

# *Polish Presidents in Exile*

*1939–1990*

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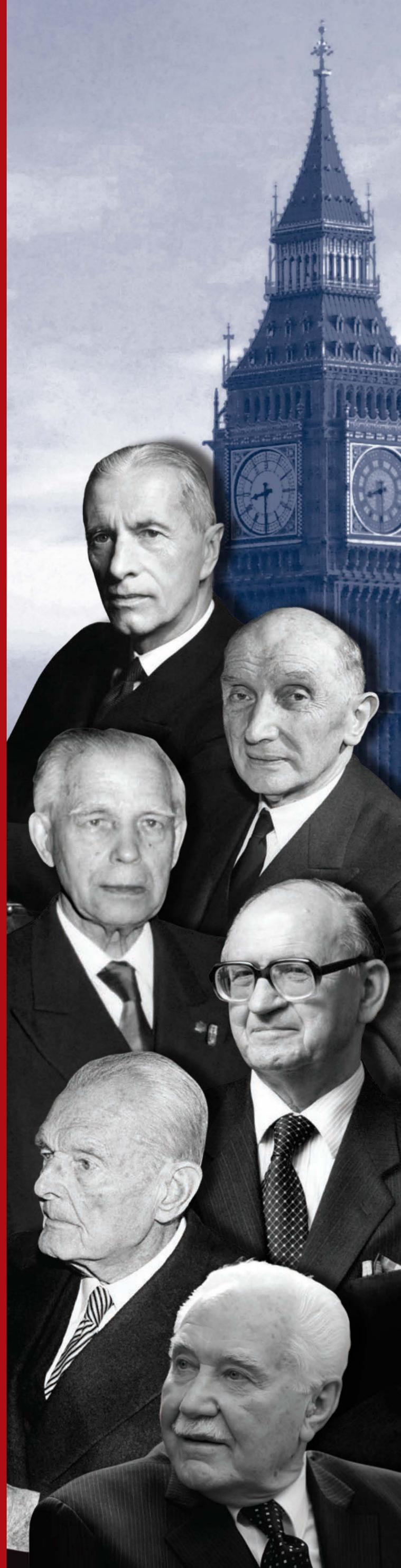
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On 1 September 1939, Poland was attacked by Nazi Germany without a formal declaration of war. On 17 September, the Soviet Union invaded on the other front. The predominance of aggressors, the desire to preserve the continuity of the state and the fear of captivity forced the state authorities to leave the territory of the Republic of Poland. In addition to the president and the Polish government, tens of thousands of civilian and military refugees have crossed the Polish border.

17 September 1939, The Royal Castle, the seat of the President of Poland, up in flames after a German air raid. After the Germans captured Warsaw, the castle was looted. The remains were blown up after the fall of the Warsaw Uprising. Photograph by: NDA

# World War II

22 September 1939, Parade of German and Soviet troops in Brest.  
Photograph by: Bundesarchiv





September 1939. The Red Army enters Poland.  
Photograph by: AINR

The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London, 1942. From left: Polish President Władysław Raczkiewicz and Polish Prime Minister General Władysław Sikorski during a conversation.  
Photograph by: NDA



On 17 September 1939, as a result of the advance of the German army and the Soviet aggression against Poland, President Ignacy Mościcki and the Polish government crossed the Polish-Romanian border. The decision to leave the country was motivated by the will to continue the fight as a state in exile. However, the internment of President Mościcki by the Romanian authorities made it necessary to replace him as the head of state. The position was assumed by Władysław Raczkiewicz, who held it until his death in 1947. Two years earlier, Raczkiewicz, aware of the political consequences of the end of the war, that is Poland's dependence on the Soviet Union, decided – in line with the Constitution of 1935 – to prolong the activities of the legitimate authorities of the Republic of Poland in exile. President Raczkiewicz's mission was continued by his successors. They saw their activity as a protest against injustice and enslavement, and considered it necessary to remain faithful to the idea of the continuity of an independent Polish state until the collapse of the communist regime in the country. For them, the democratic presidential election held in Poland in November-December 1990 made it possible to consider the commitment undertaken at the beginning of World War II as fulfilled.



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# OBYWATELE RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ!

Nocy dzisiejszej odwieczny wróg nasz rozpoczął działania zaczepne wobec Państwa Polskiego, co stwierdzam wobec Boga i historii.

