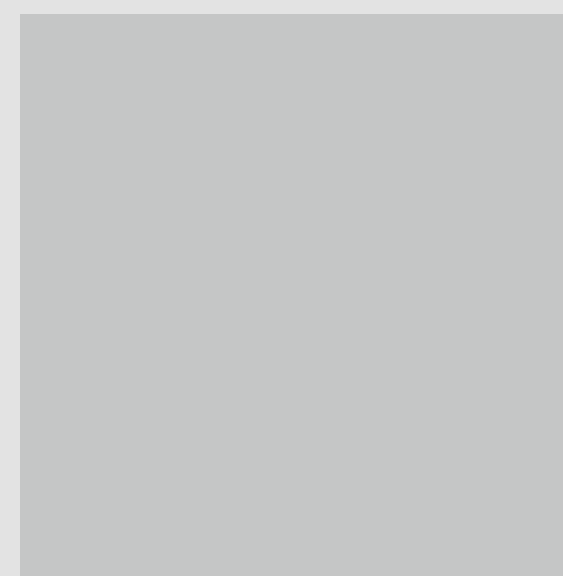
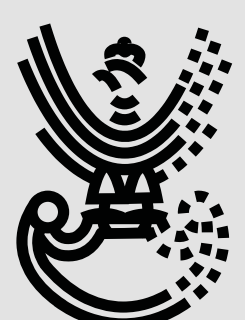


Władysław Sikorski



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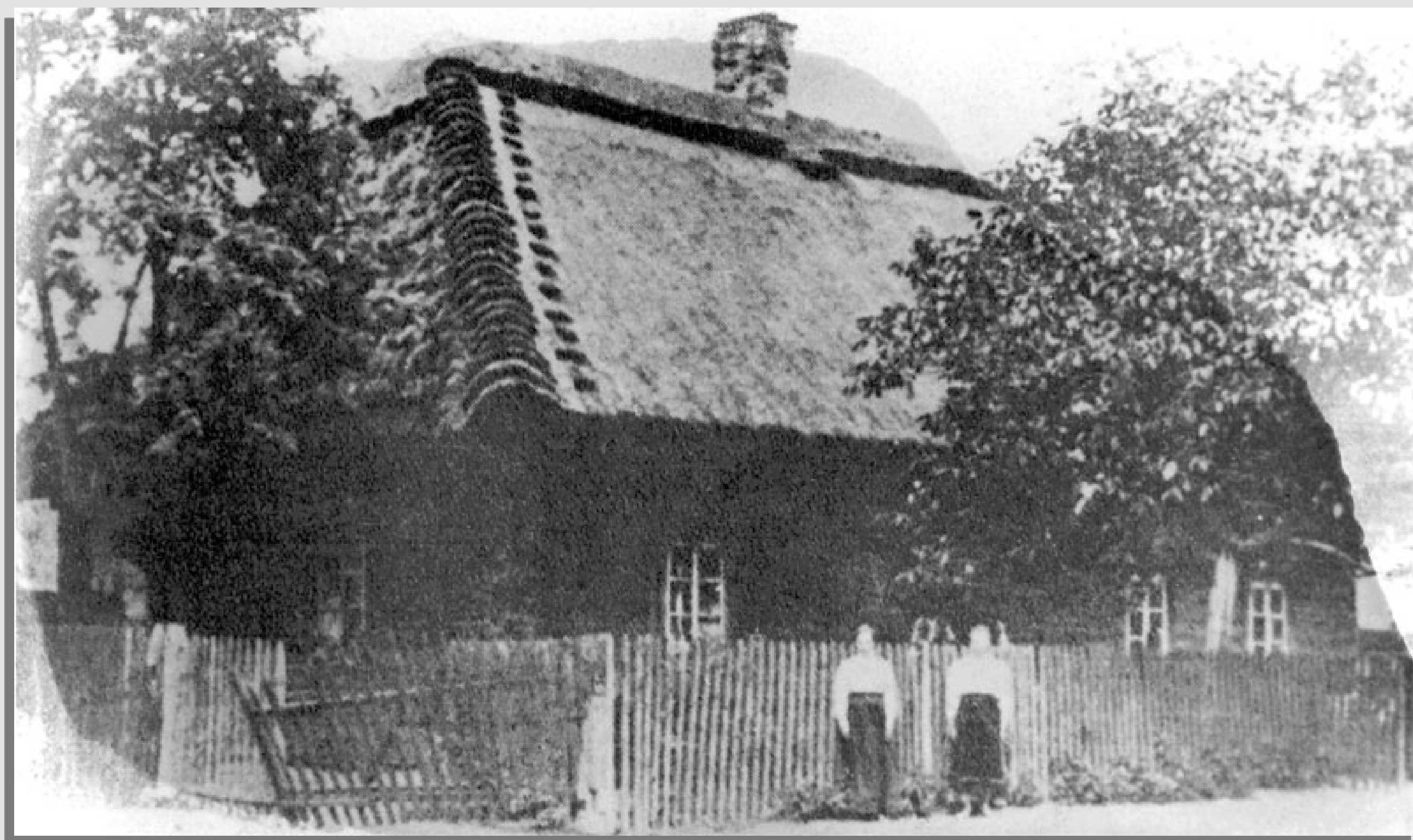
BIOGRAFIE WYSTAWY ELEMENTARNE



