It is in fact far away. From Cracow, the old capital of Poland, across the Slovak Carpathian Mountains, Austrian-Hungarian borderland, through Slovenian Ljubljana, the Venetian Lagoon, Ravenna and Perugia, it is exactly 1,426 km to Rome, according to Google Maps. This, or an even longer, distance, had to be covered on foot by three hundred armor-clad knights led by the first Polish king, Bolesław Chrobry, who, in the year 1000 AD, lent out his knights to travel to Italy with the Holy Roman Emperor Otto II the Red.

According to a French chronicler, the ruler of Germany and the Polish king first went to Charlemagne’s grave in Aachen, situated near the current border with Belgium. Having opened the tomb, Otto presented Bolesław with Charles’s golden throne, on which the emperor’s corpse was supposed to have been sitting for two centuries. Together with Otto’s sudden death in his palace in Rome, the plans to build a universal empire based on four pillars – Gaul, Germania, Italia and Slovene lands, fell through. The memory of the Polish knights who fought in the faraway Italian land over a thousand years ago was preserved by foreign chroniclers. According to a recent theory, the father of Polish historiography, referred to as Gallus, was born in Venice in the 12th century. Poles, mainly priests, repeatedly walked across the “Italian boot,” travelling to Rome, or to universities, sprouting around the country like mushrooms. Nicolaus Copernicus, as well as a famous Polish cardinal of the Reformation period, Stanislaus Hoius, studied in Bologna and Padua. The latter was responsible for establishing a Polish...

...from a far-away country

The title might not be original, but it perfectly reflects the Polish-Italian relations. The words were uttered in Italian, in 1978, by the Archbishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyła, to the crowds gathered in the piazza below the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica: “I was called from a far-away country.”

Dear Readers,

In the glorious history of the Polish army, there were many battles where our soldiers showed exceptional heroism and sacrifice. The seizure of the Monte Cassino abbey has its special place in the hearts and memory of Poles. General Władysław Anders wrote in his order: “Long have we waited for this moment of retaliation and revenge on our eternal enemy [...] for this ruffianly attack of Germany on Poland, for partitioning Poland jointly with the Bolshevists, [...] for the misery and tragedy of our Fatherland, for our sufferings and exile.” The soldiers of the Polish II Corps did not waste this opportunity and seized the reinforced position in the abbey’s ruins, which had earlier been resisting the gunfire, bombing and attacks of the Allied forces. Polish determination and heroism broke the fierce defense line of the German forces. This victory was however paid very dearly for. On the hillside of Monte Cassino over 900 soldiers were killed, and almost 3,000 wounded. Still, the Monte Cassino success, although paid for with blood, paved the way to independent Poland.

Saint John Paul II, when talking about the Battle of Monte Cassino, said about a live symbol of will to live, of sovereignty. These words perfectly define the attitude of the Polish II Corps heroes. They proved to be determined, patriotic, and full of will to fight. They were respected and admired by the Allies, and feared by enemies. They also proved that a Polish soldier is like no other, and that the Poles love their Fatherland and are ready to sacrifice their life for it.

The story of Monte Cassino soldiers is an inspiration also today, and their attitude can be a model of a soldier’s honor, the love for Fatherland and for freedom.

Warsaw-Monte Cassino
May 18, 2019

Mariusz Błaszczak
Polish Minister of National Defense
Tadeusz Swietoslawski

The 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino

The Polish Legions

The Polish Legions (1797–1807)

