

WOMEN'S PATHWAY THROUGH GDAŃSK SHIPYARD



PROLETARIAN ROUTE

- P1 Representatives' canteen
- P2 Administration
- P3 Director's office
- P4 Director's villa
- P5 Hall 42A
- P6 Department W2
- P7 Departmental changing rooms
- P8 Slipways
- P9 Healthcare clinic

STRIKE ROUTE

- S1 Gate no. 2
- S2 Representatives' canteen
- S3 Health & Safety hall
- S4 Director's office
- S5 Central switchboard
- S6 Gate no. 1
- S7 Hall 42A
- S8 School workshops
- S9 Gate no. 3
- S10 Healthcare clinic
- S11 Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers



STRIKE CALENDAR

14.08.1980, THURSDAY

Strike begins at the Lenin's Gdańsk Shipyard (SG). First demands include Anna Walentynowicz's return to work, a pay rise, and an additional 'expenses benefit' (*podatek drożności*) to adjust pay to inflation. A strike committee is formed of female and male workers, led by Lech Wałęsa. Negotiations between the committee and the directors begin.

15.08.1980, FRIDAY

In solidarity with SG (Gdańsk Shipyard), the strike is joined by the Paris Commune Shipyard (*Komuny Paryskiej*) and the Nauta Shipyard in Gdynia, the Refurbishment (*Remontowa*) and Northern (*Północna*) Shipyards in Gdańsk, *Elmor*, ports, municipal transport and local workplaces co-operating with the shipyards. Female and male representatives of their respective strike committees arrive at SG with their demands.

16.08.1980, SATURDAY

The SG's strike committee and the directors reach an agreement. Strike at SG ends. However, later that same day, influenced by the female and male activists from the Free Trade Unions of the Coast, as well as the female and male representatives of committees from other factories, another strike is announced in solidarity with their plight. Due to actions of Alina Pienkowska, Anna Walentynowicz and Ewa Ossowska, gates of SG and closed and some of the strikers remain in the Shipyard. During the night of 16 to 17 August the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) is established.

17.08.1980, SUNDAY

Due to Anna Walentynowicz efforts, Fr. Henryk Jankowski conducts a holy mass at the Gate no. 2, which attracts several thousands of people. Information on strike continuation spreads in the Tricity. More people return to SG.

23.08.1980, SATURDAY

Negotiations begin between MKS and delegation of state representatives led by Deputy Prime Minister Mieczysław Jagielski. Prior to that, attempts were made to break the solidarity of the strikers and negotiate with singled-out factory representatives to end strikes separately.

31.08.1980, SUNDAY

Gdańsk Agreement (*Porozumienia Gdańskie*) is signed, ending the SG strike. Creation of trade unions independent from employees and state begins.

Gdańsk Shipyard brings to mind the work of male shipyard workers such as welders and craft operators, yet there were many women who worked arm in arm with them – as isolators or gantry operators. The Metropolitanka Group invites you to Shipyard walks that discover the unknown stories of Gdańsk. You are holding the third edition of the map presenting two routes of following women's footsteps in Gdańsk Shipyard – down the worker pathway or the strike pathway. The workers pathway follows the daily life of women workers and engineers at the Shipyard. It highlights the heavy workload of women welders, constructors, cleaners, the isolators' fight for better working conditions. We created this walk based on interviews with former and current women workers, collected by Metropolitanka and Arteria Association. The strike pathway tells a story of women already known, as well as those remaining anonymous – women from the working class and intelligentsia, who were instrumental in making the Gdańsk Shipyard strike in August 1980 possible. We show their role in key moments of this event. You will explore stories of Anna Walentynowicz, Alina Pienkowska, Maryla Płońska, Bernadetta Stankiewicz, Henryka Krzywono, Joanna Duda-Gwiazda, Bożena Rybicka, Magdalena Modzelewska, as well as other opposition activists and artists who took present in the Shipyard during the strike. The pathway also presents a wider context of their involvement – both through the early steps and later involvement in social and political activism.