W tej chwili dziejowej zwracam się do wszystkich obywateli Państwa w głębokim przeświadczeniu, że cały Naród w obronie swojej Wolności, Niepodległości i Honoru, skupi się dookoła Wodza Naczelnego i Sił Zbrojnych oraz da godną odpowiedź napastnikowi, jak to się już nieraz działo w historii stosunków polsko niemieckich.

**Cały Naród Polski, pobłogosławiony przez Boga, w walce o swoją świętą i słuszną sprawę, zjednoczony z Armią, pójdzie ramię przy ramieniu do boju i pełnego zwycięstwa.**

Warszawa, dnia 1 września 1939 r.

(-) **IGNACY MOŚCICKI**

## Citizens of the Republic!

Tonight, our eternal enemy started offensive actions against the Polish State, which I confirm to God and history.

At this moment in history, I address all citizens of the State with deep conviction that the entire Nation will support the Commander-in-Chief and the Armed Forces in the defense of Freedom, Independence and Honour, and will give an appropriate response to the aggressor, as it had often happened in the history of Polish-German relations.

**The entire Polish Nation, blessed by God, in the fight for its holy and just cause, united with the Army, will go shoulder to shoulder into the battle to fight for full victory.**

Warsaw, 1 September 1939

(-) **IGNACY MOŚCICKI**  
President of the Republic of Poland



At the end of September 1939, the President and the government of the Republic of Poland resumed their operation in France. The National Council of Poland, which was a substitute for parliament, has been constituted and soon the formation of the army began. While in Paris, political life continued to thrive, with debates concerning the reasons of the defeat, as well as solutions for the future. Due to Germany's invasion of France on 10 May 1940 and the defeat of the French military – Polish authorities, civilian refugees and military troops were moved to Great Britain.



Pignerolles near Angers, France. This Neoclassical palace was the residence of Władysław Raczkiewicz, the President of the Republic of Poland in Exile. Photograph by: IPMS

# French Phase

**(September 1939 – June 1940)**

20 May, 1940. Organisational and training camp of the Polish Army in France – assembly of non-commissioned officers' school platoon. Photograph by: NDA



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(June 1940 – July 1945)



5 August 1940. The signing of the Polish-British military agreement. Seated from left are British Foreign Secretary Edward Wood, 1st Earl of Halifax, Ambassador Edward Raczynski, General Władysław Sikorski, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs August Zaleski, Minister Clement Attlee, Arthur Greenwood. Standing, first from left – Anthony Eden. Photograph by: NDA

The President, the government and the National Council of Poland resumed their operations in London in June 1940. Political organisations were active, cultural and scientific life developed, and Polish-language press was published. Military units evacuated from France were deployed in Scotland, and Polish airmen made a name for themselves during the Battle of Britain. Formed in Great Britain, the Polish 1st Armoured Division took part in the invasion of the mainland launched by the Allies in June 1944.

## London Phase

October 1940, RAF Leconfield, The United Kingdom. Pilots of the 303 Squadron. From the left: Second Lieutenant Miroslaw Ferić, Canadian Captain John A. Kent, Second Lieutenant Bogdan Grzeszczak, Second Lieutenant Jerzy Radomski, Second Lieutenant Jan Zumbach, Second Lieutenant Witold Łokuciewski, Second Lieutenant Bogusław Mierzwa, Lieutenant Zdzisław Henneberg, Sergeant Jan Rogowski, and Sergeant Eugeniusz Szaposznikow. Photograph by: Public domain



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February 1945, Yalta, Crimea. Conference of leaders of the anti-German coalition. Seated from the left are British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President of the United States of America Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the dictator of the USSR Joseph Stalin. Photograph by: AINR

# Post-war times (1945–1990)

The Yalta Conference in February 1945 dashed the hopes for the post-war independence of Poland, which was made dependent on the Soviet Union and condemned to Communist rule despite the opposition of the Polish society. In the aftermath of World War II, there were about 600,000 Poles in the West, who became representatives of the Polish state in exile. The Polish authorities in exile continued to operate in London, headed by a president, pointing out the illegal and unfair nature of the decisions concerning Poland made in the final weeks of the war.



