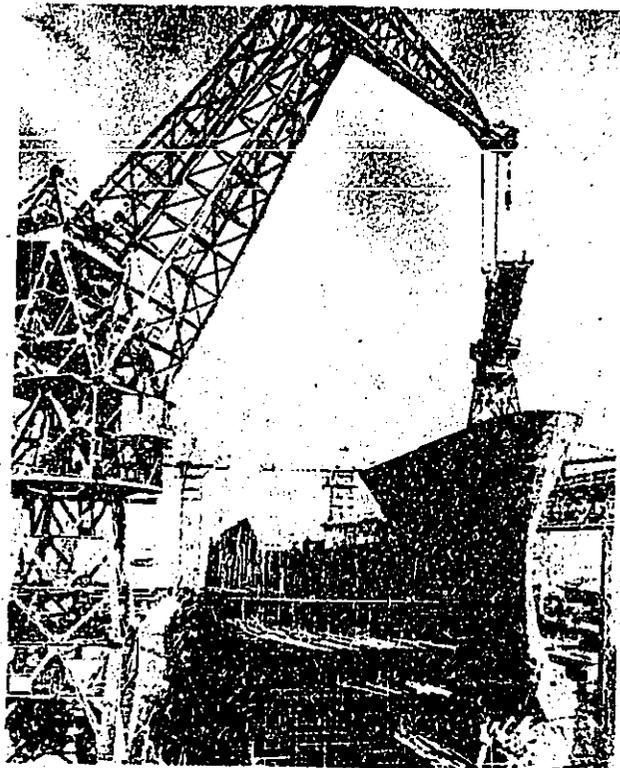


Smuggled out of Poland



**Shipyard Workers Revolt
Against
Communist Party Leaders**

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Shipyard Workers Revolt Against Communist Party Leaders

CHAIRMAN: Workers of the shipyards, Comrade Edward Gierk, First Secretary of the Central Committee, is here as promised in our Szczecin yards. We extend warm greetings to him. Also present for today's meeting are: the Prime Minister, Comrade Piotr Jaroszewicz, the Secretary of the Central Committee, Comrade Barcikowski, the Vice-Prime Minister Franciszek Kaim, who is already well known to us, the Minister of Defence, Deputy Wojciech Jaruzelski, the first secretary of Szczecin Provincial Committee, Comrade Oblubek, Comrade Szlachcic (Minister of the Interior), and other representatives of the Party leadership, the administration and the unions. I apologize for the inadequacies of tonight's organization, but we were taken a bit unawares by the timing of the meeting; I'm sorry, and undertake to be better prepared in future... *(speaks quietly to Gierk—applauds)*

GIERK: In future there won't be any need to hold meetings like this. *(Sbouts and stirring in the hall)*

CHAIRMAN: No meetings? But Comrade Secretary, we feel you have honoured us with your presence . . .

GIEREK (*interrupting*): Yes, but not meetings like this. (*Turmoil and shouting*)

CHAIRMAN: The President of the Strike Committee, Comrade Baluka, has the floor to read the workers' demands.

BALUKA: These are the strikers' demands (*reads*):

1 We demand that food prices be returned to the level of before 12 December 1970.

2 We demand, following the workers' wishes expressed in all departmental meetings open to all workers, that there be immediate legal elections to trade-union posts and to the Workers' Councils; also, following the wishes of the majority of Party members, that there be democratic elections in the Party and youth organizations, both on departmental level and for the whole enterprise. We would like the provincial authorities of these organizations to guarantee the application of this demand within a strict time limit.

3 We demand that workers receive their full pay for the period of the strike.

4 We demand that the shipyard management and the national authorities give guarantees of full personal security to the strikers and members of the Strike Committee both at work and in the town, and that no reprisals be taken against them.

5 We demand that the first secretary of the PUPP [Polish United Workers' Party] Central Committee, Comrade Edward Gierek, and Prime Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz visit the Adolf Warski naval shipyards to enter into a direct and permanent dialogue with the workers' representatives on the Strike Committee.

6 We demand that we be given honest information on the political and economic situation of the shipyards and the country as a whole, and that the report disseminated on 11 January 1971 concerning productivity undertakings in the tube factory be corrected.

7 The correction must be publicized in the same mass media that published the original report. This must be done by 25 January at the latest.

8 We demand that sanctions be taken against those who arranged for tube factory productivity pledges to be reported by the mass media on 11 January.

9 We demand that our claims be reported by the local press and radio between now and 25 January.

10 We demand that the regional authorities of the Party and the Unions, as well as the yard management, guarantee the Workers' Commission formed by the Strike Committee every freedom to perform its function, alongside the Yard Council and the Workers' Council, until the legal

* The Szczecin press had published a report that the tube section of the yards had pledged itself to higher outputs, as a manoeuvre to split the strikers—a pure invention that aroused intense indignation among the workers, as a typical example of the brazen lies in the official media.

elections mentioned in section 2 have taken place.

