

# Visuelle Geschichtskultur

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In Verbindung mit  
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gangen wird, zum Anlass genommen, die bestehenden transnationalen Schnittstellen zu den Erinnerungskulturen der Nachbarländer – die bisher vor allem mit Themen wie dem Zweiten Weltkrieg verbunden waren – zu verstärken und als Ort des Austausches wahrzunehmen.

## Commemorations and Memories of Poznań June 1956

Izabella Main

“Poznań June 1956” – the event, its commemorations and memories – are analysed in this essay. This strange name for a historical event – “Poznań June 1956” – is the most neutral of terms, which reflects a long-standing debate over the naming of the event that occurred in Poznań in June 1956. In recent Polish publications, this event has been called “Poznań June”, yet in publications in English it has been referred to as “the Poznań uprising” or “the Poznań protests”. Historians and commentators have suggested that Communist authorities called it “the Poznań incidents” in an effort to downplay its significance. Starting in the 1980s it became permissible to conduct and publish research on Poznań June, and a number of other designations appeared: “revolution”, “uprising”, “protests”, “armed struggle”. The problem with naming results not only from Communist efforts to sweep the event under the rug, but also from its complex nature. It combined workers’ protests and economic and social demands with political and symbolic demands. Although the movement was ultimately suppressed, it was nevertheless seen as an important step leading to the October changes,<sup>1</sup> which were generally assessed positively, especially at the beginning. Many volumes have been written about Poznań June, but its commemorations and the memory of it have not been thoroughly analysed. I argue that the many diverse institutionalised and private commemorations and memories of Poznań June are highly contested and used for purposes unrelated to June 1956. Today’s memories are the product of decades of enforced silence and neglect under the Communist regime, and the awakening of memories in 1981 when the NSZZ Solidarność (the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarność”) was created and demanded a commemoration for the victims of June 1956. Since 1981 Poznań June 1956 has been very visibly inscribed in Poznań public space in the form of a large monument composed of crosses located in one of the city’s main squares. After 1989, veterans of June 1956 could and did legally organise themselves and became openly active in commemorating the event. But it was not until the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006 that social interest and participation in commemorative events became widespread. After the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary the Museum of Poznań June was opened, which serves as an exhibition centre and a space for meetings, research and educational events for a variety of groups.

<sup>1</sup> The October changes, also known as October 1956, Gomułka’s thaw and the Polish thaw, were changes in Polish politics in late 1956 that came about as a result of the deaths of Joseph Stalin and Polish leader Bolesław Bierut, the taking of power by the reformist party faction led by Władysław Gomułka, and social unrest after Poznań June 1956. The main changes included the temporary liberalisation of life in Poland and greater autonomy for the Polish government vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

In order to discuss the issues of commemoration and memories of June 1956, I shall first briefly describe the event itself. Then I will discuss how the Communist regime silenced it and persecuted its participants, forcing the memory of the events to remain underground. Permission to construct the Poznań June Monument in 1981, along with public commemorations of the victims at the monument and the publication of related books and articles, marked a turning point in the public perception and expression of the event. The situation again changed in the 1980s when new meanings were attributed to the monument, and after 1989, when new places and occasions to commemorate the event were created. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – another important turning point – is described and, finally, the memories of veterans and several Poznań families are presented and briefly analysed. This chapter is based on existing literature and interviews with veterans of Poznań June, a number of families that have been central to the events, and “engaged individuals” (teachers of history, museum staff). Due to the complexity of issues of commemoration and memory, the analysis can explore only some themes; by no means does this represent an exhaustive analysis of all issues related to Poznań June 1956.

### The event, its consequences and official interpretations

In June 1956 Poznań workers took to the streets to protest recent changes in the rules used to calculate salaries and to demand better working conditions. Letters and petitions sent to the Ministry of General Machine Works had been ignored for months, until finally a delegation went to Warsaw on 23 June and elicited some promises from the authorities. These were, however withdrawn by the minister on the morning of 28 June, which stirred the workers to action. A list of demands included, among others, better management and organisation of work, fair calculation of wages and taxes, a reduction in food prices, protective clothing and accident insurance – for the most part, very basic rights.

A strike started at the Stalin Factory (known as the Cegielski Factory in pre-communist times and after October 1956), and around 80 per cent of the workers marched towards the city centre. They were joined by workers from other Poznań factories. The crowd swelled to 100,000 people, and an enormous demonstration took place in Stalin Square, next to the Imperial Castle<sup>2</sup>. Sometime after 10 o'clock in the morning what had started out as a peaceful gathering turned into a violent uprising. The crowds stormed the prison at Młyńska Street and freed prisoners. Next, the arms depot at the prison was seized and the arms were distributed among the protesters. People then attacked the office of the PZPR (the Polish United Workers' Party) and the local office of the security services (the Polish secret police) in Kochanowskiego Street, the district courthouse, the prosecutor's office, the social security office in Dąbrowskiego

2 The castle is an imperial residence built in the early twentieth century, when Poznań was a part of the German Empire.

Street (where a radio jamming station was located<sup>3</sup>) and several police stations on the city's outskirts. There was also looting in the city. During the day approximately 10,000 armoured troops entered the city and surrounded it. Many people were killed or wounded in the course of the unrest. The official list of victims includes 57 people killed and more than 500 wounded, although the exact figures are still a matter of debate. Most of the victims died on 28 June, which has come to be called Black Thursday. The majority of them were very young (around 20 years old), with the youngest victim being a 13-year-old schoolboy named Romek Strzałkowski. The last sporadic shots were fired on 30 June, on which day the troops started to withdraw.

Police started arresting people as early as the first day. By 8 August 746 people had been detained, according to documents from the security services. After a few weeks of brutal interrogation, the first trials began. The main objective of the investigations about Poznań June was to prove the regime's assertion that the events had been a provocation planned, prepared and carried out by the American and West German secret services and by reactionary underground elements. However, the investigations failed to prove any imperialist provocation; all findings confirmed the spontaneous and impulsive nature of the events.

Judgments were passed down in October. Some of the accused received prison sentences ranging from two to six years, others were found not guilty and were released. These relatively lenient sentences were considered a success by the defence attorneys, who managed to have the charges reduced to less serious crimes. The presence of representatives of international mass media organisations also played a role.<sup>4</sup> With the whole world watching, Poznań lawyers had the possibility of providing genuine defence for their clients. Many expert sociologists' and psychiatrists' opinions were cited, and arguments derived from crowd psychology were used. It was proven that the first tragic shots that triggered the outburst of violence were fired by the security services. However, after the trials the lawyers were harshly repressed. The most well-known defender, Stanisław Hejmowski, was accused of bribery, deprived of the right to work as a lawyer, and went bankrupt after additional taxes were imposed on him.<sup>5</sup>

The initial statements by the authorities were quite extreme: on 29 June Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz arrived in Poznań and infamously declared on local radio that “any provocateur or lunatic who raises his hand against the people's government may be sure that his hand will be chopped off”. Other official interpretations were gradually introduced, first acknowledging errors on the part of the authorities as well as on the part of the workers, then focusing on the criminal acts that occurred during the uprising (avoiding other issues such as the reasons behind the uprising), and finally – in October 1956 – the interpretation that has become known as “the

3 In the 1950s more than 250 radio jamming stations were placed in Poland in order to jam Western radio signals.

4 Poznań June 1956 happened during the International Trade Fair, thus Western journalists were able to observe and write about it.

5 See [www.poznan.pl/mim/public/czerwiec56](http://www.poznan.pl/mim/public/czerwiec56) (26.06.2013).

lesson of Poznań".<sup>6</sup> In October 1956 Władysław Gomułka, who had just been named first secretary of the Communist Party, was somewhat sympathetic to the cause, noting that "the workers who started strikes and demonstrated in the streets were saying: 'Enough!'". Yet less than a year later Gomułka, during a visit to Poznań in June 1957, compared the Poznań June to "a family tragedy"; he called for a "curtain of silence" (like in a family) and appealed to people to put it behind them and work towards a new life.<sup>7</sup> As a result, Poznań June was silenced, but those who participated in it nevertheless continued to be harassed.

### The silencing of Poznań June

After 1956 Poznań June was almost completely erased from the public memory of Poles. The archives were closed to historians, and the censorship office blocked any related scholarly publications, articles in the mass media, and mention of the event in textbooks. Many materials were destroyed on purpose, other were lost due to lack of attention. The first book about Poznań June was published in the West in 1971 by Ewa Wacowska. She was in Poznań during Poznań June as a journalist for "Sztandar Młodych" (The Banner of Youth), a Polish newspaper. In 1961 Zbigniew Brzeziński, in his book "The Soviet Bloc", referred to Poznań June as a "workers' uprising", and provided few details beyond that.<sup>8</sup> Brzeziński focused on the Polish October and devoted just a sentence to Poznań June: "The late June workers' uprising, suppressed only through the use of the army, signaled that the ferment had reached the working classes, smarting under oppressive labor conditions."<sup>9</sup> In 1970 local writer Józef Ratajczak wrote a story called "Węzeł" (The Knot) for a literary competition about the Wielkopolska Region. The main character is a history teacher who undergoes a personal crisis, questions the Communist system and observes Poznań June. The story won first prize in the competition, yet its publication was purposely postponed and in 1973 it was withdrawn.<sup>10</sup> This demonstrates the lengths to which the authorities went to prevent any mention of June 1956.