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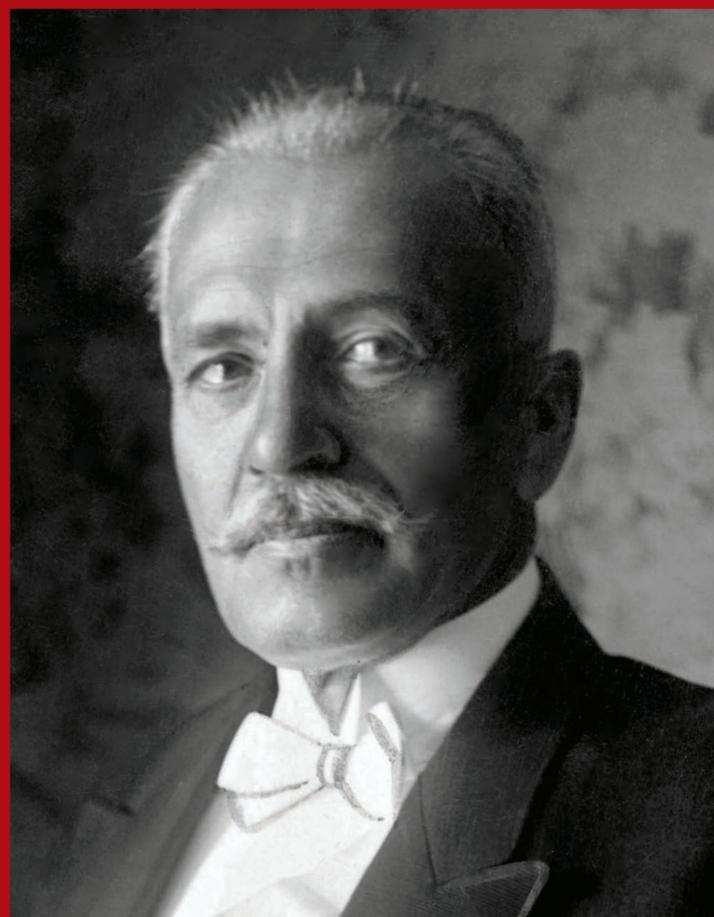
# Ignacy Mościcki

(1867–1946)

Was an eminent chemist and professor at the Lviv and Warsaw Polytechnics. He assumed the office of the President of The Republic of Poland in 1926 and then was re-elected in 1933. On 17 September 1939 he crossed the border into Romania intending to get to France. He was interned by the Romanian authorities, which necessitated the appointment of his successor as the head of state. In late 1939, he settled down in Switzerland, where he died in 1946.

3 June 1936, Warsaw. Celebrations to commemorate President Ignacy Mościcki's ten years in office. Ignacy Mościcki receives the parade in Pole Mokotowskie. Standing behind the President are Inspector General of the Armed Forces General Edward Rydz-Śmigły, Minister of Military Affairs General Tadeusz Kasprzycki and Head of the Military Office of the President of the Republic of Poland General Kazimierz Schally. Photograph by: NDA

*Mościcki*



Photograph by: IPMS



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# Władysław Raczkiewicz

(1885–1947)

After Poland regained independence (1918), Władysław Raczkiewicz held the office of the Voivode of Nowogródek (now Navahrudak, Belarus) and Vilnius, as well as the post of the Minister of the Interior. On 30 September 1939, he was sworn in as President of the Republic of Poland in Paris. By accepting the position of the head of state in exile – bereft of territory, yet still recognised by its allies, he assumed the responsibility for the fight to regain independence. When the war came to an end, he did not resign from office, thus prolonging the sovereign statehood of the Second Polish Republic, even though the international community largely recognised the legitimacy of the communist authorities in Poland.

