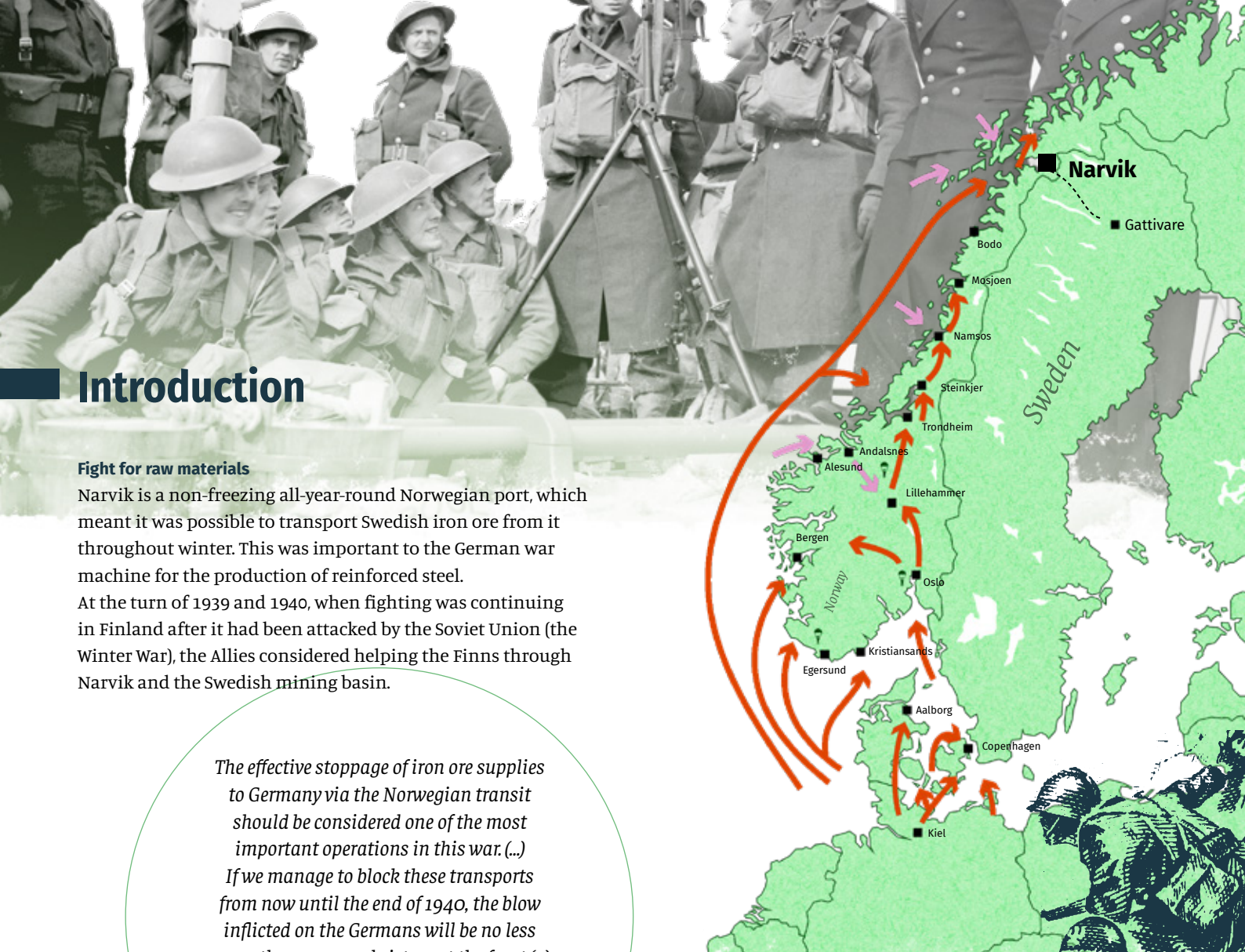


NARVIK 1940

The First Triumph of the Allies in the War Against the Third Reich.
Polish Revenge on Germany for Defeat in the Campaign of 1939