6 As Stanisław Bębenek put it, "Klasa robotnicza dała ostatnio kierownictwu partii i rządu bolesną nauczkę" ("The working class recently gave a painful lesson to the leadership of the party and government"). BĘBENEK, Stanisław: Oficjalne stanowisko władz [Official position of the authorities]. In: Wydarzenia czerwcowe w Poznaniu 1956. Materiały z konferencji zorganizowanej przez Instytut Historii UAM w dniu 4 V 1956 roku. Ed. Edmund MAKOWSKI. Poznań 1981, 93–99, here 98.

7 CHONIAWKO, Andrzej: Zachowania polityczne między czerwcem a październikiem 1956 roku [Political behaviours between June and October 1956]. In: Czerwiec '56. Ed. Jacek WIESIOŁOWSKI. Poznań 2006, 31–54; BĘBENEK (cf. n. 6), 93–99.

8 TRZECIAKOWSKI, Lech: Ku wolności. Powstanie Poznańskie [Towards freedom. Poznań Uprising]. In: Ku wolności. Powstanie poznańskie 1956. Ed. Marek JĘDRASZEWSKI. Poznań 2006, 21–52.

9 BRZEZIŃSKI, Zbigniew: The Soviet Bloc. Unity and Conflict. New York 1961, 245.

10 RATAJCZAKOWA, Dobrochna: Wokół powieści Józefa Ratajczaka *Węzeł* [On Józef Ratajczak's novel "The Knot"]. In: Czerwiec '56. Ed. Jacek WIESIOŁOWSKI. Poznań 2006, 240–255.

Along with the official silence, active participants of the revolt were persecuted: they were not admitted to schools, and often had problems finding employment or advancing in their jobs.<sup>11</sup> For example, Stanisław Matyja, the leader of the strike in the Stalin Factory, was first arrested and beaten, and only after the intervention of his colleagues he was released and allowed to go back to work. Yet in 1958 he was fired from the factory and was persecuted for many years. The repression of the lawyer Hejmowski was mentioned earlier. A few personal stories were described in the book "The struggle for the memory of June '56", which was published in 1991.<sup>12</sup> During the 1960s and 1970s the families of those who had been killed or wounded viewed the uprising as an important event in their life histories, but these memories were kept very private. One of the occasions when they would allow themselves to remember was All Saints' Day, when families would visit the graves in the Citadel Cemetery, the Junikowski Cemetery or other local cemeteries.

This situation changed in the late 1970s due to the establishment of a viable political opposition in Poland. Stanisław Barańczak – a Poznań poet, essayist and supporter of the opposition – recalled a small celebration in 1979 in the church in Grunwaldzka Street, after which about ten people went to the cemetery and laid flowers at the grave of Romek Strzałkowski, the youngest victim. In June 1980 a few masses were celebrated in memory of the victims, most often inspired by opposition activists. A group of members of KOR,<sup>13</sup> ROPCiO<sup>14</sup> and SKS<sup>15</sup> ordered an anniversary mass in the Church of the Barefoot Carmelites in Poznań. The mass was attended by about 200 people, who had planned to walk towards the Citadel after the mass and lay flowers on the graves of the victims. They were prevented from doing so by officers of the security services. In the Church of St Wojciech a mass was celebrated in memory of Strzałkowski. After this mass, a group of people went by tram to the Junikowski Cemetery, where they laid flowers at his grave and sang the national anthem. They were observed by officers of the security services.<sup>16</sup> These first public commemorations were probably not visible to the majority of Poznanians or, if they were visible, did not call the events of June 1956 to mind.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, many people moved to the city in the 1960s and 1970s (between 1956 and 1980 the population grew from

11 Interview with a veteran; see also DABERTOWA, Eugenia Renia/LENARTOWSKI, Marek: Pomnik Poznańskiego Czerwca 1956. Symbol pamięci i sprzeciwu [The Monument of Poznań June 1956. Symbol of remembrance and resistance]. Poznań 1996, 13.

12 DABERTOWA, Eugenia R./ŁUCZAK, Agnieszka: Walka o pamięć Czerwca '56. Obchody 26. rocznicy Czerwca w 1982 r. (stan wojenny) [The struggle for the memory of June 1956. Commemorations of the 26th anniversary of June in 1982 (martial law)]. Poznań 2001, 20; KARWAT, Janusz/TISCHLER, Janos: 1956. Poznań Budapeszt. Poznań 2006, 116 f.

13 The Workers' Self-Defence Committee, established after strikes in Radom in 1976.

14 The Movement for the Protection of Human and Citizen Rights, established in 1977.

15 The Student Committee of Solidarność, established in 1977.

16 DABERTOWA/LENARTOWSKI (cf. n. 11), 13.

17 They were not mentioned by any of the people I interviewed. They were similar to the small illegal celebrations in Lublin in the late 1970s, whose participants likewise felt that they had no influence on the city's inhabitants. See: MAIN, Izabella: Trudne świętowanie. Konflikty wokół obchodów świąt

370,000 to 560,000) and they might have had no occasion to learn about Poznań June. Thus during this period the memory of Poznań June remained private, and acts of remembrance were rare and generally personal (restricted to the families of the victims).

### The first public renewal of memory in 1981

The political changes after the strikes in July and August 1981 and the signing of the August Agreements between the government and the NSZZ Solidarność raised hopes about the possibility of genuine freedom and democracy. Memories of Poznań June became institutionalised, with at least four impulses contributing to the institutionalisation: the monument, conferences, publications and the first legal commemorative ceremony.

The Poznań June Monument became a landmark in Poznań June memory. The inspiration to construct it probably came from the request to create a monument in Gdańsk commemorating the victims of the strikes of 1970, which was included in the August agreements of 1980. The demand for a Poznań monument was formulated by Roman Schefke of the Agriculture University during a meeting of the Interfactory Founding Committee of Wielkopolska NSZZ Solidarność in October 1980. Immediately following that, still in October 1980, the Citizens' Committee for the Construction of the Monument was formed, with Roman Brandstaetter, a Catholic writer, as its chairman. On All Saints' Day, a wooden cross in memory of the victims was put up on the Citadel, and flowers were laid at the graves. The cost of the actual monument was to be covered by the general public: money was collected in factories, schools, on the streets, and at cultural and sporting events.

Tenders for the design of the monument and the content of the inscription were invited, and in January 1981 the winning project was chosen (a large rectangular structure intended to look like a canvas lying flat on the ground, with horizontal beams at right angles to one another inscribed with the dates of protests, designed by Sapello and Jarnuszkiewicz). The model was put on display for public viewing and discussion and elicited a great deal of criticism, but there was no time for a new competition as the unveiling was planned for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Poznań June in June 1981. The union Solidarność of Artists mediated discussions between the Citizens' Committee and organisations of artists, and a different project by the artist Wojciechowski was chosen.<sup>18</sup> The elements of the monument were cast in the Cegielski Factory. The monument is composed of two crosses (21 and 19 metres high), united by a single shared horizontal crossbar that is bound to the two upright beams by huge ropes (fig. 1 and 2). A schematic representation of an eagle rests slightly in front and a bit to the

państwowych i kościelnych w Lublinie w latach 1944–1989 [Difficult celebrations. Conflicts around state and church holidays in Lublin between 1944 and 1989]. Warsaw 2004.

18 DABERTOWA/LENARTOWSKI (cf. n. 11), 16–20; PIOTROWSKI, Piotr: Między totalitaryzmem i demokracją. Pomnik Poznańskiego Czerwca 1956 roku [Between totalitarianism and democracy. The Monument of Poznań June 1956]. In: Pomniki. Ed. Jacek WIESIOŁOWSKI. Poznań 2001, 195–202.

