

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/9875,Polish-soldiers-commemorated-in-Lommel-Belgium-25-September-2022.html>

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Polish soldiers commemorated in Lommel, Belgium - 25 September 2022

In September 1944, the soldiers of the 1st Armored Division, commanded by General Stanisław Maczek, liberated approximately 60 Flemish cities, towns and villages. To this day, the inhabitants of Belgium have been recalling General Maczek's order forbidding the use of artillery fire during battles for cities, thanks to which the local population did not lose their lives and property.













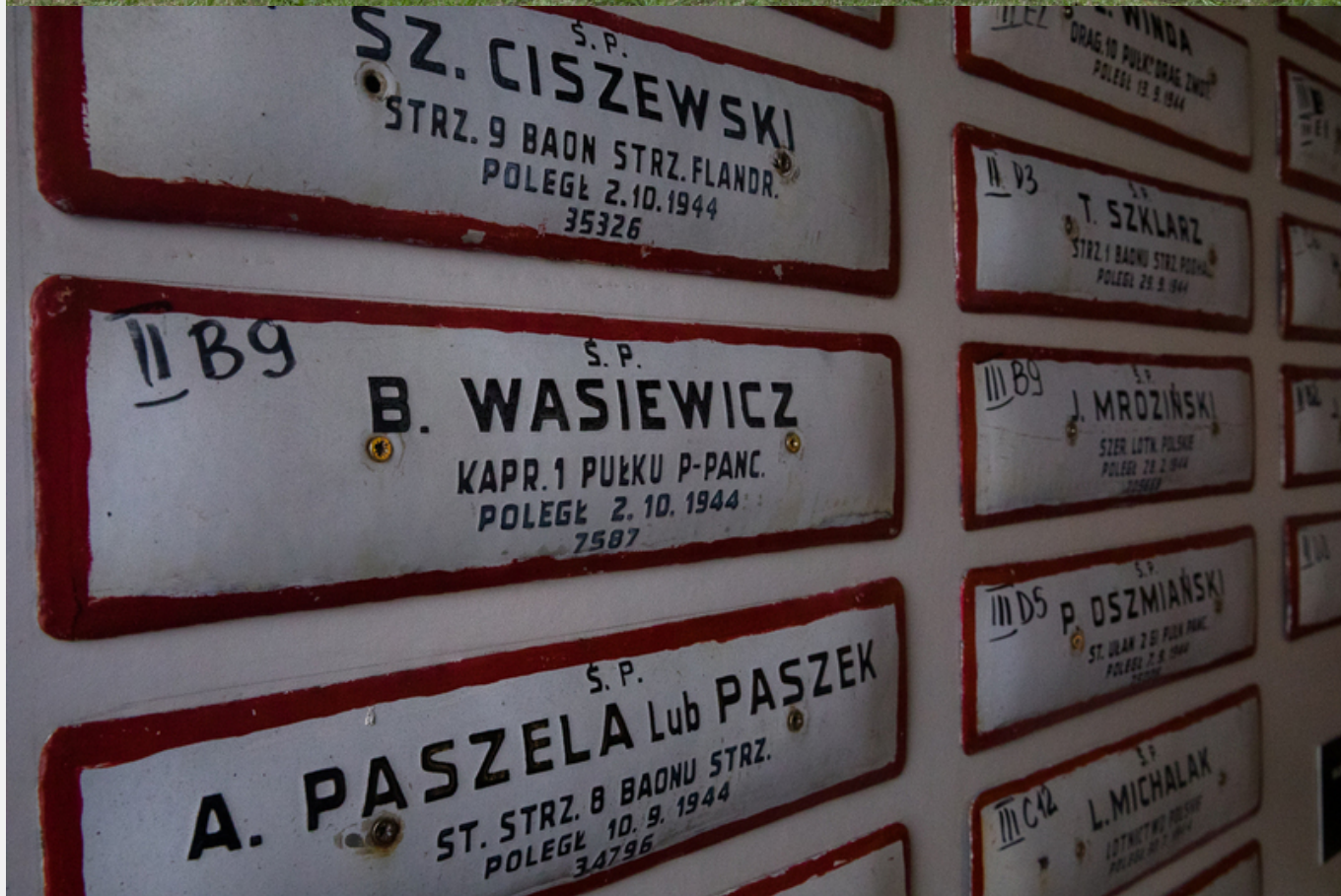
















On 25 September 2022 at the Polish War Cemetery in Lommel, a ceremony was held in honor of Polish soldiers who had fallen for the freedom of both countries. The necropolis was established in 1946, and is the largest Polish cemetery in Belgium. The celebrations were preceded by a Mass for the soldiers of the 1st Armored Division and laying flowers at the monument of the First and the Second World War.

The event was organized by the Polish Embassy in Brussels, headed by Ambassador Rafał Siemianowski, Bob Nijs, the Mayor of Lommel, and the Union of Poles in Belgium, chaired by President Zenon Fabjan. This year's celebrations had a special dimension due to the celebration of the Year of Three Generals: General Władysław Anders, General Stanisław Maczek and General Stanisław Sosabowski. All the three were outstanding Polish commanders who contributed to the victory of

the Allies over the Wehrmacht forces.

The Institute of National Remembrance was represented by the Deputy President Prof. Karol Polejowski, who has read out a letter by the IPN's President. It was emphasized that during the Second World War, the Polish spirit of freedom was one of the strongest:

Not only had we fought from day one, in uniform and underground, on land, at sea and in the air, but we fought for other nations' sovereignty to win our own. We win theirs, we get back ours, we thought. Such an extraordinary attitude translated into an enormous contribution, and it ought to be remembered and honored.

The IPN Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance also addressed the Institute's flagship project, "Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom", which aims to show the efforts of the Polish Armed Forces during the Second World War to free Europe from the rule of two totalitarian regimes, the German and the Soviet.

The Trails of Hope should be understood as collective peregrinations of Polish citizens during the Second World War, soldiers and civilians, driven by the idea of restoring freedom to the world enslaved by the Third Reich and its allies, which were related to the activities of the legal authorities of the Republic of Poland.

The project with the accompanying exhibition set off from Warsaw in March this year, but since then has already visited a number of countries, from South Africa, Zimbabwe and the United States, through Italy, to Iran and Canada. It has so far reached four continents. It is now going to be presented in further locations, including Uzbekistan, Georgia and Kirgizstan. This endeavour entails much more than an exhibition. "Trails of Hope" is also about education, commemoration and renovation of memorials. It is also about meeting the members of Polish diaspora abroad as well as local people cherishing the memory of Polish liberators. Strong emphasis is put on finding relevant archival sources and recording the accounts of people who can remember the war years.

Finally, President Polejowski referred to the current geopolitical situation:

After the fall of communism in Europe, one might think that totalitarian regimes belong to the past. The unprecedented Russian attack on Ukraine has clearly demonstrated that we could not have been more wrong. Remembrance is key in our assessment of today's war in Ukraine. Remembrance of the 20th century regimes has shaped our European identity, and this makes us stand strong in our unity against any violations of a nation's right to self-governance.

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