The Polish Legions were the first Polish military men in the heart of Italy again after 800 years. They were not common hired soldiers, like their counterparts, the Roman Catholic Emperor Charles V, who conscripted huge armies of Slavic warriors to protect the Papacy. The unsuccessful 1794 Polish Uprising against Russia and Prussia, led by General Tadeusz Kościuszko, and the latter fall of the state, forced hundreds of political activists and thousands of soldiers to emigrate. Those who stayed were conscripted into invading armies – Russian, Prussian and Austrian. Military service in occupation armies remained the base of the Polish nation until 1914, even longer, if we include the 43-year-long domination of the Polish Army to the Russian “guarantee” (1795–1919), and the service of former Polish citizens in the Soviet Army. At the end of the 18th century, the only actual, although uncertain, Polish ally was Jacques Franco, which was fighting with Prussia. The alliance remained unaltered throughout the autumn of 1794, the founding of the Coalition, and the Italian theater of the first central – Napoleon. One of the most well-known Polish emigrants was General Józef Dąbrowski, who at 35 years of age, after the failedoczarska Cscy uprising, the 3rd uprising army, in which the differences in social status and descent were to be eliminated, Kościuszko himself, having been pardoned and set free from the Russian Peter and Paul Fortress by Tsar Paul II, became the symbolic leader of the soldiers. The military service, however, resulted in, sometimes frantic, moral struggle. The revolutionary French army brought French occupation and war with religion under the banner of liberty and equality. Polish legionnaires wanted to fight in order to return to their country, but on top of everything they were deeply religious Catholics, with their own local peasant desertions. Poles were spelling the uprising against the French in Papal Rome, while an Doesn’t care for the Pope! We are the people of the Church!

Spring of Nations (1827–1849)

The unsuccessful Polish national uprising against Russia made thousands of Polish refugees, such as foreign language speakers, to leave the triple alliance of Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. This made the citizens in the open spaces of France, Germany, and Italy to arrive in Sardinia and Piedmont. The very popular news, Free France, Free Italy, could not become the leader of the new Italian state even if he wanted to. The Spring of Nations, which spread across France, the Germanies, Austria-Hungary, and the Polish territories between France and the Habsburgs, also broke out in Italy just like in the Napoleonic invasions. The Republic of Venice and the Kingdom of Sardinia were created in the north, fighting with Austrian control, and the House of Savoy sent their forces to provide help. Polish legionnaires for a long time had been knocking on the door of the Roman Republic, Polonia, the last bastion of their political activity. Prince Craczyński, the former foreign affairs minister of Napoleon, was the first president of the Polish National Government during the War of the Sixth Coalition. Unfortunately the agreement he signed with the Austrian government did not come into force. After Austrian victories in northern Italy, it managed to withdraw to Piedmont, which was then abandoned by the French, making Polonia the actual, although uncertain, Polish ally. One can discern a number of Poles in the Austrian government, among them, the well-known General Dąbrowski, a political activist, Marechal Marmont, and also politicians, such as Giuseppe Mazzini, the dictator of the Roman Republic territory, and Giuseppe Garibaldi, an uncrowned king of Poland, strove to establish a new Polish nation. And they were right in their plans. Poles were quelling the uprising against the Austrian Empire, and went to the Ionian Islands with a plan to suppress a black insurrection against the Pope. Under your command (Marechal) Dąbrowski’s Mazurka was eventually accepted for service by the government of Milan, and fought Austria along a relatively unimportant sector of the line from Lake Garda, with a famous Campania’s Hymn.

Polish General Brylowski, the last commander-in-chief of the soldiers. The military service, however, resulted in, sometimes frantic, moral struggle. The revolutionary French army brought French occupation and war with religion under the banner of liberty and equality. Polish legionnaires wanted to fight in order to return to their country, but on top of everything they were deeply religious Catholics, with their own local peasant desertions. Poles were spelling the uprising against the French in Papal Rome, while an Italian politician, the former Frenchמהלך סדר ערכים

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One more Pole came to be known in the Polish army, Giuseppe Mazzini, the dictator of the Roman Republic territory, and Giuseppe Garibaldi, an uncrowned king of Poland, strove to establish a new Polish nation. And they were right in their plans. Poles were quelling the uprising against the Austrian Empire, and went to the Ionian Islands with a plan to suppress a black insurrection against the Pope. Under your command (Marechal) Dąbrowski’s Mazurka was eventually accepted for service by the government of Milan, and fought Austria along a relatively unimportant sector of the line from Lake Garda, with a famous Campania’s Hymn.
Announcing Virgin Mary the Queen of the Polish Crown (1656), as well as adopting the first Polish constitution (1791). Nalls was killed two days later in a battle fought with Russians. He was buried at a cemetery in Oklahoma, in Lower Poland.

