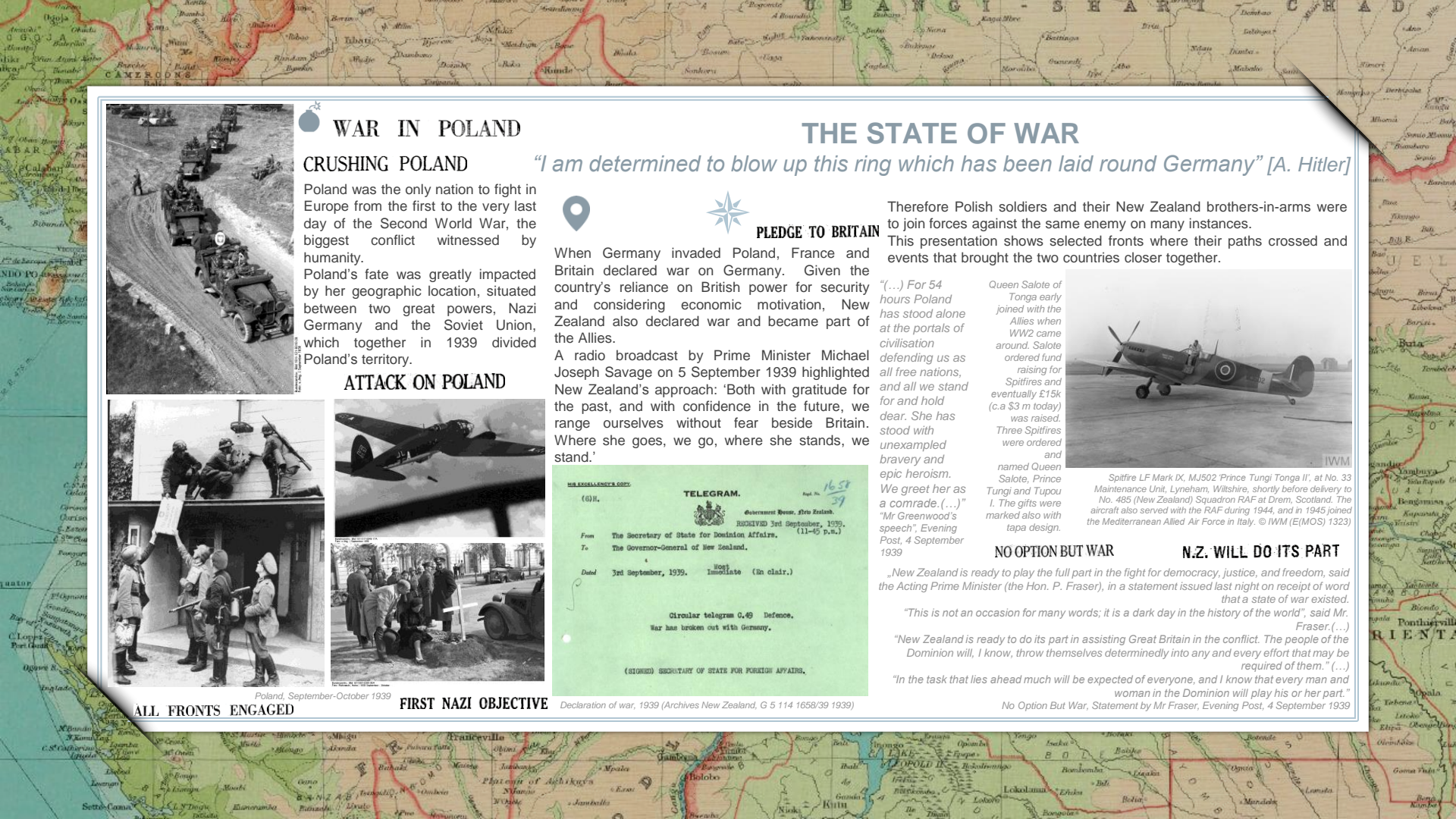




„This friendship is a very real thing indeed.”

POLAND AND NEW ZEALAND DURING
WORLD WAR II



WAR IN POLAND

CRUSHING POLAND

Poland was the only nation to fight in Europe from the first to the very last day of the Second World War, the biggest conflict witnessed by humanity. Poland's fate was greatly impacted by her geographic location, situated between two great powers, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, which together in 1939 divided Poland's territory.



