

Institute of National Remembrance

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In tribute to the Polish heroes who liberated Ancona
On 17–18 July 2026, Dr Karol Polejowski, Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance, took part in commemorative ceremonies honouring the soldiers of the Polish II Corps for their role in the liberation of the towns and cities of Italy's Marche region.























On 18 July 2026, Ancona hosted the official anniversary commemorations marking its liberation by the soldiers of the Polish II Corps. An official commemorative ceremony was held at Porta Santo Stefano, jointly organised by the Institute of National Remembrance, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland, and the Consulate of the Republic of Poland. During the ceremony, wreaths were laid and tribute was paid to the heroes who fought for Italy's freedom.

The commemorations continued in the Ancona City Council Chamber, where the *Reipublicae Memoriae Meritum* medals were presented in recognition of outstanding service in promoting knowledge of the Polish Armed Forces' role in the Allied war effort during the Second World War.

"Today's ceremony is of particular significance. It expresses the gratitude of the Polish state to those who safeguard historical truth and pass it on to future generations (...). By accepting this distinction, you become ambassadors of remembrance. Your work is important not only for Poland, but also for fostering historical awareness in a broader international context. Thanks to your efforts, the truth about the past can be passed on with accuracy, responsibility and dignity" - said Dr Karol Polejowski, Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance in his address to the recipients of the distinction.

He went on to note:

"Ancona, a place where cultures and histories converge, reminds us that national remembrance knows no borders. Poland's historical experience, the stories of our compatriots scattered across the globe, and the legacy of their lives and work form part of Europe's shared heritage."

The IPN **Reipublicae Memoriae Meritum** medal, awarded to individuals who have rendered outstanding service in preserving the history of the Polish nation, was conferred upon:

- **Dr Enzo Salera**, Mayor of Cassino, in recognition of his longstanding commitment to strengthening Polish–Italian relations through a shared respect for history and for his dedication to preserving the legacy of the soldiers of the Polish II Corps, in keeping with the words inscribed on the monument to the Carpathian Division: *"For our freedom and yours, we, the Polish soldiers, gave our souls to God, our bodies to the soil of Italy, and our hearts to Poland."*
- **Giuseppe Valente**, in recognition of his unwavering commitment to passing on to future generations the story of the sacrifice of the soldiers of the Polish II Corps during the Battle of Monte Cassino, in the spirit of the inscription at the Polish War Cemetery: *"Passer-by, tell Poland that we fell faithful in her service."* By answering this call, Giuseppe Valente has given it a broader meaning, ensuring that its message reaches audiences far beyond Poland.
- **The late Roberto Molle, Esq.**, in recognition of his lifelong dedication to promoting knowledge of the Battle of Monte Cassino—one of the defining engagements of the Second World War—and for his exceptional commitment to preserving the memory of the soldiers of the Polish II Corps, who fought on Italian soil not only for their own freedom but for that of the

world. He was also honoured for his many years of work to preserve, for future generations, the tangible traces of the heroism of those who fought side by side in defence of shared values.

During the event, the fifth episode of the documentary series *Trail of Hope: The Battle of Monte Cassino* was screened. The episode depicts the final stages of the Battle of Monte Cassino, culminating in the capture of the monastery by the soldiers of the Polish II Corps on 18 May 1944.

Drawing on veterans' testimonies, excerpts from personal memoirs and contemporary footage of the battlefield, the film reconstructs the dramatic course of the second offensive, highlighting the determination of the Polish soldiers and the symbolic moments that followed their victory. It then follows the Polish II Corps through the campaigns for Piedimonte, Ancona and Bologna, charting its military successes while also reflecting on the bitter aftermath of victory: the exclusion of Polish troops from the Allied victory parade and the post-war fate of General Anders' soldiers.

Produced by the Institute of National Remembrance, the documentary takes viewers into one of the most dramatic and heroic chapters of twentieth-century Polish history.

More than a story of the battle that came to symbolise the steadfastness and courage of the Polish soldier, it is a story of

people—their faith, determination and longing for freedom. It traces the path that led them through death and suffering, but also sustained them with hope and a sense of purpose. At the same time, the series tells the story of Poland itself—as a state and a community of citizens whose fate was shaped by the brutality of two totalitarian regimes: Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Before the screening, commemorative certificates were presented to those who had contributed to the production.

The event, held as part of the Institute of National Remembrance's international project *Trails of Hope: The Odyssey of Freedom*, was also attended by Dr Adam Pleskaczyński, Director of the Institute's National Education Office.

On 17 July 2026, a Mass was celebrated at the Polish War Cemetery in Loreto, where tribute was paid to the fallen soldiers. The ceremony was attended by representatives of Polish state institutions, veterans' organisations and the local authorities. The prayers and shared remembrance expressed gratitude for the sacrifice of those who gave their lives in the cause of freedom.

"Those buried here remind us that freedom and independence come at the highest price. The lesson we can draw from their sacrifice is a simple one: evil must be confronted wherever it arises, with all the strength at our disposal."

Dr Karol Polejowski, Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance, said, highlighting Poland's contribution to the liberation of Italy in 1944.

"Let us remember Poland's heroes and honour their legacy." he appealed.

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