

Institute of National Remembrance

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The farewell ceremony to the “girl from the IPN photograph” — London, — 28 September 2022.











The Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Prof. Karol Polejowski attended the farewell ceremony to Maria Grabowska. She was buried at Gunnersbury Cemetery following the funeral mass held at the St. Andrew Bobola Church.

In March 2021, the Institute of National Remembrance published an archival photo of a young Polish woman in uniform, asking for help in identifying her. The appeal resonated with the public, eliciting an unusually lively and quick response from Internet users. The photo, dated 8 June 1943, shows Maria, then bearing the surname Barr, moments after receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross from King George VI, awarded posthumously to her husband Philip Rex Barr-Barcinski, who was killed in a combat flight over Belgium on 7 November 1942. Maria was 20 years old at the time the photo was taken.

Mrs. Grabowska, the famous "girl from the IPN photograph", had been Maria Chłusewicz, Polish expat in France at the onset of World War II. She was the wife and then widow of Philip Rex Barr. During the war, she worked for the Polish Red Cross in Edinburgh. In 1947, she married armored corps captain Stanisław Grabowski and never returned to Poland.

The face of this young, beautiful girl is the face of the Polish Second Republic — a reborn, growing state that was annihilated by the criminal alliance of German and Soviet totalitarianism. (...) At the outbreak of World War II, the brave girl of the photo was only 16 years old. At that age, the life of a young girl should have been filled with joy, love and hope for a great future, but it was covered by the grim shadow of the war,

said Prof. Karol Polejowski.

Following the ceremony at Gunnersbury Cemetery, Prof. Karol Polejowski, along with the Deputy Foreign Minister Marcin Przydacz, Deputy Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm Christian Młynarek and Polish Embassy representatives, laid wreaths and lit candles in honor of the Katyn Massacre victims and the Polish President-in-Exile Kazimierz Sabbat.

After the celebrations, "The Girl from the Photo" documentary made by TVP Polonia and directed by Bogna Bender-Motyka, was screened at the Polish Consulate General in London. The movie will be shown on TVP Polonia on 5 October at 5:20 p.m.

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