

# Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/2317,Celebrations-commemorating-the-80th-anniversary-of-the-outbreak-of-World-War-II-.html>

17.04.2024, 15:43

02.09.2019

---

## Celebrations commemorating the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II - Warsaw, 1 September 2019

The main celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II took place on Sunday, 1 September on Piłsudski Square in Warsaw. Forty delegations, including Presidents, Prime Ministers, Speakers of the Parliament, Foreign Affairs Ministers, National Defense Ministers, as well as special envoys from European Royal Families, took part in the celebrations. The Institute of National Remembrance was represented by its President, Dr Jarosław Szarek.





The President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda stated that :  
"Poland is one of the countries that bear a permanent scar, a land that has been forever marked by the Second World War. It is ever-present in many hearts, and several unhealed wounds are still visible in our architecture, in all that lost beauty of towns and cities turned into rubble - beauty which could not be restored due to scarcity of resources and war trauma."

- It was here on 1 September 1939, that World War II began with the attack of Nazi Germany on Westerplatte. The war also began with the bombing of a city which was still sleeping - a city which was undefended and completely unprepared, a city in which there were no troops or military installations, a city in which ordinary people were simply sleeping peacefully. The small Polish city of Wieluń - said Duda.

The President further emphasized that although our country disappeared from the map, Poland as a nation never surrendered. - First, Nazi Germany attacked Poland and pushed our army eastwards, and then on 17 September the Soviet Union, as it turned out, an ally of Nazi Germany, also attacked. It then became obvious to everyone that we would not be able to fight alone - he said. The President mentioned that at that time Poland was counting on the help of its allies, but although they did declare war, no real help was provided. He

emphasized that World War II consumed 50 million human lives and that this cannot be forgotten.

The President pointed out that Germans built extermination camps on ethnically Polish lands. - One of the best known extermination camps was the Auschwitz Birkenau camp, a camp in which 1.1 million Jews from all over Europe, primarily from Poland, were murdered during World War II. It was the camp in which 140,000 Poles, 23,000 Roma and Sinti, 20,000 prisoners of the Soviet Red Army and 15,000 people of different nationalities brought to this camp from various countries, practically from all parts of German-occupied Europe, were murdered.

During his speech, giving the example of Katyń, the President also recalled that the Soviets murdered 22,000 Polish officers with a shot to the back of the head - It was a terrible massacre of the Polish intelligentsia, it was a terrible massacre of the Polish nation and its best sons - said Andrzej Duda. He also reminded those present about the fate of many people, including Polish soldiers, who were deported to Siberia.

Duda went on to talk about the Polish Underground State operating during World War II. - There were 360,000 soldiers of the Home Army, the Polish underground army, operating despite the reality of occupation, operating in the underground resistance; former partisans who fought in forests, there were young people who were training, who then stood here in Warsaw in 1944 to rise against Germany - emphasized the President.

What can one say about the end of the war and about victory when you are not living in a truly free country, in a truly sovereign country, a really independent country, when you are not completely free. But we thank our allies from the free West, from across the Atlantic, for supporting us in those difficult times, because thanks to their standpoint and thanks to their help, people from the "Solidarity" movement, one of the greatest freedom movements of all time, could win, said Duda.

- Today we are members of the European Union, today we are NATO members, today we are bound by all the best ties of the free world - emphasized Duda.

President Duda emphasized that the lesson of World War II should teach us one thing. - Maybe there would not have been a World War II at all, if Western countries had strongly opposed the annexation of Austria, if they had put a definite stop to Hitler's imperial aspirations, his manic visions, if they had strongly protested against the ill-treatment of Jews in Germany before World War II, if the international community had stood firmly and strongly in defense of Czechoslovakia, 'said Duda.

In addition to President Andrzej Duda, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and US Vice President Mike Pence also gave speeches.

The German President vowed his country would never forget the atrocities of the Nazi period as he asked forgiveness from Poland

during a series of commemorative events to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the second world war. “We will never forget. We want to remember and we will remember,” Steinmeier said.

“In no other square in Europe do I find it more difficult to speak, and to address you in my native language of German ... “I bow my head before the victims and I ask for forgiveness for Germany’s historical guilt and I recognise our enduring responsibility,” said Frank-Walter Steinmeier during the ceremony. - This war was a German crime, as evidenced by the history of this place (...) From the first day of the war, Germans attacked Warsaw, wreaked havoc in this city, razed entire districts to the ground, deported residents, murdered men, women and children. Poland, its culture, its cities, its people, everything living here was to be destroyed - reminded Steinmeier.

- Poland has proved that it is the homeland of heroes, no one fought with greater courage and determination than Poles - said US Vice President Mike Pence. - Today, in the heart of Warsaw, standing here in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, we have gathered to testify to the courage of great people, the spirit of a great nation and the deep, lasting strength of a great civilization - said Pence.

During the ceremony, one joint wreath was laid on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on behalf of all host delegations. At the same time, church bells started ringing throughout Warsaw.

Text prepared based on PAP materials

---

## Opcje strony

- [Print this page](#)
- [Generate PDF of this page](#)
- [Notify about this page](#)

- Share this article

[Share on Facebook](#)

[Share on Twitter](#)