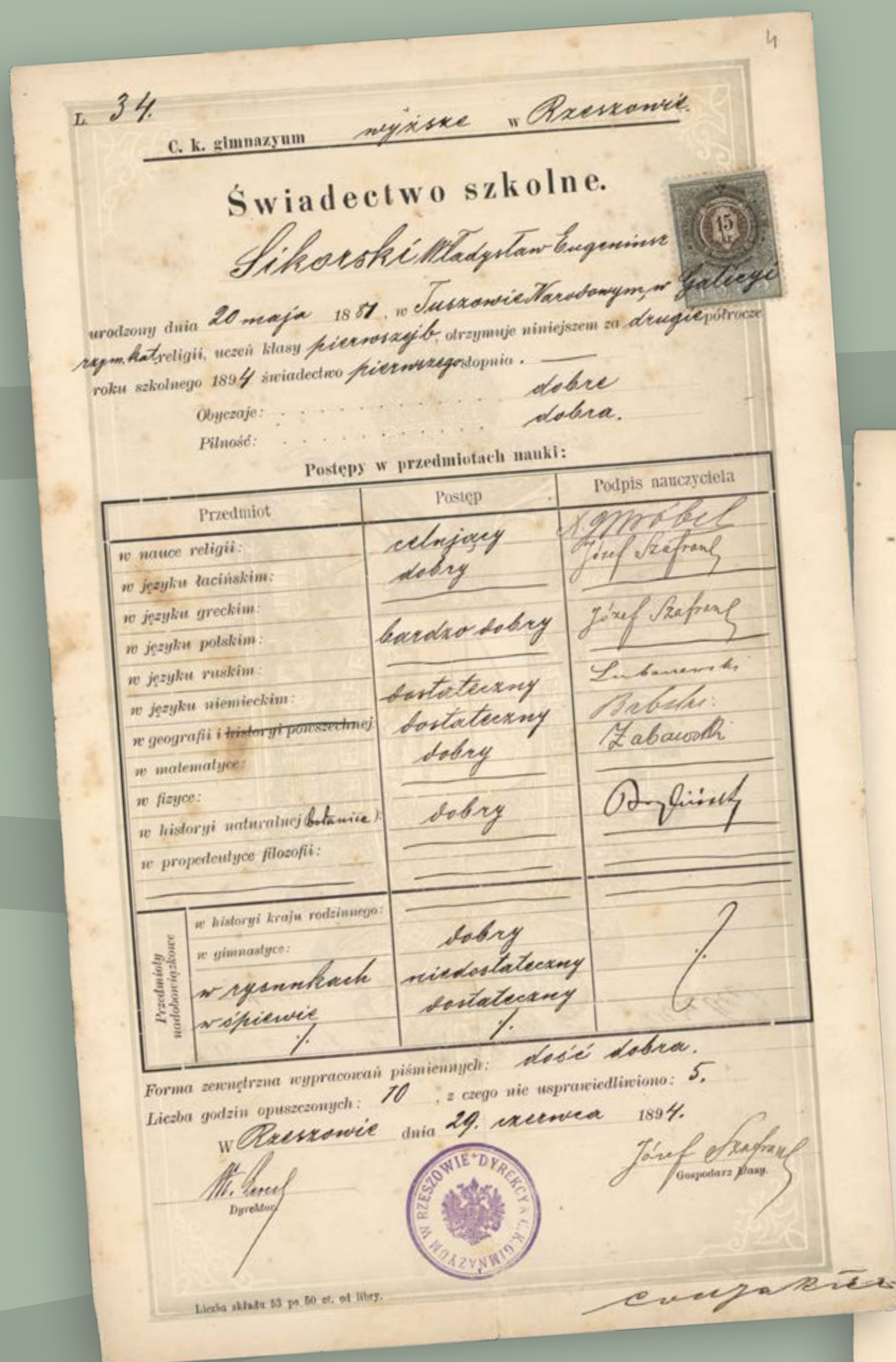
Trails of Hope
The Odyssey of Freedom

Youth

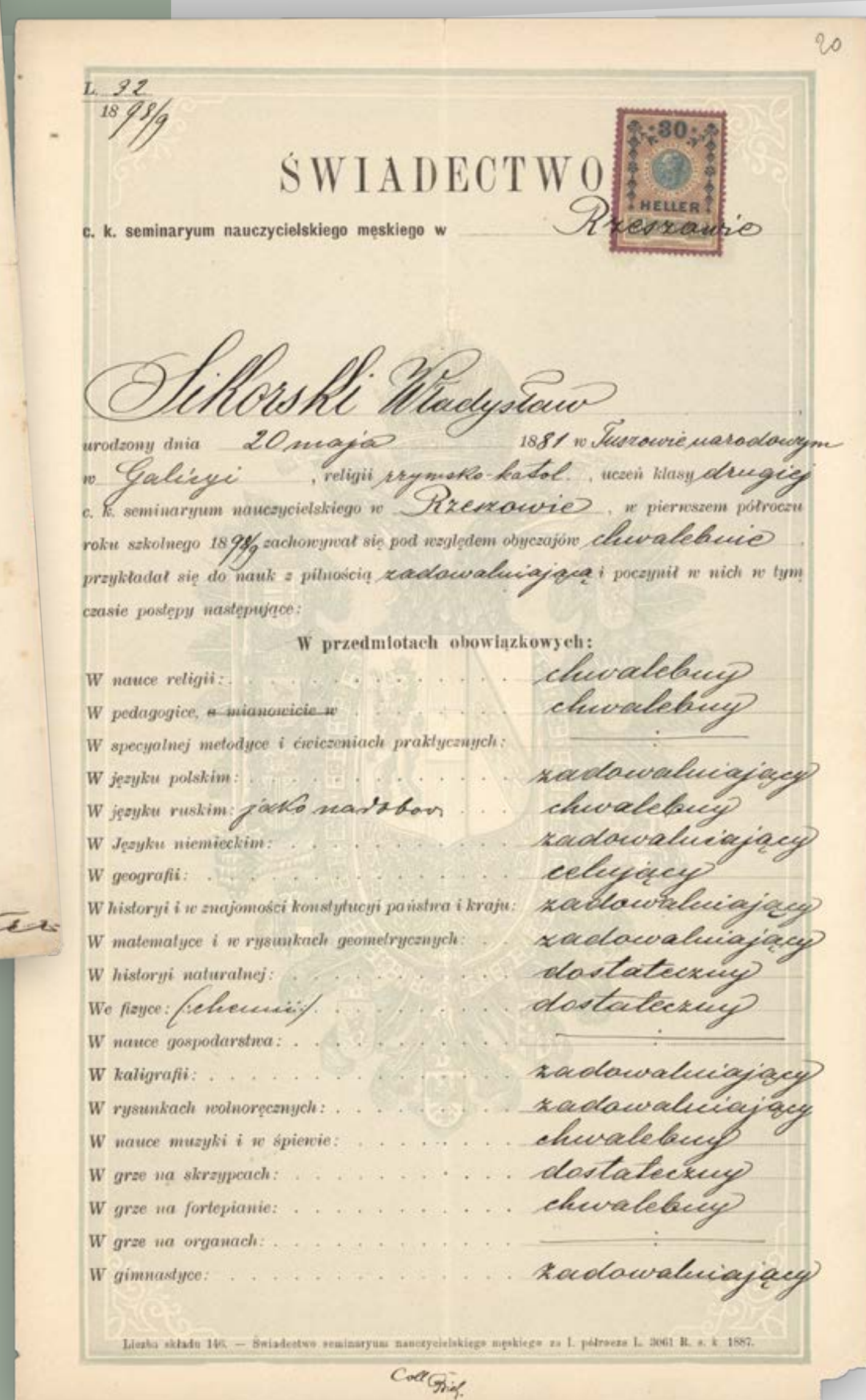
Władysław Eugeniusz Sikorski was born on 20 May 1881, in Tuszów Narodowy as one of Tomasz and Emilia's four children. After his father's death, Władysław and his entire family moved to a house in Hyżne. After graduating from folk school, he continued his education at the Imperial-Royal Senior Gymnasium in Rzeszów, and then at the Male Teachers' College, where he quickly attracted the attention of the College Headmaster, Julian Zubczewski. Sikorski moved into the Zubczewski's family house, thus receiving excellent conditions for learning and further development. In 1899, together with the Zubczewski family, Sikorski moved to Lviv, where in 1902 he graduated from the Franz Josef Imperial-Royal Classical Gymnasium.



↑ The house in Tuszów Narodowy where Władysław Sikorski was born.
 📍 General W. E. Sikorski Memorial Centre in Tuszów Narodowy



← ↓ Władysław Sikorski's gymnasium diploma.
 📍 AAN

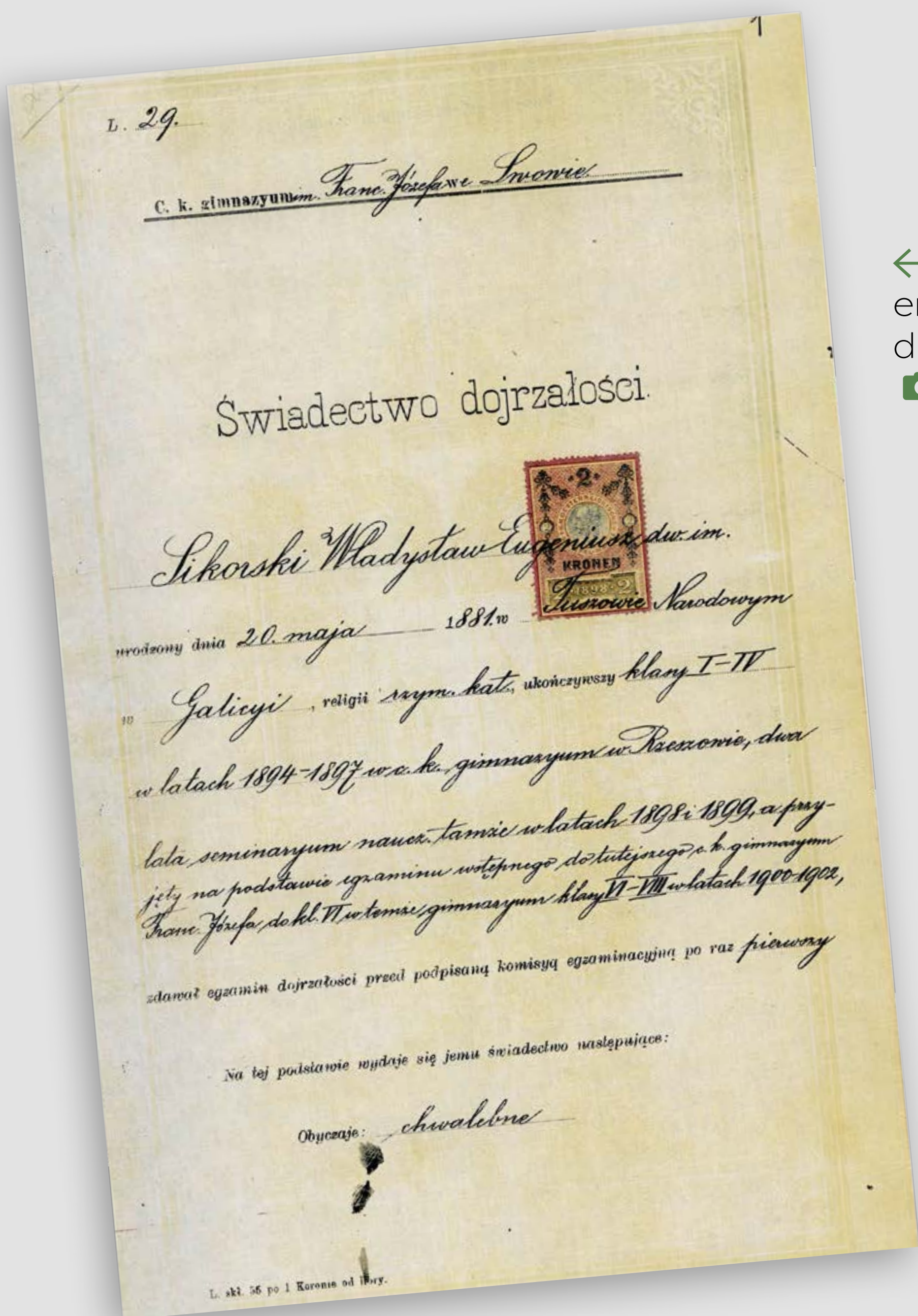



↑ Władysław Sikorski as a gymnasium student.
 📍 General W. E. Sikorski Memorial Centre in Tuszów Narodowy



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University period




← Władysław Sikorski's end of high-school diploma.
 AAN

In 1902, Władysław Sikorski began his engineering studies at the Department of Highways and Bridges of the Lviv Polytechnic National University. During his studies, he performed military service in the Austro-Hungarian army. Initially reluctant to serve in the invader's army, he wrote the following to his friend Franciszek Smolka: *It seems to me that military service would suit my spiritual being [...] But I will not devote my energy to strangers for an unlimited and uncertain period, absolutely not. Today I am training in this profession with eagerness to offer the fruits of my labour to my Homeland, should it be required in some unforeseen future.*

↓ Lviv Polytechnic National University, 1932
 NAC



↑ Władysław Sikorski's admission card to the first year of studies at the Faculty of Engineering at the Imperial-Royal Polytechnic Institute (Lviv Polytechnic National University).
 AAN



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Independence organisations

The atmosphere of Lviv, which was the political and cultural capital of the Polish lands under the Partitions, was favourable for the intensification of independence aspirations. While still in gymnasium, Sikorski was a member of "Zet", an organisation affiliated with the National League. As a university student, he became involved in the activities of the Folk School Society, whose aim was to spread education among peasants and workers. However, with time, he saw the armed struggle for independence as his main goal. This led him to join the Union for the Revival of the Polish Nation (Związek Odrodzenia Narodu Polskiego). His participation in this clandestine paramilitary independence organisation, regarded as the unofficial youth branch of the Polish Socialist Party in the Lviv area, brought him closer to the milieu of the Combat Organisation of the Polish Socialist Party, for whose members he conducted military courses from 1907.