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Some of the authors of photographs used are unknown. If you recognise a photograph or persons depicted, please contact us.

Organisers Partners Special thanks



Anna Walentynowicz
Photo: Leonard Szmaglik / ECS Collection



Bernadetta Stankiewicz
Photo: Stanisław Składanowski / ECS Collection

Maryla Płońska
Photo: Zdzisław Andrzej Fic / ECS Collection



Alina Pienkowska
Photo: Stanisław Składanowski / ECS Collection



Joanna Duda-Gwiazda
Photo: Jacek Awakumowski / ECS Collection



Henryka Krzywono
Photo: Stanisław Składanowski / ECS Collection



Work in Shipyard
Photo: Tercjan Muliński



Women at Gate No. 2 during August strike
Photo: Wojciech Milewski / ECS Collection



Ewa Ossowska (middle)
Photo: Leszek Biernacki / ECS Collection



Halina Winiarska
Fot. Stanisław Składanowski / ECS Collection



Women at the Shipyard often worked physically
Photo: Tercjan Muliński



Workers of Marlinka cooperative (probably)
Photo: Tercjan Muliński



One of balls at the Representatives' canteen
Second from the right: Helena Dmochowska
Photo: Helena Dmochowska's private archive

Shipyard Worker's Voice (*Głos Stocznia*)
5th March 1965 edition

Helena Dmochowska inside the gantry cabin
Photo: Helena Dmochowska's private archive



GATE NO. 2

S1 Gate no. 2 was one of the several entrances to Gdańsk Shipyard. During the strike in August 1980 it held many functions – the strikers met there with their friends and families, information materials were passed through it, and it also hosted numerous political speeches. Here many women delivered food, towels, underwear and other items essential to the strikers. During that time, entrance and exit from the Shipyard was based on passes and was controlled by Alina Pienkowska. At this gate, on the 16 August 1980, Anna Walentynowicz and Alina Pienkowska – after the successful negotiations between the strike committee and the representatives of Shipyard directors – were stopping female and male workers convincing them to continue the solidarity strike with factories supporting SG. Gate no. 2 is where the 21 demands of the strikers were handed. They covered such issues as provision of sufficient nursery and pre-school places for children of women workers, and an introduction of three-year paid maternity leave. Reading and categorising the demands coming from the departments joining the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) was the job of several women workers who set the final tone of the list: Alina Pienkowska, Joanna Duda-Gwiazda and Maryla Płońska. In front of the Gate, on the shipyard side, Bożena Rybicka and Magdalena Modzelewska organized prayers during the strike. For over 30 years Aleksandra Olszewska has been taking care of the Gate and decorating it with flowers. She also runs the nearby kiosk *Souvenire* with items related to the Shipyard history.

THE REPRESENTATIVES CANTEEN

P1 The majority of workers here were women who served lunchtime meals. During the 1980 strike in August they were responsible for preparing over 700 three-dish meals for the strikers. This was not taken kindly by the women. They could not imagine accepting their role as potato-peelers where discussions on their futures were taking place next door, excluding them from taking part and having a voice in the negotiations. The matter was of such importance that after being raised at the MKS board meeting it was decided that all strikers, female and male, would be peeling the potatoes. Canteen was also a hosting and meeting space for state representatives of the government and the Communist Party during their visits at the Shipyard. One of such events, extremely costly (one million zlotys) visit of Edward Gierek in 1979, was criticised by Anna Walentynowicz in *The Worker (Robotnik)* magazine run by Warsaw opposition. Walentynowicz joined the Free Trade Unions of the Coast (WZZW) in 1978. After the publication of the abovementioned piece she experienced intensified discrimination at work.

ADMINISTRATION

P2 This is where the administration of the Shipyard was located. Women worked at the accounting, human resources and social departments, and also logistics, trade and supply. At the social department they managed access to flats and rooms at workers hotels. They also allocated places at children's summer camps, benefits and coal allowance. Although the administrative work was not directly related to the ship manufacturing, the decision-making power of these women workers translated into respect from their colleagues. As described by our female and male interviewees, even the most rough-mouthed foremen turned into “meek lambs” upon entering the department. Therefore, even though the Shipyard's director was always a man, women working at the administration department had vast informal power.

