Chapter Eight
Social Solidarity and the Victory of Solidarność

Aleksander Krystosiak: There were weddings during the strike, and brides would come straight from the churches to hang their wedding-bouquets on the gates. It was a way of showing us: ‘We are with you!’ People cried when they saw these brides and grooms coming to place their flowers. What went on outside the gates was really important for the morale of the workers.

Grzegorz Stawski, a miners’ leader: Real negotiations at the shipyards began only when the strikes in Silesia started.

These strikes built upon previously established social networks and helped to establish new ties and strengthen old ones. The vast social support for the strikers enhanced their resolve. As the negotiations proceeded inside the shipyards, a great mass of people avidly followed the proceedings and gathered outside to demonstrate their support. As Krystosiak recalled:

Announcements went over the inter-com outside, so everyone could hear. Half of Szczecin was standing in front of the gate, listening. There we were in that meeting-room, cut off from the rest of the world with our doubts. When Ozimek announced that they would speak only with Jurczyk, there was a grave silence. Not a word. Then Jurczyk responded, and after his few words, everyone outside cheered. The noise they made was so loud that we heard it. There were 12,000 people
on strike in the shipyard, and at least ten-thousand outside, listening. So, when they shouted, that meant real support.

It is easy to imagine how that shout must have chilled the government-negotiators. Nevertheless, they dragged their heels, claiming they did not have the requisite authority for certain demands, while others were simply deemed impossible: ‘Why don’t we move to other issues that are more tractable and forget about these “political” demands?’ Krystosiak once more:

They would travel to Warsaw to get instructions. Sometimes they would act as though they had gone to Warsaw when we knew they hadn’t. They would come back and say, ‘regretfully, with great pain’, that they had to refuse a demand, since ‘Warsaw didn’t agree, so the best would be to start negotiating again’.

But the strikers’ outside support made it physically possible for them to continue. One farmer recalled: ‘When the Szczecin strike began, the workers… turned to us for help. We [came]… into occupied factories and delivered bread, cucumbers, tomatoes’.\textsuperscript{1} Krystosiak:

The peasants brought livestock, food, bread that was baked in ovens in the villages.\textsuperscript{2} Right by our shipyard, there was a huge, five-floor bakery that provided bread for most of Szczecin. The peasants brought flour to the bakers and told us, ‘We brought so many tons of flour, and from one ton of flour, there are so many hundred kilograms of bread, so you should get that much from the bakers’. So, we said to the government officials, ‘Go to Warsaw. Get their permission. Come back. We have time. We have food. We can wait’. And it worked!

Similar provisions were available to the strikers in Gdańsk and Gdynia.\textsuperscript{3} Krystosiak:

While in 1970, the government could fool workers into supporting them, in 1980 there was no way they could. As soon as the strikes started, it was clear that the government would never get any support, no matter how many teams were changed, and how many leaders were replaced. Students would come to me and say, ‘I am at the university; I am in such-and-such department, and if you find any use for me, I am ready to help’. At that time, all the barriers

\footnote{1. 1988, \textit{UPNB}, 4: 13.}
\footnote{2. Farmers had bitterly and successfully fought against the government’s efforts to take their land back in the 1940s and 1950s, and this same determination was now taking effect once again.}