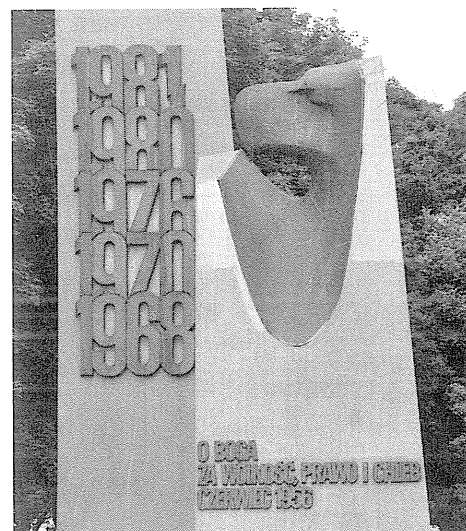
**Fig. 1** The Monument of June 1956.



right of the crosses. On the front of the first cross there is the date 1956. On the second cross there are the dates 1968, 1970, 1976, 1980 and 1981, referring to the protests that took place in those years. At the base of the eagle there is the inscription, "For Freedom, Justice and Bread – June 1956". The issue of the best site for the monument turned out to be just as controversial as its design, but in this case the decisive voice belonged to the city's authorities. Ultimately they agreed on Mickiewicz Square (formerly Stalin Square, renamed after October 1956), where the largest gathering on 28 June 1956 took place.<sup>19</sup>

19 DABERTOWA/LENARTOWSKI (cf. n. 11), 19 f.





**Fig. 2** Inscriptions on the Monument of June 1956.

The monument places the events of June 1956 in line with other anti-Communist protests: 1968, 1970, 1976 and 1980. The monument's design reflects aspects of the ideological character of *Solidarność*: the linking of the national and the religious, the glorification of history, the dominance of the collective over the individual, the unification of society around national and religious values – all ideas that contradict the ideal of democracy. Some art critics have pointed out a deeper contradiction implicit in the monument – it will always represent the initiatives and ideas not of the general public, but of the authorities and prominent social groups that have the power to decide how public space is to be organised and utilised. This issue, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.<sup>20</sup>

The celebrations commemorating June 1956 started on 27 June 1981 with a symposium at the university. The main celebration took place on 28 June. First, Poznań *Solidarność* leader Zdzisław Rozwałak and Lech Wałęsa gave speeches, then a mass was celebrated, and the monument was consecrated. Delegations from *Solidarność* branches from all over country laid flowers and wreaths at the monument. Lech Taczak, the leader of the Eight Day Theatre, directed the ceremony, which attracted an enormous crowd of people (estimated as high as 200,000). It was also attended by members of the Provincial Committee of the PZPR, province and city officials, and members of the State Council.<sup>21</sup> The ceremony, like the monument, incorporated religious values and references into the story of June 1956.

20 PIOTROWSKI (cf. n. 18), 202; KUBIK, Jan: *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power: the Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland*. University Park, Penn. 1994, *passim*. For a very inspiring study of monuments, see YOUNG, James E.: *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven, Conn.-London 1993.

21 DABERTOWA/LENARTOWSKI (cf. n. 11), 47.



**Fig. 3** The commemorative plaque on the Hospital of Raszeja that admitted victims in 1956. It was unveiled in 1981 and includes a fragment of a poem by Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna: „but brains spattered pavement / and the pavement swells slowly / the blood is not flowing already, just clots / my heart was shot in Poznań.”

Plaques commemorating Strzałkowski and other victims were unveiled at Gajowa Street, Robotnicza Street, Hetmańska Street and inside the Hospital of Raszeja (fig. 3 and 4).<sup>22</sup> The City Council responded to the request of NSZZ *Solidarność* of Cegielski Factory and renamed two streets in Poznań: Feliks Dzierzhinsky Street was renamed 28 June Street, and Mylina Street became Romek Strzałkowski Street.<sup>23</sup> In each case these actions were the result of discussions among city authorities, the local office of the PZPR, the veterans of Poznań June 1956 and local leaders of NSZZ *Solidarność*. Moreover, a photo exhibition documenting 1956 was opened, and a play, “The Accused: June 1956”, directed by Izabella Cywińska, was produced and performed.<sup>24</sup>

During a conference at the university on 4 May 1981, the reasons for June 1956, its history and consequences were openly discussed for the first time. The conference proceedings were published in 1981, with a print run of 3,200 copies.<sup>25</sup>

22 Kalendarium. In: *Ku wolności. Powstanie poznańskie 1956*. Ed. Marek JĘDRASZEWSKI. Poznań 2006.

23 DABERTOWA/LENARTOWSKI (cf. n. 11), 39.

24 KUBIK (cf. n. 20), 215 f.

25 *Wydarzenia czerwcowe w Poznaniu 1956. Materiały z konferencji zorganizowanej przez Instytut Historii UAM w dniu 4 V 1981 roku* [Events of June 1956 in Poznań. Materials from the conference





**Fig. 4** The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of June 1956. The commemorative plaque on the hospital that admitted victims in June 1956.

“Poznański Czerwiec 1956” (Poznań June 1956), a publication commissioned by the Citizens’ Committee for the Construction of the Poznań June Monument with a print run of 50,000 copies, provided important impetus to the formation of a public memory. This interdisciplinary work included historical analyses (the reasons behind the Poznań June strikes and protests, a reconstruction of the events of Poznań June, a chronology and discussion of the significance of the trials following Poznań June) and many personal recollections gathered by Aleksander Ziemkowski.<sup>26</sup> One of the

organized by the Department of History at Adam Mickiewicz University, May 4, 1981]. Ed. Edmund MAKOWSKI. Poznań 1981.

26 Poznański czerwiec 1956 [Poznań June 1956]. Eds. Jarosław MACIEJEWSKI and Zofia TROJANOWICZOWA. Poznań 1981. Ziemkowski’s collection of interviews was published posthumously in 2006: Poznański Czerwiec 1956. Relacje uczestników [Poznań June 1956. The accounts of participants]. Ed. Aleksander ZIEMKOWSKI. Poznań 2006. The collecting of the personal stories by Ziemkowski is an interesting story. Ziemkowski, who died in 2000, was an architect and urban planner employed in

families I conducted interviews with about the story and memory of Poznań June proudly showed me this book, even though the family neither actively promoted the memory of Poznań June nor supported patriotic traditions. In fact, the members of this family considered themselves pragmatic and future-oriented, but they nevertheless located the book quickly and easily on their shelves, and it even had the signature of one of the editors, although they did not remember when and where they got it.<sup>27</sup> The book’s large print run and wide circulation meant that many people were able to read about the events previously omitted from all publications of Poznań and post-war Poland.

The commemorations of 1981, and especially the unveiling of the Poznań June Monument, were exceptional. After a few decades of silence about the revolt, the leaders of the PZPR permitted the building of the monument. It became an enduring symbol not only of June 1956, but also of other protests during Communist rule, notably those that occurred in 1968, 1970, 1976 and 1980 (the dates inscribed on the monument). It also linked the anti-Communist protests with Catholic traditions.

#### Remembrance after Solidarność: New approaches, new sites of memory, new structures

The introduction of martial law on 13 December 1981 radically changed the situation: NSZZ Solidarność and other independent organisations were disbanded, opposition activists were interned, public gatherings forbidden, censorship strengthened and security control reinforced. Yet people still believed in the possibility of political change through protest. In the 1980s they chose the Poznań June Monument as the main symbol of opposition in the city. It actually became the symbol of all anti-Communist actions. Many illegal gatherings on various national and opposition anniversaries took place there (11 November, 3 May, 13 December, 28 June).<sup>28</sup> One of the largest demonstrations occurred on 13 February 1982, when more than 10,000 people gathered at the monument. They were attacked by militia with truncheons and water cannons, and

the state office for more than 40 years. During the war he fought in the Polish Army in 1939 and later in the underground Home Army. After the war he finished his studies and started working. But he was also an amateur historian and tried to disseminate knowledge about the so-called blank spots of history and politics, especially Katyń and June 1956. He had been collecting materials for many years before 1980, so when the commemorations of 1981 came around, he was prepared to publish the first monograph about June 1956. However, because of the introduction of martial law in 1981, he was unable to publish the book at that time.

27 Interview with family R.

28 PIOTROWSKI (cf. n. 18). 11 November is the anniversary of Poland’s return to independent statehood in 1918; 3 May is the anniversary of the constitution of 1791. Both anniversaries were neglected by the Communist regime (see MAIN, Izabella: Political Symbols and Rituals in Poland, 1944–2002. A Research Report. Leipzig 2002; MAIN 2004 [cf. n. 17]. 13 December is the anniversary of the imposition of martial law in 1981, and starting in 1982 it was used by the opposition to protest against the regime.

after few hours of fighting the gathering was dispersed. One person was killed and more than 200 people were arrested.<sup>29</sup>

Illegal inscriptions were constantly being written on the monument. Already in December 1981 the date "1981" was added. It was quickly removed by security forces, yet it reappeared many times.<sup>30</sup> Other inscriptions included "Solidarność is alive", "God", and the *Kotwica* – the sign of fighting Poland.<sup>31</sup> The authorities covered these inscriptions with white paint, so the marks of dissent remained visible. The monument itself was such a visible sign that it would have been impossible for the authorities to cover or demolish it.