HEALTH & SAFETY HALL

S3 In August 1980, the H&S Hall became the premises of the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) with female members such as Anna Walentynowicz, Alina Pienkowska, Henryka Krzywonos (Regional Transport Enterprise representative), Joanna Duda-Gwiazda (WZZW member, Ship Department graduate at the Technological University of Gdańsk, a press officer for MKS at the time working as at the Ship Technology Centre). Gdańsk Agreement (*Porozumienia Gdańskie*) was signed just here on the 31st August 1980, between the Government Committee and MKS, and the signatories included Walentynowicz, Pienkowska, Krzywonos. Jadwiga Staniszkis took active part in negotiations with the government representation as a political scientist and member of the Experts Committee at the MKS Gdańsk. Maryla Płońska, co-worker at WZZW, was MKS' secretary as well as the translation office manager for the foreign media. She was one of the people who on the 16th of August 1980 were convincing factories to join the solidarity strike at the Shipyard. Alina Pienkowska negotiated the release of the arrested opposition activists until the very last day of the strike. The August events were documented by Janina Jankowska, a journalist who worked despite the ban of the radio management. These recordings were released in the report *Polish August (Polski Sierpień)*. Bernadetta Stankiewicz was the editor of *Strike Information Bulletin 'Solidarity' (Strajkowy Biuletyn Informacyjny „Solidarność”)* which published works by writers such as Ewa Milewicz. Milewicz also ran the registration of the factories joining the MKS. Henryka Krzywonos supervised petrol allocation for the strikers. Another important role during the strike was that of typists, who were writing down the agreed points, rewrote and copied documents and poetry created by the strikers. They often worked 24 hours. One of them was Jadwiga Piątkowska. She wrote numerous poems describing current political situation both during the strike and thereafter, and was christened the “Solidarity poetress” due to her art. Later she joined the editorial team of the *Consideration and Solidarity (Rozwaga i Solidarność)*, published between 21st April and 11th December 1981 at the Shipyard. Its subtitle read “Magazine under the patronage of Factory Commission NSZZ «Solidarność» at the Gdańsk Shipyard”. Actors and actresses from the Coastal Theatre (Teatr Wybrzeże) performed at the H&S Hall. In the Strike Bulletin we found information that on 28-30 August 1980 the H&S Hall hosted a solidarity recital with the strikers, where artists such as Halina Winiarska, Elżbieta Goetel, Halina Stojewska, Bogusława Czosnowska, Halina Łabonarska read poems of Miłosz and Słowacki, as well as strikers' own poetry. Thousands of people took part in the strike – female and male workers of the Shipyard, as well as female and male representatives of other workplaces. Women were to leave the striking shipyard for the night, the reason given was to secure their safety and satisfy families' needs at home, however the strike women leaders would stay overnight at the Hall. During the August strikes in 1980, dozens of women workers (both physical workers and engineers) prepared sandwiches and coffee at the H&S Hall to support the female and male strike activists during negotiations.

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

P3 In front of the Director's office there was a display cupboard where photographs of women and men described as labour leaders were presented. In the 1950s one of them was Anna Walentynowicz. As a welder, she would perform even 270 % of the norm, and for her conscientious work she received awards from the Shipyard directors and the Polish People's Republic (PRL) government – i.e. Bronze, Silver and Gold Cross of Merit. On the square in front of the director's building strikers gathered on the 14th August 2015 to demand Anna Walentynowicz's return to work after the unfair dismissal – it was their first demand. Walentynowicz herself spoke here to the strikers on the very day, greeted enthusiastically as the WZZW member and a long-term activist for workers' dignity. “A. Walentynowicz became problematic, because her example was affecting others. She became problematic as she defended others, and could organise her colleagues. It is a common behaviour of the establishment to isolate those who could become leaders” – wrote Bogdan Borusewicz in the *To Gdańsk Shipyard Workers (Do Pracowników Stoczni Gdańskie)* appeal calling to support and defend the dismissed gantry worker.