→ *May the living never lose hope, and bear the torch of education before their compatriots.*

A postcard published by the Publishing House of the Folk School Society.

Polona National Library



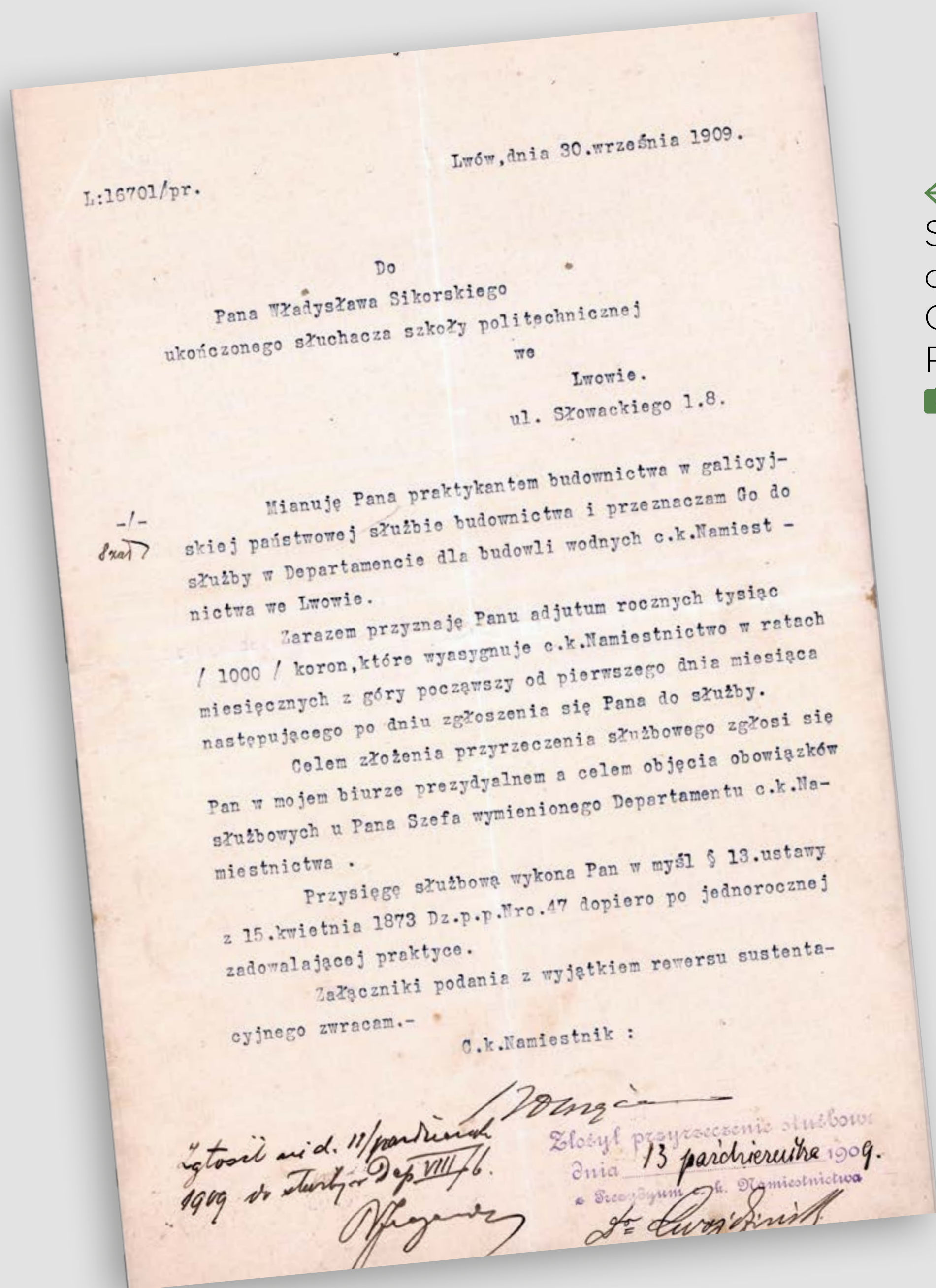
← Sign of the "Zet" Union of Polish Youth, to which Władysław Sikorski belonged.

T. Piskorski, *Wykaz poległych i zmarłych uczestników ruchu niepodległościowego młodzieży narodowej (członków Związku Młodzieży Polskiej - „Zet”, Organizacji „Przyszłość” - „Pet” i innych stopni organizacyjnych w okresie lat 1886-1936, Warsaw 1936*



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Private life



← A document stating Władysław Sikorski's admission to work as an apprentice in the Galician State Construction Service of the Imperial-Royal Viceroyalty in Lwiv.

📄 AAN

In 1909, Władysław Sikorski started work for the Galician State Construction Service, where, among other things, he was in charge of regulating the banks of the Dunajec and Vistula rivers. In the same year, he married his guardians' foster daughter, Helena Zubczewska. Their daughter Zofia was born in 1912. During the Second World War she took on the role of her father's secretary, translator and advisor, as well as the superintendent of the Women's Auxiliary Service.

→ General Władysław Sikorski with his family during afternoon tea.

📄 NAC

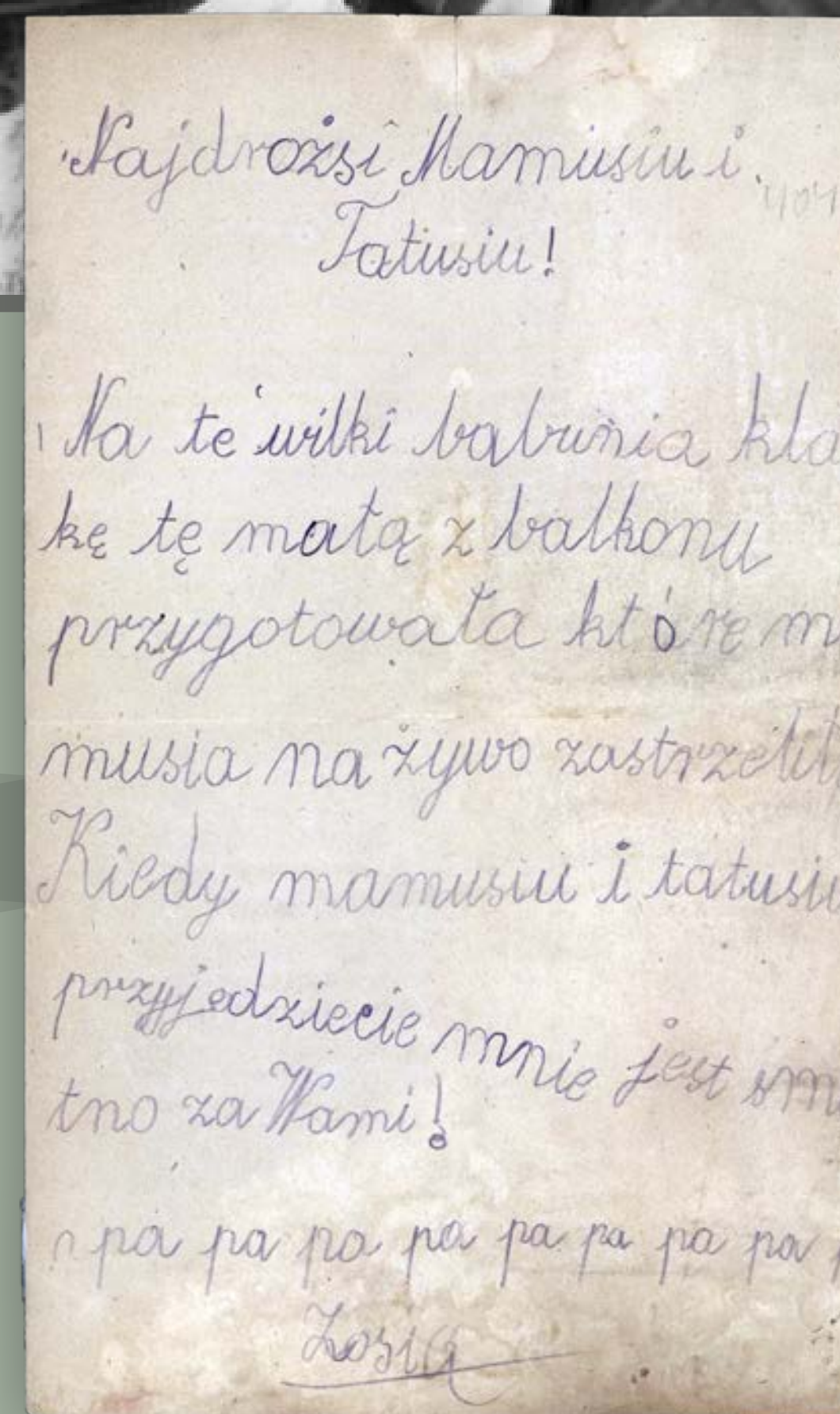


↑ Zofia Sikorska during a horse riding competition, July 1932.

📄 NAC

→ Letter from little Zosia to her parents.

📄 AAN



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The general's family life was perfect. Mrs Helena Sikorska, the General's wife, was his life companion since his early youth, which they spent together in Lviv engaging in independence activities before 1918. The General's true love was his only child, Zofia Leśniowska - bearing a striking resemblance to her father - except for her height. Gen. Sikorski was extremely attached to his family and very fond of being around them.

