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**TIMELESS AND GLOBAL NATURE OF JÓZEF TISCHNER'S SOLIDARITY
CONCEPT – THE PHILOSOPHY OF BROTHERHOOD FOR THE STRICKEN**

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Abstract: This article aims to validate the research thesis concerning the enduring nature, relevance, and universality of Józef Tischner's concept of solidarity. Tischner himself defined it as a form of "brotherhood for the stricken", and this article aims to demonstrate its global significance, despite its origins in Poland during the specific socio-political circumstances of the real socialist era. The first research goal is to analyse the figure of Józef Tischner and his activities during the emergence of the unprecedented ISGTU "Solidarity" movement in Poland. Another goal is to show the most significant elements of the philosophy of solidarity he created, understood as the solidarity of consciences, the solidarity of hope and the brotherhood for the stricken. The last goal is to indicate the global context of Tischner's philosophy of solidarity concerning challenges and threats such as: the refugee and migrant crisis, the vision of the European Union's future as a community, the COVID-19 pandemic, and Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The authors of this article employed various research methods and techniques, including historical analysis, source examination, content analysis, and secondary analysis of relevant literature, to attain their stated objectives.

Key words: Józef Tischner; Tischner; solidarity; the philosophy of solidarity; the spirit of solidarity; the solidarity of consciences; the solidarity of hope; the brotherhood for the stricken.

1. Introduction

It was not without a reason that Józef Tischner – Polish priest and philosopher – was called the chaplain of the ISTGU “Solidarity” social movement or the chaplain of solidarity. Tischner considered solidarity the overriding imperative, which should be a signpost in everyday life. Nevertheless, his ideas pertained to social solidarity, which were not confined to a straightforward and readily definable concept or a preconceived ethical theory. Rather, they represented a nebulous notion, intuitively grasped by the participants of the "Solidarity" movement, evolving during a challenging era marked by the consolidation of real socialism in Poland, dependence on the USSR, and the imposition of martial law. The popularity of this philosophy meant that, over time, the movement itself took on an increasingly Christian character, and its base became Christian spirituality with the canon of values based on the potential of human consciences as the most profound solidarity – as claimed by Tischner – it is precisely the solidarity of consciences. “Solidarity is a closeness – it is a brotherly feeling for those who have been struck down” (Tischner 1982, 9), and as such, it does not pass away, is shaped by circumstances and, ultimately, is timeless.

This article aims to validate the research thesis concerning the enduring nature, relevance, and universality of Józef Tischner's concept of solidarity. Tischner himself defined it as a form of “brotherhood for the stricken”, and this article aims to demonstrate its global significance, despite its origins in Poland during the specific socio-political circumstances of the real socialist era.

Therefore, the first research goal is to analyse the figure of Józef Tischner and his activities during the emergence of the unprecedented ISGTU “Solidarity” movement in Poland. Another goal is to show the most significant elements of the philosophy of solidarity he created, understood as the solidarity of consciences, the solidarity of hope and the brotherhood for the stricken. The last goal is to indicate the global context of Tischner’s philosophy of solidarity concerning such challenges and threats as the refugee and migrant crisis, the vision of the European Union’s future as a community, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.

The authors intended to answer the following research questions. What factors determined the formation of solidarity in the period of real socialism in Poland? What components of the philosophy of solidarity indicate its timeless nature? Is the concept of the philosophy of solidarity valid despite the political transformation in Poland and the global change in the balance of power? In what context and dimension is solidarity compatible with the global challenges of the third decade of the 21st

century? Where is the phenomenon of the timelessness of the philosophy of brotherhood for the stricken?

In order to be able to answer these questions, the authors of this article employed various research methods and techniques, including historical analysis, source examination, content analysis, and secondary analysis of relevant literature, to attain their stated objectives. Historical methods helped follow the origins of Tischner's concept, including determining the conditions of his work as a priest and philosopher and then as a public activist. The analysis of sources and content made it possible to reconstruct the main elements of the concept of Tischner's philosophy of solidarity. A secondary analysis of the literature on the subject supported the conclusions regarding the timelessness and topicality of Tischner's ideas.