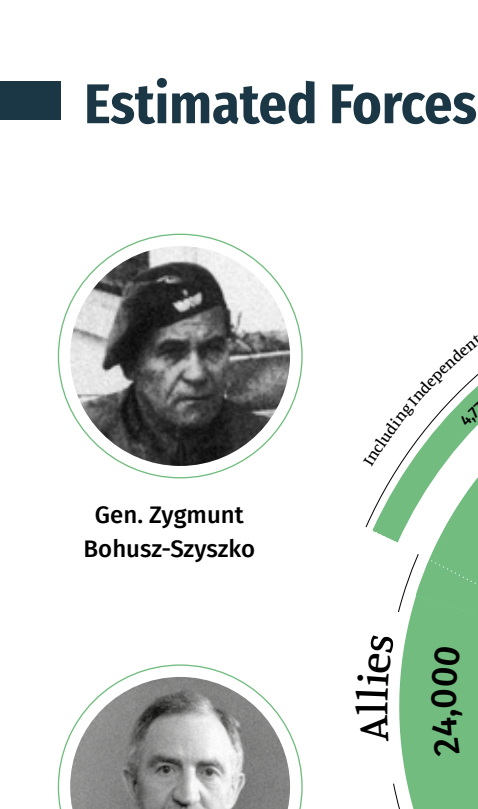


Introduction

Fight for raw materials
Narvik is a non-freezing all-year-round Norwegian port, which meant it was possible to transport Swedish iron ore from it throughout winter. This was important to the German war machine for the production of reinforced steel.
At the turn of 1939 and 1940, when fighting was continuing in Finland after it had been attacked by the Soviet Union (the Winter War) the Allies considered helping the Finns through Narvik and the Swedish mining basin.

The effective stoppage of iron ore supplies to Germany via the Norwegian transit should be considered one of the most important operations in this war. (...) If we manage to block these transports from now until the end of 1940, the blow inflicted on the Germans will be no less severe than a general victory at the front (...). In fact, it can decide the fate of the war.

– Winston Churchill, December 1939



When Finland and the USSR negotiated peace, the plan was abandoned. At the same time, Germany, perceiving the risk of having its influence limited in Scandinavia, decided to seize the neutral countries of Denmark and Norway to secure their supply of iron ore and gain important naval bases necessary for waging an effective war against Great Britain.