Leon Mitkiewicz Z gen. Sikorskim na obczyźnie, Paris 1968

↑ Władysław Sikorski with his wife Helena and daughter Zofia eating breakfast in their London flat.

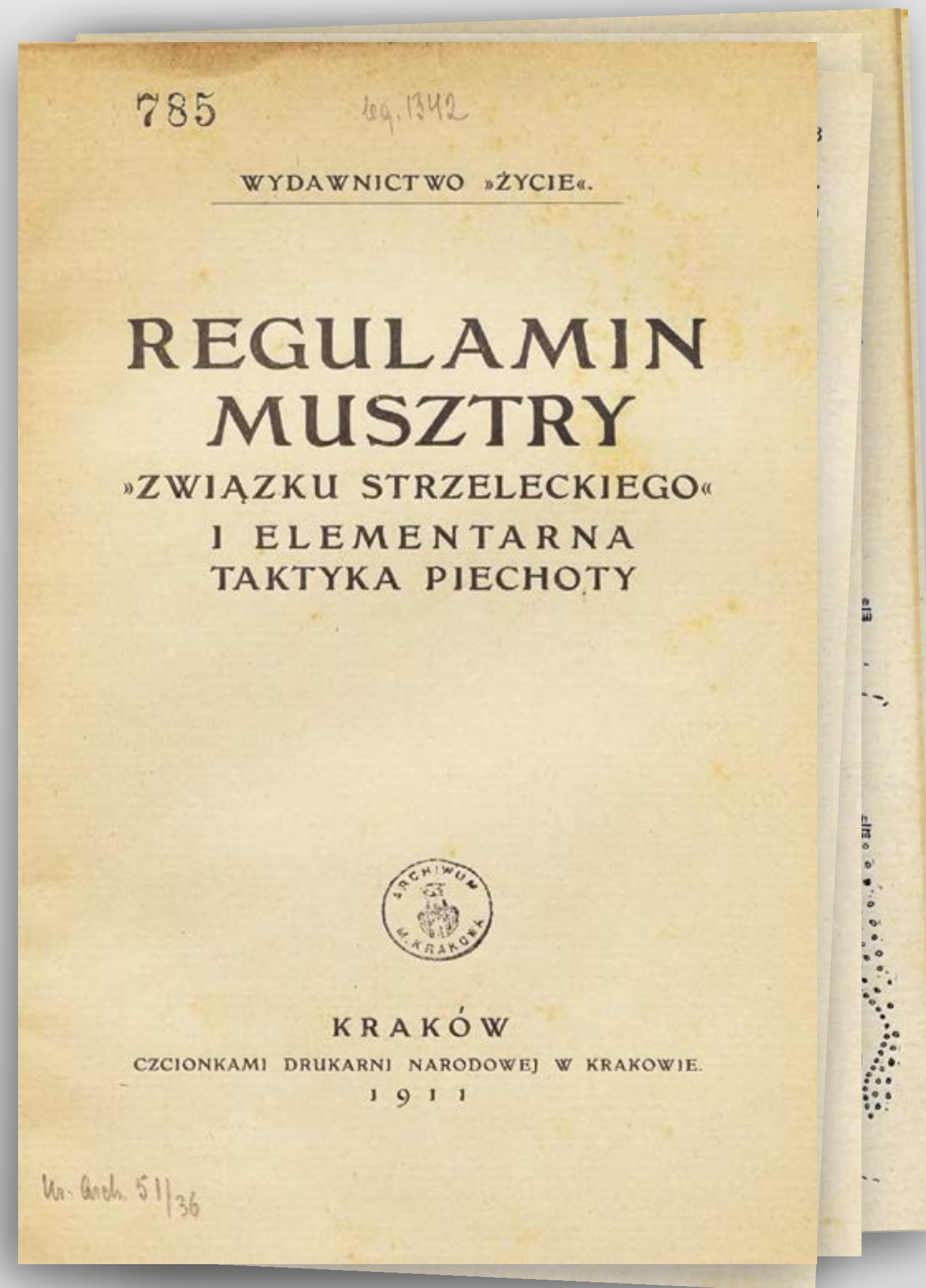
📷 IWM



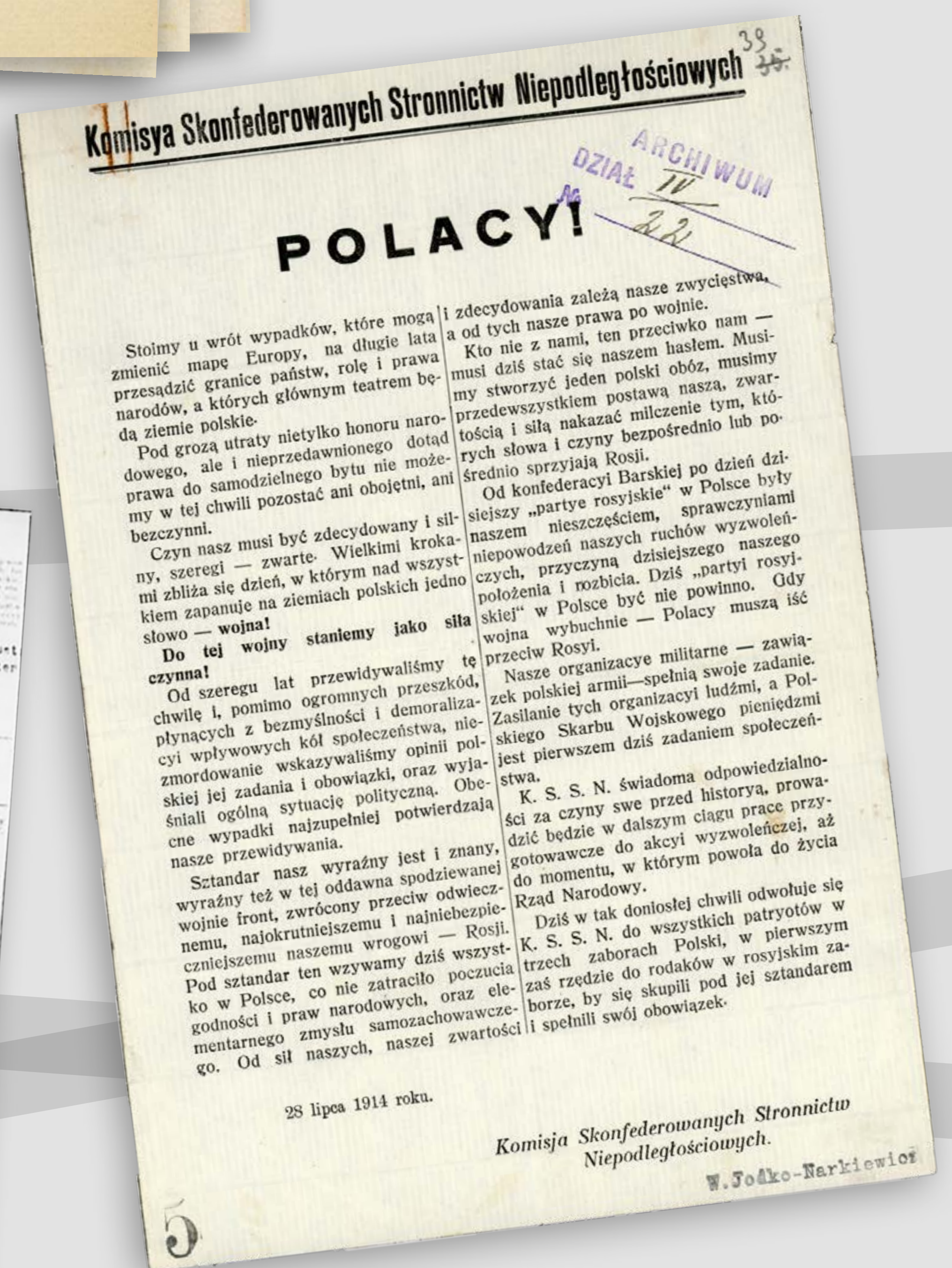
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The Union of Active Struggle

In 1908, Kazimierz Sosnkowski, inspired by Józef Piłsudski, initiated the formation of the Union of Active Struggle in Lviv, the aim of which was the armed regaining of Poland's independence. One of the co-organisers on behalf of the Union for the Revival of the Polish Nation, and also a lecturer at the lower soldier school organised by the Union of Active Struggle, was Władysław Sikorski, under the pseudonym "Władek Lwowski". In preparation for military action in the Russian partitioned territories, the Union of Active Struggle authorities established the Riflemen's Association in Lviv in 1910, with Sikorski as its president. At the same time, at a meeting of political parties in Vienna, a decision was taken to set up the Temporary Coordinating Commission of Confederated Independence Parties, in which he was active on behalf of the Polish Socialist Party.