ATTACK ON POLAND



Poland, September-October 1939

ALL FRONTS ENGAGED

FIRST NAZI OBJECTIVE

"I am determined to blow up this ring which has been laid round Germany" [A. Hitler]

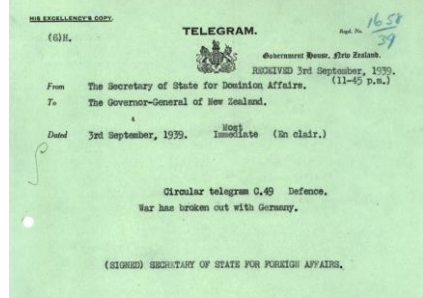
THE STATE OF WAR



PLEDGE TO BRITAIN

When Germany invaded Poland, France and Britain declared war on Germany. Given the country's reliance on British power for security and considering economic motivation, New Zealand also declared war and became part of the Allies.

A radio broadcast by Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage on 5 September 1939 highlighted New Zealand's approach: 'Both with gratitude for the past, and with confidence in the future, we range ourselves without fear beside Britain. Where she goes, we go, where she stands, we stand.'



Declaration of war, 1939 (Archives New Zealand, G 5 114 1658/39 1939)

Therefore Polish soldiers and their New Zealand brothers-in-arms were to join forces against the same enemy on many instances. This presentation shows selected fronts where their paths crossed and events that brought the two countries closer together.

"(...) For 54 hours Poland has stood alone at the portals of civilisation defending us as all free nations, and all we stand for and hold dear. She has stood with unexampled bravery and epic heroism. We greet her as a comrade (...)"
"Mr Greenwood's speech, Evening Post, 4 September 1939

Queen Salote of Tonga early joined with the Allies when WW2 came around. Salote ordered fund raising for Spitfires and eventually £15k (c.a \$3 m today) was raised. Three Spitfires were ordered and named Queen Salote, Prince Tungi and Tupou I. The gifts were marked also with tape design.



Spitfire LF Mark IX, MJ502 'Prince Tungi Tonga II', at No. 33 Maintenance Unit, Lyneham, Wiltshire, shortly before delivery to No. 485 (New Zealand) Squadron RAF at Drem, Scotland. The aircraft also served with the RAF during 1944, and in 1945 joined the Mediterranean Allied Air Force in Italy. © IWM (E/MOS) 1323

NO OPTION BUT WAR

N.Z. WILL DO ITS PART

„New Zealand is ready to play the full part in the fight for democracy, justice, and freedom, said the Acting Prime Minister (the Hon. P. Fraser), in a statement issued last night on receipt of word that a state of war existed.

"This is not an occasion for many words; it is a dark day in the history of the world", said Mr. Fraser (...)

"New Zealand is ready to do its part in assisting Great Britain in the conflict. The people of the Dominion will, I know, throw themselves determinedly into any and every effort that may be required of them." (...)

"In the task that lies ahead much will be expected of everyone, and I know that every man and woman in the Dominion will play his or her part."
No Option But War, Statement by Mr Fraser, Evening Post, 4 September 1939



„Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few”

Sir Winston Churchill

Nearly 3,000 men of the RAF took part in the Battle of Britain – those who Churchill called ‘The Few’. While most of the pilots were British, Fighter Command was an international force. Men came from all over the Commonwealth and occupied Europe – including New Zealand and Poland.

BOMBS OVER ENGLAND



Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

A group of pilots of No. 303 Polish Fighter Squadron, National Digital Archives

POLISH AIRMAN

After the September 1939 campaign, Polish airmen - well trained and prepared for immediate action, were one of the first groups to be evacuated from Poland. They served heroically in May-June 1940 in the defense of France.

In Great Britain, Polish airmen were initially formed into two bomber squadrons (300 & 301) and two fighter squadrons (302 & 303). Over 80 Polish airmen also served into Royal Air Force units. In total, during WW2 the Polish Air Force counted 16 divisions which fought over Europe and North Africa. Polish airmen gained great fame through their participation in the Battle of Britain in July - October 1940.