2. Józef Tischner – priest and philosopher

Józef Tischner was born in an intelligentsia family on March 12, 1931, in Stary Sącz, Poland. He spent his childhood in the Podhale villages of Łopuszna, Raba Wyżna and Rogoźnik, where his father (Józef), a teacher seminar graduate, worked as a manager and teacher in public schools, and his mother (Weronika) was a teacher. In 1937, he started attending a primary school, took advantage of clandestine education, and then attended Seweryn Goszczyński's Gymnasium and High School in Nowy Targ. In 1949 he passed his matriculation exams. Even then, he planned to enter the theological seminary, but his family advised him against it (Tischner.pl, n.d. a). Under its influence, he decided to study philosophy, but because of a coincidence, he began studying law at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (Tischner and Karoń-Ostrowska 2015).

However, in 1950, he transferred to the Faculty of Theology of Cracow university (liquidated in 1954) and joined the Major Theological Seminary of the Archdiocese of Cracow. On June 26, 1955, he was ordained a priest in the Wawel Cathedral and served for several months. At the end of 1955, he began philosophical studies at the Christian Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw, and from 1957 he continued them at the Jagiellonian University, where in 1959, under the supervision of Prof. Roman Ingarden, he wrote a thesis on Cardinal Mercier's philosophy of cognition and received his master's degree (Tischner.pl, n.d. e). From 1955, he actively published – initially scientific articles and reviews, then monographs and collections of essays; he also shared his reflections in magazines (including “Tygodnik Powszechny”, “Znak”, “Przekrój”) (Secler 2014, 51-98). In 1963, he defended his doctoral dissertation on the transcendental “I” in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl (Tischner 2006a) and began lecturing at the Cracow Seminary. In 1972 (formally in 1974), he obtained the degree of doctor habilitated based on a thesis on the

phenomenology of egoic consciousness (Tischner 2006b), contributed to by foreign trips (to Vienna – Austria and especially a scholarship in Leuven – Belgium) (Tischner.pl, n.d. b).

He continued his scientific work at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology (since 1981, the Pontifical Academy of Theology), at the Jagiellonian University, at the State Higher School of Theatre in Cracow, at the Viennese Institute of Human Sciences (of which he was a co-founder and president) and at the Collegium Invisible established in 1995 (Tischner.pl, n.d. c). At the same time, he was active as a priest. He was a respected preacher, chaplain and retreat giver; his homilies (also those for pre-schoolers) were very popular (Bonowicz 2022, 343-351). He collaborated with various circles, especially the Cracow intelligentsia; he remembered his roots and took special care of Podhale (Tischner 1994). He was honoured with two honorary doctorates (by the University of Lodz in 1995 and by the Pedagogical University in Cracow in 1996). In 1999, he received the oldest and highest state decoration of the Republic of Poland – the Order of the White Eagle (Prezydent.pl 1999). He died on June 28, 2000, in Cracow.

3. “Solidarity” chaplain

Communism marked almost all of Józef Tischner’s adult life. It strongly influenced both his pastoral activity and philosophical considerations. As he emphasised: “We had problems with our homeland” (Tischner 1991, 6).

From the first years after the end of World War II, despite the initial appearances, the new Polish authorities sought to reduce the social influence of the Catholic Church, marginalise the position of religion and its institutions in public life, and declaratively separate the state and the church, and in fact, entirely subordinate the church to the state (Dudek 2004; Kunicki 2009). The Polish People’s Republic’s decision-makers perceived Catholicism as a threat to the communist ideology – a carrier of alternative ideas and considered churches a potential shelter for any opposition movements. The authorities pursued these goals with a vast catalogue of measures used against the church as an institution, priests as its representatives and citizens professing Catholicism.

The repressions against the Catholic Church included, in particular, the creation of legal and administrative barriers, control of the sources of financing of the institution, attempts to politicise the church and filling positions in the hierarchy of the clergy by the authorities (e.g. under the decree of 1953, filling clergy positions in the church required “the prior consent of the competent state’s authorities”) (Dekret 1953), liquidation of church-related institutions (in 1950, the charity organisation Caritas was liquidated) or attempts to conflict the Polish clergy with the Holy See