11 For the members of the Workers' Commission, freedom to perform their function should comprise basically:

- a) guarantees on their personal safety both in the yards and outside them;
- b) the exclusive use of the radio-telephone network and of the men necessary to maintain and protect it;
- c) formation from among its members of a delegation to supervise the carrying out of section 2 of this list of demands.

12 We demand that the security services stop harassing, threatening and arresting workers taking part in the strike. The strike does not constitute an offence: nothing in our laws forbids striking.

Signed: STRIKE COMMITTEE.
(Prolonged applause)

GIEREK: Before replying, comrades, I would like to ask you for a little patience and understanding. I was aware that the situation, in Szczecin and throughout the country, had become difficult—let's say it, intolerable. Why? There are objective reasons, such as our serious setbacks in agriculture and the sabotage of the capitalist countries, which make us pay for everything in dollars. But I won't bother you with all that now; because, above all, there are reasons that are the fault of individuals. It has to be said: Comrade Gomulka, in whom we had unlimited confidence for so long, well . . . yes, Comrade Gomulka made decisions that were not correct. And it was impossible to say the slightest thing to him. He always answered: 'You don't know anything about it; I'm the only one who knows . . .' You workers were then told that the government and the Party were always united, unanimous. That wasn't true. There was an opposition. But we couldn't do anything, and the little that we did get was immediately sabotaged from the beginning by the bureaucracy. We warned Gomulka often; we told him that the price of foodstuffs should not be raised; that there were going to be strikes. Gomulka didn't listen to advice. He was far too arrogant for that. What could we do? Resign? At a time when the economic situation of the country was so bad?

Because perhaps you don't know exactly where we stand. Very well, I'll tell you. We are in an impasse. We are at the end of the line. Just for this year alone, we are short of 2,500,000 tons of wheat. The Soviet Union is selling us 2,000,000 tons, but we absolutely do not have the money for the rest. Now, cattle-raising is going to suffer, and we are going to have new troubles with the meat supply. And that's only one small example . . .

Yes, everything is very, very bad. The worst of it is that we don't know how to get out of it. Our investments are much too heavy—23 per cent of the national revenue!—but they have already been made. It is impossible to undo what has been done. In addition, we find ourselves at the highest level of population growth, in connection with employment. In the next five years, we have to find employment for 1,900,000 young people. Wherever we turn, the situation is blocked. It's impossible to upset the applecart, to tear everything apart. The only solution, believe me, is painful . . . it's hard to say . . . but it is that you work

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harder and still harder—so that our economy produces its maximum.
(He pauses for a moment)

So I am talking to you the way I spoke to my miner friends in Silesia. I say to you: Help us! Help me! You cannot doubt my good will. When it was proposed that I take over the leadership of the Party, at first I thought I would refuse. After all, I am 58 years old. In another two or three years, I will retire. I even have a pension from France and from Belgium, because I worked there 18 years. So I could leave, couldn't I? I am only a worker like you. I worked in the mine-pits for 18 years! I don't have any relatives in high places. My relatives slave in the mines—just as I did. Yes, I tell you, I was very much tempted to refuse. But if we had done that, Comrade Piotr [Jaroszewicz] and I, something terrible would have happened . . . Comrades, there would have been a bloodbath!

You will tell me that a bloodbath took place anyway, that there were deaths, many deaths. That's true, and I pay homage to those who fell. But now—and I tell you this in all solemnity, as a Pole and as a Communist—the fate of our nation and the cause of socialism are in the balance. Also, I promise you to grant your demands to the maximum, but I ask certain things of you: for example, to cease the attacks (I know that they are circulating) against the Soviet Union. First, because at the height of the present crisis, Comrade Brezhnev himself phoned Comrade Gomulka in order that the crisis here be settled politically and not by repression. And then you cannot, you must not . . . hit out at what is fundamental for us, what has been decisive and will continue to be decisive to our development: friendship with the Soviet Union.

As to your demands, we will do our utmost. The Party will be renovated; we will get rid of the incompetents. As to lowering the price of foodstuffs, we must be realistic. I tell you, there is no possible way of going back to the pre-12 December prices. (*Stirring, shouts in the hall: "There is! Why not?"*) Because, comrades, in all truth, it isn't possible. But all elected bodies will be democratically reconstituted. That, yes. (*Applause*) So that these bodies are open to all—party members or not! Open even to members of the strike committee, why not? (*Ovation, shouts*) To pay wages for the days you were on strike? That we shouldn't do—not in so difficult a period, while the whole country is at work. I'm going to make you a proposition, however: we agree to pay your wages if, before the end of the month, you fulfil the production plan. Okay? Good.

