solidarity is the tenderness of peoples (or nations)”, a saying attributed to Che Guevara, is the best-known formulation of the leftist adoption of the concept of solidarity.¹ The statement was widely used in socialist countries. In the GDR it was often referred to in solidarity campaigns etc. Yet even the link to the iconic figure of “Comandante Che” can hardly obscure the fact that the romanticizing slogan is in tension with the revolutionary aims of Marxism. Despite its appeal to equality and the mitigation of injustice, solidarity is possible only within a structure of inequality – it presupposes inequality but also, in a sense, upholds it. The act of solidarity may indeed soften an all too flagrant hardship and suffering, yet it will not lead to a full equalization of chances and living conditions. Solidarity necessarily involves the rather condescending movement of those ‘who have and give’ towards those who have not (not only in terms of money and commodities, but also including the ‘capital’ of time, energy, resources). Karl Marx, therefore, attaches no great significance to the concept of solidarity.² It runs counter to his idea of revolution, which is meant to abolish and finally overcome all kinds of social inequality and injustice. Solidarity not only seems to presuppose inequality but, within the logic of revolution, it even to some extent prolongs the state of inequality by mitigating social contradictions and alleviating the worst hardships. Solidarity seems to have something in common with the idea of charity, with sympathy and support for those who are neglected. No wonder that Marx can do very little with it – his primary aim is not to better the conditions of people here and now, not some kind of compromise solution that will make harsh injustice a bit milder. His ultimate goal is revolution, and revolution is not concerned with the well-being of those involved in the process, but with the definite and sustainable change of societal conditions.

Yet it is not only his concern for the irreversible and permanent change of

societal conditions that keeps Marx from advocating solidarity. The idea of solidarity also entails an appeal to individual human agency and the individual’s freedom of choice. Marx however insists on historical progress as a necessity. Revolution will be brought about by the iron laws of historical development and by the change of social conditions. It is a process fully independent of morality and responsibility, whereas the appeals for solidarity address exactly these capacities for individual agency.³

NOT SURPRISINGLY, it is Marx’s fierce antagonist, the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who was the most outspoken proponent of solidarity among the leftist thinkers of the 19th century. It is, in fact, one of the leading principles of his thought. For Bakunin, the initiator and the driving force for all revolutionary change is the human being, the individual, not the dependency on a gradual development of mankind in accordance with the objective historical conditions. This conviction is also the guideline for his understanding of solidarity as the basic principle of humanity. No human progress will come from a change of government; even Marx’s dictatorship of the Proletariat will still resemble the old monarchy, because it will be the domination of the masses from the top, the domination by a privileged minority that allegedly knows the interests of the people better than they themselves do. His opposing model is therefore the emancipation from the bottom which will only be attained by the principle of mutual solidarity.

This humanistic approach of universal solidarity and mutual emancipation is somewhat tainted by the fact that Bakunin also built on the concept of race to explain the differences in the development of civilizations. Some of his writings also make heavy use of anti-Semitic clichés. One could feel tempted to overlook this as the expression of personal resentments that do not affect his theoretical approach. Yet these shortcomings in fact seem to hint at a deeper and more general problem.



Bakunin is indeed a detractor of repression by the state and by religion, but his anarchism is itself not free of repressive elements and civilizational preconceptions. Bakunin’s idea of solidarity builds heavily on *essentialist* views of humanity, humanism, morality, enlightenment, etc., all of which are abstract, thereby creating a model of what the individual human being has to be. His theory presupposes a human essence that is necessarily *good*, disregarding the inherent vices and evils of the human condition. Solidarity becomes a solidarity of the “good”; it thereby remains re-affirmative, self-affirmative, and circular in its logic of exclusion. Our discussion is driven back to the issue of overcoming the concept of *solidarity against*.

