

EDITORIAL

The year 2025 marked the 45th anniversary of the strike at the Gdańsk Shipyard, which sparked significant changes in the social and political landscape of Poland and Europe over the decades that followed. It was in August 1980 that one of the events which ultimately led to the collapse of the Eastern Bloc took place. The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” was formed, but something more was born at that time: a social movement that influenced every aspect of life for the people of Poland and inspired other communities to take action in the pursuit of freedom. It resonated widely across the world, where not only the heroism of the strikers was highlighted, but also their effectiveness, which forced the communists to enter into talks with the with strike leaders.

The significance of the Solidarity movement is also evidenced by its impact on the mobilisation of society in the People’s Republic of Poland in the shorter term, i.e. during the months of 1980 and 1981, until the imposition of martial law. The period known as the *carnival* (a term sometimes questioned because of its symbolic marginalisation of conflicts) was characterised by significant development of initiatives and activities independent of the ruling party bureaucracy. New trade union and social organisations were established, an uncensored press flourished, and music, theatre, and film festivals were organised with programmes that would have been banned in previous decades. Discussions began on the state of the Polish economy, culture, and education, and attempts were made to reinterpret the history of Poland in the 20th century.

Alain Touraine addressed the nature of the movement in his book, which is fundamental to further research on the subject:

Solidarity is a trade union, but of course it is also something more. It is a workers’ movement in factories and today it faces repression precisely in the workplace. Yet it is simultaneously a national movement and a form of struggle for the democratisation of society. Many outside commentators attempt to reduce this movement to one of its dimensions: for some, it is a purely workers’ struggle, inspired by the ideals of socialism, distorted or squandered by regimes derived from Stalinism; for others, it is a continuation of the uprisings of the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Others, finally, regard this

movement as particularly close to their hearts because it explicitly draws on the models of Western democracy, respect for freedom and the pluralism of various political bodies (Touraine, 2010, p. 28).

The French researcher ultimately concludes that all these approaches are equally valid. According to him, Solidarity is “a total social movement, striving to transform all spheres of public life” (Touraine, 2010, p. 29).

The diversity of the paths followed by successive researchers studying the movement is impressive. Suffice it to recall the concept of the *self-limiting revolution* formulated by Jadwiga Staniszkis, who in Solidarity saw the “regaining of inner freedom” (Staniszkis, 2010, p. 10) but also linked it strongly to solidarity as “the defence of those who could not cope, who even today are unable to make effective use of the instruments of freedom, limited only by the freedom of others” (Staniszkis, 2010, p. 11). David Ost, in turn, wrote in the first decade of the 21st century about the defeat of Solidarity, referring to its former leaders’ abandonment of the working class, thereby ceding ground to the populist right (Ost, 2007).

The very concept of solidarity also seems significant in the context of social reality. It is often forgotten in public discourse, as well as in political and economic practice. This was particularly evident during the period of political transformation in Poland, but also in many other instances, such as the inequalities that have emerged between the global South and the global North. Every hegemony, however, carries within it its own negation, and at times of greatest inequality, ideas and concepts emerge that, by appealing to a sense of community, mutual support, and shared responsibility, can lead to significant change, as exemplified by the history of Solidarity. The universality of this concept is also evidenced by the array of disciplines in which it is employed. It appears to be present across the entire field of the humanities and social sciences, as illustrated by the texts included in this volume. There are studies demonstrating the wealth of research topics related to the history of this movement and its significance, both in local terms and on a broader, nationwide scale.

The chronological scope is also very broad, as it encompasses both the origins of the movement and its influence on the development of various attitudes in the subsequent decades. The articles included in the volume demonstrate the multi-faceted nature of research on the subject of Solidarity.

The first text, by Jan Hlebowicz, concerns the figure of Marek Latoszek and the concept of the Pomeranian Model of Active Defence, of which he was a co-founder². Latoszek was a prominent figure in the local academic community as a sociologist associated with the Medical Academy. The concept of the Pomeranian Model of Active Defence (abbreviated in Polish as PMOC) was based on the role of regional communities in shaping political opposition in the People’s Republic of Poland, in contrast to the dominant focus of much research on the Workers’ Defence Committee

² Alongside Lech Mażewski and Wojciech Turek.

(KOR) opposition. The author compares it with Ernesto Laclau's concept of the "chain of equivalence", and also points to further possible areas of research for future scholars.

In the following article, Alicja Sadownik tackles an unusual topic by weaving solidarity into the field of early childhood education and seeking out practices of solidarity carried out in everyday activities. The setting in which the author conducted her research is the "Panienka z Okienka" Nursery School in Gdańsk. She based her work on narrative and mosaic research methods. The text highlights forms of solidarity experienced in the nursery school, including solidarity with local values, with children as a group and as individuals, with nature, and with the city. Reconstructing these areas allows the author to conclude that "the treasures of solidarity have not been lost or displaced" but have merely changed form.

Another text also keeps the reader in the realm of education. Its author, Anna Siekierska, sets her narrative in the years 1980–1983 and addresses the influence of teachers associated with the opposition on schoolchildren in Gdańsk. The author highlighted forms of youth activity, such as student councils and calls for educational reform. She also analysed the attitudes of schoolchildren based on a report commissioned by the Provincial Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in Gdańsk, the findings of which were not favourable to those who commissioned it. The report concluded that there was a need for ideological and educational work based on a programme and attractive methods.

