

# Institute of National Remembrance

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The unveiling of a plaque dedicated to the inhabitants of Fréland in France - in honour of their help offered to Polish prisoners of war – 8 September 2019

















The ceremony of unveiling a commemorative plaque dedicated to the



inhabitants of Fréland, who in 1944, under the leadership of Fr. Raymond Vogeli, enabled the escape of Polish prisoners of war (some of whom were taken prisoner in Podkarpacie in September 1939), and offered them shelter and assistance until the arrival of American troops, took place on Sunday, 8 September 2019 in Fréland.

The ceremony was attended by representatives of the Rzeszów Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance – Dr Dariusz Iwaneczko, Director of the IPN Branch Office in Rzeszów and Dr Piotr Szopa, Head of the Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom, who were the originators of this commemoration.

Representatives of the Polish and French Armies, local authorities, numerous residents, as well as three people who aided Polish prisoners of war, also participated in the event.

The plaque was financed by the Rzeszów Branch of the Institute of National Remembrance.

The topic of local inhabitants offering help to Polish soldiers during the war is still very much alive in the town of Fréland. It has been described in several local publications. There are still inhabitants who remember World War II and Polish soldiers freed from a German camp near the village. The sub-camp in Ursprung near Fréland operated from 1941. When the Allies landed in Normandy in June 1944, the hope that the war and Hitler's rule were coming to an end, was revived. On the night of 26-27 August 1944, the inhabitants of Fréland, led by the local priest Raymond Voegeli, helped all prisoners of the Ursprung sub-camp

(Arbeitskommando Lagoon No. 491)- a total of 30 Poles- to escape. The people of Fréland supplied the POWs with shelter and assistance until the American troops entered, which took place on 6 December 1944.

Living in hiding for three months was not easy. Both those providing shelter and those receiving it lived in fear for their lives. One of the prisoners, Jan Pionstka, for example, broke down and left the shelter. However, he also managed to survive thanks to the help of a local woman.

Some of the Poles being hidden in Fréland were taken prisoner in Podkarpacie in 1939, after the battle near Bircza, which took place on 12 September. Among the freed were also Franciszek Urbanik from Godowa and soldiers of the 17th Infantry Regiment. Thanks to the help of priest Raymond Voegela and the inhabitants of Fréland, he escaped along with the other prisoners. It was his son who turned to the Institute of National Remembrance with the idea of the commemorative plaque.

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