

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/9125,The-40th-anniversary-of-the-pacification-of-the-quotWujekquot-coal-mine-Katowice.html>

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The 40th anniversary of the pacification of the "Wujek" coal mine — Katowice, 16 December 2021

This year's celebrations began at 1 p.m. with a Holy Mass at the church of Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Katowice. Then, the participants of the ceremony went to the "Wujek" Massacre Memorial where they laid wreaths and the Roll Call for the Fallen was read out.

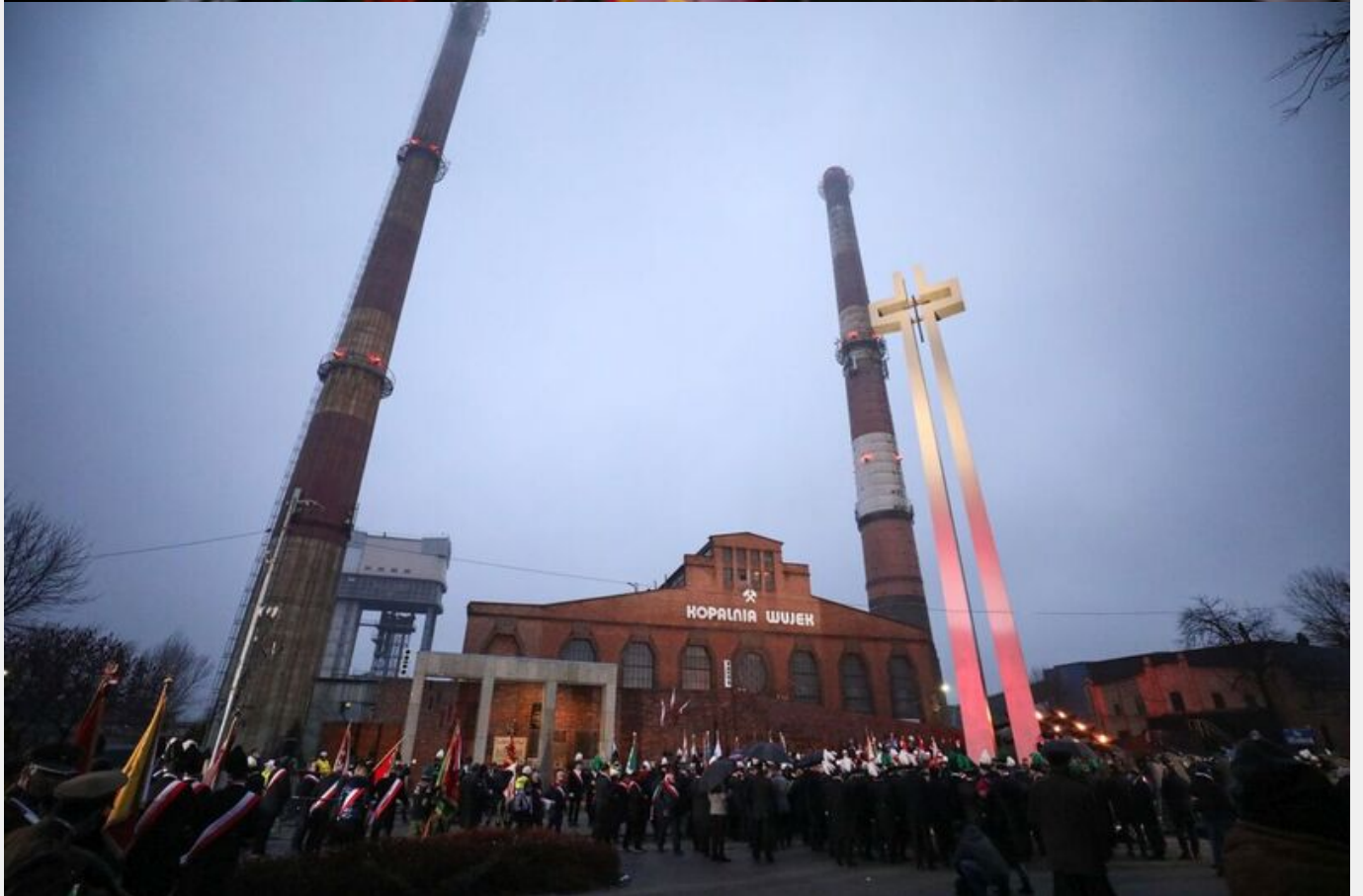
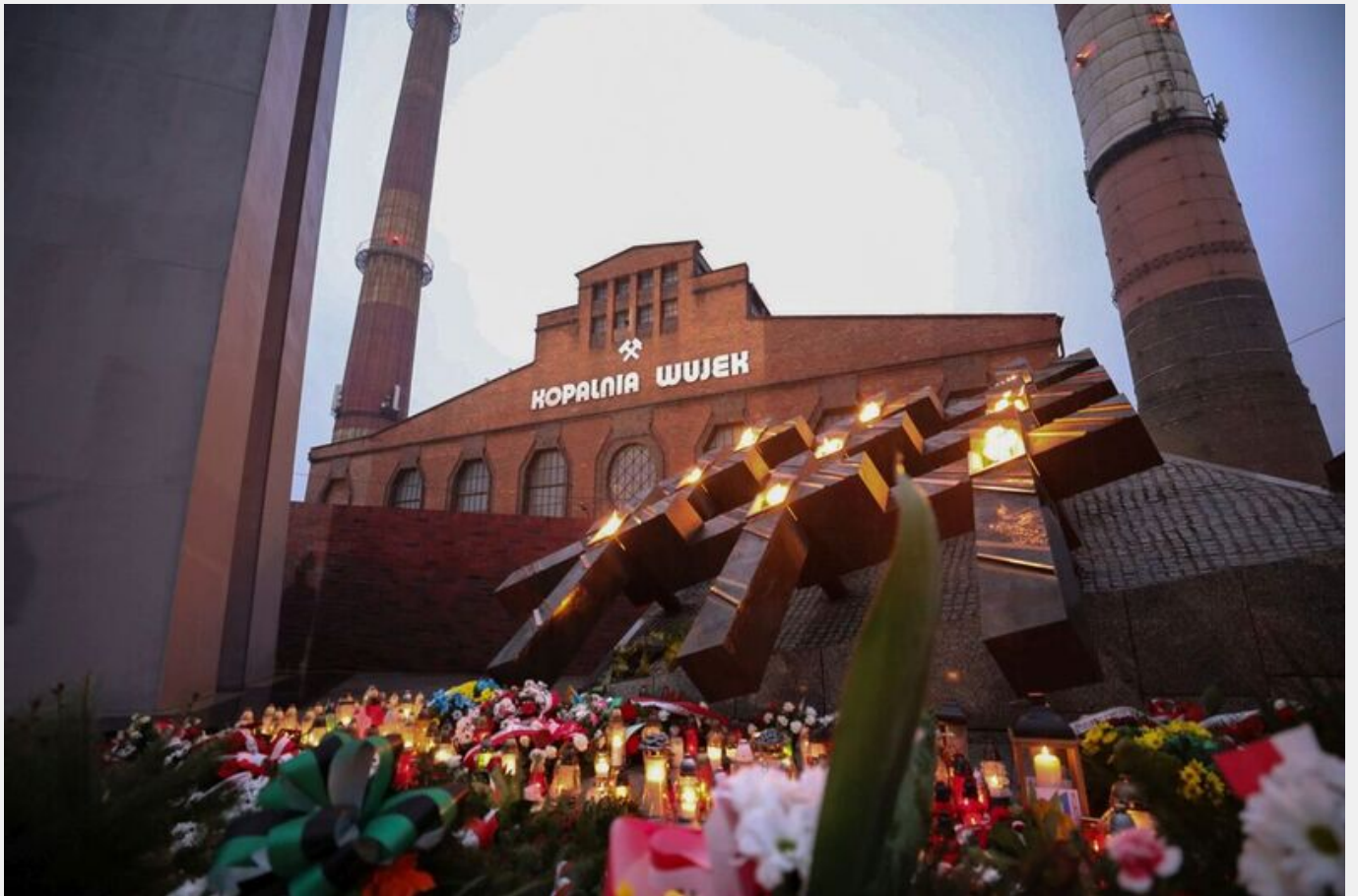