*1-1 Wł. Raczkiewicz*

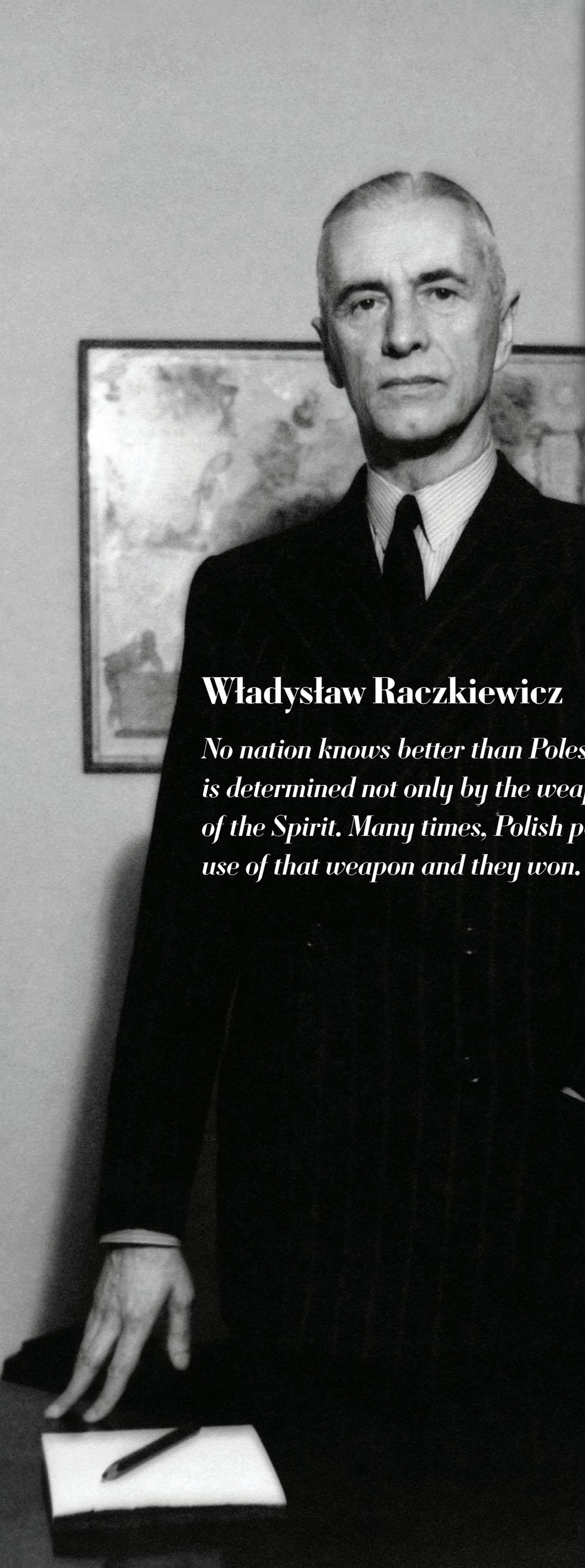


Photograph by: IPMS

1940s. The participants of the meeting listen to the speech delivered by the President of the Republic of Poland Władysław Raczkiewicz (in the foreground, in front of the microphone). Also visible are the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland and Commander-in-Chief General Władysław Sikorski (to the right of Raczkiewicz), in the second row from the left: Minister of Information and Documentation Stanisław Stroński, minister without portfolio General Józef Haller, Minister of Social Welfare Jan Stańczyk and Minister of Congressional Affairs Marian Seyda, Deputy of the National Council Ignacy Schwartzbart, Deputy of the National Council, Bishop Karol Radoński, and Polish Ambassador to Great Britain Edward Raczyński. Photograph by: NDA



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## Władysław Raczkiewicz

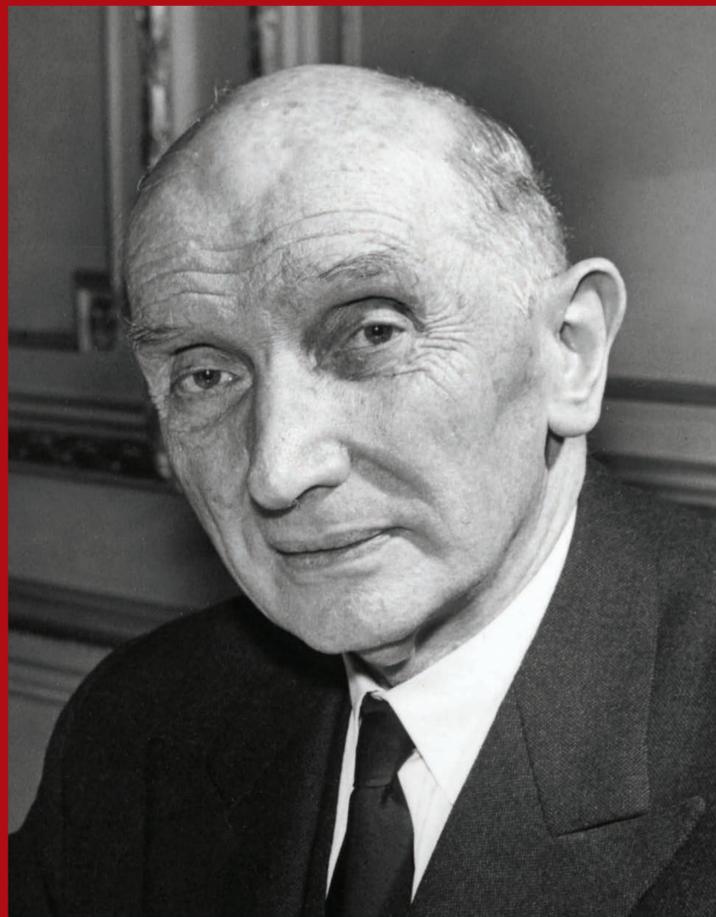
*No nation knows better than Poles that the outcome of a battle is determined not only by the weapons but also by the power of the Spirit. Many times, Polish people had to fight with the use of that weapon and they won.*

