

Political victory for Polish Miners

The Polish miners' strike ended last Friday evening (they went back to work on Monday) with a political victory and an economic compromise. The managing director has left, the sacked trade unionists have been re-employed.

Information and video published on the Syndicat Solidarnost Tuzla website and the Zagreb Workers Front website (see: <https://www.facebook.com/Radnicka.Fronta/posts/915345861833247>)

Miners Strike and repression in Poland

Jan Malewski, 13 February 2015 (Translated from <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article34332>)

Polish miners at the Jastrzebie Colliery Company (JSW) have launched an appeal for international solidarity signed by Bogusław Zietek, president of the "August 80" trade union (1). We would be grateful if you could disseminate it as widely as possible.

The strike started on 28 January when the managing director of JSW, Jarosław Zagorowski, sacked 9 trade unionist at the "Budryk" mine for organising a solidarity strike with the miners at another company, KW (Kompania węglowa ["mining company"]) Europe's biggest mining business, which wanted to close four pits and sack the miners. This strike, was

successful, with the backing of the whole population. The four mines were not closed and there were no sackings, according to the agreement with the government signed on 17 January. At that time the government made a commitment that there would be no reprisals against the strikers and those who solidarised with them...) The managing director has also suspended the collective agreements signed two years ago when JSW was converted to a PLC with shareholders. Among those sacked was Krysztof Labadz, leader of the "August 80" union and of the 46 day-long strike in 2007-2008.

All trade unions supported the strike – "Solidarnosc", ZZG (the mining branch of OPZZ), FZZ (Forum of trade unions), WZZ "Sierpen 80" ("August 80" Free Trade Union), "Kadra" (Cadres), etc. etc. There is a united strike committee made up of the five main unions in the region.

Negotiations were carried out via a mediator, a former deputy prime-minister, but the managing director was not there and the company was reluctant. Besides reversing the sackings (agreed in principle during negotiations but not signed) and respecting the collective agreement (partially agreed but not signed), demands included the sacking of the managing director Jaroslaw Zagorowski, who the miners no longer want to see and who they accuse of trying to bankrupt the firm so he can buy it back cheaper.

On Wednesday police fired 37mm rubber bullets on miners gathered outside the JSW company HQ, injuring 20, some of them seriously. As the police fired, miners shouted "Are you trying a re-run of Decmber 1981?" (General Jaruzelski's coup d'etat). A video of the rally the police fired on shows that they did so without any valid reason against a gathering of miners who were singing (2).

The confrontation actually does look very serious. Miners' families (women and children) demonstrated on Thursday, saying that even if they went hungry they would hold out to the end.

19 miners are on hunger strike. According to management, there are more than 5 000 confirmed strikers, but the mines are at a standstill (a lot of miners have taken annual leave days, since they cannot manage 16 days on strike ...)

The court at Gliwice has just declared the strike illegal and threatened to make the strike leaders (including the 9 sacked trade unionists) pay JSW's "losses", which the company states amount to several million euros ... Krzysztof Labadz is among those worst affected ...

On Thursday, Bogusław Zietek told the Polish Press Agency "We live in a country run by bandits, thieves and Mafiosi who are more powerful than the government". That gives a pretty accurate picture of the mood.

Jan Malewski

1. See [1] on Europe Solidaires Sand Frontières (ESSF article 34331), Un appel urgent des mineurs polonais : Ne tirez pas sur les ouvriers !.
2. See <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=669643963153352&set=vb.100003232629300&type=2&theater>

An urgent appeal from Polish miners: Don't shoot at workers

Bogusław Zietek, "August 80" free trade union,

12 February 2015.

Don't shoot at workers!

Don't use state institutions against protesters!

On 12 February the courts ruled illegal the strike by several thousand miners at Jastrzebie Colliery Company (Jastrzebie Spolka Weglowa, JSW) in southern Poland. On the same day, a demonstration of miners' wives and children marched through the town supporting their loved ones in struggle.

The authorities will stop at nothing to break this strike, which has already gone on for 16 days. Special police detachments sent against the miners have tried to crush the protest with unheard-of brutality, using anti-riot weapons firing 37mm anti-riot rubber bullets, water cannon and tear gas without any good reason.

More than 20 miners have been wounded, some of them seriously. At the same time prosecutors have started charges against the protest organisers, threatening them with financial consequences bound up with "losses" the company suffers affected by the strike. Among those charged are the trade unionist Krzysztof Labadz, one of the leaders of the strike at "Budryk" mine which lasted 46 days seven years ago.

The striking miners are demanding the sacking of the company managing director, Jarosław Zagorski, whose management has brought to company to the very brink. Even though the government holds more than half the shares, it will not give way. The miners and their families are determined. They are defending their jobs but also the right to protest of all Polish working people.

We call on trades unions and social organisations across Europe to support our struggle and to send us letters of support. Only international solidarity, as with Greece, can force back the diktats of the neo-liberals who rule us. Only together can we face up to their anti-social offenseive in Europe.

Bogusław Zietek,

President of the Free Trade Union "August 80" (WZZ "Sierpen 80").

Send solidarity messages to: darekzal74@gmail.com