The celebrations were held under the National Patronage and in

the presence of the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda.

The ceremony was attended by, among others, Speaker of the Sejm Elżbieta Witek and Piotr Duda, Chairman of the "Solidarity" Independent Self-Governing Trade Union . Paying homage to the fallen miners, the President said:

We are here today to commemorate those fallen heroes, to pay respect to them and their families. (...) Looking at Poland now, we can clearly say that their blood was not shed in vain. We are here to remember all those who lost their lives for a free and genuinely independent Poland.

The Institute of National Remembrance was represented by the President, Karol Nawrocki, Ph.D., accompanied by Andrzej Sznajder, Ph.D., Director of the IPN Branch in Katowice.

The pacification of the "Wujek" mine — the

greatest crime of Martial Law

Nine dead and dozens wounded is the bloody result of the pacification of the striking "Wujek" mine workers in Katowice. It was carried out by the ZOMO (Police Mobile Troops) and the soldiers on 16 December 1981, after the introduction of Martial Law by General Wojciech Jaruzelski. The youngest victim was only 19 years old.

When, at dawn on 13 December 1981, the miners of the "Wujek" coal mine in Katowice were getting ready to work, they were completely unaware of the communist government's action against Solidarity and its supporters. However, the information about the brutal detention of the chairman of the Works Committee of the Solidarity Trade Union, Jan Ludwiczak on the previous night, caused uncertainty. After General Wojciech Jaruzelski's morning speech had been broadcast, it was clear that the detention was related to Martial Law. Soon the miners' protest began.

The striking miners demanded freedom for Ludwiczak and other arrested Union members from all over the country. Apart from "Wujek" — approximately 50 state owned companies in the Katowice voivodeship were on strike.

Another reason for communist authorities to pacify the miners' "rebellion" was to intimidate others. Earlier on 14 December the army along with the militia began to suppress the protests by firing at miners near the "Manifest Lipcowy" mine in Jastrzębie-Zdrój. Four of them were wounded.

It was a "preview" before the bloodiest pacification during Martial Law — the massacre carried out by ZOMO in the "Wujek" coal mine, where around three thousand miners were on strike. The decision for the use of violence was taken on the evening of 15 December, during a meeting of the so called Defence Committee in Katowice district. The intentions of the communists were obvious for the size of the forces that were sent to the mine was huge: 1,471 MO (Police) and ZOMO Officers, 760 soldiers, 22 tanks and 44 combat vehicles. The action to "disarm" the mine was scheduled to start on 16 December.

A few minutes after 8 a.m. the area of the "Wujek" coalmine was tightly surrounded by the police, which was later joined by the army. Calling on the strikers to disperse was ineffective. The protesters replied by singing the Polish anthem among other songs. After water cannons and gas guns were used, tanks and combat vehicles entered the plant and rammed the fence. The strikers tried to defend themselves by using metal bars and

building barricades.

The biggest drama took place at around 12.30 p.m. when a special unit of ZOMO was sent in for the pacification action. The officers, equipped with machine guns, killed six miners. The death toll later rose to nine since three of the injured died in a hospital.

The plan to crush the strike at the "Wujek" coalmine by force, as well as the nature of the victims' wounds (abdominal, chest or skull) prove that the massacre of 16 December was a premeditated action. The army and the militia also obstructed the rescue operation at the mine site.

The bloody result of the pacification of "Wujek" — 9 miners killed and 23 injured (not counting those poisoned by gas) — determined the end of the strike on the very same day, that is 16 December. Dozens of police officers and soldiers were also injured.

The communist authorities put the organizers of the protest on trial. On 3 February 1982 the verdicts were announced: the chairman of the Strike Committee, Stanisław Płatek, was sentenced to four years in prison while Adam Skwira, Marian Głuch and Jerzy Wartak for three years. Two weeks earlier the case against police officers, who were shooting, was

discontinued.

It took 27 years to punish those responsible for the bloody pacification of "Wujek": the commander of the special platoon of the ZOMO, sergeant Romuald Cieślak (on 24 June 2008 he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment). A dozen of his subordinates received sentences ranging from three and a half to four years in prison.

The leaders of the Communist Party (PZPR), who sealed the fate of the miners with their decision on Martial Law, were never held responsible. The then head of the Ministry of the Interior Czesław Kiszczak was put on trial in connection with the "Wujek" massacre several times, but in the end the court decided he was not guilty (2009).

- *The general will now face the final judgement*, said Czesław Kłosek of the „Manifest Lipcowy” mine after Kiszczak's death. One miner who was on strike at that time still carries a bullet in his spine...

The list of the killed miners from the Wujek coal mine:

- Józef Czekalski (48)
- Krzysztof Giza (24)

- Joachim Gnida (28)
- Ryszard Gzik (35)
- Bogusław Kopczak (28)
- Andrzej Pełka (19)
- Jan Stawisiński (21)
- Zbigniew Wilk (30)
- Zenon Zając (22)

[See also: The world is watching. Foreign reactions to the pacification of the “Wujek” mine.](#)

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