The speech of the President of the Republic of Poland  
to the Polish Armed Forces in connection with  
the dissolution of the Polish Armed Forces abroad,  
*London, 24 May 1946*

# August Zaleski

(1883–1972)

Was a diplomat and the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1926 to 1932. In September 1939, he again assumed the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and held it until 1941. Appointed by President Raczkiewicz as his successor, he took the presidential office in June 1947. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, he held it until his death in 1972. Such a long period of his presidency led to disputes among the political elite in exile and the creation of the Council of Three – a competitive centre claiming to be the head of the state.



Photograph by: IPMS



Around 1950, London, The United Kingdom. Meeting at the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum. From the left: Stanislaw Kot, gen. Wladyslaw Anders and August Zaleski, the President of the Republic of Poland in Exile. Photograph by: Unknown author, IPMS



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# Stanisław Ostrowski

(1892–1982)

Was a physician, soldier of the Polish Legions and the Polish Army, Member of Parliament, President of Lviv in 1936–1939, soviet prisoner and soldier of the 2nd Corps. After the war, he moved to Great Britain, where he conducted a medical practice, participated in the political and social life of the émigré circles and was a member of scientific societies and organisations. In 1972, after August Zaleski's death, he assumed the office of President of the Republic of Poland in Exile, which he held until 1979.

September 1936. Stanisław Ostrowski as the President of Lviv (fourth from the left) during the meeting with Polish President Ignacy Mościcki at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. Photograph by: NDA



Photograph by: IPMS



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# Edward Bernard Raczyński

(1891–1993)

Was a diplomat and the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Great Britain since 1934. Based on documents delivered to London by courier Jan Karski and confirmed by his testimony, Edward Raczyński prepared and presented to the Allies a detailed report on the Holocaust. After the end of World War II, he remained in exile, acting as an unofficial representative of the Polish authorities to the British government. In 1979, he assumed the post of the President of the Republic of Poland in Exile, held until 1986. Edward Raczyński was the oldest (he resigned at the age of 95) and the longest-lived President of the Republic of Poland in Exile.



Photograph by: IPMS



August 1932. The wedding of Edward Raczyński, head of the Division of International Organisations in the Political and Economic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Cecylia Jaroszyńska in Rogalin near Poznań. Photograph by: NDA