CENTRAL SWITCHBOARD

S5 In the morning of the 14th August 1980, Alina Pienkowska saw the strikers with banners through the windows of healthcare clinic. She wanted to pass the information about the demands to Jacek Kuroń who was broadcasting updates on the national summer strikes across Poland to the Free Europe Radio (Radio Wolna Europa). However, already in the morning on that day all calls were blocked at the Shipyard. Pienkowska called Kuroń using a separate phone line at the healthcare clinic. When even that connection was lost, she ran to the Central Train Station in Gdańsk and continued passing on the demands. Thanks to her the strike news spread in Poland and abroad, when the mainstream media informed of ‘breaks from work’. Anna Walentynowicz asked telephonists at the switchboard to re-connect the phone lines, however it was not possible without the supervisors' permission. The building also held a radio station used to broadcast the strike negotiations.

DIRECTOR'S VILLA

P4 This historical building was the Shipyard's pre-school, amongst other functions. The law required any workplace with over 100 female workers to provide day-care for children, including a nursery. Establishing the pre-school at the Shipyard made it significantly easier for both women and men workers to organise their daily lives. It was mostly women who provided childcare. The Shipyard supported working mothers not only after giving birth, but also during pregnancy and maternity leave. During the last months of pregnancy they would be placed at a less demanding and harmful job, i.e. at the canteen or administration. Winter games with presents called “Christmas trees” and summer camps were organised for children. However, in the August 1980 edition of the *Friend (Przyjaciółka)* magazine we can read that the workers were not satisfied with the maternity pay, and the family benefits were not enough.

GATE NO. 1

S6 Here on the 16th August 1980 Ewa Ossowska was stopping women and men workers of the Shipyard, convincing them to continue the solidarity strike with factories supporting the Shipyard.

HALL 42 A

P5 This hall was one of the places where Anna Walentynowicz worked as a gantry operator. Walentynowicz got severely ill mid-1960s and instead of retiring on sickness pension, she decided to re-qualify and work at a less harmful position. After the three-month course and passed exams her salary was lowered, despite additional qualifications usually having the opposite effect. The salary was returned to the original amount after Walentynowicz protested against this unfair treatment. Walentynowicz was one of many gantry operators at the Shipyard, yet despite it being a job mostly done by women it was always a man worker who was the foreman.

DEPARTMENT W2

P6 Women worked at the Pipe Department next to man painters and sanders, usually as pipe isolators, that is sewing pipes into asbestos fabric covers. It was one of the most hazardous work places. When some women isolators fell ill with asbestosis (lung disease) they successfully forced the Shipyard to recognise the disease as a work-related illness and provide them with compensation. Anna Walentynowicz wrote in *The Coastal Worker* magazine about the exact working conditions of women isolators, their unsuccessful struggle with foremen and the Shipyard directors, and called for respecting their views and professionalism. As time passed and new technologies developed the whole team of Department women isolators was dismissed.

CHANGING ROOMS

P7 Labour law required a separate bathroom and changing room for departments which hired more than five women workers. In practice women often had to “nag the male foreman” to respect that legislation rule. Women workers also described cases of peeping Toms. Women cleaners hired by an external company ‘Marlinka’ were also changing next to the Shipyard's women workers. Their duties were anything but light and included working with chemical dissolvers and removing weld residue in the hulls. Unfortunately, this hard work was not appreciated by other workers at the Shipyard, and woman cleaners were often victims of sexual harassment or molesting.

SLIPWAYS

P8 This is where the ship hulls were constructed. Female and male welders worked here, amongst other specialists. Labour law of PRL encouraged women to choose and practice professions until then considered ‘masculine’. Particular legislation required every department to have at least two women workers. This is why in the 1950s female welders appeared in the Shipyard. Anna Walentynowicz was one of the workers who shared stories about the welding work realities – women welders worked in oversized protective gear (men's sizes) and filled their too-big boots with straw, footwraps, and newspapers. Due to smaller body size they would frequently be sent to tight pipes and corners. Unfortunately, these areas lacked space for protective masks and gloves, which often resulted in burns to face and hands, as well as lung diseases. Photographs of Walentynowicz as a welder are one of the few available depictions of women workers engaged in manufacturing at the Shipyard.

SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

S8 Anna Walentynowicz (nee Lubczyk) arrived here in 1950 for a welding course. For the next thirty years she worked at the Shipyard first as a welder, and from mid-1960s onwards, after re-qualifying, as a gantry operator. Later she would train the next generation of gantry workers. From the beginning, Walentynowicz demanded improvement of female and male workers' rights at the Shipyard – safe working conditions, fair bonus splitting, and respect. It was not appreciated by the workplace management. Walentynowicz was frequently warned by her supervisors, and was also banned from taking any actions that would help her female and male colleagues, or clarify abusive behaviours of the supervisors. Currently the building is the premise of the “Island” („Wyspa”) Art Institute, which runs Shipyard-related art projects such as Subjective Bus Line (Subiektywna Linia Autobusowa), Waleśa Workshop (Warsztat Wałęsy), Festival *Alternativa*.

GATE NO. 3

S9 Here on the 16th August 1980 Alina Pienkowska called for staying at the Shipyard and continuing the solidarity strike. She led to closing the gates; around a thousand people stayed at the Shipyard premises. “Till this day I remember the view of thousands of people on the bridge leaving the shipyard. Something had to be done – efficiently. I forced the guards to close the gates and started speaking on why the strike was continuing at the second gate, and that now was the time to make the call – stay at the shipyard with your fellow workers, or go home. I stressed there would be no success ever at the shipyard, if we acted each for their own, with no coordination. (...) And this worked – the crowd moved away from the exit” – remembered Pienkowska (K. Madoń-Miztner, *Dni Solidarności (Solidarity Days)*, „Karta” 2000, no. 30, p. 18.).

HEALTHCARE CLINIC

S10 From 1974 worked here as an industrial healthcare nurse Alina Pienkowska – daughter of a shipyard worker, later the healthcare Strike Committee leader, MKS member, signatory of the Gdańsk Agreement. She found out about the Polish opposition from Polonia meetings in Great Britain where she was on holidays visiting family. Upon her return to Poland she started reading opposition's magazines and looking to contact the editorial team. In 1978 she joined WZZW where amongst other duties she wrote for *The Coastal Worker (Robotnik Wybrzeża)*, the press body of the group. Her articles focused on occupational diseases, incidents at work, and Shipyard's healthcare provision. She was discriminated against for her opposition work. She was repeatedly stopped and frisked. She was accused of neglecting work and absences without leave when she was held under arrest. However, Pienkowska was defended by her female and male co-workers from the healthcare clinic at the Electrical Ship Machinery and Automatics Factory “Elmor”, where she was moved to as a punishment between years 1978-1979. She thanked them in *Shipyard Worker Voice (Głos Stoczniewca)*. For several days the newspaper was taken down on the director's demand and plastered back up by the shipyard workers. The case was also picked up by the Warsaw's Worker (Robotnik) – capital's opposition magazine. During the strike at the Shipyard in August 1980 Pienkowska joined by doctor Barbara Przedwojska edited one of the 21 demands – 16. regarding the healthcare provision (“To improve the medical care working conditions as to provide full medical care for the employees”), which included a detailed appendix consisting of 30 points. The strikers were provided with medical care by the nurses and doctors, such as Joanna Muszkowska-Person. In November 1980 Pienkowska led the strike at the Crest Hall of the Regional Council in Gdańsk. The strikers demanded the government side fulfil its part of the Gdańsk Agreement. In 1980 she became the chairwoman of the National Healthcare Sector of Solidarity. After 1989 she worked as a senator and councilwoman at the Municipal Council of Gdańsk. It was due to her initiative that the signatories of Gdańsk Agreement received Honorary Gdańsk Citizenship titles.

