

# Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/1165,70th-anniversary-of-the-death-of-Captain-Witold-Pilecki.html>

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## 70th anniversary of the death of Captain Witold Pilecki

On 25 May 1948 at 9.30 p.m. – upon the order of the communist authorities, Witold Pilecki was killed by a shot in the back of the head. He died for the love of free Poland. The anniversary celebrations were held at the place of the execution of our national hero. We would like to present the premiere of "The Last Journey of Captain Witold Pilecki" prepared by the Institute of National Remembrance.























































Witold Pilecki, an accursed soldier, a soldier of the "lost Republic of Poland", the last Polish lancer, "a volunteer to Auschwitz", one of the six bravest men of the European resistance movement during World War II. He is a symbol of Poland which - as a result of the occupying forces of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia - has been irretrievably lost.

He belonged to the generation born during the partition of Poland, whose mission was to help Poland regain independence, and once it had - to work towards the greatness of a free homeland. A generation brought up on the still vivid traditions of national uprisings and shaped by the words "God - Honour - Homeland".

It took 42 years for Witold Pilecki to finally be acquitted.

**This is what Witold Pilecki's last moments might have looked**



**like.**

**To this day, we are looking for his remains.**

**Hail to the memory of Witold Pilecki!**

Witold Pilecki was detained on 8 May 1947, and from 6 -22 May 1947, 23 people were imprisoned, of whom only seven were found innocent and released. From 9 May, Pilecki was detained in the 10th Pavilion of the Mokotow Prison, in complete isolation.

The trial of Witold Pilecki and his companions: Maria Szelańska, Tadeusz Płużański, Szymon Jamontt-Krzywicki, Maksymilian Kaucki, Jerzy Nowakowski, Witold Różycki and Makary Sieradzki began on 3 March 1948 at the headquarters of the Warsaw District Provincial Court on Nowowiejska street.

"Witold's" prosecutor was the Deputy Prosecutor of the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of the Polish Army, Maj. Czesław Łapiński. He accused Pilecki of possessing a weapon, which, after the fall of the uprising, like most of the insurgents, he hid in a safe-deposit box and never used. Another accusation concerned the preparation of armed attacks on the prominent figures of the regime, but it was partly classified, as it was based on material related to an unsuccessful provocation. The last charge concerned using false documents issued in the name of Roman Jezierski. At the hearing, the prosecutor did not allow witnesses of the prosecution to testify, most of them being in prisons; he also resigned from testimonies of the witnesses of the



defense.

On 15 March 1948 the following verdict was announced: W. Pilecki, M. Szelańska and T. Płużański were sentenced to death. On 25 May 1948 at 9.30 p.m., in the presence of the Deputy Prosecutor of the Polish Army Prosecutor Major S. Cypryszewski, the head of the Mokotów prison - Lt. Ryszard Mońko, doctor - Lt. Dr Kazimierz Jezierski, priest - Fr. Capt. Wincenty Martusiewicz, Witold Pilecki was shot to death, and secretly buried probably on the so-called "Meadow", lot "Ł" of the Powązkowski cemetery in Warsaw.

It was only in September 1990 that the Supreme Court acquitted Captain Witold Pilecki and his companions, revealed the unjust nature of the sentences issued, and emphasized the patriotic attitudes of the convicts.

In July 2006, the President of the Republic of Poland Lech Kaczyński, in recognition of Witold Pilecki's merits and his devotion to the affairs of his homeland, honored him with the Order of the White Eagle posthumously.

On the 70th anniversary of the death of Witold Pilecki, on 25 May 2018, ceremonies with the participation of Pilecki's children- Zofia Pilecka-Optułowicz and Andrzej Pilecki, took place at The Museum of Cursed Soldiers and Political Prisoners of the Polish People's Republic, located in the former Mokotow prison on 37 Rakowiecka str. in Warsaw. A previously unknown portrait of Captain Pilecki was unveiled on the prison wall. Andrzej Duda, the President of the Republic of Poland laid



flowers by the execution wall of the former prison. The Holy Mass for the late Witold Pilecki was celebrated at 6:00 p.m. After the mass, a school choir from Olsztynek sang their songs, followed by a performance of the “Forteca” band with a concert entitled "Captain".

The most solemn part of the celebrations began with the participants' joint walk to the execution wall. At 9:30 p.m.- at the time of his death- the Captain was honoured.

The President of the Institute of National Remembrance Dr Jarosław Szarek took part in the celebrations.

The end of the celebrations was marked in the prison cell in the 10th Pavilion, where Pilecki had been imprisoned. The participants of the event read out parts of Pilecki's favourite book - ***The Imitation of Christ*** by Thomas à Kempis.

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