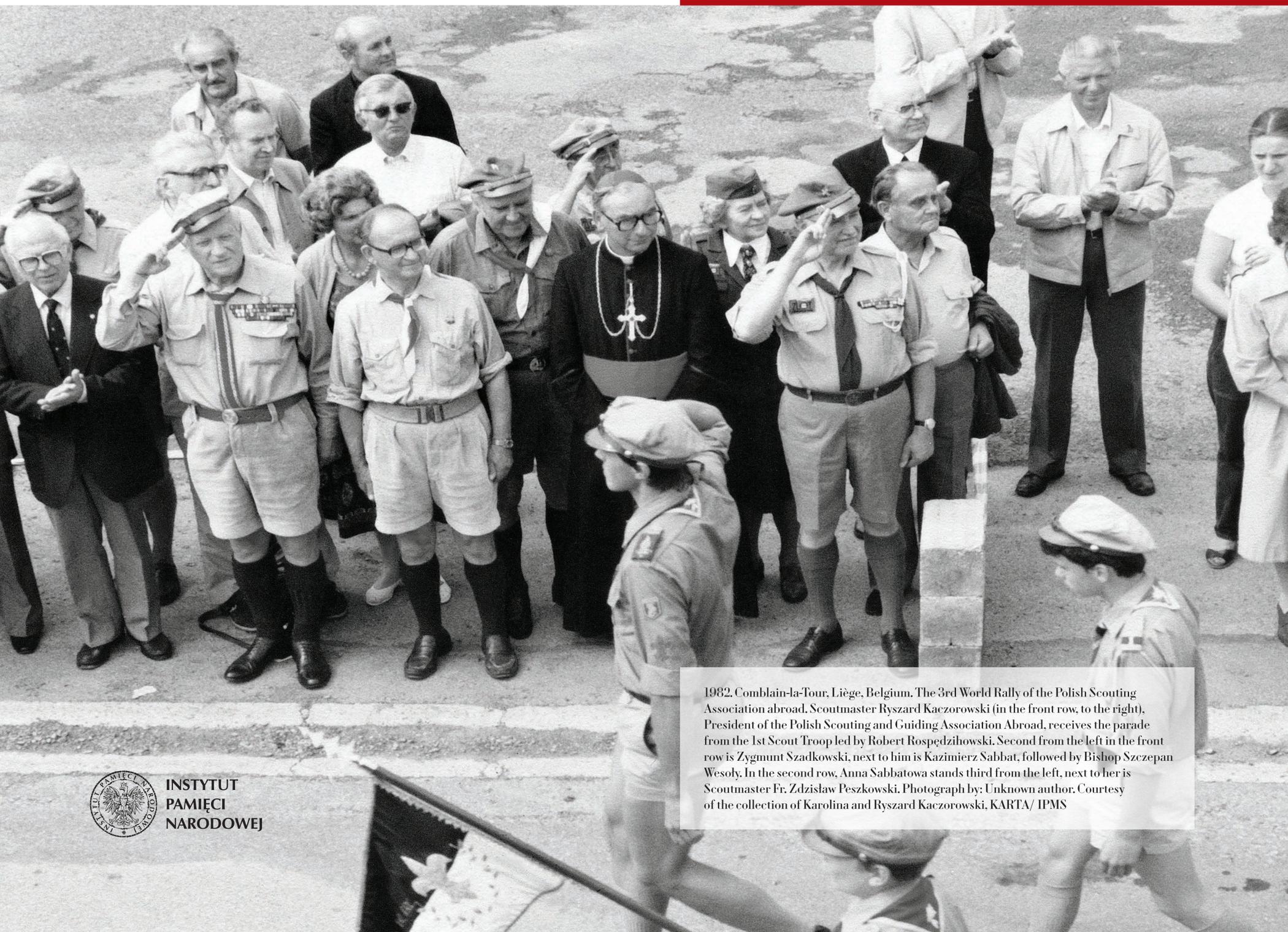
# Kazimierz Sabbat

(1913–1989)

Was a lawyer, scouting activist and veteran of the 1939 September Campaign in Poland. After the evacuation of the Polish Army to Great Britain, he served in the Polish 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade under General Stanisław Maczek in Scotland, and then he was promoted to the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. After the war, he remained in Great Britain, where he worked as a social activist and participated in the political life of the emigration. In the years 1976–1986, he was the Prime Minister of the Polish Government in Exile. In 1986, he assumed the office of President of the Republic of Poland in Exile. He died suddenly in July 1989.



Photograph by: IPMS



1982. Comblain-la-Tour, Liège, Belgium. The 3rd World Rally of the Polish Scouting Association abroad. Scoutmaster Ryszard Kaczorowski (in the front row, to the right), President of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association Abroad, receives the parade from the 1st Scout Troop led by Robert Rospędziowski. Second from the left in the front row is Zygmunt Szadkowski, next to him is Kazimierz Sabbat, followed by Bishop Szczepan Wesoly. In the second row, Anna Sabbatowa stands third from the left, next to her is Scoutmaster Fr. Zdzisław Peszkowski. Photograph by: Unknown author. Courtesy of the collection of Karolina and Ryszard Kaczorowski, KARTA/ IPMS

