

What is SOLIDARITY?

"Solidarity is not an act of charity but an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains towards the same objectives" (*Samora Machel*).

Can we distinguish solidarity from tolerance? Where do we meet solidarity? Are all people solidary? All these questions are worth to think about as our society becomes more aggressive and at the same time also more indulgent.

Some years ago in Riga it was quite impossible to drive a car for those who were not local because the other drivers were crazy in some extent. Now it has totally changed: they are polite and let one to drive in the other manner then *Rigans* used to. This is very demonstrative example of tolerance. So then what is solidarity?

One of the dictionaries says that it is bond of unity between individuals, united around a common goal or against a common enemy, such as the unifying principle that defines the labor movement, and willingness to give psychological and/or material support when another person is in a difficult position or needs affection. More captivating seems to be the second definition. Despite of what *Samora Machel* has said about an act of charity, when one comes into any kind of trouble and other is willing to help - I agree that this is solidarity indeed. As well as I consider that help can never be seen like a charity.

Let's see the case with Greece. I consider that the whole world is fighting towards one objective - not to let the country to collapse. Monetary Fund and banks are solidary in this case when giving money and releasing debts. Next is Japan. All the people express solidarity with the people of Japan who have been affected by the devastating earthquake and tsunami. This is how solidarity can be performed at international level.

Also solidarity all the time has been present at all - national, regional, local levels. At national level, for instance, in Afghanistan there has been established The National Solidarity Programme which is the most ambitious and effective rural development programme of country. It contributes significantly to Afghanistan's poverty reduction strategy.

At regional level in EU there is EU Solidarity Fund which was set up to respond to major natural disasters and express European solidarity to disaster-stricken regions within Europe. Regions may also receive funds even when the applicable national threshold has not been reached. For these specific cases, the annual amount available is limited to no more than 7.5 % of the annual amount allocated to the Solidarity Fund (i.e. EUR 75 million). Particular attention is paid to remote and isolated regions, for example the outermost and island regions.

According to the second definition the solidarity also can be considered like, for instance, helping some old lady to cross the road since for her it may be like a kind of trouble. Or it may be expressed when people feel connected through similar work, educational and religious training, and lifestyle, for instance, in school, class, hospital, office, etc. Solidarity as it is can be based on kinship, for instance, in family between relatives and family members, close or distant.

In order to enhance its merits and importance solidarity with its content should be popularized more by, for example, involving people in various projects dealing with providing help to others. I think that border-countries should create more projects for collaboration and fortifying common values. Parents should educate their children about what is tolerance and solidarity, about the fact that good and happy person is that who is tolerant and can always provide some spiritual or material help to those having troubles. "No man is an island, entire of it; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main" (*John Donne*). If only every human could be united, close and able to help others...

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