



## 1 GATE NO. 2

Each day workers had to pass through gates 1, 2 and 3 on their way to and from work. The Shipyard was "a city within a city" - such expression was repeatedly used in recollections. The Shipyard had a three-shift working system. Each person crossing the gate had to show a valid pass and undergo a security check.

Women constituted, depending on the period, from several per cent to more than ten per cent of all staff (there were, in the 1970s, nearly 20 thousand employees in total). Women also worked as industrial security officers. The first training for women officers was carried out as early as the beginning of the 1950s. At that time working in The Shipyard was for women a chance to raise their social status, prestige, an opportunity to establish new relations and enter a new environment. Most women were manual workers, they were involved in the ship building process as: welders, sealers and insulators, battery truck drivers and some of them were also in charge of quality control.

In the 1960s and 70s more and more women with university degrees (in technology or economics) started applying for jobs in the Shipyard. In the course of time sons, daughters and other relatives of Shipyard employees started working there too, so The Shipyard became, in case of many people, a part of their family tradition. Besides, salaries and other benefits were quite appealing, especially for those working in the production process.

The Shipyard gates played a vital role in the time of strike of August 1980. The spark that ignited the stoppage of The Shipyard's work was the unlawful dismissal of Anna Walentynowicz, a few months before she was entitled to a pension. Strikers demanded that Anna Walentynowicz be returned back to work, other demands concerned pay rise, compliance with freedoms guaranteed by the constitution and building the monument to commemorate the victims of December 1970. The strike began to spread to other workplaces. On Saturday, 16th of August 1980 an announcement was made that the protest had ended and the strikers started moving towards the exit gates, intending to leave Shipyard premises. Three women persuaded some of the workers to stop and remain in The Shipyard. Ewa Ossowska rushed to Gate no. 1, Anna Walentynowicz went to Gate no. 2 and Alina Pienkowska - to Gate no. 3 They urged workers not to leave The Shipyard and to continue the strike, in solidarity with other striking factories, whose workers would not stand a chance to negotiate as favourable conditions as The Shipyard employees. The determination of these women resulted in closing the gates and their arguments lead to the continuation of the protest. More than one thousand people stayed on The Shipyard premises. As a consequence, the nature of strike changed - from that moment on it was a solidarity strike.

The gates, particularly the main gate - no. 2, were the point where strikers met with their families, heard speeches and exchanged information. Food, towels, clothes and other basic items for strikers were handed to them through the gate, too. Here Bożena Rybicka and Magdalena Modzelewska held prayer groups. Above the gate was posted the board with full list of 21 strikers' demands. Striking workers not only demanded political freedoms but also social rights, such as providing sufficient number of vacancies in nurseries, improving standards of healthcare or lowering of the retirement age.

For over 30 years the person in charge of Gate no. 2 was Aleksandra Olszewska, who also run the souvenir shop Souvenire.

Next to Gate no. 1 there was a staff cultural centre, Zakładowy Dom Kultury (ZDK). It offered workers a chance to participate in leisure time activities. There were amateur art groups such as: a song and dance ensemble, a choir and an orchestra. In the 1960s the importance of such cultural activities was questioned, as only a small percentage of staff took part in them. The issue of culture became a subject of public debate in The Shipyard and women, as the main initiators of these cultural activities, took part in it. The role of ZDK was eventually taken over by public cultural institutions.

Adjacent to Gate no.3 there was another facility, sport and entertainment hall, opened in the mid-1950s to provide sport and entertainment functions. Numerous mass events were held there, e.g. beauty pageants, concerts, with such stars as Marlene Dietrich and Josephine Baker and Christmas balls for the workers' children.

## 2 THE REPRESENTATIVES' CANTEEN

Canteen was one of the places in The Shipyard where the mundane activities intertwined with extraordinary events; where people of different professions, education status, gender, age and seniority met. Each days meals were prepared here which were then served by waitresses during lunch breaks. The canteen also served more substantial, nutritious meals for those working in harmful conditions. Lunch vouchers entitled workers to a hot meal and a half a litre of milk. Hundreds of portions were served. Food preparation and cooking started one day ahead. Preparing meals in such large quantities was extremely hard work - pots were as big as several hundred litres.

The division of duties in August 1980 during meal preparation for strikers became a subject of dispute to be resolved by Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy (MKS) (The Interfactory Strike Committee). Women rebelled against the stereotypical assumption that their role in the strike was limited to meal preparation - they wanted to participate in discussions and negotiations equally with men. The Committee agreed to their demand and ordered men to help with the cooking.