(Korbonski 1994, 1-8). Political and administrative control over the church was confirmed in the constitution adopted on July 22, 1952, which emphasised that “the church is separate from the state. The principles of the relationship between the state and the church as well as the legal and property situation of religious associations, are defined by acts”, adding cautiously that “the abuse of freedom of conscience and religion for purposes detrimental of the interests of the Polish People’s Republic is punishable” (Konstytucja 1952). Repressions were also applied directly to priests, who were subject to surveillance, arrests and internment (in 1953, Primate Stefan Wyszyński was interned) (Misztal 2004, 28-45). Attempts were made to divide the pastoral environment (Chmielecki 2019, 299-301). The authorities also organised show trials of clergy accused of treason and espionage. In 1952, in such a trial, among others, Czesław Kaczmarek, Bishop of Kielce, was sentenced to death as a Vatican spy. In 1953, four priests from the Cracow Curia were sentenced to death, life imprisonment or long prison terms for allegedly spying for the United States (Noszczak 2010, 155-156). In the following years, under a resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Polish People’s Republic, theological faculties at Polish universities were closed. The freedom of religion declared by the authorities actually meant removing faith from the public space, dismissing catechists from schools, priests from hospitals or prisons and limiting the teaching of religion in schools, as well as discrimination and harassment of Catholics, manifested, among others, in the lack of access to higher positions (Dudek 1995, 29-35). The persecution was not stopped by the agreement of April 14, 1950, regulating mutual relations concluded between the Polish authorities and representatives of the Catholic Church in Poland (Opoka 2001), nor by the *Non possumus* memorial of the Polish bishops of May 8, 1953, who opposed repressions and attempts to subordinate the church to the state (Episkopat Polski 1953), or even by the oath of allegiance to Polish People’s Republic and its authorities took by the Episcopate at the end of 1953 (Noszczak 2008, 93-98).

These events occurred in the first phase of state repressions against the church, dating from 1945 to 1956. During this period, Tischner decided to start theological studies and enter the Seminary and was ordained a priest. Although in 1956-1957, there was a relative normalisation of relations between the authorities of the Polish People’s Republic and the church (Dudek 1995, 185-199), the following years were again marked by the repressive course of the regime’s religious policy. The authorities still intended to limit the church’s independence and marginalise its position in Polish society. Therefore, administrative instruments were used again (attempts to confiscate church property, lack of consent for the construction of new sacral buildings, unfavourable taxation for the clergy) (Mażewski 2015, 111-119), personnel matters were influenced, priests were harassed (e.g. by conscripting them to the army, rarely by arrests), religious symbols in the public space were removed (ban on hanging

crosses) and the secularisation of society was intensified (Marek and Bortlik-Dźwierzynska 2014, 35-72); anti-church propaganda was also strengthened. The culmination of the 1960s relations between the state and the church was the competition in celebrating the Millennium of the Polish State – the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland. The fundamental task of the state authorities was to prepare a more attractive secular celebration programme and the security apparatus – to hinder the organisation of religious ceremonies, disrupt them and repress their participants. Church celebrations, however, gained more public interest (Dudek and Gryz 2006, 2017-250).

The authorities were aware of the slight chance of success in further rivalry. The awareness of defeat and socio-economic tensions that forced political changes led to a thaw in bilateral relations in the 1970s. This decade was characterised by an intensification of dialogue between the Polish Episcopate and the authorities, one of the conditions for which was attempts to renew relations with the Vatican. Their nature, however, was strictly controlled by the state apparatus. At the same time, some administrative barriers towards the church were abolished (granting property ownership, changes in tax regulations, slightly greater acceptance of applications for permission to build church buildings), and harassment against the clergy was limited (Bankowicz 2016, 328-329). A breakthrough event of this period was the election as Pope of Karol Wojtyła in 1979, with whom Tischner had already become acquainted during his education at the theological seminary. The decision to fill this position with a citizen of a country from behind the Iron Curtain had wide-ranging consequences. As it drew the world's attention to the marginalised and persecuted church in Poland, it caused consternation at the highest levels of government (Anusz and Anusz 1994, 48-56). The mass celebrated in the Vatican by the new Pope was broadcast on Polish television for the first time in history. Despite opposition from the authorities, the first pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland took place in 1979. Thus, the regime's efforts to limit the church's influence on society failed; on the contrary, Poles gained an essential ally in the struggle for independence.