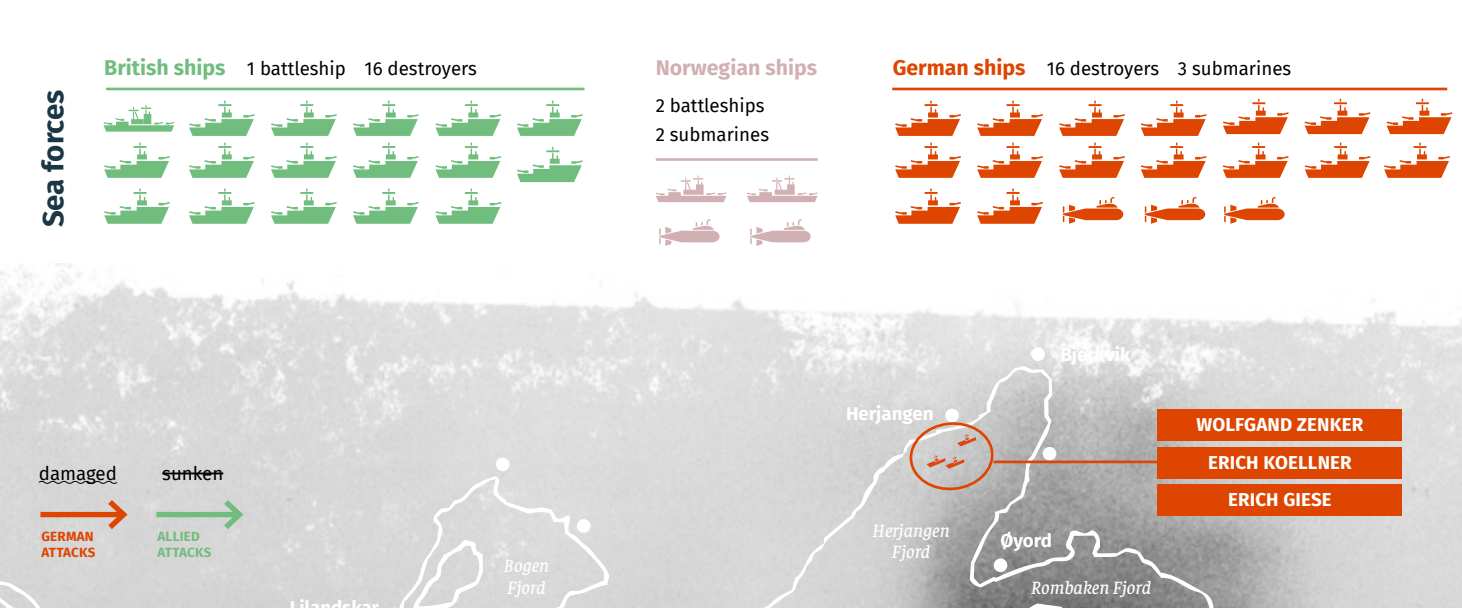


February 16th, 1940
The British capture the German ship 'Altmark', which was carrying Allied prisoners of war. The incident occurred in Norwegian territorial waters, which accelerated Adolf Hitler's decision to attack Norway.

March 1st, 1940
Adolf Hitler orders an invasion of Norway. The operation is code-named *Weserübung*.

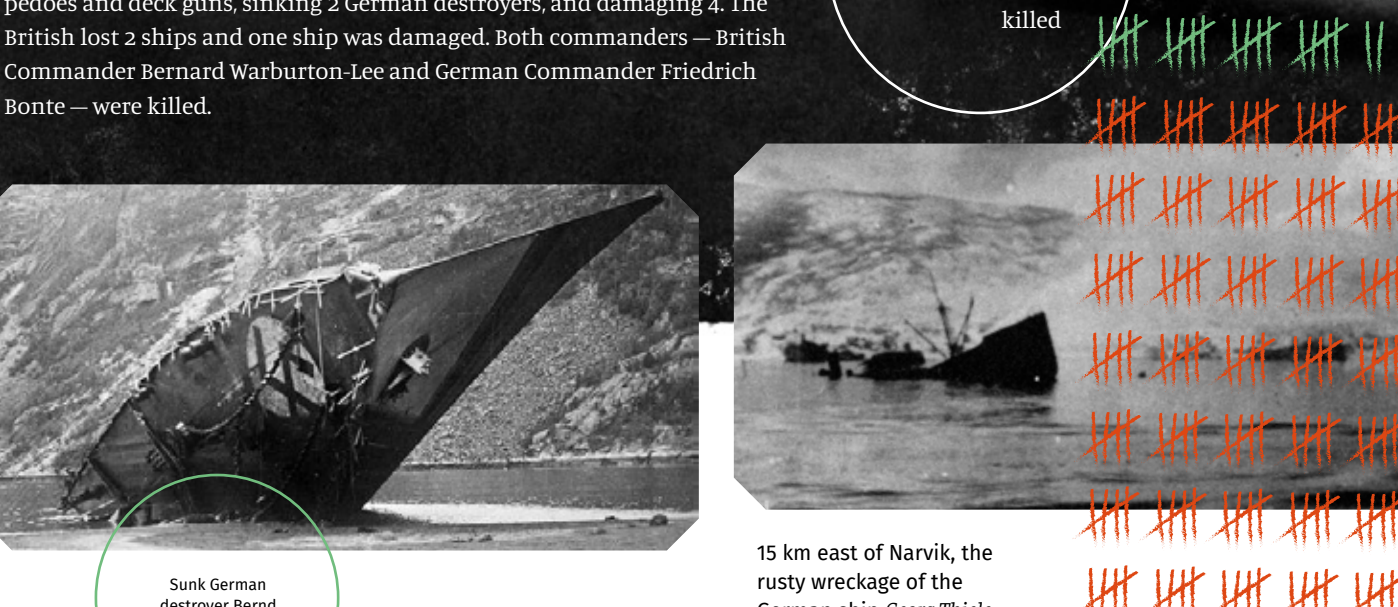
April 9, 1940
The German attack on Denmark and Norway begins
Denmark hardly resists. Norway defends itself. The heaviest fighting takes place in the Narvik area.