The monument for many Poznanians was a clear symbol of opposition, yet the authorities tried to appropriate its legacy by organising their own celebrations of the 28 June anniversaries. In 1982 the authorities created the Interfactory Committee for the Celebrations of June '56. The official organisers often referred to the word "unity", which had become a catchword during the competition for the design of the monument in 1981, implying that the monument was a symbol of unity and agreement. Opposition leaders claimed that agreement between victims and oppressors was impossible. The official celebrations took place on Sunday, 27 June 1982. On the day before, some 1,500 militia members were brought to Poznań, armoured vehicles drove through the city, and the police and military forces were beefed up significantly. The official ceremony was attended by delegations from a few factories, and a military orchestra performed. The participants were surrounded by militia vehicles.

The opposition staged its own celebrations of June '56 in 1982. After masses in the Dominican and Holy Saviour churches, people moved towards the monument. They did not join the official gathering, however, but rather chanted "Solidarność is alive". The opposition continued its celebrations on 28 June, when the number of people gathering at the monument reached some 20,000 people. Flowers were laid by representatives of NSZZ Solidarność of the university, the agriculture academy, the Cegielski Factory and other schools and factories. The militia started to check IDs and disperse people in the late afternoon and evening of Sunday, 27 June and Monday, 28 June.<sup>32</sup> Commemorations in the following years took place mainly in churches. The local structures of NSZZ Solidarność – the Cegielski Factory, the railway car factory, the public transport depot, NSZZ Solidarność of Wielkopolska Region and others – issued calls to the general public to participate in celebrations, decorate windows with national flags, and visit graves and the monument. There were anniversary masses, lectures, poetry recitations, and in several churches the calling of the roll of honour

commemorating the people killed during Poznań June.<sup>33</sup> I have found no mention of official responses to these activities; perhaps organising celebrations in churches was a way of avoiding confrontation. Pope John Paul II visited Poznań in June 1983 and planned to visit the Poznań June Monument, but the authorities prevented it and his meeting with residents took place in a field near the city centre. The pope did, however, mention the monument in his sermon.<sup>34</sup>

The division between "us" and "them", so often emphasised in opposition publications, was reinforced at moments of confrontation between the regime and opposition groups such as occurred on 28 June 1982, although often at the family, neighbourhood, and local levels this distinction was questioned and blurred.

After 1989 the situation again completely changed: first, there were official celebrations on 28 June; second, associations of veterans of Poznań June were organised; and third, new commemorative plaques were installed (constituting new sites of memory). Celebrations of June 1956 were attended by municipal government officials, representatives of NSZZ Solidarność and residents of Poznań, and were reported in the local press.

The Association of Poznań June '56 was initiated in July 1989 and registered in September 1989. Among its members were people engaged in the Citizens' Committee for the Construction of the Monument and the Club for the Memory of Poznań June '56, which had previously been under the auspices of NSZZ Solidarność of Wielkopolska Region.<sup>35</sup> The association announced its establishment in the press and invited people to join. Its members participated in various national celebrations (11 November, 27 December,<sup>36</sup> 3 May, and others). The first chairman of the association was Bolesław Januszkiewicz, the second (and still current) is Aleksandra Banasiak. Soon some members left the association and created other veterans' associations: "Invincible" – the Association of Insurgents of Poznań June 1956, with Ryszard Biniak as its head, and the Association of the Veterans and Participants of the Poznań Uprising, led by Włodzimierz Marciniak.<sup>37</sup> As of 2006, the three associations had a combined membership of approximately 300, 140 of whom had veterans' entitlements. The entitlements were given to people who could prove that they had been arrested or wounded on 28, 29 or 30 June 1956.<sup>38</sup> According to some veterans and historical sources, there are cases of abuses and falsifications in the application process for the June entitlements.<sup>39</sup> This issue will be further explored in the last part of this chapter.

29 DABERTOWA/LENARTOWSKI (cf. n. 11), 56.

30 DABERTOWA/ŁUCZAK (cf. n. 12), 37.

31 The *Kotwica* ("anchor"), a combination of the letters W and P in the form of an anchor, was an emblem of the Home Army and the underground state during the Second World War.

32 DABERTOWA/ŁUCZAK (cf. n. 12), 41–62.

33 Działalność Stowarzyszenia "Poznański czerwiec '56" w latach 1989–2008 [Activities of the „Poznań June '56" association between 1989 and 2008]. Ed. Dariusz MATELSKI. Poznań 2008, 125.

34 TRZECIAKOWSKI (cf. n. 8), 29 f.

35 Działalność Stowarzyszenia (cf. n. 33), 132 f.

36 The anniversary of the Wielkopolska Uprising in 1918.

37 Działalność Stowarzyszenia (cf. n. 33), 167.

38 KARWAT/TISCHLER (cf. n. 12), 122 f.

39 JASTRZĄB, Łukasz: "Rozstrzelano moje serce w Poznaniu". Poznański czerwiec 1956 r. – straty osobowe ["My heart was shot in Poznań". Poznań June 1956 – casualties]. Poznań 2006, 14–17.

In 1990, for the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a commemorative plaque to Stanisław Matyja (1928–1985), one of the leaders of the strike in the Stalin Factory in June 1956, was unveiled in Cegielski Factory.<sup>40</sup> A monument consisting of a large stone and six plaques with the names of protesters who were killed in June 1956 was built on Strzałkowski Street and dedicated in 1994.<sup>41</sup> In 1991 a plaque dedicated to Piotr Majchrzak, a 19-year-old killed in 1982 by security forces, was unveiled in the Church of the Holy Saviour. That case is still under investigation, but the most likely scenario is that Majchrzak was killed for his opposition activities and for wearing the symbol of resistance (*opornik*).<sup>42</sup> His father, Jerzy Majchrzak, had participated in June 1956 and is an active member of the Association of Poznań June '56.<sup>43</sup>

The Association of Poznań June '56 was very active in publishing books and pamphlets about June 1956. In 1990 the association published the first booklet in the "Library of Poznań June '56" series: a translation of a chapter from Lawrence Goodwyn's book "Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland", which is about political opposition in Poland.<sup>44</sup> Following that the association published "The Landscape after June" by Trojanowiczowa, a new edition of "Poznań June '56" by Maciejewski and Trojanowiczowa, "Poznań" by Albert Camus, and occasional postcards, stamps and badges.<sup>45</sup> The following year, for the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event, a booklet with a few previously unknown documents was published in the "Library of Poznań June '56" series.<sup>46</sup> In 1996, a feature film, "Poznań '56", was made by Andrzej Górny and Filip Bajon. It told the story of a young boy who received his life education in the course of a single day.<sup>47</sup> Filip Bajon, a filmmaker and Poznań inhabitant, often spoke of Poznań June as a revolution.

After the changes of 1989 the history and memory of June 1956 were popularised in many ways. As I noted earlier, there were official celebrations at the monument, veterans' associations were created, and numerous publications appeared. Yet it seems that knowledge of June 1956 was still very limited, as was demonstrated by the results of a research project conducted in three Poznań high schools in 1991 concerning family and annual celebrations. Nearly one hundred students between the

ages of 17 and 19 were asked about the meaning of a number of national holidays: 1 May, 3 May, 11 November and 28 June. Only a few of them knew what happened on 28 June (approximately 16 per cent), while 79 per cent had no idea. The people who had some idea referred to the event in a variety of ways: "Poznań incidents", "June incidents", "workers' strikes", and so forth. Joanna Dankowska, the author of this report, found it surprising as "the present tendency is to uncover the blank spots and to criticise Communist rule". She also pointed to the highly visible symbol of this event, the Poznań June Monument in the city centre.<sup>48</sup> Clearly, for many people local history and anti-Communist protests did not carry a great deal of significance even in times of radical social, economic and political change.

### The explosion of remembrance for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary

In 2006 the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated in many different ways: there were state celebrations, church celebrations, veterans' celebrations, school and factory celebrations, artistic performances and academic conferences, in many ways intertwined but also different in focus and tone. Preparations started many months earlier and were reported in the local press. In January 2006 the CD "Poznań June '56" was released; there were also radio dramas and the broadcasting of archival recordings. In March a special Web page about the anniversary was launched. The official poster of the celebration, presented in June, showed a crying baby with a white-and-red band around its wrist and the slogan "First scream". This poster was displayed on billboards across Poland and published in newspapers and magazines (fig. 5).<sup>49</sup>

Some religious celebrations incorporated elements commemorating June 1956. For example, Poznań June was the main theme of the Stations of the Cross during Easter celebrations (on Holy Thursday): the procession followed the same route that the demonstration in 1956 had taken. The bishop's sermons were later published.<sup>50</sup> The annual youth meeting on 3 June organised by the Poznań Dominican fathers in Lednica, near Poznań, was also related to June 1956: seventy-four doves symbolising the souls of the victims and 10,000 balloons with the inscription "We remember" were released. The members of veterans' associations were invited as honorary guests.

40 Działalność Stowarzyszenia (cf. n. 33), 137.

41 MULCZYŃSKI, Jarosław: Historia pisana na murach [History written on the walls]. In: Pomniki. Ed. Jacek WIESIOŁOWSKI. Poznań 2001, 246–282, here 264.