Two World Wars
At the beginning of the 19th century, there was a great shortage of Polish soldiers in the service of Napoleon’s protegés. There were all thousands men, which was a lot considering the relations between the small European states. Besides, 100-year charge of one squad of Polish light-cavalrymen on Spanish territory was a matter of course.

“Soldiers! My dearest Brothers and Children!"
The time of battle has come. Long have we waited for this moment of retaliation and revenge on our eternal enemy. We will fight shoulder to shoulder with the British, American, Canadian, New Zealand divisions. The French, the Italian, and the Hindu will also fight.

These words were uttered by General Wladyslaw Anders at his ash gore before the Polish detachments attacked the Monte Cassino. The commander of the German General Ludeke, stretching across the Italian Peninsula and guarding access to Rome. The attack was carried out by the soldiers of the Polish II Corps, which between 1939–44 fought in Italy participating in the fights for Rome and the Bologna Peninsula.

The Way to Monte Cassino
The Battle of Monte Cassino is referred to as a battle of survival for a good reason. There were many more reasons than those General Anders mentioned in his order, but compared to all formations from all over the world, the II Corps was a truly remarkable phenomenon. None of the big corps that took part in the battle had been through the hell that the Poles had suffered. For most of them, the world fell apart on September 17, 1939, when the Soviet army attacked the eastern regions of Poland to help secure its plan to destroy the Republic of Poland. Thousands of Polish families were suddenly thrown out of their homes and taken to the infamous “Gulag Archipelago” to die in the Soviet concentration camps, in the towns, at the Polar Circle, or in the desert steps of China. It seemed that the only thing surviving the domestic Poles was death from winter and exhaustion.

Their fate changed suddenly and for the happy moment of catching a glimpse of the Monte Cassino Cemetery:

The final resting place for 4000 Polish soldiers who fought for freedom in the World War II. It is the final resting place for Polish soldiers who were killed in action during the Battle of Monte Cassino. The graves are marked with white crosses, and the names of the fallen are inscribed on a large plaque on the wall of the chapel. The cemetery is located near the town of Cassino, in Italy, and is open to visitors every day.

The Polish II Corps became the formation of Poles coming from all territories of Poland, but the Eastern Borderline (Korab) centre protected in the army, as both the names of military units and regiment traditions. The Corps’ panzer units called their tanks with proper names, among which the most popular were the names of 20 capital cities of the eastern regions of Poland, namely Lwów and Włocławek. With those names, they would go from victory to victory, starting from the winter of Monte Cassino on May 6, 1944. This victory was followed by another one in the Battle of Ancona, and by capturing Bolzano. General Anders’ soldiers believed that this victorious campaign would make it possible for them to “Rome from Italy to Poland.”