In addition, I read on your list: give honest information on the political and economic situation. But there has only been too much of that recently, too much of that kind of information. (*Voices in the hall: "False information, false!"*) No! Don't demand of us a democracy . . . as they say . . . for all, for friends and enemies alike! The erroneous reports will be corrected, but it is out of the question, at this time, to encourage agitation among the workers by publishing your demands! The last point concerns the police: if anyone has been arrested for a strike action, it is clear that he has to be released immediately. Thieves, looters, arsonists will have to be punished, but they only.

There you are, comrades, that's what I have to say to you. I know that it can't satisfy you completely. But you must know, you must understand, that that's the limit. Accept it, help us, and on our side, we will do everything we can to ameliorate this tragic situation. That is your duty... *(Applause)*

CHAIRMAN: Who wants the floor? Who is ready? The delegate from department K-1? Yes?

DELEGATE FROM K-1: I would like to ask our higher officials: Can we speak frankly, as Comrade Gierak says? *(Addressing himself to the chair)* Can I speak honestly?

GIERAK: Yes, that's exactly what we're here for.

DELEGATE FROM K-1: Then we can talk as workers do among themselves?

GIERAK: That's obvious.

DELEGATE FROM K-1: Then we can have mutual self-criticism?

GIERAK: Yes.

DELEGATE FROM K-1: Good! Do I have guarantees of safety? You understand, since I'm a worker, I don't know how to speak very well, how to present things... but does Comrade Gierak know that we can no longer count the number of corpses here, because it is hard to calculate how many have been picked up in the street. *(Sbouts in the hall)* Oh, it isn't so much the number, but people were falling, bullets were whistling. And these bullets—how were they brought? With money earned by our sweat. That's really too hard to bear!

How is it possible that the working class can be turned against the working class? How is it possible that we were shooting at one another? Because, really, we have one party, don't we? Then why all this blood? And another thing: I know a man whose brother was killed. Now, this man received reparation, but on condition that he sign a declaration saying that his brother had not been killed but died of a heart attack, a labour accident, or some other reason. *(Sbouts of anger, applause)* That's not all. Comrade Gierak tells us: there won't be any sanctions against the strikers. Official sanctions, perhaps. But how about other sanctions? *(Shouting)* Actually, they catch the shipyard workers like rats! They jump on them noiselessly, in a corner, behind trees, they beat them up. We had a case in our department: a man was beaten up. It's the truth. His back was all green as a result of the clubbing. We saw it. Why? Simply because he had wanted to note the badge number of the militiaman who was checking his papers...

I ask: Of what use is this militia? To beat up honest people and to take care of 'bluebirds' [parasites]? And it is false to say that they shot into the air. There were two killed and two wounded, not in the street but inside the plant, in front of the administrative building where we were

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waiting for the manager. We certainly had the right to be there, no? Then why shoot? No, we are not protecting those who set fires and who looted, because we will have to rebuild all that with our money, that's for sure. The financial institutions borrow money from us who work. But I think these methods of the militia have to be changed. And the leaders have to be changed, too—that . . . that aristocracy that is going to steal everything. (*Ovation in the hall*) If we are really going to elect our officials, we have to get rid of all those people who have elbowed themselves permanently into comfortable chairs, where they sit so long that the seats of their pants become mildewed . . . because they are useless! We are struggling for that, for a change of officials. Especially at the base. It's like a fish—it's the head that starts to rot first, but it has to be scaled from the tail. All this is not against Comrade Gierek. I've finished. Thank you.

DELEGATE FROM K-2: I want to go back to the events. So many young people have been killed, shot from behind—not from in front—in the back, in the head. There is proof. I am an eyewitness! And then, those killed in the street have been wrapped up in nylon bags and buried in secret, like cattle. (*Applause, shouts*) But, believe me, the people will not let this go by—they will check everything, even in the cemeteries. Everything will be accounted for. Everything! And in my opinion, Comrade Gierek should take matters in hand and punish the guilty with the greatest severity. (*Applause*) That's all . . .

Excuse me, there are still the demands. In my opinion, Comrade Gierek has promised us nothing; he has said that the economic situation was too difficult. It is well known that we Poles know how to work—here as well as abroad . . . So we must give him a chance—we must give Comrade Gierek a chance. Of course, at the time we also trusted Gomulka. Only nothing came of it—nothing was accomplished. But, in my opinion, Comrade Edward is the right kind of man. Let's give him at least a year or two and we'll see the results . . . (*Applause*)

BALUKA: K-3? K-3? Not present? Then K-4.

