



How did „SOLIDARITY” logo come into being

I was living in Gdansk, when in August 1980 the Lenin Gdansk Shipyard went to strike it was absolutely not indifferent to me. Ever since the first days of the strike, I would stand at the Gate No. 2 in the constantly growing crowd of strike supporters. Subsequently I managed to get a pass authorizing me to enter the premises of the shipyard, and there I was, right in the middle of the strike until its very end. I came home late at night to get some sleep. I observed the course of events close up - incredible emotions, Polish flags, speeches, open discussions, singing together, tears.

This direct clash with democracy, for the first time in my life, came to me as a shock. Facing all this I knew that I had to do something, express my emotions somehow, support the strikers. I am a graphic designer, so I wanted to express myself in a poster or a sign. I was looking for symbols - I thought of the gate of the shipyard which did not divide, on the contrary it unified the protesters. I also considered flags or flowers. I started with writing down the strikers' slogans written on the walls, where the word Solidarność (engl.: solidarity) was repeated in all possible forms: "only in solidarity", "our solidarity", "in solidarity with". It quickly became obvious to me, also thanks to a suggestion of my friend, the young poet Krzysztof Kasprzyk, that this word illustrated everything. In the evening, in my flat in Morena, I started trying how the word could be best expressed graphically and with which typeface. I wasn't particularly happy with my trials. And suddenly it hit me that the word should be handwritten, with paint and a brush, like the slogans on the walls. I started to link the letters, such as people linked together like being links of a chain - in solidarity. On a DIN A5 format paper I wrote with a small brush and red color: SOLIDARNOSĆ. I put the letters even closer together which was to symbolize solidary people sticking together. The accents were to bring associations with the people's heads. The flag had its best proportions on the letter "N". At the third attempt I succeeded the right proportions and dynamics of the sign.

On August 20th I presented the project at the Gdansk shipyard and it was agreed to disseminate it for strike purposes. However, there were no technical capabilities, no paper for copying and thus I turned to my friends for help. Andrzej Popiel elaborated suitable printing plates at the Gdansk University of Technology, Ania and Tadeusz Strzelczyk restarted their small screen printing studio in Sopot, somebody brought paint. We made the first printouts, manually, slowly. The paper was provided by everyone whoever had any. We were printing the sign with the caption "GDANSK August '80 on A5, later on also on A3. Many people helped. Every single day until the end of the strike, we printed 100-200 exemplars. Quite by the way, the poster "21 x YES" came into being. I prepared the design hastily, according to the concept of Krzysztof Kasprzyk I have already mentioned. We printed about 50 A3 copies. Also some T-shirts with the "Solidarność" sign were produced.

The first A5 Print-out I brought to the shipyard, which I preserved to this day, was signed by Lech Walesa, Anna Walentynowicz, Henryka Krzywonos and somebody from the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee (polish: MKS). And that is how it all began.

I transferred further copies in the shipyard to Krzysztof Wyszowski and Bogdan Borusewicz. The sign appeared in the BHP-hall, where MKS-sessions were held and on the gate of the shipyard. I helped to paper the walls of a small room, prepared for a meeting with representatives of the government, with them. Copies were scattered in the crowds at the gate, to be snapped up right away. Some of the copies reached the shipyard in Gdynia. The sign started to circulate. Thanks to the presence of international media the sign appeared in other countries sooner than in Poland, completely blocked at the time.

Later on, after the agreement had already signed, I heard from the press that my sign had become the logo of the newly established Independent and Self-Governing Labour Union "Solidarność".

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