The Representatives' Canteen afforded workers an access to culture even during ordinary working days. Art exhibitions

and book fairs were held there and books could be borrowed from a small library branch. The Canteen was the place where men and women workers could integrate during the many regularly scheduled special events. The Canteen was also a venue for staff meetings with State representatives of the government and the Communist Party during their visits to The Shipyard. One of such events, extremely costly (one million Polish złotych) visit of Edward Gierek in 1979, was criticised by Anna Walentynowicz in Robotnik (The Worker) magazine run by Warsaw opposition movement. Walentynowicz was at the time a member of Wolne Związki Zawodowe Wyrbrzeża (WZZW) (The Coastal Free Trade Unions). She experienced severely intensified discrimination at work after the publication of her article.

## 3 THE HOSPITAL

This is another facility not connected directly with the production process. Patients of the hospital were employees of Gdańsk shipyards, as well as their family members. Occupational diseases such as: asbestosis, lead poisoning, digestive and respiratory disorders, hearing damage resulting from continuous noise and ailments of the spine and motor apparatus were a common problem due to difficult working conditions and exposure to harmful substances (paint, grease, fumes and asbestos). Many workers were treated here for cardiovascular diseases or recovered after heart attacks because of very demanding productivity standards and the exhausting nature of work.

The facility was well-equipped and provided comprehensive patient care.

Drastic price increases of food and other basic goods in December 1970 triggered the strike which began in The Shipyard and other factories of Gdańsk and Gdynia. In August 1980 militia troops and soldiers shot at workers leaving The Shipyard - several people were killed and the wounded were taken to the shipyard hospital, where they received emergency treatment. Women doctors e.g. Joanna Muszkowska-Penson and nurses from The Shipyard, provided care for the strikers.

## 4 THE BHP HALL

In view of numerous accidents occurring on Shipyard premises it was crucial to raise the workers' awareness about the hazards that they faced in their daily work. The place where trainings on occupational health and safety were given was, since the beginning of 1960s, this very building. During the trainings workers learned about procedures and safety measures that should be adopted in particular situations and also discussed the issue of improving their working conditions. Severe penalties, most often fines, were imposed on those workers who failed to comply with rules and procedures. Part of the building housed The Shipyard Museum.

It was in The BHP Hall where on the 31st of August 1980 Gdańskie Porozumienia (Gdańsk Agreement) was signed between the Government Committee and Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy (MKS) (The Interfactory Strike Committee). Joanna Duda-Gwiżdża, Alina Pienkowska, Maryla Płorńska and other women were among those who negotiated the agreement's content and wording and signatories included Anna Walentynowicz, Alina Pienkowska and Henryka Krzywonos. Political scientist Jadwiga Staniszkis was a member of the Expert Committee of MKS in Gdańsk. Maryla Płorńska held the function of MKS secretary. She founded a translation agency for foreign media, thanks to which the whole world heard about the strike, resulting in widespread public support for the strikers.

Bernadeta Stankiewicz and Ewa Milewicz were members of the editors' team publishing Strajkowy Buletyn Informacyjny Solidarności (Solidarity Strike News Bulletin) newspaper. It was issued daily, in tens of thousands of copies and for its readers was the main source of information about the protest. The message was reinforced by the work of Janina Jankowska, who courageously, without her Polish Radio superiors' permission, came to The Shipyard and shot a documentary entitled „Polski Sierpień” (Polish August). Poetry inspired by current events was written by Jadwiga „Jagoda” Piątkowska, who wrote poems both during and after the strike. Piątkowska, who was not a Shipyard employee, voluntarily and spontaneously joined the strike and, being a good typist, she volunteered to type the documents produced during the talks.

At the end of strike the people assembled in The BHP Hall watched the recitals and recitations performed by actors and actresses of Wyrbrzeże Theatre from Gdańsk. Halina Winiarska, Elżbieta Goetel, Halina Słojevska, Bogusława Czosnowska and Halina Łabonarska recited poems by Miłosz and Słowacki as well as poetry written by the strikers themselves.

During the strike women strikers left The Shipyard premises each night. The reason for that was to guarantee them safety and protect them from sexual harassment. Furthermore, it was stereotypically assumed that women needed to tend to home and family matters. This rule did not apply to the leaders of protest, who stayed overnight in The BHP Hall and machinists, who worked 24-hour shifts. They had to lie down on chairs if they wanted to take a nap. Another group of people who stayed overnight were those in charge of printing informational materials.

