

= Pozna? 1956 protests =

The Pozna? 1956 protests , also known as the Pozna? 1956 uprising or Pozna? June (Polish : Pozna?ski Czerwiec) , were the first of several massive protests against the government of the People 's Republic of Poland . Demonstrations by workers demanding better conditions began on June 28 , 1956 at Pozna? 's Cegielski Factories and were met with violent repression .

A crowd of approximately 100 @, @ 000 gathered in the city center near the local Ministry of Public Security building . About 400 tanks and 10 @, @ 000 soldiers of the People 's Army of Poland and the Internal Security Corps under Polish @-@ Soviet general Stanislav Poplavsky were ordered to suppress the demonstration and during the pacification fired at the protesting civilians .

The death toll was placed between 57 and over a hundred people , including a 13 @-@ year @-@ old boy , Romek Strza?kowski . Hundreds of people sustained injuries . The Pozna? protests were an important milestone on the way to the installation of a less Soviet @-@ controlled government in Poland in October .

= = Background = =

After Joseph Stalin 's death , the process of destalinization prompted debates about fundamental issues throughout the entire Eastern Bloc . Nikita Khrushchev 's speech On the Personality Cult and its Consequences had wide implications outside the Soviet Union and in other communist countries . In Poland , in addition to the criticism of the cult of personality , popular topics of debate centered on the right to steer a more independent course of ' local , national socialism ' instead of following the Soviet model down to every little detail ; such views were seen in discussion and critique by many Polish United Workers ' Party members of Stalin 's execution of older Polish communists from Communist Party of Poland during the Great Purge .

Anti @-@ communist resistance in Poland was also bolstered , and a group of opposition leaders and cultural figures founded the Klub Krzywego Ko?a (Skewed Wheel Club) in Warsaw . It promoted discussions about Polish independence , questioned the efficiency of the state controlled economy , and government disdain and even persecution of veterans of the Polish Armed Forces in the West and the Armia Krajowa resistance during World War II . While the intelligentsia expressed their dissatisfaction with discussions and publications (bibu?a) , workers took to the streets . The living conditions in Poland did not improve , contrary to government propaganda , and workers increasingly found that they had little power compared to bureaucracy of the Party (nomenklatura) .

The city of Pozna? was one of the largest urban and industrial centers of the People 's Republic of Poland . Tensions were growing there , particularly since autumn of 1955 . Workers in the largest factory in the city , Joseph Stalin 's (or ' Cegielski 's) Metal Industries , were complaining about higher taxes for most productive workers (udarnik) , which affected several thousands of workers . Local directors were unable to make any significant decisions due to micromanagement by the higher officials ; over several months , petitions , letters and delegations were sent to the Polish Ministry of Machine Industry and Central Committee of Polish United Workers ' Party , to no avail .

Finally , a delegation of about 27 workers was sent to Warsaw around June 23 . On the night of June 26 , the delegation returned to Pozna? , confident that some of their demands had been considered in a favourable light . The Minister of Machine Industry met with the workers next morning and withdrew several promises that their delegation was given in Warsaw .

= = Strikes = =

A spontaneous strike started at 6 : 00 am at the multifactory complex of Joseph Stalin 's (or ' Cegielski 's) Metal Industries . Around 80 % of its workers , most of whom had lost bonus pay in June as the government suddenly raised the required work quota , took to the streets demanding pay compensation and some freedom concessions , marching towards the city centre . Workers at other plants , institutions and students joined the procession .

Between 9 : 00 am and 11 : 00 am , about 100 @, @ 000 people gathered on the Adam Mickiewicz Square in front of the Imperial Castle in Poznań , surrounded by buildings occupied by the city and Party authorities and police headquarters . The demonstrators demanded lower food prices , wage increases and the revocation of some recent changes in the law that had eroded workers ' conditions . They further requested a visit from Polish Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz , as the local government declared that they had no authority to solve the problems . Some police officers also joined the crowd .

After 10 : 00 am the situation rapidly deteriorated when provocateurs came into action , claiming that members of the negotiating delegation had been arrested . The local units of the regular police (Milicja Obywatelska) were unable to contain the crowd and the situation turned into a violent uprising as the crowds stormed the prison at Młyńska Street , where some protesters believed the members of the delegation to have been imprisoned ; hundreds of prisoners were released around 10 : 50 am . At 11 : 30 am , the arms depot at the prison building was seized and the firearms were distributed among the demonstrators .

The crowd ransacked the Communist Party 's local headquarters and then at around 11 : 00 am attacked the office of the Ministry of Public Security on Kochanowskiego Street , but were repulsed when the first shots were fired from its windows into the crowd . From then until 6 : 00 pm , they seized or besieged many government buildings and institutions in and around Poznań , including the district courthouse and the prosecutor 's office , radio jamming station in Dąbrowskiego Street , police stations in Junikowo , Wilda , Śwarczew , Puszczykowo and Mosina . The prison camp in Mrowino and the military school at the Poznań University of Technology were seized and weapons were taken . The police documents at local police station , procurature and court were destroyed .

