

Institute of National Remembrance

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The celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the death of General Władysław Sikorski – Gibraltar, 4 July 2023



















4 July 2023 marks 80 years from the tragic death in a plane crash of Lieutenant General Władysław Sikorski – the co-author of the victory over the Red Army in 1920, the Prime Minister of the Second Polish Republic, the Supreme Commander of the Polish Armed Forces during World War II and the Head of the Polish Government in Exile.

The President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Karol Nawrocki, Ph.D., took part in the celebrations organized by the Office for Veterans and Victims of Oppression, which were held on 4 July in Gibraltar.

The main event took place on 4 July. The Polish delegation took part in the Holy Mass in the Cathedral of Saint Mary the Crowned, and later paid homage to the General and those accompanying him in the tragic flight during the main ceremony near the Europa Point lighthouse, near

the monument commemorating the victims of the Gibraltar tragedy. At the time of the Gibraltar tragedy, at 11:07 p. m., when the plane sank in the sea, roses were thrown into the waves.

On the following day, the IPN delegation laid flowers at the graves of the people killed in the Liberator II AL523 crash at North Front Cemetery.

This year, in connection with the 80th anniversary of the tragic death of General Sikorski, the presidents of the largest veteran organizations, Gibraltar authorities and representatives of polish Consulate in the UK also took part in the celebrations in his honor.

The Head of the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression, Jan Józef Kasprzyk, read out a letter by the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda.

The story of General Władysław Sikorski's last mission is the culmination of the dramatic fate of Poland and Poles during World War II. Our nation, though suffering, waged an unequal struggle against the powerful aggressors by all means – military and diplomatic – until the end. In both of these arenas, Gen. Sikorski played a unique role. He was an outstanding commander and diplomat who, giving up his own comforts and taking personal risks, steadfastly served the Fatherland and sacrificed his life for it. And for this the Republic of Poland will always honor him as a national hero, the President wrote.

Regardless of the political emotions of the first half of the 20th century, today, from a historical perspective, we are all aware that we are paying tribute to one of the key figures of Polish history in the 20th century, said Karol Nawrocki, Ph.D.

The Polish nation always speaks up for those who served Poland and wants to bury them with dignity. It also proves that for us history is not just a record of the past, but it is a matter of social life even 80 years after the death of General Władysław Sikorski, added the IPN President

The circumstances of the death of Gen. Władysław Sikorski are still controversial. The aircraft - Liberator II AL523, in which the General was returning from an inspection of the Polish Army in the East, fell into the sea at 11:07 P.M. The General's daughter and his colleagues, including the Chief of Staff of the Commander-in-Chief Tadeusz Klimecki, also perished in the catastrophe.

The reasons for the disaster (only the Czech pilot survived) have not been fully explained to this day. According to the official version, presented in the report of the British committee investigating the accident in 1943, the cause of the disaster was the jamming of

elevator controls. Some, however, think that it was an assassination and there has been much speculation that Sikorski's death may have been the result of the Soviet, British, or Polish conspiracy.

After the official funeral in London, General Sikorski was buried at the cemetery of Polish airmen in Newark, near Nottingham. On 17 September 1993, his ashes were buried in the crypt of St. Leonardo of the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków.

In November 2008, as part of the IPN investigation, General Sikorski was exhumed and his remains were examined by Polish experts. They concluded that Sikorski died due to injuries to many organs typical of victims of communication disasters.

[See also: The exhibition about the General Władysław Sikorski](#)

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