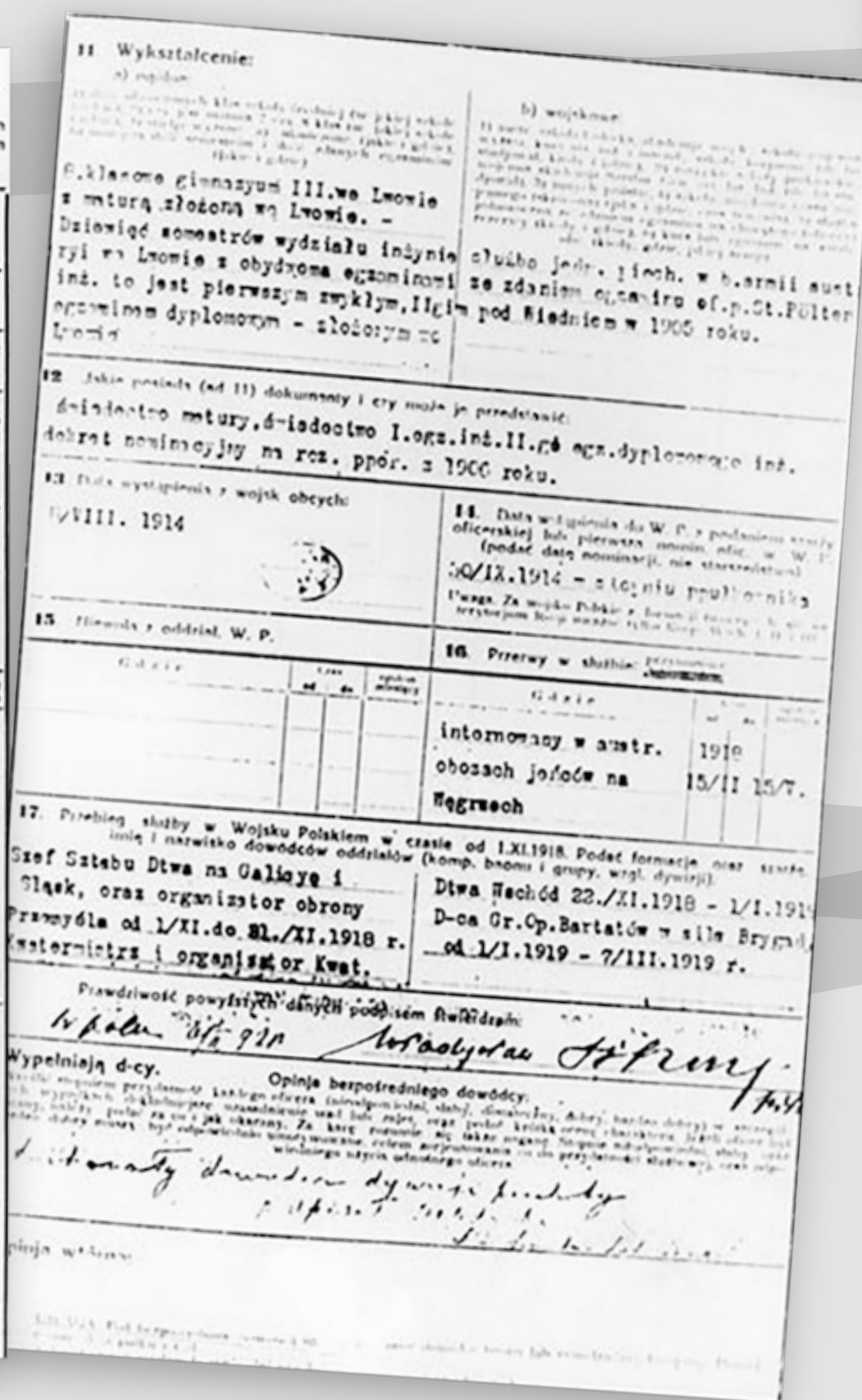
← The drill regulations of the "Riflemen's Association" and elementary infantry tactics written by Władysław Sikorski. Published by the "Życie" publishing house in Cracow in 1911. MBC



↑ Proclamation of the Temporary Coordinating Commission of Confederated Independence Parties. NAC

Karta kwalifikacyjna dla Komisji Weryfikacyjnej.

1. Rodzaj broni: Pistolet		2. Przynależność: 9. Dym. Piech.	
3. Stan: Porucznik		4. Nazwisko: Władysław Tuzowski	
5. Data: 1/1. 1906 r.		6. Wydział: 7. Wydział	
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↑ Władysław Sikorski's qualification card for the Verification Commission. General W. E. Sikorski Memorial Centre in Tuszów Narodowy



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The Great War



↑ Standing by the map is Lieutenant Colonel Władysław Sikorski, the Head of the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee, standing next to him is Dr Waław Tokarz, and behind the table is the Head of the Press Office, Dr Stanisław Kot.
📌 J. Dąbrowski *Dziennik 1914 - 1918*, Cracow 1977

With the outbreak of the First World War, Władysław Sikorski became involved in the creation of Polish military structures. From 1914, he headed the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee, being responsible, among other things, for the organisation of the Polish Legions. In September 1914, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel of the Legions. In August 1916 he attained the rank of colonel and briefly took command of the 3rd Legion Infantry Regiment. However, he quickly returned to his previous post. As commandant of the Draft Office of the Polish Auxiliary Corps, having learnt about the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of 9 February 1918, he and his subordinate soldiers repudiated their allegiance to the Austrian authorities, for which he was interned.



← Col. Władysław Sikorski during an open-air mass celebrated in May 1916 by Bishop Władysław Bandurski. Józef Piłsudski in the centre.
📌 NAC



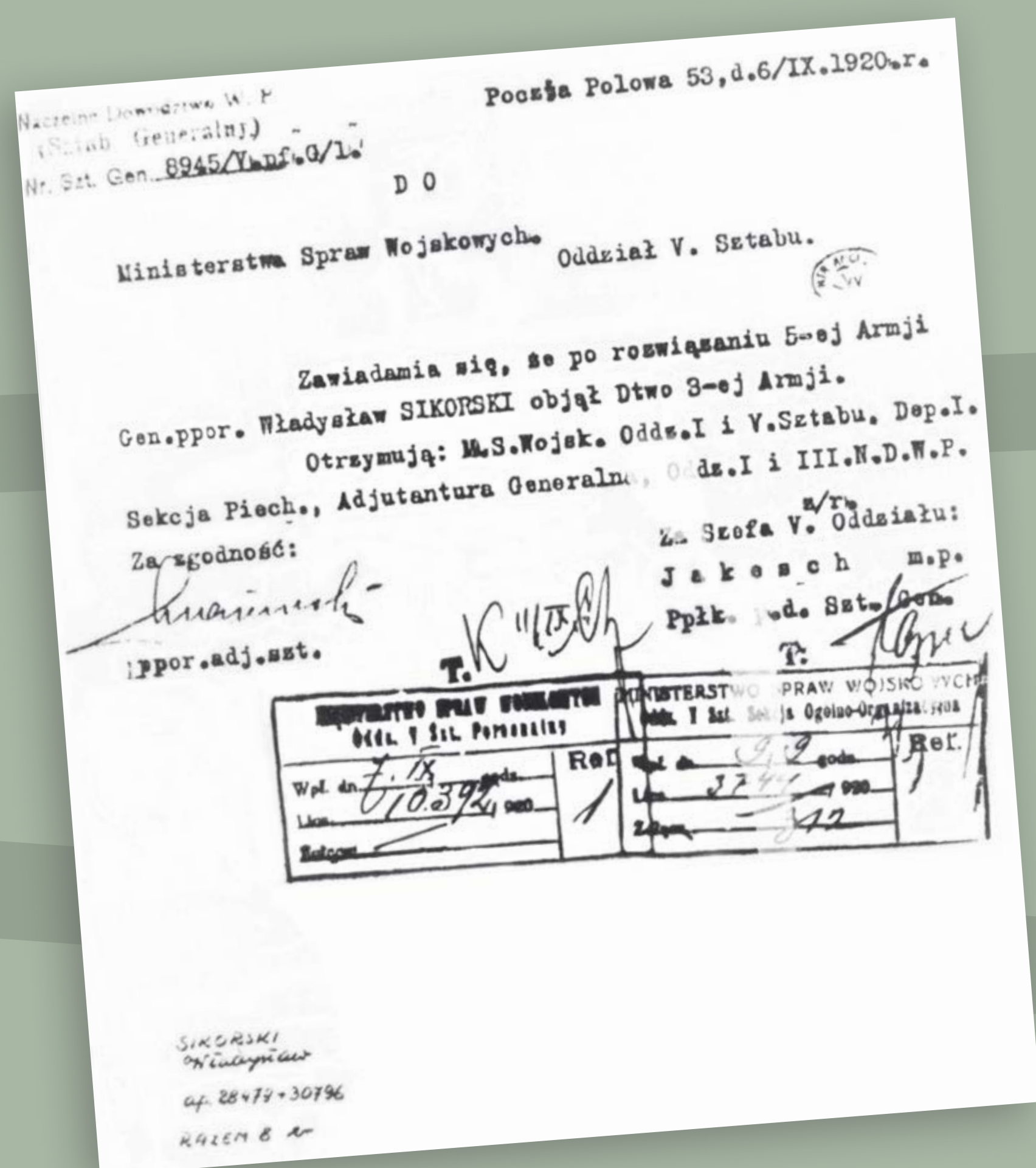
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For independence and borders