Thus, Tischner performed his priestly ministry in conditions that were difficult for the Catholic Church and, at times, even dangerous for the Polish clergy. Notably, the oppressive nature of the system implemented and developed in Poland after 1945 was directed at the church and, above all, at the whole society. The state's dependence and docility to Moscow as the governing centre of the USSR, limited opportunities for the citizens to participate in political life, the inefficiency of the centrally controlled economy (primarily rapid increases in the prices of products with their insufficient supply), increasing interference in the private life of Poles, e.g. through strengthened censorship, surveillance and repression of potential and imaged "enemies of the people", regularly led to civil disobedience and rebellion. The first general strike and street

demonstrations in Poland occurred in June 1956 in Poznań. Although the authorities brutally suppressed them, their aftermath – as well as Stalin’s death, political changes in the USSR and the crisis in the ruling Polish United Worker’s Party – became the Polish October ’56, which resulted in a short-term thaw (Kemp-Welch 2006, 1266-1276). While Tischner watched the June protests only with interest in the press, he actively participated in the October events. He participated in rallies and marches, lectures and public debates and co-created protest banners (Bonowicz 2020, 212-214). In 1968, Tischner observed the March students’ demonstrations brutally pacified by the regime and the growing anti-Semitic campaign (Eisler 1998). At that time, he adopted the paradigm of being apolitical, and because of his scientific work, he tried to be neutral (Bonowicz 2022, 299). The Episcopate also maintained a restrained attitude during this period. It admittedly supported the protesting youth but did not want to get involved in the internal crisis. This position led to more pragmatic state-church relations (Dudek 1995, 224-227). Tischner observed the December 1970 workers’ protests on the Baltic coast from a similar perspective (Lukowski 2006, 303). Nevertheless, as Wojciech Bonowicz emphasised, “Tischner then saw something that he had not realised so clearly before: that neutrality can also be a fault” (Bonowicz 2020, 299). Moreover, he knew about the support other priests gave the protesters at that time (Dudek and Gryz 2006, 355-356). Gradually, the role of the church as an institution of civil society was strengthened (Anusz 2004, 61-62).

The economic and social crisis deepened in the following years, and Tischner’s position also changed. In June 1977, another wave of workers’ protests (Radom, Ursus, Płock) was triggered by the government’s announcement of a drastic increase in food prices (Bernhard 1987). In July 1980, in the face of another increase in the prices of basic products, workers in the Lublin region started strikes, and a wave of opposition gradually spread throughout the country. In August this year, the Free Trade Unions of the Coast, founded in 1978, joined the protests. The strikers in the Gdańsk Shipyard demanded, among others, the reinstatement of Anna Walentynowicz and Lech Wałęsa (later leader of ISGTU “Solidarity” and the president of Poland), who were dismissed due to their trade union activities, pay rises and commemoration of the victims of the 1970 protests. Despite reaching a partial agreement and trying to break the strike, in the following days, it not only continued but also spread (initially on the coast and then in other parts of the country). Even then, its key slogan was solidarity. Subsequent inter-enterprise strike committees were formed, which acquired, among others, financial support from foreign trade unions. On August 17, the leaders of the committees announced a 21-point list of demands agreed upon with the strikers. They included, in particular, the possibility of creating free trade unions and economic, labour and social issues. It was also demanded to respect the constitutionally defined freedom of speech, printing and publication,

abandon the repressions used so far in this regard and release political prisoners. Although the regime harassed the strikers and tried to limit the wave of protests, it started negotiations with its leaders. On August 31, the government accepted all the presented demands and signed the so-called August agreements; the strike ended (Ascherson 1982, 145-194; Kennedy 1991, 49-83; Garton Ash 2022, 41-72). The August events resulted in a relative liberalisation of the state, brutally finished with the declaration of martial law in December 1981. The leaders of the August workers' and social uprising, soon after the agreements with the authorities, formed the founding committees of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity", and on September 24, 1980, they submitted an application to the court for the registration of the first national trade union. This happened on November 10, 1980. In the following years, ISGTU "Solidarity" became a driving force and a symbol of the Polish struggle for freedom, which in 1989 led to fundamental changes in the country and the region.