42 *Opornik* (resistor) is a small electrical component; it was worn as a symbol of resistance against the Communist regime in Poland during and after martial law.

43 Działalność Stowarzyszenia (cf. n. 33), 138; interview with JM.

44 GOODWYN, Lawrence: Cegielszczacy mówią "jawnie i głośno" [Workers of Cegielski Factory speak "openly and loudly"]. Trans. K. RÓSNER. Poznań 1990; GOODWYN, Lawrence: Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland. New York 1991.

45 GOODWYN, Cegielszczacy mówią "jawnie i głośno" (cf. n. 44); TROJANOWICZOWA, Zofia: Krajobraz po czerwcu [The Landscape after June]. Poznań 1990; Działalność Stowarzyszenia (cf. n. 33), 137.

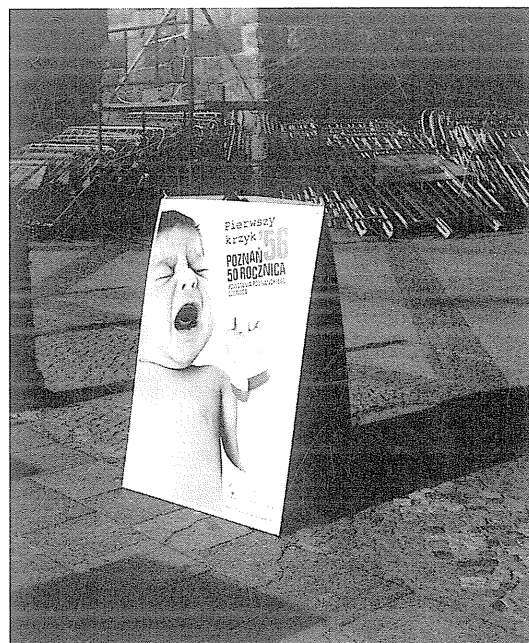
46 Poznański Czerwiec '56. Nieznane dokumenty, opracowania, fotografie [Poznań June '56. Unknown documents, descriptions, photographs]. Ed. Zofia TROJANOWICZOWA. Poznań 1991.

47 KARWAT/TISCHLER (cf. n. 12), 122.

48 DANKOWSKA, Joanna: Postawy młodzieży wobec wybranych elementów obrzędowości rodzinnej i dorocznej (z uwzględnieniem nieformalnych zwyczajów młodzieżowych) [The attitudes of young people towards some family and seasonal rituals (including informal youth customs)]. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań 1993, 235 f.

49 Kronika obchodów 50. rocznicy Powstania Poznańskiego 1956 roku [A chronicle of commemorations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Poznań Uprising 1956]. In: Echa Czerwca. Kronika Obchodów 50. Rocznicy Powstania Poznańskiego 1956 roku. Ed. Włodzimierz St. GORZELANZYK. Poznań 2006, 10.

50 Ku wolności. Powstanie poznańskie 1956 [Towards Freedom. Poznań Uprising 1956]. Ed. Marek JĘDRASZEWSKI. Poznań 2006. The book contains the chronicle, a few historical texts and many individual recollections submitted for a literary competition called "I saw the uprising", which was announced in a Catholic journal.



**Fig. 5** The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of June 1956. The poster with a crying baby "First scream".

The Poznań June Monument and its surroundings on Adam Mickiewicz Square were renovated. The inscription on the monument, "For Freedom, Justice and Bread", was extended to include "For God". This change was justified by referring to the documents from 1956, proving that protesters sang religious songs, carried banners saying "We want God", and demanded the reintroduction of religion classes in schools. It was impossible to place the words "For God" on the monument in 1981.<sup>51</sup> This change to the monument raised a bit of discussion.<sup>52</sup> Another element added to the surroundings of the monument was a plaque with words, "Holy Father John Paul II prayed here on 3 June 1997, fulfilling his wish from 20 June 1983, when the authorities did not give him the chance to do so".<sup>53</sup> On 23 June, the holiday of the Heart of Jesus, a procession from Jeżyce (where there was intense fighting in 1956) to the monument was organised to commemorate the victims. After the procession, Primate Józef Glemp celebrated a mass on the square in front of the monument. The new part of the inscription and the plaque commemorating the presence of Pope John Paul II in Poznań in 1997 were consecrated. The primate and about eighty bishops met in Poznań for a plenary conference of the Polish episcopate. The meeting took place in Poznań in order to honour June 1956.<sup>54</sup> Religious components also took place on 28

51 Echa Czerwca (cf. n. 49), 10 f.

52 Gazeta Wyborcza, 21 March 2006, <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,3227124.html> (08. 09. 2013).

53 Gazeta Wyborcza, 26 June 2006, 22.

54 Gazeta Wyborcza, 24 June 2006, 4.

June: a morning mass was celebrated by Bishop Tadeusz Gocłowski. In the sermon, he recalled the meaning of June 1956, but also warned against the dangers of abortion, euthanasia and the "promotion" of homosexuality.<sup>55</sup> Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki in his speech focused on the meaning of June 1956, saying that "it showed that there were ideas worth fighting for. [...] It broke the wall of silence and hypocrisy."<sup>56</sup> As the above examples show, the anniversary was used by some church leaders to promote religious ideas, some completely unrelated to June 1956.

The official state celebrations on 28 June were attended by the presidents of Poland, Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as many ambassadors, politicians, and other guests from Poland and abroad. Lech Wałęsa and Ryszard Kaczorowski, the last Polish president-in-exile, also participated in the gathering. The ceremony consisted of speeches, the calling of the roll of honour of the people killed in Poznań June, poetry readings about Poznań June and the laying of wreaths. Poznań June was linked to other anti-Communist protests, especially the Hungarian revolution of late 1956. Veterans of Poznań June were presented by the president with state decorations and special medals. Although 80,000 spectators were expected, only about 10,000 people actually came.<sup>57</sup> Two veterans I talked to voiced no disappointment with this turnout. One remarked, "Fortunately the times of obligatory celebrations are gone". A few veterans mentioned that the celebrations were very beautiful and solemn.<sup>58</sup>

More Poznanians attended the artistic performances. On 28 June a show prepared by Izabella Cywińska and Jerzy Kalina was staged at Mickiewicz Square. It incorporated tanks, armoury, fields of corn, dancers from the Polish Dance Theatre and music by A.P. Kaczmarek. The Eight Day Theatre prepared a performance, "A time of Mothers", that focused on the suffering of mothers in June 1956 and other revolutions and wars: in Iraq, Afghanistan, Argentina, Palestine and Chechnya. Ewa Wójciak, the director of the theatre, said that news from battlefronts usually neglects the suffering of mothers, thus it is time to bring it to the fore. This spectacle was repeated later, spreading the commemorative events over the next months. It stressed the role of women in war efforts, which is seldom mentioned in contemporary discourse and commemorative practices.<sup>59</sup>

The theme of freedom was the focus of other plays. The theatre Silence Zone (*Strefa Ciszy*) prepared a play devoted to freedom. A concert called "Respect for Poznań June" was organised on 29 June in the Cegielski Factory with Poznań hip-hop musicians and Polish, German and Czech groups. The peak of the concert was the

55 Gazeta Wyborcza, 29 June 2006, 2.

56 Echa Czerwca (cf. n. 49), 12.

57 Gazeta Wyborcza, 24 June 2006, 1; 27 June 2006, 3; 29 June 2006, 2.

58 Interview with BA, MW.

59 See PENN, Shana: *Podziemie kobiet* [The underground of women]. Warsaw 2003; KENNEY, Padraic: *The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland*. In: *American Historical Review* 102 (1999) 4, 399–424.

song "June", written by Mezo and Owai, two young musicians. They emphasised respect for workers, the right to democracy, and dignity.<sup>60</sup> Another concert – of the Catalan group Lluís Llach with their famous song "The walls" (*Mury*) – was organised near the old tram depot (a place of intense fighting in 1956).<sup>61</sup> Two months later the opera "Ça Ira" (It'll be fine) by Roger Waters was performed as part of the Poznań International Fair.<sup>62</sup> All these events attracted large audiences of all ages.

Veterans' associations, officials of Wielkopolska Province and the city of Poznań, members of workers' unions and Poznanians paid tribute by installing commemorative plaques on the front of the factories on 27 June. Cegielski workers organised a rally in front of the main gate of the factory. There were also banners with slogans from 1956, many of which were still relevant, a point that was noted in the speech of local Solidarność chairwoman Lidia Dudziak, who linked the difficult situation of workers in the past with that of the present.