Several dozen female employees, both factory and administrative workers, were involved in preparing refreshments, coffee and sandwiches, for the negotiating participants.

The formation of trade unions which would be independent from employers and the government started after 1st September 1980. This so called Solidarity Carnival lasted only 16 months. It ended with the imposition of martial law on December 13th 1981.

## 5 DIRECTOR'S VILLA

For many years The Director's Villa was used as a childcare facility (nursery and kindergarten). At the time, every employer who hired more than one hundred women employees was obligated to provide childcare for the employees' children. Working mothers could leave their children with childcare workers employed at the facility. The advantage of such solution for the women was the possibility to get back to the children quickly at feeding times. The Shipyard expansion plan of 1958 prescribed that with the increasing number of women workers (estimated to constitute up to 20% of staff) it would be necessary to increase the number of children for whom childcare facilities would be available. It must be stressed that the attempts were made to relieve the strain of work on those women who returned to work after maternity leave, by transferring them to less tiring workplaces (administration department, canteen). It unfortunately had negative consequences; e.g. they received reduced pay, although it was against the Labour Code regulations (this issue was the subject of intervention of women's organizations) or their status decreased - in the case of women involved directly in the ship building process. After their maternity leave women usually returned to their previous posts.

Behind The Director's Villa there was a horticultural facility. The main task of women working there was taking care of the plants and making the premises of Shipyard look presentable.

The Director's Villa was demolished in 2012.

## 6 THE SHIPYARD MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Here all the crucial decisions concerning shipyard operations were made. Apart from management staff, comprising of men, women employees worked there, too. They worked in administration, sales and finance departments. Zofia Mausolf recalls that when she started work in the 1950s there were very few economists with a university degree. When she applied for a job in The Shipyard, three departments competed for her, offering her posts in sales, trade and finance. In subsequent years, when more and more qualified experts were available, it became harder for women to advance the career ladder.

The Main R&D Department was located here. It was where women developed technological solutions regarding the painting of, maintenance of and insulation of ships and other vessels. They prepared instructions, made technical designs and corrections of designs created in the design studio. This sort of work required constant updating of working methods and the testing of new solutions. This technological process was applied to all the ship building stages - both on the slipway and after the vessel was passed on to be fitted out. Up to 10 ships were being built here at the same time.

In front of the Management Office there was a notice board on which the photos of most productive employees were displayed. The message conveyed by that display was to motivate staff to take on new challenges and re-double their efforts in achieving goals. One such employee was Anna Lubczyk (subsequently Walentynowicz), a welder, who in the first half of the 1950s exceeded 270% of productivity requirements. She was awarded with a Bronze, a Silver and a Gold Cross of Merit for her hard work. Being a productivity leader in the first half of the 1950s meant certain perks: bonuses, presents, vouchers for goods which were in extremely short supply in Communist Poland, opportunities to travel abroad and tokens of recognition: badges, medals or diplomas. There were, however, also negative implications - envy and dissatisfaction of other team members (achieving better results by one person meant raising the productivity bar for everyone) and caused health problems connected with requisite physical exhaustion as a result of harder work and longer exposure to harmful conditions.

The square in front of The Management Office became an arena for the struggle put on to defend Anna Walentynowicz. On the 14th August 1980 the workers of Shipyard gathered here, to protest against her unfair dismissal. Reinstatement of Walentynowicz was the first demand made by the strikers. In a leaflet distributed that morning by The Free Trade Unions of the Coast (WZZW), workers entering The Shipyard premises read about the events leading to the dismissal of the gantry operator and were encouraged to express solidarity with this worker and activist, who for so long manifested her determination to improve working conditions and to restore the sense of dignity in The Shipyard workforce.

## 7 HALL 42A

This is one of the halls where Anna Walentynowicz worked. Gantry operators, like herself, were often transferred from one hall to another, where they were needed at any given time.