In the meantime , at about 11 : 00 am , 16 tanks , 2 armored personnel carriers and 30 cars had been sent from the Officer School of Armored and Mechanized Formations , a Poznań garrison , to protect the designated buildings , but no shots were exchanged between them and the insurgents . These soldiers engaged in friendly conversation with the protesters ; some reports state that two tanks were seized and some troops disarmed . Then the Soviet General Konstantin Rokossovsky , the Minister of National Defense , who was then in command of all armed forces in Poland , decided to take personal control , and the situation changed dramatically .

Rokossovsky sent his deputy , the Polish @-@ Soviet general Stanislav Poplavsky and a group of lower Soviet officers , with orders to put down the protest in a manner consistent with Russian standards , intending to end the demonstrations as soon as possible to prevent an occurrence similar to the Uprising of 1953 in East Germany , when a similar protest , not quelled in time , spread to many other regions . The Russian officers arrived at 2 : 00 pm at Ławica Airport and took command . Poplavsky did not bother to use local regulars from Poznań garrisons , instead taking other troops from Silesian Military District and recalling special troops from the Biedrusko military base north of Poznań . The troops were told that the protesters were led and organized by " German provocateurs " who were attempting to darken Poland 's image during the ongoing Poznań International Fair .

Between 4 : 00 pm and 5 : 00 am the following day , the Polish 10th Armored Division , Polish 19th Armored Division , Polish 4th Infantry Division and Polish 5th Infantry Division , totaling about 10 @, @ 300 troops and the Internal Security Corps under the command of Poplavsky entered Poznań . A two @-@ hour long procession of tanks , armored cars , field guns , and lorries full of troops went through the city and surrounded it . At 9 : 00 pm a wave of detentions began . The detainees were taken to Ławica airport , where they were subjected to brutal interrogation ; 746 persons were detained until August 8 . The protests continued until June 30 , when the troops finally pacified the city , after exchanging fire with some violent demonstrators . At 7 : 30 am on June 29 the Prime Minister arrived and infamously declared on the local radio station that " any provocateur or lunatic who raises his hand against the people 's government may be sure that this hand will be chopped off . "

The number of casualties is currently a subject of academic dispute . The historian Łukasz Jastrzęb from the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) estimates it to be 57 dead and about 600 wounded (including eight on the side of the government) , noting that larger estimates , such as

that by another IPN scholar , Stanisław Jankowiak , who places the figure at slightly over 100 , are not fully supported by available data . Estimates of a similar range , such as the " over 70 deaths " , can be found in media reports .

= = Aftermath = =

About 25 people were arrested in the first few days , including 196 workers ; several hundred others were arrested in the following weeks . Stanisław Hejnowski , the lawyer who defended them , was later repressed for his statement that the government 's actions had led to the death of innocent civilians . The government failed in its attempts to coerce the detainees into stating that they were provoked by foreign (Western) secret services ; nonetheless this became the official line of the government for years to come .

Soon the ideologues realized that they had lost the support of the Soviet Union , and the regime turned to conciliation by announced wage rises and other reforms . Realizing the need for a change in leadership , the Polish communists chose a new leader , Władysław Gomułka , who was considered a moderate ; this transition is known as Polish October (or " Gomułka Thaw ") . In spite of this , the communist authorities censored all information on the Poznań events for a quarter of a century .

Historians were denied source materials for research , and the campaign was effective in eliminating any mention of the events of June 1956 from publicly available sources . Persecution of the most active participants would be carried out for many years . The memory of the events was preserved by the participants and members of opposition . After the Gdańsk Agreement in 1980 , the Independent Self-governing Trade Union " Solidarity " as one of its first actions decided to raise a monument in the memory of the Poznań June 1956 events .

Many historians consider the Poznań 1956 protests to be an important milestone in modern history of Poland , and one of the events that precipitated the fall of communism in Poland . Nonetheless it should be noted that the protests of 1956 were not motivated by anti-communist ideology ; the workers ' demands were mostly of an economic nature , centering around better work conditions rather than any political objectives . The workers sang " The Internationale " and their banners read " We demand bread . " It was the government 's consistent failure to fulfil the first demand which eventually led to the demands for political change , but even during the history of Solidarity few demanded wide political reforms .

= = = Commemoration = = =

On June 21 , 2006 , to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the events , the Polish parliament Sejm declared June 28 to be a national holiday in Poland ; the Day of Remembrance of the Poznań June 1956 .