Young people had their own ways of celebrating: scouts colourised a comic book about June 1956 that was produced in black and white. The story is fictional, yet based on facts from June 1956 in Poznań. One of the authors pointed out that it might be a very good way to teach history, and that comic books were not always funny stories. Colourising it symbolised the transformation from a dismal grey reality to a colourful, democratic and free one.<sup>63</sup> Another event was the Poznań Chain of Freedom, created by young people joining hands in a variety of places in Poznań on 23 June (they were not successful in creating one unbroken chain).<sup>64</sup> In some schools various activities were organised throughout the year: exhibitions, history competitions, meetings with veterans, visits to the graves of the victims, etc. The school in Śniadecki Street was even given the name "The Heroes of Poznań June '56".<sup>65</sup> This school was very active in the celebrations of 2006 and in the following years, with history teachers playing a large role.<sup>66</sup>

The senate of Poznań University passed a resolution stating that the senate "pays tribute to the heroic inhabitants of Poznań and Wielkopolska, who had the courage to demand freedom, law and order, and dignity of work".<sup>67</sup> A two-day conference called "Poznań June 1956: Reasons, Course, Consequences" was also organised by Poznań

60 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 June 2006, 9.

61 The song "The walls" was the unofficial anthem of the opposition movement in the 1980s. The Catalan original was directed against Franco's regime. See also: LINDA, Katarzyna: *Od L'estaki Lluís Llach do Murów Jacka Kaczmarskiego: Mit artysty, historyczno-społeczno-kulturowe tło powstania pieśni oraz ich współczesny odbiór* [From Lluís Llach's L'estaka to Jacek Kaczmarski's The walls: A myth of an artist; historical, social and cultural background of songs and their contemporary perception]. In: *Zanurzeni w historii – zanurzeni w kulturze*. Jacek Kaczmarski. Eds. Marek KARWALA and Barbara SERWATKA. Kraków 2010, 43–54.

62 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 2006, various issues; *Echa Czerwca* (cf. n. 49), 15 f.

63 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27 June 2006, 6.

64 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24 June 2006, 4.

65 *Działalność Stowarzyszenia* (cf. n. 33), 207.

66 Interview with BA.

67 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27 June 2006, 3.

universities, high schools and institutes.<sup>68</sup> A myriad of books and pamphlets related to June 1956 was published. A detailed story of the uprising and the celebrations was published in the "Chronicle of Celebrations of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Poznań 1956 Uprising".<sup>69</sup> Bishop Jędraszewski edited a book called "Towards Freedom", which included the story of June 1956, recollections of participants, and a description of religious celebrations in Poznań related to June 1956.<sup>70</sup> An issue of the "Poznań City Chronicle" was devoted to June 1956.<sup>71</sup> The local newspaper "Głos Wielkopolski" (Voice of Wielkopolska) published a photo album called "Hope shot dead", based on an earlier book, "Wounded City", with photos made by security forces.<sup>72</sup> Personal recollections that had been submitted to literary competitions were published by a Catholic journal and the provincial library.<sup>73</sup>

In front of the castle there was a tank, similar to the ones used in 1956 against the protesters. Throughout the city there were large billboards with black and white photos from 1956 with inscriptions added in red (fig. 6 and plate 1). These billboards were prepared by the Wielkopolska Museum of Fights for Independence. There were also large pictures of Poznanians and their daily life that had been sent to the daily newspaper "Gazeta Wyborcza" after a call for pictures (plate 2).<sup>74</sup>

All of these celebrations, religious gatherings, events and concerts, as well as the artistic and historical objects in public places, rendered the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary highly visible in the city space. Local newspapers devoted many pages and several issues to June 1956 and various celebrations. Even the poster prepared for the anniversary led to a public debate. All this, in the opinion of one respondent, led to an awakening of the inhabitants. Many of the people I talked to pointed out that everyone could in one or another way participate and commemorate. This large commemorative event often led to recollections and discussions within families and among friends, not only about June 1956 but also about the Communist period in general (fig. 7).

### The institutionalisation of memory: The Museum of June 1956

The Museum of June 1956 was opened on 5 October 2007, in the basement of the Castle Cultural Centre (*Centrum Kultury Zamek*). The Museum of June 1956 is a branch of the Wielkopolska Museum of Fights for Independence, which has been in existence

68 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24 June 2006, 4.

69 *Echa Czerwca* (cf. n. 49).

70 *Ku wolności* (cf. n. 50).

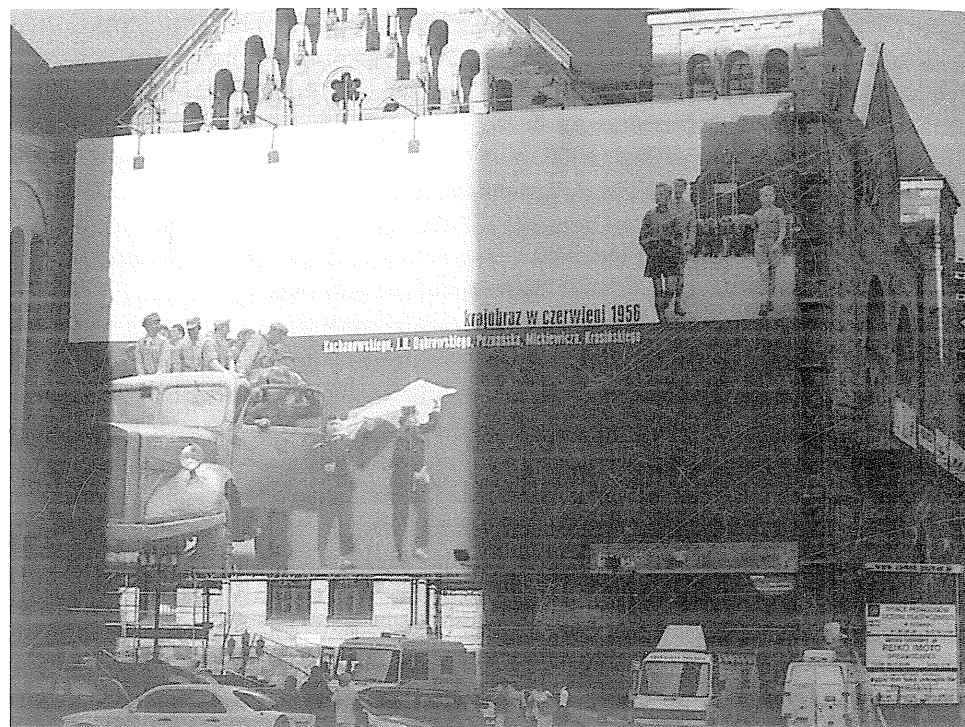
71 *Czerwiec '56* [June '56]. Ed. Jacek WIESIOŁOWSKI. Poznań 2006.

72 *Rozstrzelana nadzieja. Poznański Czerwiec 1956* [Hope shot dead. Poznań June 1956]. Eds. Filip LEŚNIAK and Agnieszka ROGULSKA. Poznań 2006.

73 *Widziałem Powstanie. Czerwiec 1956* [I saw the uprising. June 1956]. Ed. Adam SUWART. Poznań 2006; *Rok 1956 – 28 czerwca. Wspomnienia i refleksje 50 lat później* [The year 1956 – June 28. Recollections and reflections 50 years later]. Poznań 2006.

74 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20 June 2006, 1.





**Fig. 6** The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of June 1956. The billboard "Landscape in red 1956" on the castle.

since 1960 and was organised by the city council of Poznań. Since the 1990s there had been an exhibition room in the castle devoted to June 1956, created by the veterans of Poznań June. The opening of the museum was planned for the 1990s, but due to organisational and financial difficulties it was postponed. There were high hopes that the museum would be opened in time for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006, but it was again postponed until 2007.<sup>75</sup> Veterans of the revolt played a large role in initiating and supporting the idea of creating the museum (fig. 8).

The Museum of June 1956 consists of several rooms, including reconstructions of a typical living room from the 1950s, the interior of the PZPR Province Committee, Pokojowa Street (Peaceful Street) and Kochanowskiego Street (where the office of the security services in Poznań is located), the hall and the investigation room of the security services, a courtroom, a prison cell, and an exhibition hall with art concerning June 1956. Some exhibit items are very impressive – for example, the rooms depicting streets include the front part of T-34 tank and a fragment of a tram.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Barbara Fabiańska, the exhibition's curator, May 2008; the museum's Web page: [www.muzeumniepodleglosci.poznan.pl/](http://www.muzeumniepodleglosci.poznan.pl/) (05. 06. 2013).



**Fig. 7** The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of June 1956. Street display of photographs from the movie about 1956.

Voices play an important role in the museum. Visitors may sit in the tram and listen to recorded interviews collected in 1981, mostly by Ziemkowski. The museum offers new interactive technology that gives the visitor a chance to learn about June 1956 in an individual, personalised manner. Visitors can hear and read personal stories of the victims, read about the details and sequence of events, listen to the arguments of the defence attorneys during the trials, and listen to soc-real music and speeches of Communist leaders. When a visitor picks up the headphones in the room devoted to those who were killed, she hears nothing – the headphones are actually attached to the cobblestones.

