

The Warsaw Uprising

Germany occupied Poland in September 1939. What followed were years of murderous, inhuman rule. Five to six million Polish citizens lost their lives to war, terror and genocide. Some three million of them were persecuted because they were Jewish. As early as April 1943 there was an uprising by the Jewish population of the Warsaw Ghetto. It was cruelly quelled by German troops.

On 1 August 1944, the Armia Krajowa (Polish Home Army) revolted against the German occupying power in Warsaw, the country's capital. A large proportion of the Warsaw population supported the struggle. They put up barricades, helped provision the fighters and cared for the wounded. Initially the rebels succeeded in liberating a number of the town's districts. Soon, however, they faced a brutal counteroffensive by the Germans. The Red Army, which had already reached the Warsaw periphery, did nothing to support the insurgents. The Home Army surrendered on 2 October 1944. During the 63 days of the uprising, 150,000 to 200,000 persons were killed, most of them civilians. By way of assembly camps such as that in the Warsaw suburb of Pruszków, one third of Warsaw's population – women, men and children—were deported to concentration camps or locations where they were assigned to civilian forced labour. The Wehrmacht (German army) had the City of Warsaw systematically destroyed by arson and demolition squads.