Tischner observed the August events from a distance. Not only was he abroad at that time, but he also initially doubted the strikers' victory. So he received the subsequent event with surprise and then – with hope. In September, he returned to Poland. In October, he was asked to preach during a mass in the Wawel Cathedral, attended by activists of the newly created organisation visiting the country's south. He delivered his most famous homily, defining solidarity: "What does it mean to be in solidarity? It means to carry the burden of another person. (...) solidarity does not need to be imposed from the outside by force. This virtue is born of itself, spontaneously, from the heart" (Tischner 1984, 2-3). Referring to the current situation in the country, he pointed out that solidarity does not need either enemies or opponents. Moreover, Poles want to be a united nation, "but not united by fear". "What we are living through is not only a social or economic event but one that above all touches us personally. The problem impinges upon human dignity, human dignity that is based on the conscience of human being. The deepest solidarity is solidarity of consciences" (Tischner 1984, 4), he concluded.

This sermon was printed in "Tygodnik Powszechny". Encouraged to deepen his philosophical reflection on the latest events, Tischner published subsequent chapters in this magazine week after week. "The Spirit of Solidarity" was created and published in August 1981 in a compact form by the "Znak" publishing house. Tischner became inseparably connected with the "Solidarity" movement through his wider public activity. In February 1981, he preached another sermon for the participants of the Rural "Solidarity" Congress of Podhale, Spisz and Orawa. In September 1981, he attended the 1st National Congress of Delegates of ISGTU "Solidarity"; his sermon delivered at the main mass was included in the official convention documents. He emphasised then: "There has never been anything like this before. (...) For the first time in

our history, we have undertaken work on work on such a scale” (NSZZ Solidarność 1981). In the following years, he participated in the celebrations organised by the Union and the works of its bodies. In 1988, he took part in a meeting of the leadership of “Solidarity”, to which its advisers and intellectuals who supported its activities were also invited. The Citizen’s Committee, created by the gathered people, together with thematic groups, was to prepare ISGTU “Solidarity” for conducting talks with authorities. Tischner also actively supported the branches of the Union, e.g. by organising material aid for farmers from Podhale, thanks to his Austrian contacts (Tischner.pl, n.d. d). In the 1980s, he became a real – albeit informal – chaplain of “Solidarity”. Reflections on the multidimensional meaning of solidarity became one of the foundations of his intellectual output (Wieczorek 2019, 352-354).

4. Józef Tischner’s philosophy of solidarity – the solidarity of consciences and solidarity of hope

As a priest and philosopher, Józef Tischner, following the footsteps of Christian existentialist thought and, at the same time, polemicising with Catholic Thomism, held the position that conscience remains the foundation of broadly understood solidarity and that solidarity itself, as a value, is born in response to the violence of one man against another. Furthermore, when there is a cry for help, there is an opportunity to show solidarity (Tischner 2005, 11-15). As explained by Tischner: “Take the parable of the Good Samaritan; he also lived in a particular society, in a world of a particular religion and politics. Nonetheless, his deed somehow breached the limits of this world, reached beyond the structures that this world imposed upon people. The good deed of the Samaritan was a response to the specific cry of a specific man. It is simple; someone is crying for help. A wounded man lies in a roadside ditch, and his pain has a particular character. It is not the result of disease, unfortunate coincidence, advanced age; rather, it is pain caused by someone else. It was one man who devised this lot for another. It is precisely this fact that is of importance; it is this that in a particular way stirs conscience and calls for solidarity. Nothing outrages one more than a gratuitous wound, a wound inflicted on one person by another. We have sympathy for a patient who has undergone surgery. For someone who has been mistreated we have sympathy, but at the very same time we are outraged. From the spectacle of such pain a particular deep solidarity is born” (Tischner 1984, 8).

The main category in the philosophy of solidarity built by Tischner became conscience, which remains closely related to the philosophy of values. The essence of solidarity is a spontaneous moral act that must flow from conscience and be a reaction to another person’s specific harm or need. Notably, only the sum of such moral acts can constitute the foun-

dations of social solidarity. The ethics of solidarity, following Tischner, is the ethics of conscience. It assumes that human is a being endowed with a conscience. Conscience is a natural human ethical sense, largely independent of various ethical systems. The law implanted in the soul is conscience (Tischner and Żakowski 2000, 137).