Estimated Forces of Combatants



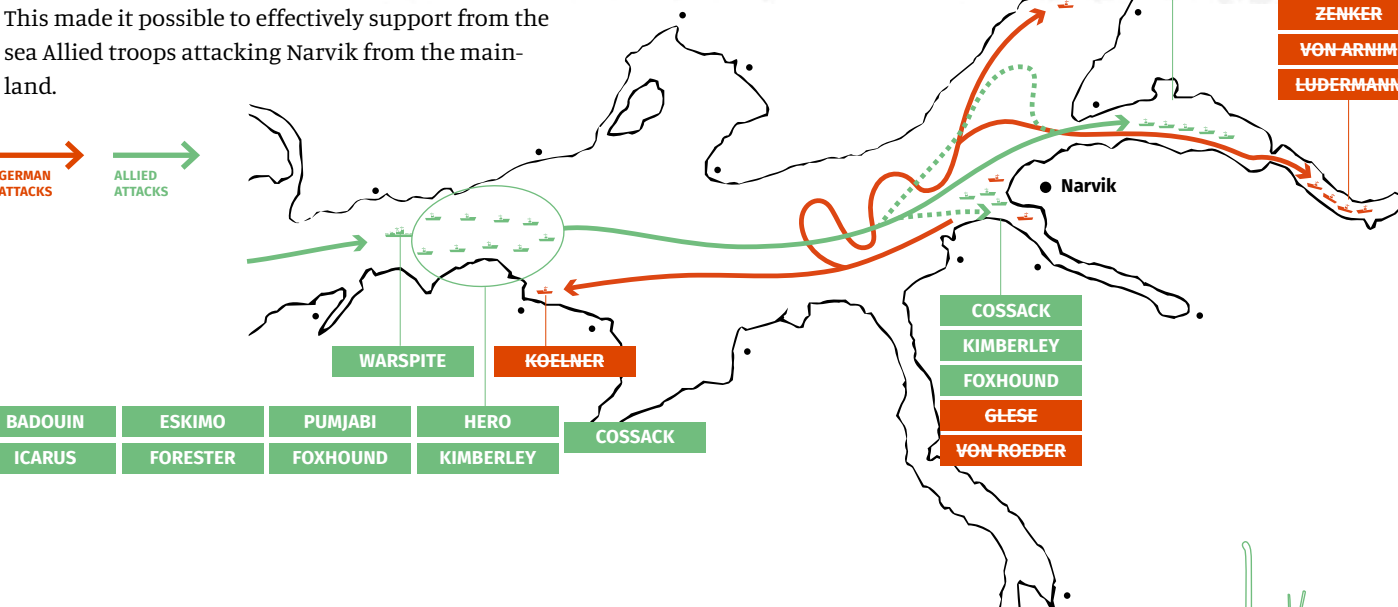
Battle – course, turning points, weaponry