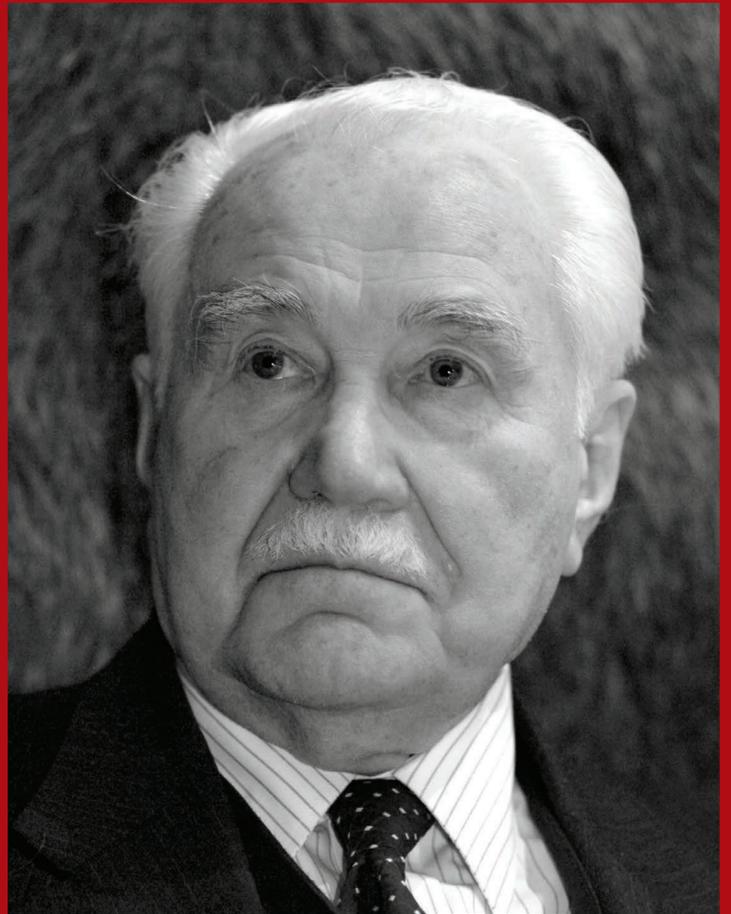


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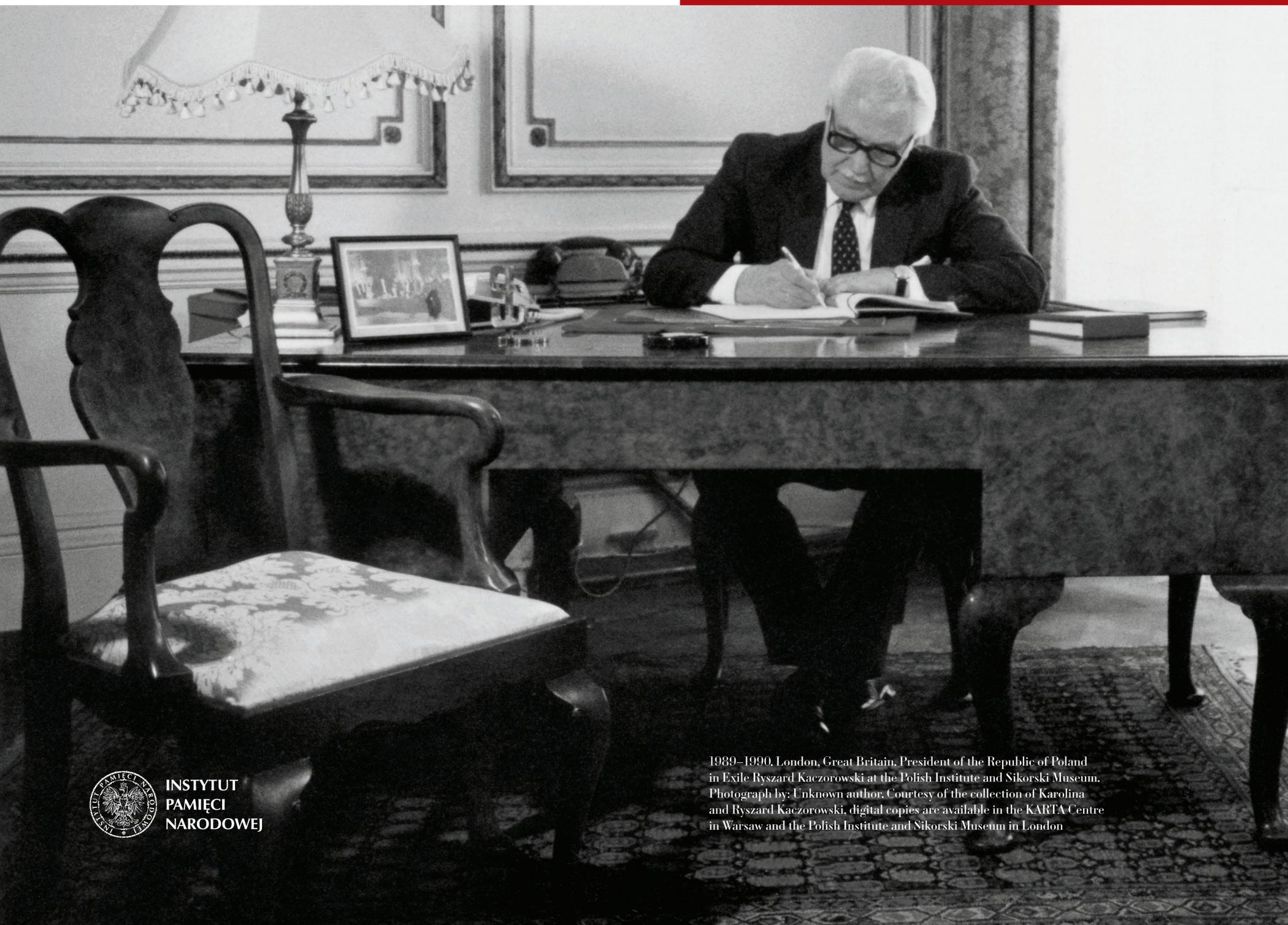
# Ryszard Kaczorowski

