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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

8 June 1981

Dear John,

PROPOSED REMOVAL OF GENERAL SIKORSKI'S REMAINS
TO POLAND

When the Home Secretary saw the Prime Minister this morning, he raised briefly with her the question of the removal of General Sikorski's remains from this country to Poland. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Chief Whip and Lord Thorneycroft were also present.

Mr Whitelaw said that there were many voices raised in favour of the removal of General Sikorski's remains to Poland. His widow, now dead herself, had wanted his remains to be sent to Poland for burial. The Polish authorities now wanted his remains returned and were actively making preparations for a ceremony at Cracow which was planned to take place on 5 July. Cardinal Macharski, Cardinal Wyszynski's successor, was also in favour; and this must mean that the Pope himself was too. The Polish emigre community in this country was divided on the issue. The majority wanted the General's remains to stay here, but there was a minority that thought they should be sent to Poland for reburial. Mr Winston Churchill was in touch with him about the matter and wanted to bring representatives of the emigre community to see him. He had agreed to meet them. He would also be seeing Lady Airey. The main argument against the removal of the General's remains was that the Soviet Union might intervene in Poland after a decision had been taken and/the remains were on their way back to Poland. But he had established that all the formalities for the return of the General's body could be completed within forty-eight hours and that therefore the remains need not leave this country until two days before 5 July, thus minimising the period when a Russian intervention might affect the transfer of the body. He would report back to his colleagues when his meetings with Mr Churchill and representatives of the emigre community and with Lady Airey had taken place.

I am sending copies of this letter to Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), David Heyhoe (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), and Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office).

Yours sincerely,

John Halliday Esq.,
Home Office.

Alvin Whitelaw.

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