DELEGATE FROM K-4: I am the representative from K-4, which does the actual construction of the ship's hull. Our department works outdoors. That means that in the summer we stew in our own juice; the temperature goes to 70° [Centigrade] and higher. In the wintertime, we can hardly work because the equipment is frozen. When the rainy season comes, there are deaths from electrocution among the welders and shipfitters. We have never been able to get even a two-hour stoppage when it rains, though rain is a mortal danger for us.

And all that for what? For miserable wages—1,800 to 2,000 zlotys. * The same thing I was earning ten years ago! If you figure it out, for a family of five: breakfast for each, bread and something to drink, that comes to

* The official rate of exchange is 38 zlotys to £1. The real exchange rate is about 100 zlotys to £1. The wages cited above are thus in the region of £18-£2 a month.

2 zlotys. In the evening, the same thing: 4 zlotys. The cheapest possible midday meal, 12 zlotys per person, comes to 60 zlotys. Automatically, then, 64 zlotys a day. For the month, that comes to 1,800—almost 1,900 zlotys. And that's only food—bread and drink. But in the yards, the work is hard; the worker has to eat because, truthfully, after 15 years, it's the cemetery. Anything else is impossible. That's it, thank you. *(Applause)*

BALUKA: Comrade, comrade! Your position on the demands?

DELEGATE FROM K-4: Our department is for some kind of raise. And a fixed minimum. If it rains or snows, I don't know if I can earn 1,000 zlotys. I don't know if I'm going to survive until next month. Thank you.

BALUKA: Who gets the floor now?

DELEGATE FROM K-5: Fellow workers, I have to raise this point. It's necessary to work to live; we don't share the good luck of those who live well without working, we're not that sort of people. Fate does not favour us. We have to work to keep alive. But in our departments, the work is unfairly divided, it's not shared out on a democratic basis.

What's more, there are a terrible lot of offices in our section; we're working for six, seven, maybe ten men. Well, come on, why are we working for these people? What use are all these gentlemen? Sometimes a week goes by without me seeing one of them do a hand's turn. It seems they're busy with social matters . . . they only appear to hand us our control sheet. That's all they have to do. Well, what are these people paid for? They're stealing our wages. And that's not all. *(Applause)*

That's not all, mates. These gentlemen have got where they are, not from here, from among us, but via the government, the Party leadership—a long way from us. Those who don't want to speak the same language as us, the workers. And it's our wages that they're sharing out, we provide for them out of our wages. Is that what democracy is? Certainly not! That's my lot. *(Applause)*

DELEGATE FROM W-2: In connection with our demands and in the name of our workers, we have decided unanimously to suspend the strike. To show our full confidence in the Party authorities and the government, we will go along with the decisions taken by the authorities on the demands we have made. As our decision is positive towards the authorities, we would like frank and positive answers to one or two questions.

First, and we would like a clear answer from the first secretary of the Central Committee of the PZWP: is it necessary for blood to flow before the Central Committee of the PZWP and the government can be changed? It seems to us that a decision to limit the duration of office should be considered, to avoid the sort of thing that happened in 1956 and 1970.

CIEREK: I didn't quite catch that . . .

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DELEGATE FROM W-2: Must blood flow to change the CC of the PUPW and the government? Shouldn't we consider limiting the duration of office to avoid events like 1956 and 1970?

Second, and again I'd like an answer from someone: people are always talking about so-called high wages in the yards without realizing that they come from too much overtime. We accept that the country's in a difficult situation, but would like to ask how much directors and ministers are getting. We demand an answer. If they're taking home more than twice as much as a highly skilled welder—whose average wage is about 3,000 zlotys—I repeat, if they get more than twice that, our opinion is that their salaries should be reduced and frozen.

DELEGATE FROM W-3: As for these very important persons, other things have to change too. I know an army officer named Szatkowski, an old-timer of the PSP [Polish Socialist Party, fused with Communist Party in 1948]. How he worked for the Party in his day! He has been a Party member for 25 years. Now he wanted to see Comrade Walaszek, at the Provincial Committee. He said: 'I'll wait one, two, six months . . . please set up an appointment for me.' The secretary replied: 'No, it's out of the question. You won't be able to see him.' That man went away broken-hearted and embittered. Well, if everybody in power is like that—and they often are—well, it's going to be hard to find a common language with us workers. How are they going to govern us?

As to the demands, the first and most important for us is that a raise in salaries or a reduction in prices must be declared. (*Great applause, ovation, shouts*) That's it.

BALUKA: Comrade, comrade! Speak concretely: are you for or against continuing the strike? That's very important.

DELEGATE FROM W-3: I'm going to ask the others . . . (*Movements in the hall, confusion on the platform, interruptions*)

DELEGATE FROM W-0: Department W-0 decides to stop the strike. It's a gesture towards Comrade Gierak, who came here. Thank you.