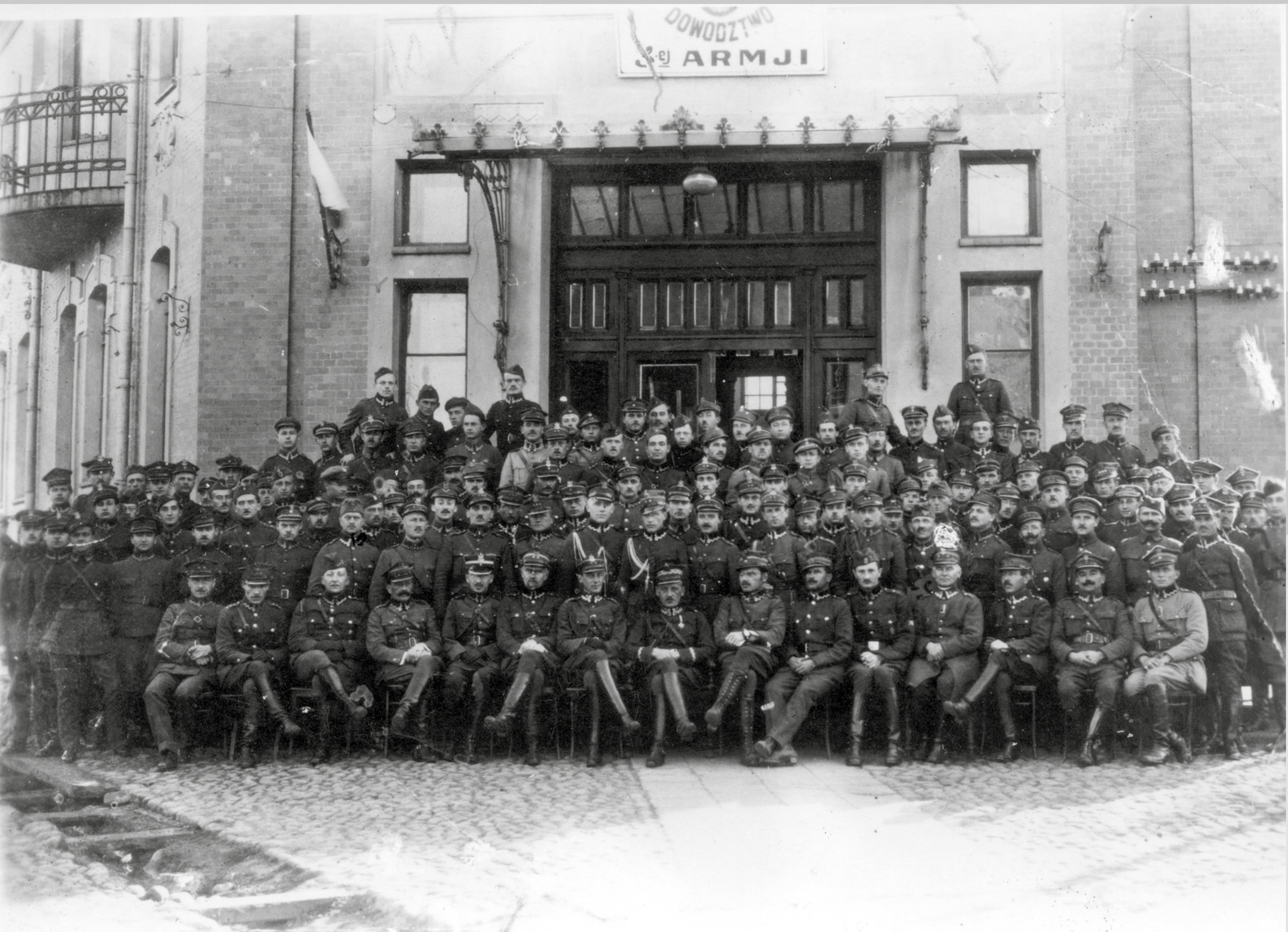
In April 1918, Władysław Sikorski arrived in Cracow, continuing his political and military activities. On 30 October 1918, he was appointed Chief of Staff of Lt. Gen. Stanisław Puchalski, who was commander of the Polish Army in Lesser Poland and Silesia. On 21 November he became quartermaster in the Command of the Operational Group "Wschód". In January 1919, he was appointed commander of Operational Group "Bartatów". In the Polish-Soviet War, he commanded the 9th Infantry Division and the Polesie Group, and, as of 6 August 1920, also the 5th Army, which defeated the 3rd and 15th Red Army during the Battle of Warsaw. Then, from 26 August, he commanded the 3rd Army, fighting in the vicinity of Zamość.



↑ General Władysław Sikorski talking to soldiers of the 5th Army during the Battle of Warsaw.
 📷 WBH



↑ Notification of Lt. Gen. Władysław Sikorski taking over command of the 3rd Polish Army.
 📷 General W. E. Sikorski Memorial Centre in Tuszów Narodowy

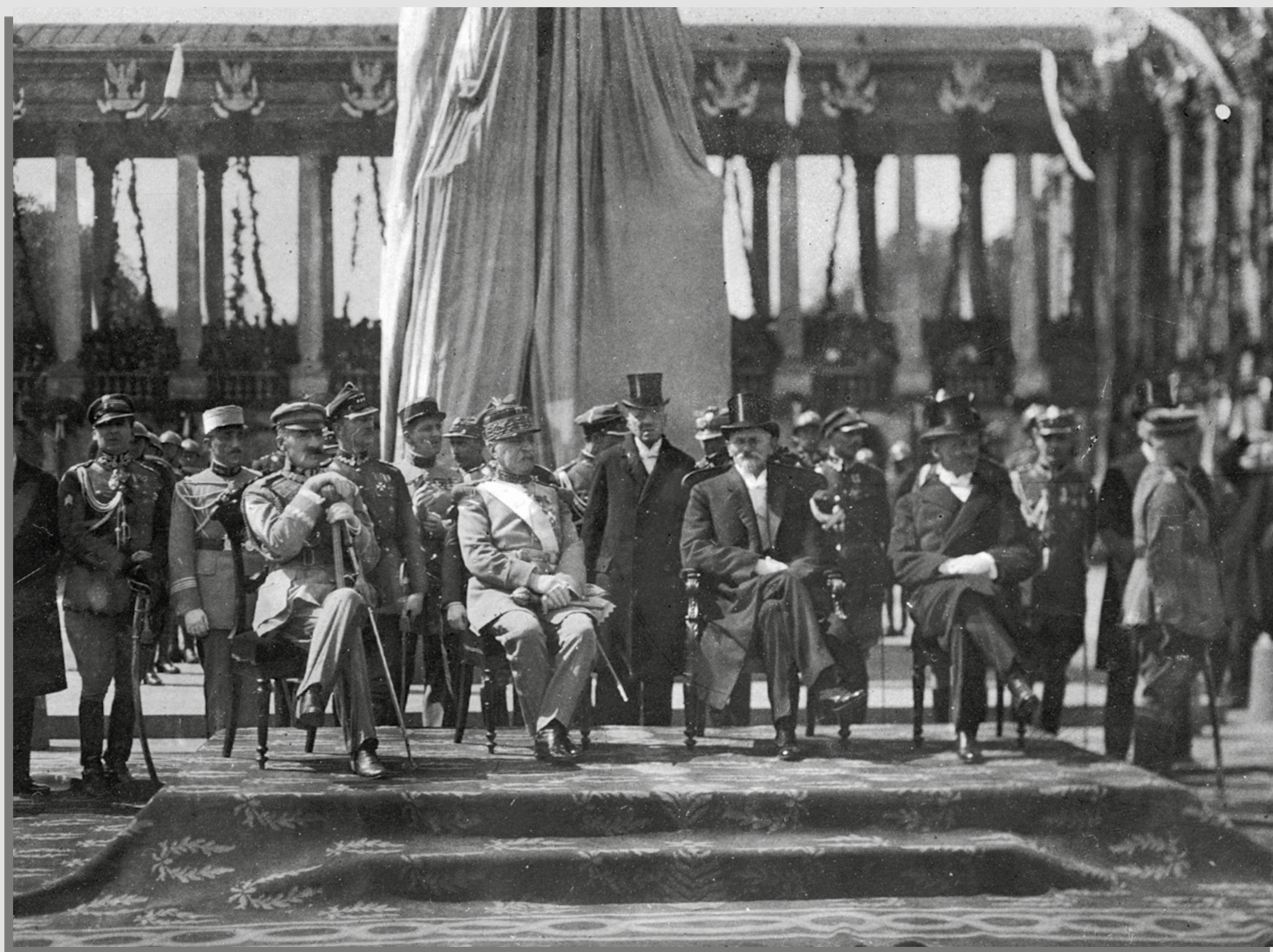


↓ 2nd Lt. Gen. Władysław Sikorski with members of the command of the 3rd Army in front of the command headquarters.
 📷 AIPN



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Politician and commander



↑ The ceremony of unveiling of the statue of Prince Józef Poniatowski in front of the Saxon Palace. Seated on the platform are, from right: Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski, President Stanisław Wojciechowski, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Marshal Józef Piłsudski. In the second row we can see, among others, Lieutenant Colonel Bolesław Wieniawa-Długoszowski. Warsaw, 3 May 1923.

📷 NAC

In April 1921, Władysław Sikorski was appointed as Acting Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Army, in recognition of his wartime services. During this time, he organised support for the Third Silesian Uprising, and was also actively involved in strengthening the alliance with France. On 18 December 1922, two days after the assassination of President Gabriel Narutowicz, Sikorski was appointed Prime Minister and Minister of Military Affairs. After handing in his resignation in May 1923, he went to France using his leave to study at the French General Staff. In February 1924, he, once again, became Minister of Military Affairs. From December 1925 to March 1928, he served as Commander of Corps District No. VI in Lviv.



← Minister of Military Affairs, Gen. Władysław Sikorski during a visit of Joseph Avenol, Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Nations, January 1925.

📷 NAC



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Commander-in-Chief and Prime Minister

The deepening conflict with Józef Piłsudski and his supporters resulted in Władysław Sikorski's removal from the army and state functions. In 1936, in an attempt to return to active politics, he founded, together with Ignacy Paderewski, a grouping known as the Front Morges. However, it was not until the outbreak of the Second World War that his situation changed dramatically. In September 1939, Sikorski reported his readiness to undertake military service to Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły. Receiving a negative answer, he went to Romania and then to France. On 28 September 1939, he took command of the Polish Army, on 30 September he was appointed Prime Minister and Minister of Military Affairs, and on 7 November 1939 he took the position of Commander-in-Chief.