(1919–2010)

Was a social and scouting activist. He was arrested by the NKVD and sentenced to death. In 1942, the sentence was changed to 10 years in a labour camp. A veteran of the Polish II Corps, who settled down in Great Britain after the war. He assumed the office of the President of the Republic of Poland in Exile in 1989 after the sudden death of Kazimierz Sabbat. Considering the 1990 presidential elections as an achievement of freedom and democracy by Poland, he decided to end the activity of the Polish authorities in exile. He died in the Smolensk catastrophe in 2010 on the way to Katyn where a ceremony was to be held to commemorate the anniversary of the Katyn Massacre.



Photograph by: Robert Jaworski/FORUM



1989–1990. London, Great Britain, President of the Republic of Poland in Exile Ryszard Kaczorowski at the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum. Photograph by: Unknown author. Courtesy of the collection of Karolina and Ryszard Kaczorowski, digital copies are available in the KARTA Centre in Warsaw and the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London



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## Ryszard Kaczorowski

*Concluding my term and thinking about my predecessors in the position of the President of the Republic of Poland, I can state with deep gratitude that during the half-century of difficult work in exile, none of them misused their oath of faithfulness to our Republic. May their loyalty to the Nation and their fidelity to its laws and traditions become the signpost that will save all of us from being divided and will firmly unite us in the service of Poland.*

*The enormous and highly devoted efforts of the two generations of Polish political emigrants and the freedom movements in the country will also remain in the Nation's grateful memory forever.*

*By handing over the office of the President of the Republic of Poland from London to Warsaw, we confidently cry out:*

*Long live the Most Serene Republic of Poland!*

Presidential speech, London, 21 December 1990



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President of the Republic of Poland in Exile, Ryszard Kaczorowski in his office at Eaton Place in London. Photograph by: Kaczorowski family archive

# Third Polish Republic insignia of power

In December 1990, when the Polish Government in Exile ceased to exist, Ryszard Kaczorowski handed over to President Lech Wałęsa the presidential insignia saved by Ignacy Mościcki in September 1939. This act highlighted the role of the Polish Government in Exile in preserving the continuity of the sovereign Polish state from the Second to the Third Republic, it was also proof of the enormous importance of the post-war independence emigration.

1990. Transfer of presidential insignia.  
Photograph by: M. Bronarski. Courtesy of the Royal Castle in Warsaw



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