

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/1372,Celebrations-in-honor-of-Polish-soldiers-who-died-for-the-freedom-of-Poland-and-.html>

25.04.2024, 11:53

27.09.2018

Celebrations in honor of Polish soldiers who died for the freedom of Poland and Belgium - Lommel, 30 September 2018





































On 29-30 September 2018 a delegation from the Institute of National Remembrance visited Belgium. Deputy President of the Institute Jan Baster and director of the Office of Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom Adam Siwek took part in annual celebration in honour of Polish soldiers of the 1st Armoured Division of general Stanisław Maczek buried at the Polish war cemetery in Lommel.

On the first day, at the invitation of Artur Orzechowski, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Kingdom of Belgium, IPN's representatives participated in a meeting at the Polish Embassy in Brussels. The meeting was also attended by Antoni Szymański - Senator of the Republic of Poland, Hubert Czerniuk - director of the Department for Cooperation with Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tomasz Stachurski representing the

head of the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression and representatives of the Polish Educational Society, Polish schools and social organizations in Belgium. The meeting was devoted to promoting Polish history and culture and supporting the education of Polish youth in Belgium. The work of the Institute of National Remembrance, praised by the participants, is an important part of this mission executed through publishing academic and popular science publications, organising exhibitions and lectures.

On the second day the main ceremonies were held. They were organised by the Polish Embassy in Brussels, Polish social organizations and local authorities. First, the participants laid wreaths at the monument to the Belgians who died in the First and Second World War, located in front of the church of St. Peter. Then, ceremonies at the Polish war cemetery ensued, which began with a Holy Mass for the Polish soldiers. 257 Poles are buried there, mainly members of the 1st Armoured Division of General Stanisław Maczek, but also Polish airmen and members of the Belgian resistance movement. They all died when liberating Belgian towns from occupation. After the Mass, the official part of the ceremony was held. It was attended by the General of the Belgian Army, who was the official representative of the King of Belgium Philippe I. The Belgian side was also represented by Peter Vanvelthoven, the mayor of the city Lommel and officers of the Belgian army and members of Belgian veteran organizations.

Jacek Miler, director of the Department of Cultural Heritage Abroad and War Loss at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, also took

part in the ceremony. On behalf of the Polish Army, officers from the NATO command, 10th Armored Cavalry Brigade from Świętoszów and Andrzej Konkol, defence attache in the Kingdom of the Netherlands participated in the ceremony. Polish social organizations in Belgium were also strongly represented. During the part devoted to official speeches, Deputy President Jan Baster read a letter by Dr Jarosław Szarek, the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, addressed to the participants of the ceremony. Then, together with director Adam Siwek, he laid a wreath in front of the central monument in the cemetery.

The organizers have already invited the participants to join the next year's celebrations, which will be of special importance, as they fall on the 100th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Poland and Belgium and on the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War.

Photo credit: Polish Embassy in Brussels

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