← General Władysław Sikorski and President of the Republic of Poland Władysław Raczkiewicz during the ceremony of awarding of the banner to the Polish Independent Highland Brigade in Malestroit, France, 10 April 1940.
📍 NAC

→ General Władysław Sikorski visiting Polish ships at the British Naval base in Rosyth, presenting decorations to officers on board the destroyer ORP "Burza".
📍 AIPN



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Commander-in-Chief and Prime Minister

After the defeat of France in June 1940, Władysław Sikorski was evacuated to the United Kingdom with the government and part of the Polish army, declaring his intention to continue fighting alongside the British. On 5 August 1940, he signed a Polish-British military agreement regarding the formation of the Polish army in the United Kingdom. On 30 July 1941, in London, in the presence of Winston Churchill, he signed the Polish-Soviet agreement, known as the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement, which was an attempt to normalise relations with the USSR. The agreement was broken by the Soviet authorities on 25 April 1943. During his numerous travels, he intensively sought support for the Polish cause, by meeting, among others, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



↑ Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill during the signing of the Polish-British military agreement. London, 5 August 1940 .
📷 NAC



← General Władysław Sikorski during his visit to the United States in 1941.
📷 NAC

↓ General Władysław Sikorski during his visit to the units of the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR created under the provisions of the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement of 30 July 1941.



→ General Władysław Sikorski giving autographs to soldiers of the Polish Independent Highland Brigade before their departure for Norway, 21 April 1940.

📷 AIPN

He never gave up, he defied adversity with an inexhaustible optimism that was innate to him and which flowed from a sense of his own capabilities, ingenuity, energy and diligence. Innate optimism, innate generosity, chivalry, the sparkle in his sapphire eyes, these are the harmonized notes of his battle fanfare, from which the walls of many a Jericho have fallen.

Edward Raczyński *W sojusznicy Londynie.*
Dziennik ambasadora Edwarda Raczyńskiego
1939-1945. London 1997



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The last journey



↑ General Władysław Sikorski's funeral. The photograph shows, among others, Helena Sikorska, President of the Republic of Poland Władysław Raczkiewicz and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

📍 NAC



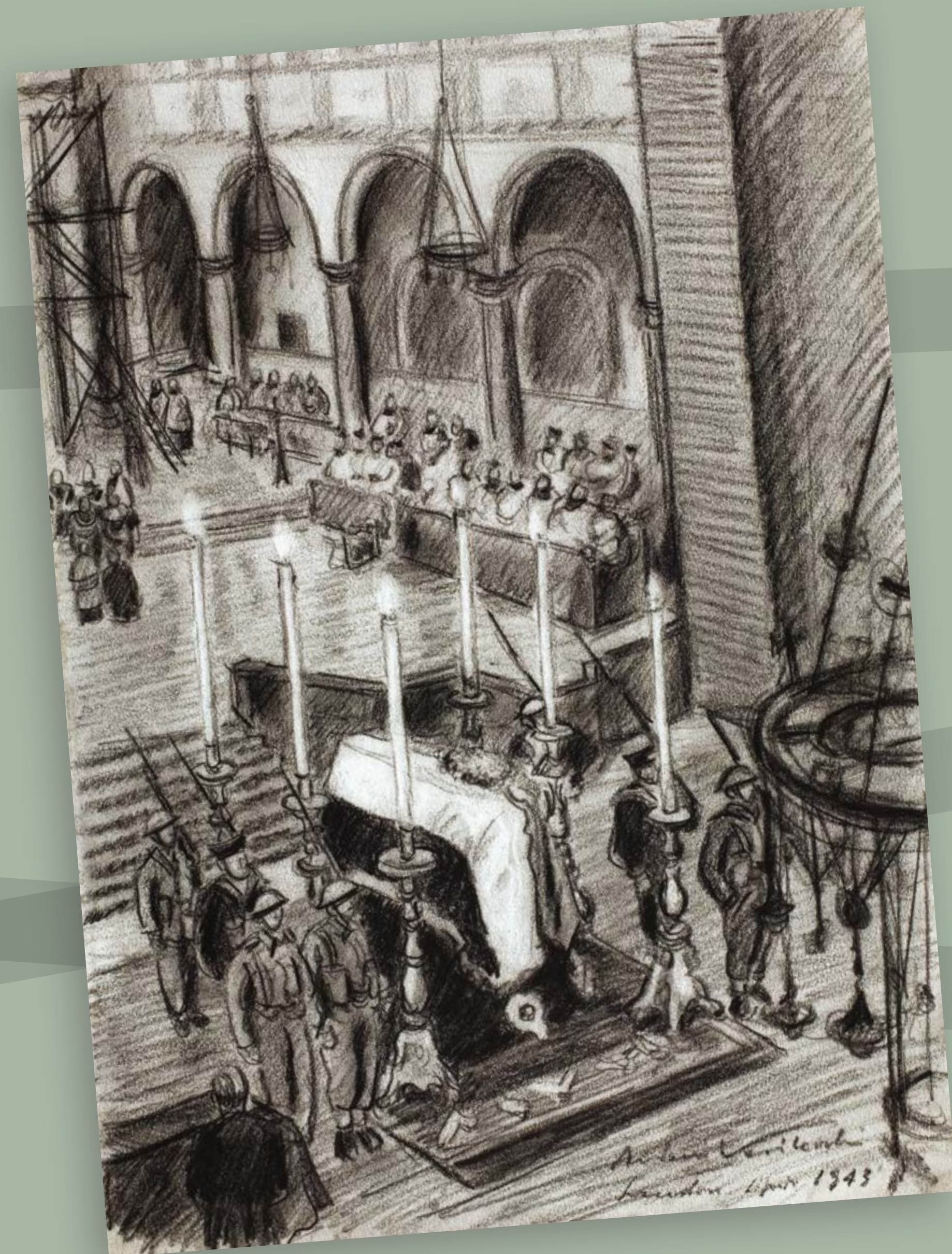
↑ *My husband's political ideals were always the same. He dreamt of an independent, whole and truly democratic Poland.* Helena Sikorska, (Jacek Krzysztof Danel, *Spory wokół powrotu prochów generała Sikorskiego do Polski 1943-1981*, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2004, s. 8-9.) Helena Sikorska leaving Westminster Cathedral

📍 NAC

In May 1943, Władysław Sikorski set off to inspect Polish troops in the Middle East. On his return journey on 4 July, shortly after taking off from Gibraltar airport, the plane in which he was flying crashed into the sea. Everyone on board, apart from the pilot, died. This also included the General's daughter, Zofia Leśniowska. Sikorski's body was transported to England on board the destroyer ORP "Orkan". Funeral ceremonies were held on 15 July at Westminster Cathedral with the participation of representatives of the Polish and British authorities, including Winston Churchill. Sikorski was posthumously awarded the Order of the White Eagle. The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland also decided that his body would be laid to rest at Wawel Castle after the war. This did not happen until 17 September 1993.