Just after World War II, in 1947, when The Shipyard no.1 and The Shipyard no. 2 were merged to form The Gdańsk Shipyard, Women's League clubs were founded. The aim of these Women's League clubs was to instruct women in new skills, essential for working environment and at home, to involve women in the process of rebuilding the country and to raise the level of their civic awareness. The League initially struggled with lack of places to conduct activities, lack of resources, staff shortages and with the scarce amount of free time women could devote to activism. Their main activities in the first years were: organizing festive events, award ceremonies for distinguished women workers, excursions and parties for the children of the most productive employees. After 1956 The Woman's League demanded a say in matters such as fair remuneration, employment and promotion rules for women, which would be adequate to their qualifications and highlighted the need to adapt working conditions and sanitary facilities to the needs of its women employees. The League also strived, although unsuccessful, to increase the number of women in management

structures of political and social organizations, in administration and the management functions.

Women employees were also members of Women's Council branches operating in production halls and across departments, where they helped in childcare centre, organized transport to The Shipyard nursery for women with children, educated teenagers, helped to improve living standards and housing conditions of large families, tried to establish a workers' hostel for women staff, supported women pensioners and former Shipyard workers. Women activists pointed out that women holding the same posts as men did not earn the same wages, were passed over for promotion and after completing their education were frequently offered posts which were below their qualifications. In certain areas, in cooperation with management, the situation for women gradually improved.

After 1956 the perception of the role of women in social life changed. Women were expected to devote more time to housework and to raising children. This was directly connected with the growing number of unemployed men on the labour market and with the necessity to provide workplaces for them. This change had impact on the activities of women's organizations in The Shipyard. In this period, The Women's League and The Women's Council, as a result of the problems of infrequent supply of everyday goods, began to focus on organizing courses on household management, sewing, shoe making and using kitchen appliances. Women from The Council made party hats and rosettes for children's parties and worked as cleaners in workers' holiday centres.

## 8 LONG SLIPWAYS

The long slipway is where the ship hulls were constructed. Women riveters, sealers and welders worked there, amongst other specialists. After World War II there was a shortage of labour force in the shipbuilding industry. Women were encouraged to choose and practice professions which, until then, had been considered reserved for men. Particular legislation required that at least two women workers were to be employed in each department. Training courses for various professions were advertised and photos of women shipyard workers appeared in the press. Warehouses, however, did not provide them with suitable workwear. Women workers were mandated to wear overalls, trousers and shirts that were oversized (men sizes). They filled their much too big boots with straw, footwraps, and newspapers to make them at least a bit more comfortable and suitable for work. The quality of protective gear, face masks or gloves wasn't satisfactory either. Urszula Scubiel, who worked as an insulator, recalls that face masks did not let enough air through and made breathing extremely difficult, whereas removing the masks exposed workers to the hazard of inhaling harmful substances. Welders frequently suffered from burns to their face and hands.

Women crews: sealers, welders, insulators etc. began to form in different production halls. In the early 1950s an article appeared in Głos Stoczniozca (The Shipyard Worker's Voice) magazine mentioning the excellent work of women crews and the promotion of Katarzyna Kaleta - initially working as machine stoker - for the position of supervisor of sheet-metal workshop, in recognition of her outstanding work and social merits. She was the first woman to hold this post in the entire history of The Shipyard.

Women hired by an outsourced company, Marlinka, worked on the slipways, too. Between 85% and 90% of Marlinka's staff were women, 60% of whom were the sole family providers (data of 1980). Their main duties were cleaning the premises, removing chemical dissolvers and welding residue in the ship hulls. Their position in the unwritten job hierarchy was quite low. Not only was their work hard physical labour, but it exposed them to health hazards and the threat of being sexually molested by the men workers. The burden of ensuring security for women was placed on the women themselves, with the introduction of a regulation stating that they must always move around The Shipyard premises in pairs.

## 9 DEPARTMENTAL CHANGING ROOMS

Labour law required a separate bathroom and changing room for departments which hired more than five women workers. In practice women often had to resort to various informal tactics to respect that legislation rule. One of the women told us that in one case her colleague, the wife of foreman, nagged her husband until he finally agreed to allocate separate changing rooms for women. Other woman points out that women were supposed to clean their changing rooms themselves while male changing rooms were cleaned by women cleaners. Women workers also described cases of peeping Toms. Today sexual harassment is punishable by law.

## 10 INCLINED SLIPWAY

Nearly one thousand ships were built in The Shipyard. It is worth highlighting that it was a comprehensive fabrication work: from design to completion. The launching of a ship was each time a wonderful celebration. From the bridge leading to Ostrów island, called Holm by women workers, the spectacular side ship launching ceremonies could be seen. Those were attended by workers' families and groups of schoolchildren. The artistic setting was prepared by the shipyard orchestra and dance ensembles.