Pictures are another important element of the exhibition hall. The museum displays a large number of photographs, many of which have been enlarged and cover walls and pillars. These pictures were taken by private people and agents of the security services. There is also a tableau with the ID photos of more than 500 arrested people. Actual objects play a limited role. Besides the already mentioned parts of a tank and a tram, there are few objects displayed in the museum. The most important objects belonged to Romek Strzałkowski, the youngest victim. These include a photograph from his first communion ceremony, a shirt and school certificates. The limited





**Fig. 8** The entrance to the Museum of Poznań June 1956 in the castle.

number of physical objects from the period is related to the fact that many objects were lost or destroyed during the period of martial law, and many of those that remain are kept in families as mementos. Nevertheless, the curator is of the opinion that the situation is changing: as the museum gains credibility and attracts the attention of people who were not active in veterans' associations, ever more people are donating objects.<sup>76</sup> Veterans of Poznań June who are active in associations are especially likely to donate objects to the museum.<sup>77</sup>

The exhibition curator, Barbara Fabiańska, claimed that one of the museum's great successes is that "not only young people but also veterans who are not used to such interactive technology like the way the museum exhibition is presented".<sup>78</sup> The Museum of Poznań June is a historical museum and its function is to "gather objects, conduct research about the objects, and display them for the public",<sup>79</sup> which is typical for any historical museum. But it also has more specific goals, such as to honour the people who took part in the June revolt – both living and dead – as well as to create "a space of trust" and "a space of identity".

The museum exhibition is based on three main sources: the personal stories of participants collected in 1981 (more reliable and valuable than stories collected today because less time had passed), photographs taken by the security services and by Leszek Paprzycki, a student who spontaneously took pictures of the events, and consultation with veterans and historians. One veteran has been employed in the museum, first to help set it up and, after it had opened, to tell his first-hand story of Poznań June. The museum organisers continuously gather new material and plan to rearrange the space with new objects and information. "History is rewritten all the time", the curator told me. "The museum should be alive." The next major changes in the exhibition are

planned for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of June 1956, to take place in 2016. There is also a room for temporary exhibitions, where exhibitions about the 1956 Hungarian revolution and about the trials following June 1956 took place.<sup>80</sup>

Museum staff believe that one way to disseminate knowledge about June 1956 – especially internationally – is to link it to the 1956 revolution in Hungary. Contacts with Hungarians were established during the time of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary: on the initiative of the Polish and Hungarian embassies, a delegation of Hungarian veterans came to Poznań and a delegation of Polish veterans went to Budapest for the celebrations. Such visits were repeated in subsequent years. Comparisons are made between Strzałkowski and Peter Mansfeld, the youngest Hungarian victim. There is a plan to name a street in Budapest after Strzałkowski and one in Poznań after Mansfeld.<sup>81</sup>

### June 1956 in the memories of veterans, young people and families

The memory of Poznań June is fragmented, multifaceted and ambivalent. I attempt to present several aspects of memory, taking into account the voices of sociologists, veterans, young people, and selected families of Poznanians. Furthermore, I try to address the issue of how Poznań June is contextualised, including the problem of the meaning of the Poznań June Monument and the square around it.

According to the sociologists Rafał Drozdowski and Marek Ziółkowski, the memory of Poznań June is relatively weak for a number of reasons, including the lack of a consistent and recognisable name for the event, differing interpretations of its meaning, the lack of single leader, the lack of lasting structural outcomes (e. g., an independent group of people or an organisation to advance the cause), its anti-Poznań character (both auto- and heterostereotypes of Poznanians as legalists), and the official silencing by the Communist regime.<sup>82</sup> I have already discussed the issues of naming, interpretation and official silencing. The lack of a leader is related to the spontaneous character of the events and the leading role of workers and young people. As also mentioned, the person who became the symbol of the revolt was Romek Strzałkowski, the youngest victim. It is difficult to explain why there was no group of intellectuals to carry on the struggle; I surmise that proximity in time to the war and severe post-war repression played a role, as did the fact that the revolt was instigated by workers who were primarily interested in better work conditions. Historians point to the major role of Poznań June in "preparing" for the October changes, yet this interpretation was neither widespread nor was it something to be proud of: Polish society was soon disillusioned with the October changes.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Barbara Fabiańska, the exhibition curator.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Krzysztof Głyda, the director.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with B. Fabiańska.

<sup>79</sup> Web page of Wielkopolska Museum of Fights for Independence: <http://www.muzeumniepodleglosci.poznan.pl/index.php> (20. 05. 2008).

<sup>80</sup> Interview with K. Głyda.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with K. Głyda.

<sup>82</sup> DROZDOWSKI, Rafał/ZIÓLKOWSKI, Marek: Poznański Czerwiec w pamięci Polaków [Poznań June in memory of Poles]. In: Poznański Czerwiec '56. Sens pamięci. Ed. Wiesław RATAJCZAK. Poznań 2006, 31–45.

The anti-Poznań character of June 1956 is also interesting. It is based on a stereotype of the inhabitants of the city and the region as hard-working, legalist, conservative, anti-revolutionary and pro-small-steps. This is, of course, an overgeneralisation that assumes a single character for the entire population. My modest anthropological research reveals a diversity of experiences, memories and beliefs concerning June 1956. Veterans of Poznań June, for example, form a small but influential group. They played a key role in creating the Museum of June 1956, in erecting stones and plaques, and in naming streets. One veteran I talked to was actively engaged in preparing an exhibition in the museum, had been working there since it opened, and is active in a veterans' association. He had told his story so often that parts of his recollection sounded like a recording. He had been lightly wounded in June 1956, but his close friend (age 16) was killed. He described June from the perspective of a group of young people led by curiosity about what was happening. "We moved from place to place, we followed the crowd", he said. "When we heard shots, we went to that place." He became very emotional when speaking about the deaths of his friend and other people.<sup>83</sup> June 1956 was one of his most formative experiences and had a great impact on his life, so his individual memory was very vivid.

Veterans were and are most visible during ceremonies, and they dominate the public discourse about June 1956 and its memory. They also try to control public spaces related in any way to June 1956. One such space is Mickiewicz Square, around the Poznań June Monument. Veterans have protested against the March of Equality that has taken place every November since 2004. The march starts in the square and is always organised by leftist, feminist and green organisations. In 2005 the march was prevented by the city authorities, who cited security reasons to justify the ban. In subsequent years it was organised and carried out, but a small group of veterans protested against it, fearing that it would turn into something resembling Berlin's Love Parade. They pointed to the dignity of the place, associated with the victims of fighting in June 1956.<sup>84</sup> In recent years there have been no protests against the march.

As was mentioned earlier, there are three separate associations of veterans of Poznań June, and in the mid-1990s there were even four associations. The main reason for this division into separate groups is disagreement among association members and historians over the course of events and personal engagement in June 1956 and, as a result, also over who is entitled to veterans' privileges. The stories told differ, and some veterans tend to exaggerate the number of victims.<sup>85</sup> Problems with inaccurate information arose as early as the 1980s, when Ziemkowski was collecting personal recollections. He commented on some stories, and even called one person a habitual liar because he claimed that American parachutists were involved.<sup>86</sup> When I was interviewing veterans about their participation in June 1956 and the way it was remem-

83 Interview with MJ.

84 *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19 November 2007; *Rzeczpospolita*, 15 November 2008.

85 Jastrząb (cf. n. 39), 14–17.

86 Ziemkowski (cf. n. 26), 246.

bered and commemorated, I noticed that they often merged their personal memories with stories gleaned from different sources (public discourse, the mass media, historical books, other people's stories). For example, two veterans referred to the fact that there had been a monument to Jesus's Heart on Mickiewicz Square before the Second World War (destroyed by the Nazis), but they were too young to have personal recollections of it and can only have learned about it from books or other people. As I understood it, they mentioned this in relation to the debate about adding a reference to God on the monument. I presume that one of the reasons for this is that some veterans repeat their stories so often when participating in commemorative ceremonies where other stories are also told, that with the passing of time they cannot distinguish between their own and others' memories.

Veterans feature rather infrequently in the mass media. When the anniversary is approaching there are sometimes short articles with personal recollections of veterans, but for the most part the brief comments about veterans in the daily Poznań press focus on who is entitled to veterans' privileges (monthly subsidies for housing and utilities, free public transport, etc.). This issue of privileges resurfaces annually in the period immediately prior to the anniversary. Politicians from various parties promised to give veterans these entitlements in 2006, but every year in the media there are notices explaining the "objective reasons" why there is no money for the veterans. As of 2010 a law about veterans' entitlements had still not passed, but one-time subsidy payments (of around 2 000 zł) were offered to those whose health had been harmed, or who had been persecuted in work or by security services, or who had helped the victims. It was estimated that around 200 people would apply for it.<sup>87</sup> For about a dozen veterans – leaders and very active members of the associations – activities related to commemorating June 1956, honouring the victims, maintaining the graves, etc., comprise a full-time job.<sup>88</sup> One person I visited at home had a large number of diplomas and certificates on the walls, and an entire room was filled with papers and objects documenting his involvement in June 1956 and activities of the association he belonged to. He meets regularly with other veterans and prepares various commemorative activities. Another veteran spends most of his time meeting with young people in schools in Wielkopolska Province, preparing letters and documents for other veterans applying for the privileges, maintaining the graves, etc. We can assume that for these veterans such activities give meaning to their present lives.

