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Polish Miners Protest Against Cheap Russian Coal by Blocking Train

By The Moscow Times

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Miners blocked trains carrying Russian coal at a border passage in northern Poland.

WARSAW — More than 200 Polish miners blocked trains carrying Russian coal at a border passage in northern Poland to protest against the cheaper Russian coal being brought in at a time when local mines are struggling, mining union leaders said Wednesday.

Poland, which uses coal to generate about 90 percent of its electricity, produced 76.5 million tonnes in 2013. It exported 10.6 million tonnes but at the same time imported 10.8 million, mainly from Russia and the Czech Republic.

Imported coal proves cheaper than that from Poland's largest miners such as Kompania Weglowa or JSW. Faced with high production and labour costs, as well as falling prices and demand, Polish mines are suffering losses.

"Right now about 80 percent of tenders for coal supplies to units run from the state budget

are won by suppliers of imported coal, because they offer dumping prices," said Jaroslaw Grzesik, leader of the mining Solidarity union.

Dominik Kolorz, who heads the Solidarity union in the coal-rich Slasko-Dabrowskie region, said the miners may block the Braniewo-Mamonowo passage until a government representative is sent to listen to their demands.

Earlier this year Poland said it was considering sanctions on the import of Russian coal. Poland is among the more vocal supporters in the European Union of tougher sanctions on Russia over its intervention in Ukraine.

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