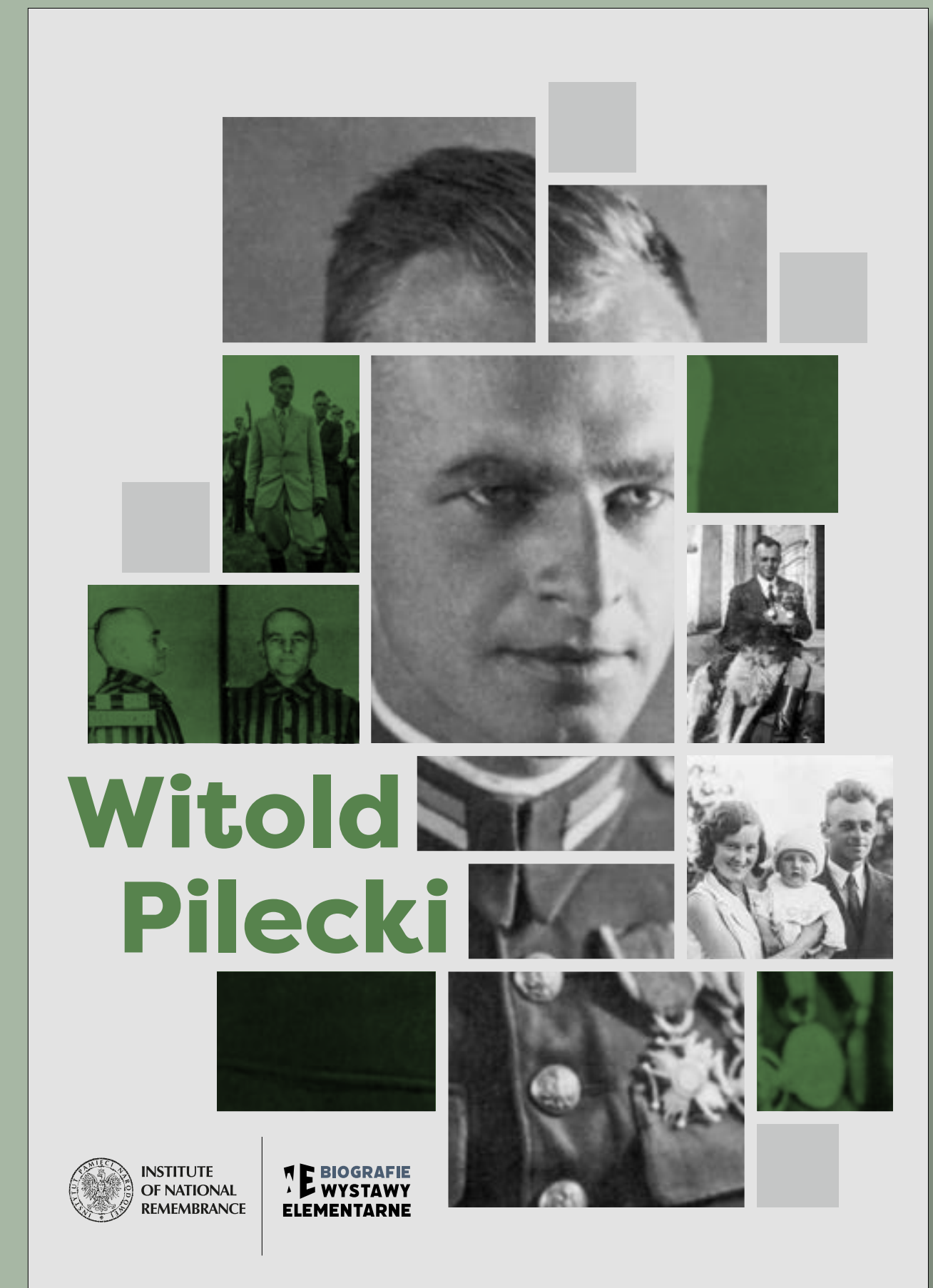
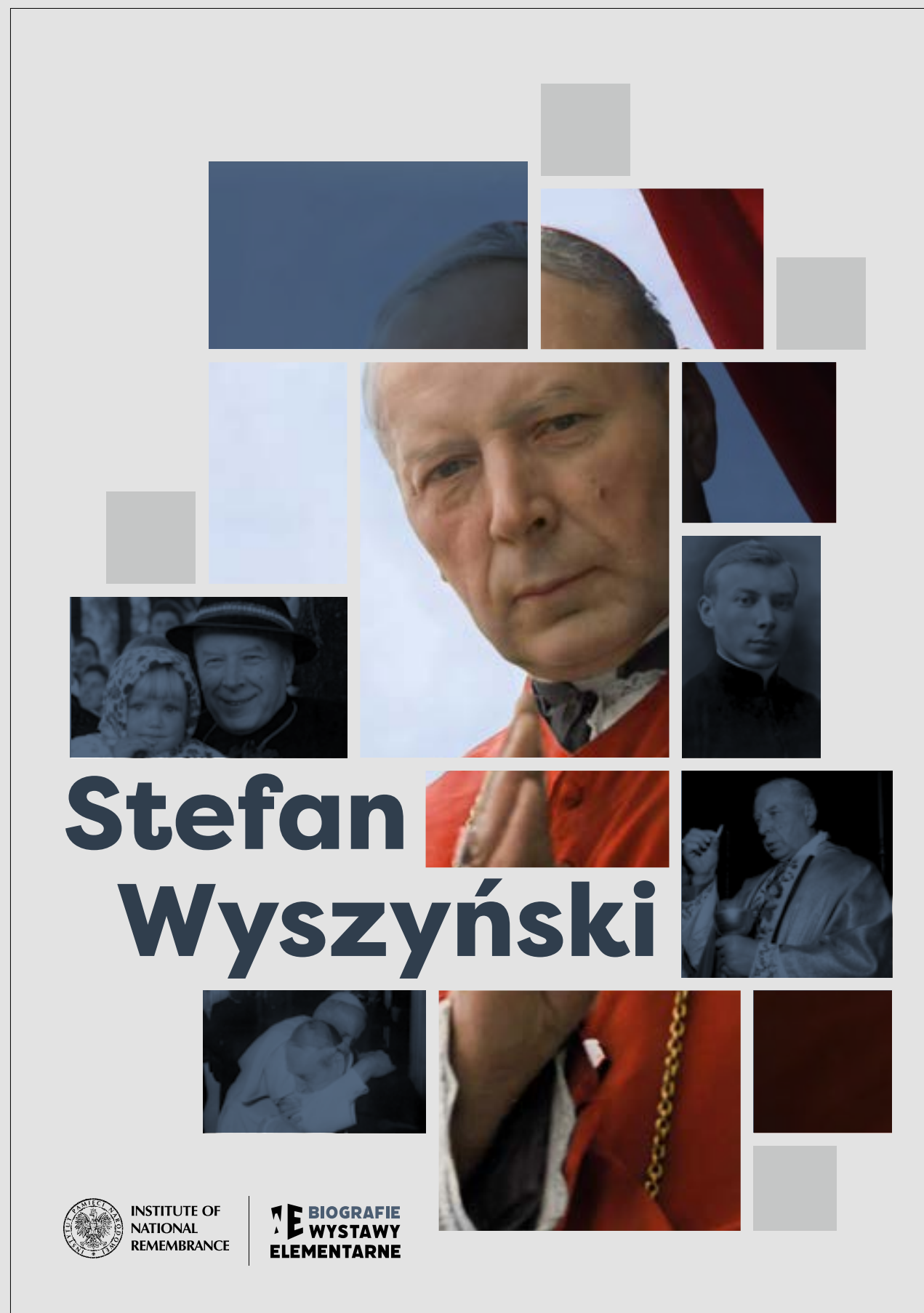
→ Funeral Mass for Gen. Władysław Sikorski in Westminster Cathedral, 15 July 1943, drawing by Antoni Wasilewski.

📍 Primary School in Hyżne which Gen. Władysław Sikorski attended

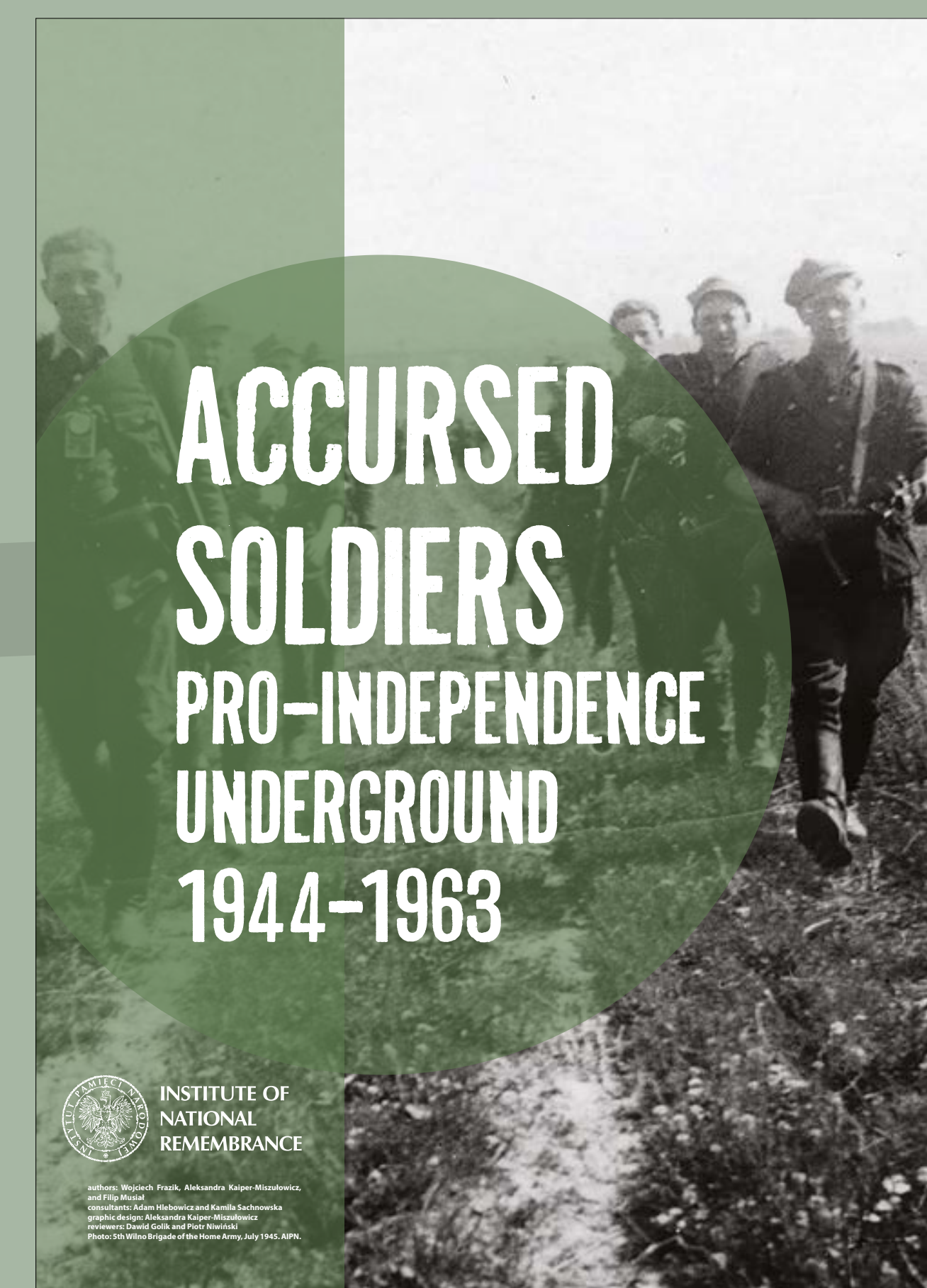


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Digital Library, National Digital Archives, National Library Polona,
Gen. Władysław Sikorski Primary School in Hyżne, Military Historical Office