Other social groups are less interested in June 1956 and its memory. Students have told me that they get their knowledge of history mostly from school. Students who visit the Museum of Poznań June have varying levels of background knowledge and interest. As the history that students learn in school often focuses on earlier epochs (antiquity, the middle ages, earlier modern times, etc.), young people often lack basic knowledge about post-war history. According to the museum's director, only a few

87 Wsparcie dla kombatantów Czerwca 56 [Support for June 1956 combatants], 04. 06. 2010 (<http://www.tvp.pl/poznan/aktualnosci/wsparcie-dla-kombatantow-czerwca-56/1885573>, 08. 09. 2013).

88 Interview with B.

history teachers are genuinely interested in Poznań June, and they pass this interest on to their students.<sup>89</sup> The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary generated more interest among young people. The schools named after Strzalkowski and June 1956 organised many activities, which they have continued to this day: competitions, exhibitions, performances, meetings with veterans, etc.<sup>90</sup> Teachers of history play a decisive role in these actions. Students in other schools get some basic historical background, but developing it further depends on their personal interests or their teachers' encouragement (for example, through participation in history competitions).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with members of two extended families of Poznanians and several individuals concerning their knowledge and memory of June 1956, participation in commemorative activities since the 1980s and the significance of June 1956. Finding families of three generations of Poznanians was actually quite difficult; I had to use personal contacts and ask students and colleagues at work to help me find them. After talking to people from three generations I came to a few conclusions. The age a person was in June 1956 is a very important factor in the way they experienced and remember June 1956. People who were in their twenties or older in 1956 pointed out that the dramatic experiences of the Second World War were far more significant and had a greater impact on their lives. Memories and recollections about the war still dominate discussions about history in the families. June 1956 lasted just a few days; they noticed it, but found it not so important. They never attended any commemoration ceremonies, and were not interested in talking or reading about it. The second generation – people who were children in 1956 – also had very few memories of June 1956. Some members of the second generation became interested in June 1956 at the time of the unveiling of the June 1956 Monument, which led to an increased interest in history in general, but especially in history's "blank pages". They would ask their parents and grandparents, but often learned very little. One person mentioned that there was a secret concerning one family member, and still, after more than fifty years, they do not know the truth. "We still have no idea what happened. I know that my father later had problems at school and had to change schools. He still refuses to talk about it."<sup>91</sup>

The youngest generation in the families I interviewed learned about June 1956 in school, as their grandparents usually talked about war experiences and their parents about the late Communist years. In general discussions about the past were rare, and were sometimes triggered by elections, news in the mass media or other events. Both grandparents and parents said that historical events were not so important to them; rather, they focused on daily and family life, which they believed was typical for Poznanians. Among the people I interviewed almost nobody attended the annual celebrations of the anniversaries of June 1956. Some people recalled the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary because it was so prominent, remembering the tank in front of the castle and many artistic events.

89 Interview with K. Głyda.

90 Interview with a history teacher at Śniadecki school.

91 Interview with IA.

Some people refused to meet with me because "they had nothing to say"; others had no time. I heard about two families who had lost a family member in June 1956, but they did not want to talk about it with me. The contact persons explained that their memories were so painful and traumatic that they preferred to keep them private. Interestingly, many people directed me to the veterans' associations as the "guardians of memory", even when they had their own personal memories and opinions. This situation brings us back to the issue of the institutionalisation of the memory of a historical event. Even when people have interesting individual memories, they value the more official discourse and see it as more reliable.

### Concluding remarks

The analysis of commemorations and memories of June 1956 in Poznań shows that over the course of more than fifty years there have been several significant changes in attitudes and approaches to this event. In the Communist period up until the registration of NSZZ Solidarność, the event was neglected and silenced by the Communist authorities and its memory was kept private. In 1981 the most significant symbol of its commemoration – the monument on Mickiewicz Square – was unveiled, which itself was an extraordinary act, reflecting the Communist authorities' loss of control over not only discourse and memory of the past, but also over its physical manifestation in public space. Writings about the commemoration activities in 1981 describe the solemnity, enthusiasm and joint participation of a variety of local groups (the representatives of PZPR, city officials, NSZZ Solidarność, artists, veterans, ordinary Poznanians). This radically changed in 1982, when the monument became a contested space inscribed with divergent meanings for PZPR and opposition members, turning commemorations into confrontations. Since 1989 there has been a wide range of ways of commemorating June 1956; this was especially the case on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, when different groups of people were stimulated to commemorate in different ways. The meanings that people attached to Poznań June were also heterogeneous: international connections, religious values, workers' fate and rights, the role of women, the value of freedom and democracy, the obligation to remember. Through various artistic, visual and educational activities it was shown that commemorations may actively involve very different people and stances, lead to an increased interest in history, and contribute to individual and group memories of the past.

Memories of June 1956 were and still are in the process of formation; they are ambivalent and contested. Families of mortally wounded victims have individual and family memories that had to be kept private for many years. The loss of a family member and the suppression of memory sometimes led to the stigmatisation and repression of other family members, compounding the trauma that they experienced. People wounded in June 1956 and those beaten during interrogations experienced physical and psychological suffering, and often also had problems getting education and work. The painful memory of these experiences was reawakened by changes in

commemorative practices (especially following the imposition of martial law in 1981, and again after 1989). The validity and value of their personal memories were also called into question in commemorative situations when other groups asserted contradictory or competing interpretations of the event.

The experience and memory of June 1956 motivated some Poznanians to join veterans' associations. The existence of different veterans' associations (at one time four, currently three) reflects the different opinions and memories of their members. These memories are also contested when some veterans challenge the claims of others' participation in June 1956 and their rights to special privileges. Their personal memories often get conflated with stories they heard later from other people or in speeches during commemorative ceremonies, or read in books or the press. In my opinion there is neither a shared memory among veterans nor a shared social memory of June 1956; there are, rather, many memories shaped and reshaped in situations and processes of recollection and commemoration.

Individual and family participation in commemorations as well as private and group memories of June 1956 are intertwined with people's attitudes towards the Communist period, their social and political involvement, and their current political views. This became clear during interviews when some people proudly stated and described their activism in commemorating Poznań June and its victims, while others emphasised that they are focused on daily life and the future. Yet even for the latter group the main site of memory – the Poznań June Monument – is a clear and visible reminder of Poznań 1956. This situation supports the view that for private and group memories to develop and be maintained, commemorations, sites of memory and public discourse are essential.

## Selective memories of Communism

### Remembering Ceaușescu's "socialism" in post-1989 Romania

Dragoș Petrescu

Romanian Communism is mainly remembered for the flamboyant personality cult of the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, the severe food shortages of the 1980s and the violent exit from Communism in which over 1,100 people died and more than 3,300 were wounded. In spite of the everyday miseries of late Communism and the bloody revolution of December 1989, the overwhelming majority of the population voted in the first free elections of 20 May 1990 for the Communist successor party, whose leadership comprised a great number of former Communist officials. This chapter addresses patterns of remembering the Ceaușescu epoch in the post-Communist era and argues that, in terms of popular perception, the Ceaușescu epoch is generally divided into two distinct periods: 1965–1977, which is remembered as a period of relative liberalisation, and 1977–1989, which people remember as a time of state surveillance, shortages and corruption.

Patterns of remembering the Ceaușescu epoch in the post-Communist period exhibit a paradoxical phenomenon. Although immediately after the 1989 regime change the electorate brought to power former second- and third-rank members of the *nomenklatura*, the modest achievements of the epoch of "communist consumerism", i. e. 1965–1977, were constantly obscured until 2007. In many respects, this was due to the fact that, immediately after the 1989 regime change, a majority of the discourses aimed at assessing or remembering the Communist period in Romania were produced by public intellectuals associated with the emerging centre-right democratic opposition. These discourses also represented a form of opposition to the "neo-Communist" power epitomised by Ion Iliescu and the National Salvation Front (NSF), and therefore were centred exclusively on criticising the crimes, terror, surveillance and shortages associated with the defunct Communist regime. Thus, during the 1990–2007 period the historical reconstructions of the 1965–1977 period concentrated mainly on political repression and economic shortage. Consequently, a majority of the population that lived through the 1965–1977 period chose to repress any memories of that period that deviated from the prevailing interpretation emphasising crimes, surveillance and shortages.

Some advertising campaigns launched between 2005 and 2007 stressed aspects of everyday life during the period of relative liberalisation from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, and in a peculiar way contributed to a change of perspective on the period of "good communism". This chapter analyses a number of commercials released during that period that created a particular link between recent history, collective memory and commodities that were initially produced in the Communist era and sur-