Jan Hlebowicz's article addresses the topic of *The Situation in Independent Youth Circles of the Tricity Following the Spring–Summer Strikes of 1988*. The author analyses the activities of a range of organisations such as the Federation of Fighting Youth, the "Freedom and Peace" Movement, the Alternative Society Movement, as well as groups centred around magazines. The author highlights the generational conflict between young activists and representatives of the older generation of oppositionists. This generational divide influenced the strategy for further action. Youth organisations organised demonstrations and happenings, rejecting the possibility of negotiations with representatives of the regime. Meanwhile, "old Solidarity" leaders sought an agreement with the authorities and were preparing for a possible political transformation.

Whilst earlier articles refer to the broadly understood phenomenon of Solidarity and its social consequences, Zygmunta Barańska addresses a different issue in her article on *Natural Population Changes in the Parish of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Dolne Miasto and Olszynka Districts of Gdańsk From 1947 to 2018*. The author takes the readers back to two districts of Gdańsk, analysing demographic processes on the basis of parish registers, which she characterises as a significant source of data given the continuity of records and repeatability of the information they contain. She also acknowledges their limitations, as that they do not cover the entire population of the studied area and have gaps in some of the data.

Despite these shortcomings, the source material made it possible to provide an approximate characterisation of demographic processes, which differed only slightly from the trends observed in other parts of the region.

Zbigniew Cywiński and Ewa Maria Kido focused on municipal housing in Gdańsk, drawing on a number of examples from the Wrzeszcz district. Cywiński points to a sentimental motivation for taking up this topic, as, after beginning his studies in the mid-20th century, he lived in a room of one of those flats. The text brings together plans, photographs and illustrations depicting individual buildings in different years, illustrating the passage of time, which is difficult to perceive over a short term.

Another text by Zbigniew Cywiński is autobiographical in nature, reconstructing the various stages of his life. He begins by describing his family against the backdrop of the history of the Second Polish Republic, the Second World War and the post-war period. He also recalls the successive stages of his work at the Gdańsk University of Technology, linked to the attainment of successive academic degrees and titles. The author describes his various professional trips in a particularly engaging manner, offering a broader perspective on the fields of science, culture, and industry in different countries. The article concludes with a series of universal reflections on the nature of the world.

The places where Solidarity was born, viewed from women's perspective, are the subject of a conversation between Iwona Zając and Anna Miler. The interviewees discuss the herstory of the Shipyard, as well as archival and documentary work and the everyday lives of shipyard workers, both male and female, going beyond the dominant narrative of strikes and political upheavals. Particular attention is paid to the activities of amateur artistic groups, cultural institutions operating at the Shipyard, and the relationships between work, culture, and social memory. The conversation presents the Gdańsk Shipyard as a place of production, but also as a space for forging social bonds, grassroots cultural activity, and individual creative expression.

The Proceedings of the Academic Seminar Organised by the Gdańsk Scientific Society and the University of Gdańsk, 22 May 2025 contain presentations by six researchers conducting research in various fields of science. Klemens Bruski discussed the issue of the royal coronations in 1025, paying particular attention to their historical context and significance. Tomasz Puzyn focused on the problem of artificial intelligence in the context of chemical risks to humans and nature. Maria Mendel outlined the concept of "blue pedagogical thought" centred on water as a metaphor for the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Joanna Fac-Beneda also chose water as the subject of her presentation, citing data on its chemical and physical properties and its significance in other areas of human life. Lidia Wolska discussed issues related to the impact of climate change on human health and the challenges arising from the need for mitigation measures. Katarzyna Szepietowska presented the potential applications of mechanics and computational medicine in the treatment of hernias and the design of modern surgical implants.

An important text in the context of preserving the memory of the University of Gdańsk and its staff is a biographical sketch by Józef Żerko. It is devoted to Andrzej Plukis, a member of the Gdańsk pedagogy department. The author reconstructs the successive stages of Andrzej Plukis' life and professional career, from his studies

in Fabianki, Włocławek, and Bydgoszcz, and at the Higher School of Pedagogy in Gdańsk, to his work at the University of Gdańsk. In his work, Plukis focused primarily on issues of social pedagogy, educational theory, and child care, particularly in the context of family functioning, parents' educational attitudes, and the care system for children requiring support. Another significant area of his interest was the issue of violence among children and young people, as well as the functioning of emergency care services. Żerko highlights not only the researcher's academic and teaching achievements, but also his social commitment, organisational activities and reputation as a highly regarded academic teacher and educator.

The penultimate article is a report from the conference on *A Good Climate. Academic Communities in Solidarity for an Eco-Community*, which took place on 28 November 2025. The author, Szymon Gronowski, presented the proceedings of the event, which focused on the role of academic communities, science and the arts in reflections on climate crisis and building an "eco-community". The text discusses presentations by researchers representing various academic disciplines, discussions on environmental humanities, and education in the Anthropocene, as well as the artistic activities accompanying the conference. The report presents the conference as a forum for interdisciplinary dialogue on the relationship between humans and the natural environment, and as an attempt to seek new forms of responsibility towards society and the environment.

In the final text, the reader will find a review of the "Signatures" exhibition by Maria Mendel and Tomasz Szkudlarek. The authors interpret the works presented at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk as an artistic commentary on the most pressing issues of our time, namely the climate crisis, relations of domination, and responsibility for our shared world. In their reflections, they draw inspiration from the thought of Jacques Derrida, Jacques Rancière, and Emmanuel Levinas, focusing on concepts such as signature, responsibility, and commonality. The review presents the exhibition as an example of engaged art, which not only interprets reality but also provokes reflection on the ways in which people, nature, and social space coexist.

Bibliography

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