

Institute of National Remembrance

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The 74th anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino

On 16-19 May 2018, Deputy President of the IPN, Prof. Krzysztof Szwaagrzyk took part in the commemoration of the 74th Anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino. During the ceremony, he received the "Pro Patria" medal from the head of the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression. It is awarded for "special merits in cultivating the memory of the struggle for independence of the Republic of Poland".







The official celebrations with the participation of the government

delegation and veterans of the General Anders' Army took place at the Polish War Cemetery on Monte Cassino. The Holy Mass at the Polish War Cemetery was concelebrated by Józef Guzek, the Field Bishop of the Polish Army. A speech was also delivered by Jan J. Kasprzyk, head of the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression.

The mayor of Cassino, Carlo Maria D'Alessandro, who was among the invited guests, expressed the gratitude of the Italians for the sacrifice made by Poles on 18 May 1944. In addition, Zofia Romaszewska, an adviser to the President of the Republic of Poland, read out his letter to the assembled. Minister Mariusz Blaszczak also spoke, while minister Joachim Brudziński read out a letter by the President of PIS, Jarosław Kaczyński. A letter from the Speaker of the Sejm, Marek Kuchciński was also read out.

On 19 May World War II veterans and the Polish delegation gathered at the monument dedicated to the soldiers of the 2nd Polish Corps and Italian soldiers at Aquafanata, where wreaths were laid. The Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance gave a speech addressing the gathered veterans of the 2nd Corps. He said: "In those days of glory, many of you had the right to think that soon you would return to your free, beloved Poland. In a free capital, you would be able to march as winners in front of your beloved general Anders, but as you know, it was a bittersweet victory, especially for you. For the allies, you no longer had the value that you represented before, and in communist Poland instead of parades, instead of flowers, instead of decorations and words of appreciation, you met with hostility, with the

persecution of the communist authorities. Instead of defilades, there were shameful questions posed to you, the heroes who fought for Poland: <<"Why did you come back to Poland?">> voiced by the communist security service officers." Professor Szwagrzyk added that it is our moral duty to compensate this harm.

Apart from Prof. Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, the head of the Office for War Veterans also awarded the "Pro Patria" medals to Major Fred Allan Brill-Brylowicz, Czesław Balec, Adam Gazur, Leonard Gierasik, Paweł Łojko and Lieutenant Edmund Szymczak.

Then, in the forest near Acquafondata, a plaque commemorating the burial place of about seven hundred Polish soldiers who died during the war was unveiled. In 1946, their remains were transferred to the Polish War Cemetery.

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