A DELEGATE: There's one thing that's still bothering me. I hope that the new government's programme is right, that it's worth supporting. It's been mentioned in meetings that the CC sends people who talk to us as if we're now trying to stifle the voice of truth from the top. But everyone here says, quite rightly, that our best weapon is the truth; lies are useless to us. We must carry on in this direction.

Everyone knows that two opposing tendencies have taken shape in the leadership and that they're at each other's throats. If the tendency behind the old policy comes out on top, those of us who started the strike will all end up in the nick, no less! Because in the leadership, in the press, in the provincial committees, there are people who are going to try, bit by bit, to eliminate those in favour of change. We are really worried about this, and with good reason. We'd like to see this dialogue on every level, starting at the bottom and taking in the unions, the yard

management and so on right to the top. That way we won't lose face and we won't have to worry about them getting rid of us. For there have been cases of that kind.

For example, I was also a member of our 'Three-man Committee'. We had to carry out the Strike Committee order and find 20 mates for security duty. When I was leading these men, the head of my department came up, grabbed me by the arm and said: 'You'd better pass everything you do through me, or you'll be fixed!' I didn't know what to do and got my comrades together to think about what line to take. Then I said to him: 'Tell the others what you just said to me.' He said he didn't want to. Now, if he wants, he can ~~deny~~ he ever said anything—but how does he look to the workers, as a department head? Can I trust someone like that? I don't think so. We didn't wreck or destroy anything. We tried to keep order, but we were fighting for a just cause. For 25 years, we'd been told that we were in the right; now we're told we're wrong. That's what I can't take.

I'd like to say one thing more. There was a discussion with the yard management about this strike—the director himself said it and it's all down on tape. What Director Skrobot said was: 'All right, you can have a strike, but don't leave the yards.' So we went on strike. We wanted the promises made in response to our demands to be kept. That's not all. If this renewal is really happening, if we can really look one another straight in the face, I'd like to know what the director's getting paid. I don't know if it's gossip or lies, but it's said that Director Skrobot makes 18,000 a month! If it's true, then I think—when people are trying to get a few pennies more—that salaries like that should come down a bit, because some people are living sumptuously while others haven't enough to buy bread. In the present situation we can't tolerate such things! *(Prolonged applause)*

One last point about the deputies: I don't think our deputies are interested in their region. They don't pay the slightest attention to it. Our affairs don't interest them; they never come to the shipyards, not even to hold dialogues like this one. They come at election time though, so that we'll elect them; then they come and tell us that we're quite right, what we say is fair enough, and so on. Otherwise, nothing. Thank you. *(Prolonged applause)*

BALUKA: Comrades, I ask you to shorten your comments and to make known your concrete position on the demands rapidly. Otherwise we'll all still be here at noon! Don't repeat yourselves. Those who haven't as yet consulted their department should do so now. *(Proceedings suspended, stirring in the hall, a rather long interruption)* Next!

DELEGATE FROM W-7: Everyone in w-7 knows that every strike worsens the economic situation of the country, which is not too good in any case. We are resolutely and honestly for an end to the strike and a resumption of work. At the same time, we ask that our continuity of work be guaranteed, so that it won't carry on like now: first we're in it up to the neck and then, for two or three months, there's nothing to do at all—and that hits us in the pocket. We demand that the piecework

rates, which already force us to work too fast, should not be lowered any further. Not so long ago—two years or so—panel-beaters were getting 2.70 zlotys a square metre; now they only get 1.10. Varnishers? They still get no rest-periods; it's been my work for 14 years, during which there have been several approaches by the Epidemiological Health Centre, which ascertained that the concentration of vapours is six times the acceptable level. What's more, varnishers only get 0.23 zloty social allowance. What about maintenance workers, their work conditions? They're the very ones who work inside these casings, with the casings closed. That dust! It's clear there's been a lack of technical progress. At one time there used to be scrapers; the scraper is still with us. Work safety and hygiene: we're not provided with masks, we have to risk our health. Obviously no-one takes the slightest interest. Social conditions: there's no space for offices, nor for stores. We haven't even any space for changing rooms. The existing changing room is too small and at present one man dirties another man's clothes, there's no way to avoid it. When people arrive for work they change in the showers, the corridors, everywhere.

DELEGATE FROM SP: There's another problem I'd like to mention, one which irritated the shipyard workers very greatly. Why is it that lately . . . last Saturday . . . the shipyards were surrounded by cordons of militia? And why, when their families came in the morning with their meals, did the militia stop them from making contact through the railings with the people inside the yards? (*Applause, angry shouts*) I witnessed it, because I went from the arsenal as far as COXAL I've asked the question, now if possible I'd like it to be answered, perhaps today.

As for our position on the demands—whether or not we go on with the strike—I can't say, because of all the department, which as I've said numbers more than a hundred people, there are only eight of us here. We eight agree that the strike should be suspended. On the other hand, we can't speak for those who are now watching tv or asleep in bed.

