

FILM

“SOLIDARITY, SOLIDARITY”

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The 25th anniversary of post-communist Polish Uionon has been celebrated by thirteen directors, in making “Solidarity, Solidarity” (Poland, 2005, colour, 113 mins), produced by Michal Kwiecinski and Dariusz Jablonski. Each film has a reference to the ‘Solidarity’ movement and events of August 1980. The first contribution by Juliasz Machulski has a sound track of the din of demonstrations. Mark who makes TV films, pursues on going projects, while Andrej covers soccer in Germany. The producer instructs them to write a screenplay on the 25th anniversary of ‘Solidarity’. The change of living is owed to ‘Solidarity’. A Japanese vendor sells ‘sushi fish’ in Warsaw. Andrej Jakimowski’s sketch portrays two thieves on a train, stealing a satchel from a sleeping passenger, sitting on the opposite seat. The man wakes up but does not realize that his bag has been interchanged. In the adjacent compartment, the thieves pull out from the stolen satchel, papers and leaflets on the shipyard strike. When the train stops, one of the pilterers is attached by goons on the platform, and put under handcuffs. The leaflets are thrown out from the passing train.

Robert Glinski focuses on the Gdansk shipyard. There is a strike action against socialism of the land. Leaflets are printed and distributed. Loudspeakers plea for not going on strike. The secret service distributes leaflets from helicopters denouncing the strike. Lech Walesa receives a tumultuous reception at the shipyards, after the Gdansk agreements are signed. The work has been paralyzed, and the halls, docks, cranes, and passages are inactive and deserted. In the episode by Feliks Falk, the ‘Solidarity’ demands are written with oxide on bill boards. The unions insist on the acceptance of free Trade Unions, and individuals recite demands, at work place. The iron gates are closed with New Testament icons and flowers. The police march. Jerzy Domaradzki describes students viewing the bill boards of original demands, some years later. The bill boards have entered the UNESCO Register of World Cultural Heritage.

Some quarry mine workers are inside the mines of Androdel Cuarca, while other miners are drilling above the caves, in Jan Jakub Kolski’s episode. Radio news broadcasts declare Lech Walesa’s victory. The miners speculate return to new Poland, pay rise, more goods to purchase, and scope for building houses. In Filip Bajon’s contribution, a man awaits a train for going to the coast. He carries a jerrycan of inflammables, as his wife has telephoned him about gas shortage on the Coast. The train is quite empty, and the few fellow passangers are going to Gdansk. Some passengers are curious over the jerrycan of gas. The man explains he loves heat, fire, and metaphysics. The other passengers are going to the shipyard to avoid provocation. One passenger throws the jerrycan out of the window. The wife of the man, who was the owner of the jerrycan, waits at the station, as there was no gas in the town. Piotr Trzaskalski portrays Janusz, a middle aged man, who manufactures and sells ball point pens, bearing the Pope’s visage. In December 1983, he sold more than 35,000 pens. News items on TV and in newspapers emphasize freedom and end of secret service. Janusz’s wife

experiences long queues on front of food shops; but there was no butter, margarine and eggs. Janusz buys five hundred postcards, with the Pope's photo.

Krzysztof Zanussi records the first year of 'Solidarity' in December 1980. Russian tanks are part of the Warsaw Pact training on the Polish border. Strikes and demonstrations continue. Zanussi is shooting a film on the entry of Russian and Polish tanks in Cracow of 1945. The foreign ministry of Warsaw instructs that the red star will not be put on the tanks. General Jeruzelski imposes martial law in Poland. Zanussi's film was premiered at the birth place of the Pope. Tourists visit the shipyards. An old man cycles to the harbour. The dredgers and tankers are idle. The atmosphere is of "Solidarity today, success tomorrow". The camera shifts to a statue of Lenin in the museum. The Pope recalls the dark days of Gomulka in 1968. On the streets and in the shipyards of Gdansk, there are demonstrations and marches against food price rises. The police clamp down on protestors, and beat up demonstrators. Only slogans are left now. Teenagers steal from passersby. There is a live footage of Lech Walesa on a solidarity train to Gdansk. Three singers implore against enslavement, and to fight with dignity.

Jacek Bromski describes Teresa and Roman, who were earlier activists against the regime, now find 'Solidarity' is no more. There is no more common cause; only power and lust for jobs and shares remain. The couple withdraw cash from a bank. They were refused credit twice earlier. The Bank President recalls that Roman was given a prison term, some years ago. Disappointed in politics, the couple are now in business, Democracy is equal opportunity for all; but law and democracy are morally neutral. Presently capitalism is fierce, with leftist feelings. Ryszard Bugajski follows a music video format, where a father recounts his own life to his son, in explaining the spread of 'Solidarity'. The name of the movement is written on white bill boards with red paint. From Gdansk strikes to the Supreme Court registering Independent Unions, the narrative arrives at the dates for massive demonstrations on anniversary of December 1980 riots. The 'Solidarity' bill boards were later auctioned.

Andrzej Wajda portrays the protagonists of his films, "Man of Marble" and "Man of Iron", Krystyna Janda and Jerzy Radziwillowicz, visiting a photo exhibition on Gdansk. On the 50th anniversary of the communist revolution, could the 'Iron Man' be called 'Man of Hope' or 'Man of Conscience'? There are discussions on how to get bread through freedom. Three film scripts show 'Solidarity' in conflict and fragmented. The film makers sit in an empty auditorium. Malgorzata Szumowska describes the growing up of a girl with the political and social developments. The girl was seven years old, at the birth of Solidarity's first free elections. During mass in church, people would raise two fingers as victory sign. Important talks would take place in the kitchen. The girl's friend is scared—her father was a policeman who lost his job, and later imprisoned. As the girl grows up, the high school celebrates Solidarity victory. The girl is now thirty years, in a free country, but with road to nowhere. Her father did not get any high post, and now stays at home. "Solidarity, Solidarity" pursues a dramatic style without any experimentation. Each segment tries to integrate the people of Poland, where witnesses speak, or become heroes. The anthology of short films raise the question : 'After Solidarity what?' The film was screened at the Kolkata film Festival (Nov. '06). □□□