The Polish soldiers in the East of Poland, 1944–1945

The year 1939 proved to be catastrophic for Poland. Before the outbreak of war, the II Corps in Italy there also became a real argument for the Polish soldiers treated Italian civilians very politely, providing them with food and medical assistance. At the same time, the Polish soldiers decided to protect Italian civilians, bridges, roads or villages, which was a crucial argument for the Polish II Corps in Italy there also became an argument for the Polish soldiers treated Italian civilians very politely, providing them with food and medical assistance. At the same time, the Polish soldiers decided to protect Italian civilians, bridges, roads or villages, which was a crucial argument for the Polish II Corps in Italy there also became an argument for the Polish soldiers treated Italian civilians very politely, providing them with food and medical assistance. 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Independent Commando Company and Company was called “the 2nd commando. Italian commandos were referred to as into three platoons. Instead of green company, the Italian one was also divided after the war became a renown attorney and 23 Polish officers and NCOs. The soldiers. After the training ended in mid-July, 1944, the 1st Bridge Protection Company were also tasked combat military forces. recruiting Italian citizens to foreign in case of their potential protest against that role also at Monte Cassino. For that They had proved to be very useful in the first fights for Ancona. On July 8, Castelfidardo region, but was not engaged at the tactical level to the Polish 2nd Regiment, under the command of which the soldiers of the Carpathian Uhlan Regiment were assigned. In the first fights for Ancona. The 1st Uhlan Squadron – which made up a total of 18 survivors. from this platoon were found alive later. About 9:00 a.m., I was standing about 20,000 Polish citizens deported to and the soldiers coming from ‘the Ravine’ seized ruins of the abbey. That night, Cassino. About 9:00 a.m., I was standing happy. In the early morning, our troops and serenity hit me from the start. The people, among the prisoners, were able to identify the remains… I was in this hell for the end of his road. It’s true. The last two vodka shots, and to kindle the last two vodka shots, and the stretchers would come to take the wounded, only to take the fallen. Only after the battle ended, they took the fallen, although many a single face had been seen from the scene in real life.

The Polish II Corps soldiers in Italy, second on the right is Brunon Jankowski (rifleman) – Wojtek the Bear, who used to carry his own back several kilometers away from the front. “The same first name, the Professor jokingly said. “It’s even more likely that the bears are more human than we are.” He said with a calm smile.

The first fight of Italian volunteers proved how upset were the opinions about the reported fate of Italian soldiers. The battles that followed only cemented the new Polish-Italian brotherhood of arms. Not accidentally, the first two platoons to enter Ancona were the honest guard of the Carpathian Uhlan Regiment through the gates of Santo Stefano on July 16, 1944, the 2nd and 3rd Commando Company. By the end of July 1944, the Polish and Italian commandos of the 2nd Independent Commando Company was deployed to be formed again in the south of Italy as a result of a decision on transferring soldiers to the Carpathian Uhlan Regiment, under the command of which the soldiers of the Carpathian Uhlan Regiment were assigned. The Italian company returned under the command of the 3rd Polish Infantry Regiment and fought along with its soldiers until the capture of Monte Cassino on September 5, 1944. In the war, it then was the decision on detaching the Polish-Italian Commando Company, which was formed at Oraneta near Novy Targ. There, many Polish and Italian soldiers came to the aid of a civilian, whom the Italian name and the end of the fighting along the Adriatic coastline. Moreover, unoffically, the 2nd Independent Commando Company was called “the Italian Polish-Italian Commando Company” or simply “the Italian Polish-Italian Commando Company” – which was assigned an offensive direction of the II Corps’ 111th Bridge Protection Company. The group was assigned an offensive direction of the II Corps’ 111th Bridge Protection Company. The group was assigned an offensive direction of the II Corps’ 111th Bridge Protection Company. The group was assigned an offensive direction of the II Corps’ 111th Bridge Protection Company.

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The Polish II Corps, along with the American and British forces, supported the Polish forces in Greater Poland. In 1919, he was engaged in forming the Royal Polish Army, which he commanded in the 1920 Polish-Soviet War. After the war, he served as the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Army. In 1926, he became the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army. In 1939, he commanded the Polish Army in the invasion of Poland by the Nazi Germany. In 1940, he commanded the Polish II Corps in the Battle of France. In 1941, he was captured by the Nazi Germany and spent almost two years in a Nazi concentration camp. After his release, he continued to serve in the Polish Army. In 1944, he commanded the Polish II Corps in the Italian Campaign. In 1946, he became the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces. In 1947, he was elected to the Polish National Assembly. In 1952, he was arrested by the communist authorities and spent almost two years in a prison. In 1954, he was released and spent the rest of his life in exile in Canada. He died in 1970. However, his memory is still revered in Poland, and there is a monument to his memory in the city of Warsaw. Today, a square in Ochota – the district of Warsaw – is named after him. After me.”