DELEGATE FROM CP: As a party member for 26 years and one who has lived in Szczecin since 1946, I would like to answer Comrade Gierek when he tells us that we have to save money, that money is precious in our country. We know that—we've put our own blood into it. But we can take some money back from those who are living too well on our labour. I'll speak plainly, Comrades: our society is divided into classes. There are people who no longer know what to do with their socialism; and they're already looking for something better. Their socialism is like that because they have too much money and too many ways of making money. Even right here in the shipyards! Comrade Skrzynecki was here—at the end of 12 months he's earned 170,000 zlotys and a bit of small change. Not with his fixed basic salary, but with all those supplements, bonuses and so on. I think, comrades, that it's time to stop this. People should be paid for the work they do! Some people, especially the management and department heads, get much bigger bonuses than others; these bonuses should be equalized.

I have another demand. We've been fighting for this since 1945; we must make sure there's no division into classes. But these class divisions

start from the top! Why? Because when these bonuses are granted, the divisions are brought in at the start: so much for the intellectuals, so much for manual workers. Isn't that a class division imposed from the top? Is the intellectual worker any different from me? Surely not; he's certainly the same worker and the same man as I am. Why start this sort of thing ourselves? We've been talking about abolishing the inequalities between worker and peasant ever since the Sanacja period (*Sanacja* = 'Cure'—the name of a pro-Pilsudski political movement in the thirties). That's what our struggle is for! And it's a just struggle. Then why are we making this kind of division here? I think some of the money should be taken back and then, automatically, something can be done for those who need bread.

Comrade Gierek, we understand you and trust you totally. We're perfectly well aware of that. But Comrades, up until now *we've been told too many lies* . . . by the mass media. We weren't being spoken to frankly or openly. These comrades—whether Party members or non-Party—were too conceited, while we were sweating at work. They learned all that in schools we built for them. Comrade Gierek, it is known—I don't know exactly, but generally—how much it costs to educate an engineer or any graduate. Where does the money come from? Out of our pockets! So why have these people grown so snooty? They don't want to talk to us! We all know perfectly well here that that's the way it is.

Often we blame the authorities, or the Party. Where does the trouble really lie? They lose interest in the worker's fate right down at the lowest levels, at the departmental management level. They follow the line of least resistance. Instead of trying to improve the workers' situation, these executives transform themselves into simple bailiffs, as if they were living under a colonel's regime. We believe there should be no such bosses among us! Just like bailiffs . . . but we're thinking meal (*Applause*)

DELEGATE OF THE NTP DEPARTMENT: Workers of the shipyards! I speak in the name of NTP. First, I would like to say: Comrade Gierek, you talk of a change. Do you know what a change is? It's us who are present here. (*Shouts, applause, ovations*) Those who are workers, Communists, who are for People's Poland. So, it's with us that you should hold discussions, instead of sending the militia after us as if we were bandits, instead of surrounding us with a cordon of troops and trying to starve us out by preventing food from reaching us during the strike . . . Comrade Gierek, in the morning, after this long night, we'll go back to work, but we want, beforehand, to have some honest and direct answers. We've been lied to too much. Not by you, perhaps, Comrade Gierek, but by the others. Before . . . Well, now, we want the Central Committee to commit itself and take a position on this affair. We want . . .

GIEREK: That I cannot accept! It's an ultimatum . . . (*Stirring and agitation in the hall*) after all, I am not the Central Committee. I'm only the First Secretary. It's up to the Committee to decide . . .

DELEGATE FROM THE NTP: That's true! Comrade Gierek is right; he

can't answer all by himself. Do you know what that means? That means that the days of the cult of personality are over, workers! Hurray for Comrade Gierk . . . *(Applause and laughter)* But before I finish *(turning towards Gierk)* I want to say that we've waited 25 years for this historic moment. Now, today, in the presence of the government and of the Comrade First Secretary, we want everything—yes, everything that has been said here—to be put in black and white. No traps! *(Shouting, yelling)* Thank you.

DELEGATE FROM SGW: I'm from SGW. I've got a question for the Central Committee: do we punish criminals in our country, or do we pay them? Someone answer me. We Poles chastised the Germans for their crimes . . . for shooting at us! Let the First Secretary of the Central Committee give me the answer: are crimes punished or rewarded?

GIEREK: Don't force me to answer like that, or I won't answer you.