Sea Battles at Narvik



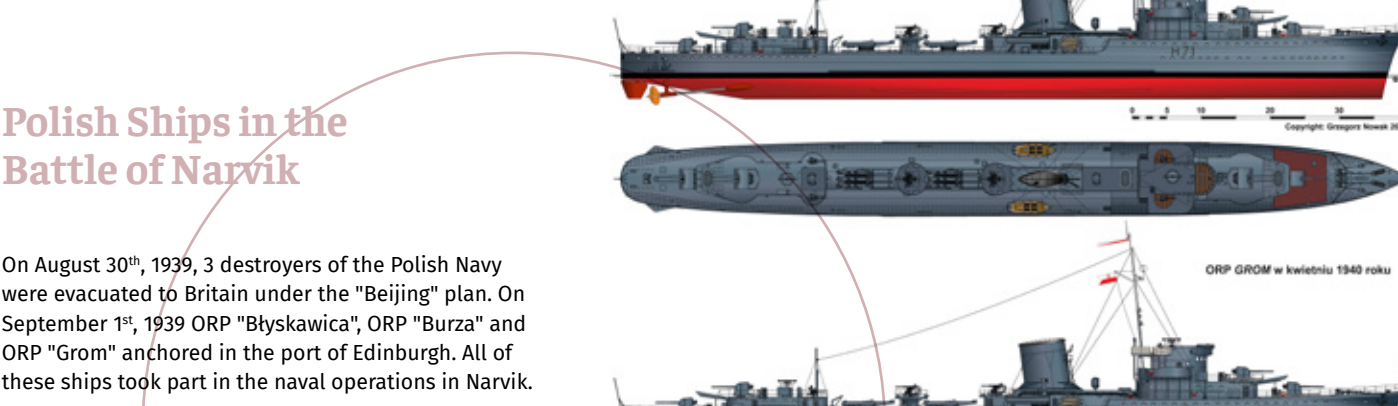
April 9th, 1940
The British sink one of the oil tankers transporting oil for the German destroyers.

April 10th, 1940
First Sea Battle
A fleet of 10 German *Kriegsmarine* destroyers fought its first naval battle against the British Royal Navy force of 5 destroyers. The British entered the fjord under the cover of darkness and fired on the German ships with torpedoes and deck guns, sinking 2 German destroyers, and damaging 4. The British lost 2 ships and one ship was damaged. Both commanders – British Commander Bernard Warburton-Lee and German Commander Friedrich Bonte – were killed.

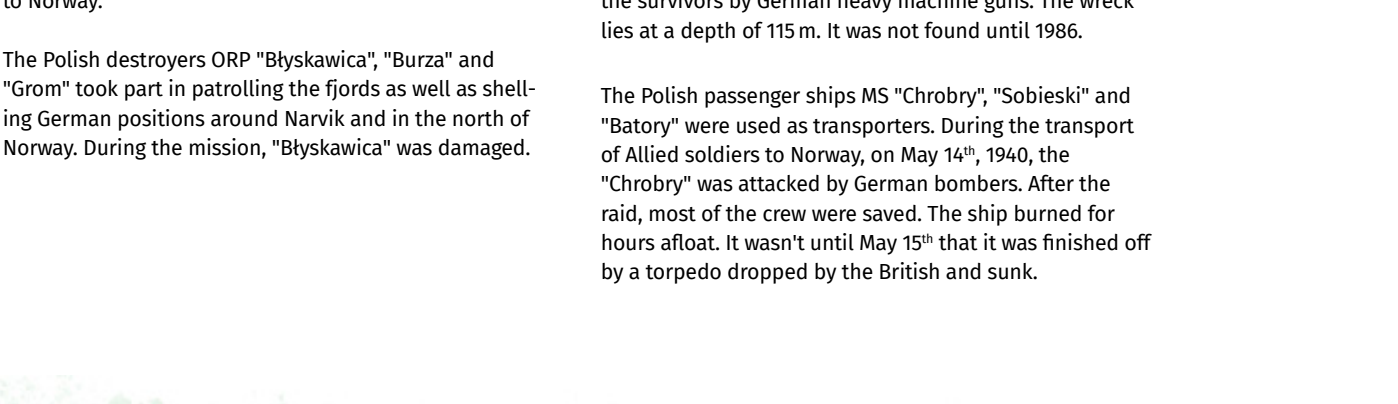


April 13th, 1940
Second Sea Battle
The British won a spectacular victory. They sank all 8 German destroyers, with only 3 British ships being damaged.

British naval operations practically brought the *Kriegsmarine* to a halt in the waters around Narvik. This made it possible to effectively support from the sea Allied troops attacking Narvik from the mainland.



The British *Supermarine Walrus* seaplane sank a German U-64 submarine at the mouth of the Herjangs fjord; this was the first sinking of a German U-boat in World War II.