Thus, every human being has many ethical systems but one conscience. Conscience, according to Tischner, is primordial to those systems. Conscience is an independent reality in humans, following the example of reason and will. Conscience is a voice that cries out within a person and, above all, calls to have a conscience in difficult times. Conscience is the sense of reading signposts (Tischner 2005, 14-16). Only it knows which of them is worth attention. A person who errs, but has a conscience, will recognise their mistake and be able to change. A person without conscience is not capable of this. Even if he changes, it is only because the circumstances he will have to adapt to have changed, not because his conscience tells him so. According to Tischner: one cannot be in solidarity with people without conscience. As he repeatedly stressed, not every “us” and not every “together” is solidarity. Authentic solidarity is a solidarity of consciences. This means that being in solidarity with a person always means that you can count on another person. He will not fail in the moment of trial because he has a conscience that will not allow him to disappoint another person. However, it should be remembered that such a person can only be a person who wants to have a conscience or at least wants to regain it (Tischner and Żakowski 2000, 140). Particularly interesting is Tischner’s statement that one cannot be in solidarity with people without conscience. As he strongly emphasised: “You can travel with people without conscience on the same train, sit at the table during dinner, read books – but this is not yet solidarity. Not every “we”, not every “together” is solidarity. Authentic solidarity – let us repeat it once again – is the solidarity of consciences” (Tischner 2005, 18).

Therefore, Tischner perceived humans as an inevitable internal tear or a constant call to build and respect values, which call is heard when a person meets another person, his presence and his harm. The basis of the tear is a dialogue and a choice that human is condemned to choose between what is better and what is worse. The accuracy of choice is constantly threatened due to the difficulty of the situation in which a person finds himself. When making a choice, every human being is surrounded by numerous internal threats, such as political oppression or physical violence. The drama of the choices made by a man also concerns the awareness of the possibility of achieving eternal salvation (if he chooses Good) or eternal rejection (if he rejects Good). Tischner emphasised that the most important thing is the call rumbling in man, which directs him to think about the central Good that binds everything together (Tischner 1991, 211-212). The lack of such a central point of reference (Good) Tischner considered the cause of the civilisation crisis and the

tragedy of World War II. As he repeatedly pointed out, a crime against another human being is possible because thinking has been brutally detached from the category of Good. Thus social solidarity has ceased to be possible (Tischner 1999, 14).

Notably, in Tischner's thoughts, constant hope is present. He permanently emphasised that every person in any situation can always find the way to the highest Good and make the right choice, have a conscience and remain in solidarity with others. Therefore, the philosophy of solidarity is the philosophy of hope, which is the foundation of this solidarity and manifests in the practice of social life (social solidarity – the brotherhood for the stricken).

Finally, the idea of social solidarity, created and understood by Tischner as the “ethics of brotherhood for the stricken” based on the principle of bearing one another's burdens, is only a model, a guideline for action, not an accurate representation of the existing reality or the actual state of affairs (Bonowicz 2001, 374). It is not a ready-made signpost directly telling how to act. According to Tischner's concept, solidarity is also not a set of ready-made and clear orders and prohibitions constituting a defined and unchanging ethical norm. Solidarity is only a certain way that points toward light and Good. Therefore, the human himself should step in on the path of the light and Good, the path of solidarity, which will help him make the right choices in the reality that surrounds him, full of difficulties and challenges. Thus, these choices will change depending on many internal and external determinants, evolve as socio-political circumstances change and require constant redefinition.

Accordingly, solidarity is with people and for people (Tischner 1984, 23). It is a social phenomenon, and thus its existence raises several implications not only for society but also for politics, or rather for bad politics. As pointed out by Tischner, when politics is good, it is imbued with the spirit of solidarity. Politics that is true to itself is building a space where conscience can act. Furthermore, no one should be afraid of such consciences (Tischner 2005, 16-20).

5. Concluding remarks – why is the philosophy of “brotherhood for the stricken” timeless?

Even though Tischner after 1989 did not deepen his reflection on solidarity (Kobyliński 2010, 47), his statements have undoubtedly not lost their value. Returning in the changed and constantly changing circumstances of the third decade of the 21st century to the concept of solidarity understood as Tischner's brotherhood for the stricken, it is worth noting its topicality and timelessness, as well as its global (not only intra-Polish) dimension.