DELEGATE FROM SGW: Now, second point. Retirement. The retirement age ought to be 60 and not 65. We should also revise the work categories and modify the shipyard worksheets. I believe the unions will have to revise all that completely. *(Shouts)* Let's take sheet-metal as an example, or transport, or the stores . . . the work is hard there. These should be put in the first category, and we should go in the second, 10 per cent after ten years, 5 per cent after five years; they should get 15 per cent after ten years. As for the demands, I'll say we've discussed them with the workers. They agree to suspend the strike and go back to work on Monday. Thanks . . . and I greet the new Central Committee and the government. In the name of the workers! *(Applause)*

DELEGATE FROM DZ: Esteemed citizens, I am non-Party and this is the seventeenth year that I have worked in the yards. It so happens that I am on the Strike Committee. I listened to Comrade Edward Gierk's speech and, believe me, it brought tears to my eyes. Comrade Gierk particularly emphasized our country's difficult economic situation. My section and I support him, and we will end the strike. But we say urgently to the Comrade Secretary and our new government: We're at the end of our strength! Because, frankly, we earn very little, and we hope the government is going to do all it can to ensure that, within the next few months, the working class will be able to raise its standard of living. We are good workers, but if we see that something of this sort is being done, then we'll work even harder. We genuinely want unity between us. Thank you. *(Applause)*

A DELEGATE: I still have to give the final answer of the workers in my department on ending the strike. Comrade Gierk! I am an old Party member. I only want to tell the truth. I don't want to disguise the situation, nor do I want to blacken my department. I don't want to be misunderstood. When I arrived, the situation in the department was as follows: a unanimous reply of: "We want to go on with the strike!" That was the decision. After a long and stormy discussion we reached a conclusion: we can't carry on alone as a department. I don't want to urge the shipyards to continue with the strike, that's not my aim. But I would like to draw attention to the fact that the workers in our depart-

ment are critical of all those who spoke before me, who they understood to have given way too easily on the question of cancelling the increase in food prices . . . and this despite the fact that throughout the strike, not one worthy showed up to intervene and try to convince us of the justice of this measure. Moreover, our department believes that in coming out on strike we, the naval shipyard workers, caused other enterprises to come out. Now this demand is not being met, and we're not living up to the trust they place in us. Comrade Gierk, Comrade Jaroszewicz, *(in a very grave voice)* I'm speaking the truth. The workers in our department have not been convinced by your remarks . . . and I'd like to say this: we'll stop the strike, not through conviction, but because the others are stopping. That's all. *(Deep silence, followed by growing tumult, prolonged turmoil, shouts)*

BALUKA: We demand full, correct information on the political and economic situation in the shipyards and in the country, and that the report circulated on the 11th of this month concerning pledges by the tube factory be rectified. Gentlemen, colleagues and comrades, it's quite obvious: the government will never be either popular or democratic as long as . . . the government is aware, I believe, that *information* is an element, an area, of the greatest importance! Remember the German hangman, Goebbels. Do you remember that he was the pillar of Hitlerism? What about us? But we have a people's state; this strength is among us! This press, this fine radio station built with our own hands, the microphone in front of me, the television, the newspaper, the very paper it's printed on—none of this should be directed against us! Against our interests! On the contrary, they ought to make our life pleasanter. They should inform! Bring together! Unite! Well, they don't, because until now these things have to a large extent been thrown in the dustbin. They were simply wasted—not used.

We demand that our claims be published in the local mass media before 25 January 1971. Comrades, citizens, colleagues: this business must be reported. We are not insubstantial, we exist, and we're not going to give way on this point.

We demand that the security services immediately stop harassing, threatening and arresting workers taking part in the strike. The strike is not an offence, for nothing in our laws forbids it. I'd like to underline one thing here. We have repeatedly demanded: *The law must be respected!* That's why I'm not going to enlarge on it now.

I believe—I demand in the name of the workers—that in the end Comrade Gierk, or someone in the government, will have to answer us; and that in the end they will give us a few words more of hope and reassurance. For that is the only way that every one can be entirely satisfied with what has been accomplished. Thank you.

GIEREK: Comrades have been saying here that—well, 14 years, isn't it too long a period? Shouldn't some limit be placed on the duration of office? For myself, comrades, I can tell you that before giving my agreement to my candidature for the job of First Secretary of the Central Committee, I couldn't make up my mind; I had huge reservations, you

understand, and couldn't decide. Only the vision of this evil hovering over our country, this vision, you understand, made me agree to the decision. Now at that time I had already said to myself—and my closest friends know it—that I was going to try to make a start—a good start—on arranging things so that, as they say in jest, the king would not be the king for life; that is, elected for life. So that things wouldn't go on in that way; you understand, that either the First Secretary dies in office or he is swept away by the tide. I want to tell you that we're aiming to call an extraordinary Party Congress later this year to elect a new Central Committee. I'd like to take all this up, you understand, with the Congress. And if the Central Committee thinks I should remain at the helm for a while longer then, comrades, I'll do my utmost to make sure that this period will not be too long—both on account of my health, for I am a sick man, and for other reasons. Anyway, let's wait and see. You can be quite certain that the one who makes a start on this will be me. Let's leave it there, comrades. It will be discussed further. *(Applause)*

During that period, things happened in general something like this: there were staff meetings, weren't there, of a group of two or three persons, and this staff would take the decisions under Comrade Gomulka, for example, the decree on the State of Emergency. The comrades knew nothing about all that until they read about it in the papers! In the papers! To be more specific, I'll tell you that many of the government's decrees, while this autocratic attitude, this exceptional autocratism of Comrade Gomulka's held sway, were decided in Comrade Gomulka's office—it was *he*, you understand, who was running things, and the government only learnt about certain decisions from reading the papers. You know, these are things one is ashamed to talk about. It's shameful to say them! But unfortunately that's the way it was.