PERHAPS WE HAVE to concede that any solidarity deserving the name should be the fragile, temporary and uncertain ‘solidity’ of the moment. It should acknowledge that it does not give the answer to any eternal and essential concepts. Solidarity occurs only when insufficiency and finiteness are recognized and acknowledged. The very wound that can neither be negated nor healed is that which reunites us. Solidarity is not confined to reducing the suffering of others because I might find myself in their place at some point; nor is it a co-suffering that makes suffering more endurable because we can share it. Solidarity is something that responds to this wound, the shared experience. In looking for what still is the common bond, communitarianists often refer to a common good: they try to strengthen social responsibility and establish a model of bottom-up solidarity, that is, a solidarity of smaller groups (families, communities) on the level between individuals and the state. But whereas these supposed grass-roots initiatives in the communitarian view tend to operate within a certain political and economic order, driven by the attempt to reshape, rebuild this order according to what is seen as the “common good”, perhaps we should look for some-

thing in solidarity that is beyond political and economic order, not aiming at a new shape but attempting to keep the ontological, political, existential space open. There is no common good, but there is perhaps a common experience, an experience of groundlessness and unrootedness. Counterintuitively, the phenomenon of political and existential groundlessness described is not something that isolates, but, paradoxically, that might enable a true understanding of community. Patočka's quoted "solidarity of the shaken" expresses precisely this: a solidarity of those who have lost their trust in all positive political values such as pacifism, socialism, democracy, etc. which might serve as common goods for reshaping the society. Perhaps the outcome of solidarity counts less than the atmosphere that it creates and in which it unfolds its explosive message. ✘

ludger hagedorn

Note: All texts on solidarity were collected by Ludger Hagedorn in the realm of the research project *Loss of grounds as Common Ground* directed by Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback.

references

- 1 In 2010, Leonardo Boff characteristically held: "Without the solidarity of all towards all and also for Mother Earth, there will be no future for anyone. (...) Che Guevara put it well: *Solidarity is the tenderness of the people*. It is the tenderness that we must give to our suffering brothers and sisters..."
- 2 The word "solidarity" might show up a few times in his huge oeuvre, but it is not connected to any idea, nor does he even come close to developing any systematic approach to the topic.
- 3 The French political philosopher Chantal Millon-Delsol emphasizes precisely this personal involvement in the act of solidarity. She criticizes a widespread tendency, characteristic of the political left, to identify solidarity with equal distribution and to create what she calls "an improbable dream of solidarity free of all human additions" (cf. Chantal Millon-Delsol, "Solidarity and Barbarity", *Thinking in Values*, no. 1/2007, Craców, 79).

review

A missing air force plane. The secret of the Cold War

On Friday June 13, 1952, the Swedish Defense Staff issued the following statement (here in translation):

An aircraft from the Air Force, ordered to carry out a navigation flight above the Baltic Sea in connection with radio operators training, has been missing since around 12 o'clock this Friday.

This statement, partly false, marks the beginning of one of the most significant traumas resulting from Sweden's difficult geo-political position during the Cold War. It implied the loss of eight servicemen and two aircraft, and strained relations with the trans-Baltic neighbor, the Soviet Union.

For a long time, Sweden had maintained a foreign policy of non-alignment with explicit neutrality in the event of war. The Soviet occupation and annexation of the three Baltic states made the Soviet Union a territorial neighbor across the Baltic Sea. With the beginning of the Cold War, Sweden had an interest in being prepared for a possible attack from the East, whereas the possibility of Western intrusion seemed less likely and also less dangerous.

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND the organization of the Soviet military in the Baltic area, different methods were used. One was signals intelligence collection (SIGINT) of radio and radar signals, both indicating communication from and to the location of installations. Given developments in technology, it was deemed necessary to use surveillance aircraft to patrol the Baltic Sea with equipment that could listen to and detect radio communication and radar signals. In 1948, the Air Force Materiel Administration purchased two Douglas DC-3s and had them converted into flying laboratories, one for research and development, the other one for signals intelligence collection. The operations started in 1951, usually one flight a week, suggesting a route in the south-north direction over international waters in the Baltic between the island of Gotland and the Baltic coast at an altitude of 4500 meters. The planes were slow and unarmed, with a staff of 8

Christer Lokind: DC-3:an. Kalla krigets hemlighet [The DC-3: the secret of the Cold War].

Stockholm: Medströms bokförlag, 2014.