The Shipyard management along with the new shipowner selected the candidate who would have the honour of christening the ship. In the 1950s the candidate was often chosen from among the most productive women workers. Bernadeta Nowak, an employee of the design studio, who supervised the ship building process, was chosen to christen the ship in the 1990s. She recalled this as a major ceremonial event but at the same time - a very stressful one. The bottle of

champagne thrown at the ship's bow was supposed to smash against it at the first attempt, otherwise it meant a bad omen for the ship's crew. The woman christening the ship uttered the following words: "Sail the seas and the oceans, honour the names of Polish shipbuilders. I name you...".

## 11 SNACK BAR

On The Shipyard premises there were many kiosks, shops, snack bars and service outlets. The goods sold were not easily obtainable: household appliances, groceries, clothes. Queues forming in front of the shops were a meeting spot for women from different departments, offering them the opportunity to exchange information. Not far away from The BHP Hall was a bookshop Dom Książki.

Having catering outlets located in various areas of the shipyard made it possible to optimize workers' productivity. During lunch breaks they did not have to go as far as to the canteen situated next to Gate no. 2 and could have a meal near their production hall or workshop. There were various service points (tailor's workshop, shoe repair shop, laundry) on The Shipyard's premises and in the districts where The Shipyard workers lived. This followed in line with the concept of socialisation of household chores and was aimed at helping women to reconcile their domestic duties with occupational obligations.

## 12 SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

In the building where school workshops were run crossed the paths of all the people who came to work in The Shipyard: apprentices, students of The Ship Building Vocational School, participants of professional training or skill development courses, teenagers, students and adults. The system of introducing new workers to working procedures made it possible for them to become familiar with different professions and work stations. The process of vocational training emphasised both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, learned under experienced workers' supervision.

Krystyna Rożnowska, an engineer, a ship engine construction specialist, recalls vocational training workshops took place on The Shipyard premises with students spending there one full working day every week. First they were given instructions, then changed into shipyard overalls, which they received from the warehouse staff, and worked for 6 hours. After their shift was over, they wrote a daily report. They illustrated it with technical drawings and took part in the discussion about the events of their working day. The basis for vocational training evaluation and scoring was the achievement of continuous good work and progress made throughout the whole year, not just the results of the final examination.

Anna Walentynowicz (formerly Lubczyk) arrived at The Gdańsk Shipyard in 1950 for a welding course. She worked in The Shipyard for the next thirty years, first as a welder, and from mid-1960s onwards, after re-training, as a gantry operator. Later in her career she would train next generations of gantry operators. Since the very beginning Walentynowicz demanded respect for Shipyard workers and granting them rights such as providing safe working conditions and fair bonus distribution.

It was disapproved by The Shipyard management. Walentynowicz was frequently reprimanded by her supervisors and was prohibited from taking any actions which would expose abusive behaviours of the supervisors.

## 13 CRANES

In the 1970s the new green cranes were brought to The Shipyard from Finland, but women operators did not work on them. Women, however, did prevail among gantry operators as they manifested characteristics regarded as feminine, such as diligence and accuracy. Their work, in fact, was very demanding both in terms of physical effort and mental acuity. Women attended numerous courses, including those on teamwork on large-size structures. They also had to take a test confirming their ability to work at heights.

## 14 ASSEMBLY HALL 3B

This building was a mould loft. Women workers made there life-sized patterns of each part of the ship to be built. Young women who came here for vocational training at the age of 14 were students of the first class of The Ship Building Vocational School (at the beginning of the 1960s the school authorities formed a class specially for them).

Designs were prepared in a building, referred to as RN building, that is no longer here today, located opposite Jana z Kolna street. RN building housed the studios, where women designers and draughtsmen created various floating vessels, ship mechanisms, appliances, compiled documentation and supervised works at the slipways. Some of the women at the time, asked about their opinion about promotion prospects, replied that they preferred to deal with designs than with team management, that the sign of recognition for them was being given an interesting task to accomplish.

Close cooperation between these women workers from both buildings allowed them to spot errors, leading to immediate corrections.

The first computers were introduced at certain workplaces in the 1970s. Some staff members were apprehensive of such technological progress and chose to be transferred to different posts while many of women employees opted to learn new computer skills. Declaration of The Shipyard's bankruptcy in 1996 forced many people to look for new jobs, for others it meant taking up early retirement.