You could ask: Yes, but what about the Political Bureau? Comrades, there wasn't much the Bureau could say, or at least some members of the Bureau; if they brought something up, either they were isolated or they were discriminated against. I don't want to speak about myself, because it isn't right to talk about oneself, comrades. But still, if one does . . . well, personally, I have very decided opinions on some problems. Much more, I spoke of certain matters! Openly! At the Central Committee's Plenum, I mentioned certain matters—not with my mouth, you understand, but with my hands which wrote the speeches. Yes!—except that everyone knows what came of it. As they say: words are one thing, actions are another. I mention this so that people will be able to *grade*, as it were, the different degrees of guilt.

Take the business of the price rises, for instance. I was against, Comrades. *Against!* (*Voices in the hall: What?*) *I was against!* *I said so, comrades, openly!* I said so to everyone! And now you're going to ask me what I should have done? What should I have done! At the Central Committee's Plenum—the 6th Plenum, the comrades (*turning to the platform*) will remember—you know because, as they say, I was in all the right places. Gomulka was at the miners' dinner. There I cornered him and told him it was dangerous, that there would be strikes, that we were heading for an incident, and so on. That's what I told him. The

only reply was: 'Yes. But you, what outcome are you suggesting?' That was all the answer I got! Under the circumstances, comrades, there was still one thing I could do: intervene publicly in the Political Bureau or the Central Committee's Plenum. In other words, resign from the Bureau with the words: 'Comrades, under the circumstances I cannot remain a member of the Political Bureau.' I could have done it—I've even wondered whether I shouldn't have. Only the comrades explained to me, my friends explained: 'Don't do it, because if there's an incident, no matter what it is, they'll say you caused it. They're going to say you were the motive force behind the incident.'

Comrades, one could say a lot about the way it was. For myself—you know, it's difficult for me to speak, difficult, because I wouldn't like people to think I wished to, let's say, blame others and whitewash myself. I'm not an angel either. I'm no angel. Me too, you understand, if I look at some matters with the benefit of hindsight, I can see that in certain cases . . . *(Tape interrupted)*. From time to time we reproached Gomulka for being against buying more coffee, for instance, or enlarging cocoa purchases. His only reply was: 'You don't like it? Chocolate and coffee are petty-bourgeois habits.' Such . . . such fairy-tales, you see. Understand, some things are shameful to mention. It was especially shameful for us, Communists, to have to listen to all that. It was said that people like Gomulka are only born once in a century. Or it was said that Gomulka was ahead of his time, people didn't understand him, but his ideas were correct all the same, and so forth; people used to talk nonsense like that, that sort of idiocy. But it worked on some people; there were some, you understand, who were quite taken in by it. The more so because, during the occupation, the first years and even later, Gomulka did in fact do something for this country—never mind where the means came from. Even after 1956 . . . *(inaudible)*. I think that at the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee we'll have, let's say, a thorough house-cleaning. We'll see what that achieves. I think that we'll all leave this meeting with a profound conviction that the clean-up must be even more thorough than the one here, for which you have demonstrated the need—if, that is, we really want to avoid in future the tragedy which has touched our country recently. I solemnly promise you that we will do our utmost to make the house-cleaning genuinely thorough. For the moment, we must get down to work. And as we have already said, do not hinder us in our work and do not help our enemies. Do not help those who would wish to show that what has happened is a counter-revolution after all, and that it was, after all, right to open fire.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for your confidence in me. I thank you, comrades. *(Prolonged applause, hubbub, everyone speaking at once)*

BALUKA: Comrade workers! The strike is over! The strike is over! Leave your guard posts! *(Another voice is heard, loud and emotional)*

A WORKER: Don't leave. I want to say one more thing. It's about all those who are no longer among us. I don't know if Comrade Giersek will share our regret. I would like us to do homage to them at least with a minute's silence at the end of this strike.

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GIBREK: I agree.

THE WORKER: Since I'm speaking, I ask a minute's silence of everyone present, starting now. I also ask all those in the naval shipyard grounds to observe a minute of silence in memory of those who are no longer with us. (Silence)

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