P9 The majority of medical care providers were women: they worked as nurses, on-call doctors at the hospital and the healthcare clinic, they responded to work accidents throughout the Shipyard. Women also worked as industrial doctors at numerous departments where they supervised adherence to H&S regulations, issued occupational permissions and provided health assessments regarding occupational diseases. The latter were most frequently issued to women who worked in severely hazardous roles (welders, isolators). They would come to the healthcare clinic suffering from pneumoconiosis (black lung or miner's lung diseases), i.e. asbestosis. Similarly difficult were allergies, often disturbing the work of cleaners and painters. Women healthcare workers at the Shipyard also worked at the renowned Physical Therapy Clinic.

THE MONUMENT OF FALLEN SHIPYARD WORKERS

S11 Where the Monument is built independent commemorations of December '70 were taking place in the late 1970s. In 1979, representing WZZW, Maryla Płońska gave a speech: “We must draw conclusions from what happened here nine years ago. We must learn to organise, defend our leaders, propose and defend such demands that result not in temporary improvement, but those which secure our rights in the future. We have the right to clearly and legally associate in Free Trade Unions to defend our needs” (A. Kołodziej, *Free Trade Unions of the Coast (Wolne Związki Zawodowe Wybrzeża)*, Pomeranian History Initiative Foundation (Fundacja Pomorska Inicjatywa Historyczna), Gdynia 2012, p. 137). Thousands of people listened to her. Pienkowska, Walentynowicz and other female and male activists were arrested in December 1978 and 1979 for up to several hours, to prevent them from taking part in the commemoration events. Construction of the Monument was one of the first demands of the August 1980 strikers. Funds were raised during the protest. Gdańsk's sculptor Elżbieta Szczodrowska took part in the design planning. Maria Korpalska took part in creating the first form of the monument. The Monument was publicly revealed in December 1980.

GLOSSARY

MKS (MIĘDZYZAKŁADOWY KOMITET STRAJKOWY) – INTERFACTORY STRIKE COMMITTEE – was created during the night of 16th / 17th August 1980 at the Gdańsk Shipyard, after the shipyard strike turned into a strike in solidarity with workplaces that supported the Shipyard since 14th August. MKS was led by Lech Wałęsa. By the 31st August the committee consisted of women and men representing around 800 workplaces and factories. On 17th August MKS announced 21 demands based on all demands received by it from departments and factories joining the MKS.

POROZUMIENIA GDAŃSKIE –GDAŃSK AGREEMENT (AUGUST AGREEMENT) – one of the four agreements signed in the summer of 1980 by the government commission of Polish People's Republic and the striking workers (Szczecin – 30th August, Gdańsk – 31st August, Jastrzębie – 3rd September, Katowice 11th September). The direct result of Gdańsk Agreement was the formation of a trade union independent from communist government on the 17th September 1980, first ever in the history of the Soviet bloc. Gdańsk Agreement guaranteed such rights as: the right to strike, safety of the strike members, lessening of the censorship, freedom for political prisoners, and return to work of those dismissed after December 1970 and June 1976. The content of the Agreement was based on the 21 demands written during the strike at the Gdańsk Shipyard. (Source: www.gedanopedia.pl).

WZZW (WOLNE ZWIĄZKI ZAWODOWE WYBRZEŻA) – FREE TRADE UNIONS OF THE COAST – an independent, anti-communist, opposition workers organisation. Launched in 1978 by Andrzej Gwiazda, Krzysztof Wyszkowski and Antoni Sokołowski. Created as an alternative to the official trade unions dominated by the Polish United Workers' Party. The members included Jerzy Borowczak, Bogdan Borusewicz, Joanna Duda-Gwiazda, Alina Pienkowska, Maryla Płońska and Anna Walentynowicz. WZZW published *The Coastal Worker (Robotnik Wybrzeża)* magazine and leaflets. The establishment of Solidarity in August 1980 and its later programme were largely inspired by the programme developed by WZZW. (Source: www.gedanopedia.pl).