On August 30th, 1939, 3 destroyers of the Polish Navy were evacuated to Britain under the "Beijing" plan. On September 1st, 1939 ORP "Blyskawica", ORP "Burza" and ORP "Grom" anchored in the port of Edinburgh. All of these ships took part in the naval operations in Narvik.

On April 8th, 1940, on the eve of the German attack on Norway, the submarine ORP "Dziś" sank the German freighter "Rio de Janeiro", carrying German soldiers to Norway.

The Polish destroyers ORP "Blyskawica", "Burza" and "Grom" took part in patrolling the fjords as well as shelling German positions around Narvik and in the north of Norway. During the mission, "Blyskawica" was damaged.

As a result of a German bombing raid on May 4th, 1940, "Grom" was sunk. Out of the crew of 213 sailors, 59 died as a result of being stuck inside the ship and by shooting of the survivors by German heavy machine guns. The wreck lies at a depth of 115 m. It was not found until 1986.

The Polish passenger ships MS "Chrobry", "Sobieski" and "Batory" were used as transporters. During the transport of Allied soldiers to Norway, on May 14th, 1940, the "Chrobry" was attacked by German bombers. After the raid, most of the crew were saved. The ship burned for hours afloat. It wasn't until May 15th that it was finished off by a torpedo dropped by the British and sunk.

Poles constituted approx. 30% of all Allied forces in the ground operations near Narvik.

Gen. Bohusz-Szyszko makes an oath of allegiance.

Polish soldiers have to defend freedom and justice. They do not know the feeling of revenge because they are convinced that the perpetrators of inhuman crimes committed in Poland and elsewhere in Europe will soon be punished.

Polish troops were provided with French equipment, purchased with repayable loans granted to Poland before the outbreak of WWII.

The main armament of the Podhale soldiers were French MAS 36.75 mm rifles. The rifle, although relatively modern, was not very popular among the soldiers, who considered it too complicated and not very practical to use.

In addition to armaments and mechanized equipment, the Poles were also given 196 mules to support transportation needs in the difficult mountainous terrain.

The King of Norway, Haakon VII, rejected Germany's demands for the surrender of the country and the formation of a collaborative government of Vidkun Quisling. Instead, he called on Norwegians to resist the German aggressors. After the German attack on Norway, the king fled and made his way through the mountains to Molde and then to Tromsø, from where he evacuated to Great Britain.

Polish troops took a local dog, a Norwegian Shepherd, on board the ship. To commemorate the fighting in Narvik, they named it "Narvik".

The success of the Polish Independent Podhale Rifle Brigade and the accompanying units had a propaganda dimension. It showed Polish soldiers had not laid down their arms and, despite the lies of Nazi propaganda, continued to fight on several fronts, in accordance with the slogan *For our and your freedom*.

I take this opportunity to tell you General that from what I have seen and heard, the troops fighting under your command are among the best and most disciplined I have ever known.

– Col. Hans Finne, representative of the Norwegian High Command at the Allied Command

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12 Poles who participated in the Battle of Narvik, including General Zygmunt Bohusz-Szyszko, were awarded the Norwegian War Cross. General Sikorski was the 13th Pole, who was awarded the cross posthumously.

There is a monument in Narvik, the work of prof. Bohdan Chmielewski dedicated to the memory of the Polish seamen from the ORP "Grom" ship, which sank in 1940. It was established in 1979 in the town in *Groms plass* (Grom square).

There is a music band in Norway called Groms Plass. Their music is in the style of Norwegian folk ballads. Thanks to them, at the beginning of the 21st century, the damaged monument to the sailors of the ORP "Grom" ship was restored. The band recorded a song about the monument and the history of the ship, entitled *Kriegeren Grom* (Warrior of Thunder).

(...) Grom with Blyskawica, two sisters, They rushed to battle to free you (...)

– A fragment of a translation of the song *Kriegeren Grom* by Groms Plass

On the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw, there is an inscription *NARVIK May 12 – June 6, 1940*, commemorating the Podhale men who fought in Norway.

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