POLISH AIR FORCE

✈
“BATTLE OF LONDON.”



Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

CREW'S TEAM WORK

144 Polish pilots - roughly 5% of all RAF pilots - shot down 170 German planes, damaging an additional 36, which statistically was close to 12% of Luftwaffe losses suffered during the Battle of Britain. The majority of these shoot downs were done by the Polish 303 squadron. The 303 “Warsaw” Fighter Squadron named after Tadeusz Kosciuszko was recognized as the best unit in the RAF. The division's engagements during the Battle of Britain became one of the most prominent symbols of Poland's contribution to the Allied cause.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

„Never was so much owed by so many to so few” (W. Churchill)



The first four Polish recipients of the Distinguished Flying Cross of No. 303 Fighter Squadron © IWM (CH 1840)



Two airmen of the Polish Air Force Depot at RAF Blackpool receiving instruction on the controls of an aircraft, 27 August 1940 © IWM (CH 1150)

POLISH TROOPS
IN BRITAIN



A group of pilots of No. 303 (Polish) Fighter Squadron RAF standing by one of their Hawker Hurricane Mark IS at RAF in Yorkshire, 24 October 1940 © IWM (CH 1533)



IWM

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

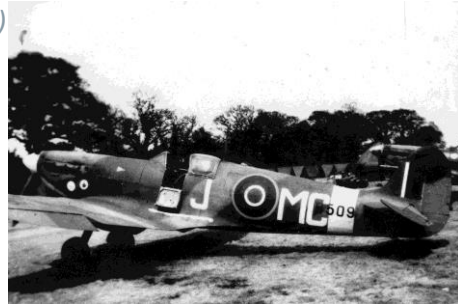
„Never was so much owed by so many to so few” (W. Churchill)

New Zealand's most visible contribution to the Battle of Britain were the 135 men who served in Fighter Command - the third largest foreign contingent after Poles. But many New Zealand pilots also served in Bomber Command, including 75 (New Zealand) Squadron. Other New Zealanders flew supporting missions as part of RAF Coastal Command, served in the ships and squadrons of the Royal Navy.



Group of New Zealand pilots from 'B' Flight, Number 32 Squadron, resting on the grass in front of one of their Hurricanes at Royal Air Force Station Hawkinge. This is during the Battle of Britain. Air Force Museum of New Zealand

✦
N.Z. PILOT KILLED
N.Z. PILOT MISSING
✦



Side view of Spitfire AB509 JM-C, belonging to Wing Commander JM Checketts DSO DFC, Wing Leader of No. 142 Wing, RAF Station Home. No. 142 Wing comprised of No. 130 (RAF) Squadron, No. 303 (PL) Squadron and No. 402 (CA) Squadron. No. 303 and 402 Squadron badges appear on the engine cowling. No. 142 Wing Operated from RAF Station Home during the period of the Allied invasion of France. Air Force Museum of New Zealand



The most prominent New Zealander involved in the battle was Keith Park, the commander of Fighter Command's crucial 11 Group, which covered London and southeast England. No other New Zealand-born military figure had a greater impact on history than Park, for none have ever had such a significant role in determining the course of a major battle.



No. 75 Squadron (NZ) Wellington's aircrews at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk

BATTLE IN THE SKIES.

In 1938 the New Zealand government had ordered 30 Vickers Wellington Mk1C bombers. RNZAF aircrew were sent to England to train on the new aircraft. The crews were to fly the aircraft to New Zealand in batches of six. RAF official records name this group as "The New Zealand Squadron", and as a result of Britain declaring war against Germany, the New Zealand Government made the airman and the aircraft available to the RAF. A decision by the British Air Ministry to give them the defunct No. 75 Squadron (NZ) number plate on 4 April 1940, meant that the nucleus of The New Zealand Squadron personnel remained together as an operational unit of the RAF. This was the first Commonwealth squadron to be so created in the WW2. In October 1946, in gratitude for the work done and sacrifices made by its New Zealand aircrew, Britain transferred the squadron number, badge and colours to the Royal New Zealand Air Force. The RAF were to never again have a No. 75 Squadron, and it is the only RAF Squadron to be given to a Commonwealth country by Britain.