Tischner's reflections were written in the dramatic political situation of the Polish society dependent on the USRR, under the authoritarian rule of a foreign superpower during the Cold War and trying to liberate itself from this power. However, their topicality spectacularly breaks through the reality of the following decades of the 21st century. The question at this point is, what is so unique about Tischner's ideas that they can be applied without hesitation to new socio-political challenges? What makes Tischner's thoughts turn out to be a panacea for the ills of the globalised reality of governed and ruling democratic countries and societies that are still fighting authoritarian regimes?

The uniqueness, topicality and timelessness of Tischner's philosophy are based on the fact that he remarked on and presented the deeper sources of socio-political phenomena that create reality. His thoughts are not only a superficial commentary on the circumstances surrounding him then. Broad, metaphysical Tischner's vision of power and society, noticed and described in the period of real socialism, spills over into all areas of social life in the 21st century. It is powerful and defines the character of the community, solidarity and brotherhood that endure and are the condition *sine qua non* for the survival of every community.

Referring to modern times, it is worth emphasising that Tischner manifested a vision of dialogical patriotism, in which there is a place for people coming from very different parts of the world who are characterised by various ethnic, national, racial or religious origins. In a community, a strong society dominated by solidarity and brotherhood, there is room for everyone. No one can be rejected or discriminated against because of race, religion or origin. In Tischner's vision, the ethnicisation of patriotism, popular especially during the 2015' refugee and migrant crisis, is unacceptable (Tischner 1991, 41). He did not accept and opposed fundamentally building walls and closed single-ethnic communities (Przybyło 2014, 76-78). Nevertheless, the refugee and migrant crisis, which affected almost all of Europe, has become one of the most significant challenges for the ruling elites and societies in the 21st century. At the same time, it became an excellent opportunity to show the spirit of social solidarity. It became an opportunity to show this brotherhood for the stricken and take on the role of a good Samaritan. The critical question is whether political decision-makers and societies have risen on occasion. Were they the people of conscience or even wanted to be? Did they make a choice that pushed them towards Good?

Tischner also opposed the perception of the world as a field where only interest groups clash and Europe becomes the so-called "Europe of hiding places" (Tischner 1993, 438-439). At the same time, he promoted the idea of building a Europe of cooperating communities. Europe should be a common home for all Europeans. The metaphor of a common home is a metaphor for freedom. As Tischner emphasised, freedom means rising above the conditions, becoming sovereign and gaining autonomy. Con-

science is just talking freedom. What does this mean for a united Europe? Or, in the context of disputes about the future of the European Union, what does it mean for the shape of this organisation? According to Tischner, the new European freedom should be similar to a persons' freedom in his home. This means that Europeans cannot be satisfied with the freedom of the "hidden people", that is, the freedom that lives in isolation from others. As he pointed out, looking at our European past, we must admit that we have all come out of some "hiding places" for centuries. We were residents and, simultaneously, prisoners of nationalism, communism and even liberalism and many political, ideological and religious prejudices (Olszewski 2021). The timelessness of Tischner's reflection boils down to the statement that building a common European home (the ethos of a solidary and strong European Union) involves the need to risk crossing the borders of the hiding places.

An opportunity to test European solidarity and whether Europeans can come out of hiding was provided by the two most significant challenges of recent years, i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Both of them showed the internal tear of Europe. On the one hand, there was a prevailing feeling that it was necessary to cooperate, unite forces and fight threats. On the other, especially among some Western European countries, there was a firm conviction that it was necessary to pursue their national interests. Referring to Tischner's reflections, such an attitude is a return to the "Europe of hiding places". In this context, Otfried Höffe aptly spoke of the "hedonistic paradox", which consists of the fact that people (states) who care only about their benefit harm not only others but also themselves (Gabriel and Renöckl 2012, 12-13).

To sum up, Tischner's thoughts on politics are timeliness and worth noticing. He drew attention to what happens when we start to think in terms deliberately thrown at society by politicians. When politics take over every sphere of life, social conflict becomes inevitable. Social or political dialogue ceases to be possible. As Tischner indicated, free yourself from such a political trap as soon as possible to survive. A perfect summary of these timeless reflections is: "State power should be completely moral and ethical. This is the state's concern. And religious authority, which should also be ethical, also has in mind that mercy surpasses justice. How to connect the two will be the question of the third millennium" (Tischner and Żakowski 2000, 159).

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