In 1944, the units of the Polish II Corps were transported by the British to the Apennine Mountains in Italy. In May 1944, the Polish II Corps – still under Anders’ command, got to the Italian front at the break of 1943/44. The attack, which was to distract the German forces, was a failure. The Polish forces suffered heavy losses and the assault was abandoned. However, the Polish forces managed to break through the German defenses and reach the Italian coast. The Polish forces continued to fight in Italy until the end of the war in 1945. The Polish II Corps was disbanded in 1947. However, the memory of the Polish II Corps is still revered in Poland. Today, a monument to the memory of the Polish II Corps in the city of Warsaw. Today, a square in Ochota – the district of Warsaw – is named after him. After me.”
**A Polish Bishop AT MONT CASINO**

"On May 18, the Ascension Day, I celebrated the second mass, with the first one said by Father Bochenski. I did not know that the Polish flag was then already fluttering above the abbey ruins seized by our soldiers."

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**Józef Gawlina, Memoirs**

Józef Gawlina was born on the Prussian Niziołka in 1894. During the war he was a military chaplain under the German and Russian occupation. He spent the war with the Polish forces in France, later in England and Scotland, as the Polish II Corps, who told me: "Bishop, I'm here for you, but I cannot go any further."

"From the day of my arrival, I began my pastoral visits, when snow covered the country, I met with soldiers in Carpi and Castelnuovo. I witnessed the battle of Monte Cassino, where our troops fought against the Germans. The whole village was blown up by the enemy bombs."

"It would take too long to name all the Italian villages in which our division fought...""Chaplains of the 17th and 26th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiments during the fights for Montoro near Ancona, July 6, 1944"
The orchestra is playing The Red Poppies on Monte Cassino, and the laborer is quickly grounded by a grumble coming from other guests: “You don’t dance to THAT!” The scene shows what the victory at Monte Cassino meant to the Polish nation oppressed by the German and Russian occupiers, not only during the war, but also for many, many years after.

The song, commemorating one of the most glorious moments for the Polish Army during WWII, became a symbol, with an aura of holiness around it, targeted against both occupiers’ propaganda. Biuletyn Informacyjny (Information Bulletin), the official, main propaganda of the Polish Army during WWII, was covertly published (Biuletyn Informacyjny), the official, main propaganda. Biuletyn Informacyjny (Information Bulletin), the official, main propaganda.

Do you see the nub in the top? There, like a rat, lurks your foe! You mustn’t stop, you mustn’t stop... But from the clouds the enemy throng! And so, onward and upward they went; They went to avenger and to kill, On the enemy’s destruction, bent; To their honor they harrowed their will.

Do you see the white crosses in a row? That’s where the Poles pledged their all. The farther, the higher you go, The more you’ll find them fall. This soil belongs to Poland, Though Poland be far from here, For ‘twixt cossacs measure freedom’s span — That is history’s lesson dear.

Do you see the rubble at the top? That toll the fallen to sleep!... Echoes in the monastery bells And of the blood that once flowed here — But memory of those nights terrible... Years will come and ages will go, Once again climb, white, to the skies... This soil belongs to Poland, The red poppies on Monte Cassino... For ‘tis crosses measure freedom’s span — That is history’s lesson dear.

The soldiers of the 5th Kresy Infantry Division of the Polish II Corps attacking Monte Cassino.

THE SOUL BELONGS TO POLAND

A quarter-century has passed, The dusts of battle no longer rise, And the monasteries’ waists at last... O’er the poppies the soldiers did go... That is history’s lesson dear.

And so, onward and upward they went; They went to avenger and to kill, On the enemy’s destruction, bent; To their honor they harrowed their will.

The red poppies on Monte Cassino: Do you see the nub in the top? There, like a rat, lurks your foe! You mustn’t stop, you mustn’t stop... But from the clouds the enemy throng! And so, onward and upward they went; They went to avenger and to kill, On the enemy’s destruction, bent; To their honor they harrowed their will.

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