## 15 HEALTHCARE CENTRE

In The Shipyard healthcare facilities women worked as doctors, nurses, lab technicians and administrators. The facility was divided into various treatment sectors. There were, amongst others, women's medical centres such as gynaecology and hygiene unit. Healthcare services for pregnant women were provided here. In the 1950s, the healthcare system dealt with such social diseases as tuberculosis, rheumatoid arthritis, trachoma and some sexually transmitted diseases.

Women doctors were also called out to help victims of accidents on The Shipyard premises. The occupational medicine department was in charge of occupational health, safety and prevention training. Women employed there as industrial doctors conducted occupational testing of workers and provided health assessments regarding occupational diseases. The assessments were most frequently issued to women who worked in severely hazardous conditions, i.e. welders, insulators. They would come to the healthcare clinic suffering from asbestosis, often causing cancerous lesions in respiratory system. Allergies were common, often disturbing the work of cleaners and painters. Olga Krzyżanowska - after 1989 the Member of Parliament, The Deputy Speaker of Parliament, for many years the Manager of The Shipyard Healthcare Centre, recalls that for many being certified as disabled and incapable of performing work was a personal tragedy. Even if they could find a new profession, it often involved retraining at entry level. Women working in The Rehabilitation Clinic were responsible for the treatment of injuries and diseases. The Clinic was an extension of Physiotherapy Centre, which operated since the mid-1950s. Doctor Hanna Kistelnicka was the director of The Clinic.

Alina Pienkowska, who began working here in 1974 as an industrial healthcare nurse, in 1978 became a member of The Free Trade Unions of the Coast (WZZW), later the healthcare Strike Committee leader, member of MKS and a signatory of the Gdańsk Agreement. She penned articles for Robotnik Wyrbrzeża (The Coastal Worker) focusing on occupational diseases, accidents at work and The Shipyard's healthcare provision. She was discriminated against for her opposition activity. She was repeatedly stopped and frisked and ultimately arrested. Then she was accused of negligence in the workplace and unauthorised absence at work when she was held under arrest. However, her men and women co-workers from the clinic at The Electrical Ship Machinery and Automatics Factory Elmor, where she was transferred as a punishment between 1978 and 1979, came to her defence.

In August 1980 Pienkowska saw the strikers with banners through the windows of healthcare clinic. She wanted to pass information about the strikers' demands to Jacek Kuroń who at the time was broadcasting updates on the national summer strikes across Poland on Radio Wolna Europa (the Radio Free Europe). Together with Barbara Przedwojska, herself a doctor of Regional Hospital in Gdańsk, she drew up one of the 21 demands - nr 16, concerning healthcare, along with a detailed 30-item annex. Pienkowska was for many years the head of Krajowa Sekcja Służby Zdrowia Solidarności (Nationwide Division of Healthcare Solidarity) and after 1989 - a Senator and a Member of The Gdańsk City Council.

## 16 THE MONUMENT TO FALLEN SHIPYARD WORKERS OF 1970

Women were there during the historic and tragic events of December 1970. One of the women remembered seeing military tanks on The Shipyard premises and the fact that women workers were allowed to return home while men were detained. Another woman, who was breastfeeding a baby born earlier that month, lost her milk supply because of stress. Yet another one described the incident of her roommate from the workers' hostel being severely beaten during street riots.

A demand to build the monument was put forward soon after the brutal pacification of the protest in front of The Shipyard Gate no. 2. In 1978 and in 1979, anniversary ceremonies were held right next to this gate. Thousands of people gathered. In 1979, Maryla Płorńska spoke on behalf of The Free Trade Unions of the Coast emphasising the need to improve the situation of the workers and to grant them rights, such as the right of association in order to defend workers interests. Anna Walentynowicz and Alina Pienkowska were at the time in a detention centre 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 negotiated with government representatives. A fundraising campaign for that purpose was also initiated at that time. The government authorities tried to change the monument's meaning, such that it would commemorate also militia officers. The proposal met with vehement objection from Anna Walentynowicz. To build the monument, women and men workers gave up their free time, as the whole undertaking was being conducted after their working hours. Sculptor Elżbieta Szczodrowska was one of the creators of the Monument.

The monument consists of three 40-metre high crosses, to which anchors are attached, as the symbol of hope. Bas-reliefs, representing a shipyard worker and other professional and social groups, were placed on the steel structure below. The ceremony of unveiling the Monument, which is one of the city most memorable landmarks, took place on the 16th December 1980.

