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 Sindicat 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 Boguslaw 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, Jaroslaw Zagorowski, sacked 9 trade unionist at the "Budryk" mine for organising a solidarity strike with the miners at another company, KW (Kompania weglowa ["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 Jaroslow 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 … Krzystof Labadz is among those worst affected …

On Thursday, Boguslaw 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 Frontieres (ESSF article 34331), Un appel urgent des mineurs polonais : Ne tirez pas sur les ouvriers !.
2. Seehttps://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=669643963153352&set=vb.100003232629300&type=2&theater