📢
"Britain Proud
Of You" Eden
Tells New
Zealand Troops



"O Thou that hearest prayer,
Our brothers' shield and guide,
Who through the spacious air
On high adventure ride,
To watch or fight,
Near and afar,
On wings of war,
For truth and right
Give skill of hand and eye,



And quick discerning mind,
Through lonely wastes of sky
Uncharted ways to find,
Nor faint nor fail
Nor evil fear,
But know Thee near,
Whate'er assail (...)"
Battle of Britain Hymn

DOMINION PILOTS

to convey to your co-workers, our grateful thanks for the care bestowed
our Polish soldiers in the name of the Polish Army League. "This gratitude
to the League has again been demonstrated by the arrival of a third collection
of beautiful gifts, in metal and wood, of remarkable artistry and craftsmanship.
There are four examples of inlaid wood by M Sadowski, which are reminiscent
of the work of that great master of Marquetry, Spendler. There are casquets and
woodcarvings and fascinating work in metal, including a very lovely fruit dish
exquisitely engraved. ~~There is~~ A working model of an anti-tank gun is a fine
piece of work, and is in a case decorated with the 8th Army and 3rd Corp Embl.
All these things will join the collection already presented to the City of
Nth, where they will be displayed in the Municipal Library Building. It is fitting
that P.N. should be the home of the Polish Collection as it was in that
city that the Polish Army League was founded in 1941, and it was due to the
warm hearted response of the people of Palmerston that the work of the League
became so quickly established and spread to other parts of N.Z. so that there
now a membership of some 6 or 7 thousand. The gifts will be a reminder to all
who visit the display, of the deep friendship entertained by Polish soldiers
for our country. This friendship is a very real thing indeed. It is due to
three facts, firstly the Poles have fought along side our N.Z. soldiers on
many battlefields, secondly, N.Z. gave shelter to Polish orphans from Russia,
thirdly, because, for most of them, the letters they got from members of the
Polish Army League were the only ones they received during the long years of
war and exile. They think of N.Z. as a sort of Eldorado, a land far removed
from the horrors of war and misery, a land where, as one Pole wrote, "People
are different. where goodness and kindness still reign".

"This friendship is a very real thing indeed."

CONSUL-GENERAL POLISH PROFESSOR

The first Polish Consul-General to be appointed to New Zealand, Professor K.

Wodzicki, has arrived at Auckland from London on his way to Wellington, where he will take up office. The professor, who is accompanied by his wife and their two children, was formerly professor of biology at Warsaw University College of Agriculture.

Professor Wodzicki said he was proud to be the first representative of Poland to the Dominion, especially at a time when his countrymen were fighting with the British Empire for the common cause of freedom and liberty for the entire world."

Evening Post, 26 April 1941



THE WODZICKIS & POLISH ARMY LEAGUE

"This friendship is a very real thing indeed."

OUR POLISH ALLIES



THE SOUL OF POLAND

CONSUL-GENERAL AT TRAVEL CLUB

"(...) Count Wodzicki said he did not feel a stranger in New Zealand. Since he had arrived in Auckland he had felt almost as though he were in his own country, owing to the hospitality he had received, for which both he and his Countess were greatly indebted. He brought a greeting from all his fellow-countrymen who were now fighting with the Allied Forces for the freedom which was the Allies' aim. (...) "
Evening Post, 21 May 1941



SPIRIT OF POLAND

"(...) I should like to take this opportunity of telling you how much I respect the sincerity with which you have expressed your convictions. You have made the ideal and achievements of the Polish people widely known and greatly respected in this country. It is largely because of you that we have a deep knowledge of and sympathy and admiration for the courage and spiritual strength of the people of Poland during years of dreadful trial. (...) "
Prime Minister Peter Fraser in a letter sent to K. Wodzicki on 17 December 1945



Members from the Executive Committee of the Polish Army League: from left: A Stewart, L E Bale (President); T K Fraser (Treasurer); W A Jacques (organising secretary)

As the delegate of the Polish Red Cross, Maria Wodzicka set to work doing what she could to help her fellow countrymen. A talented speaker, she travelled extensively giving public addresses to raise money and awareness about the situation of the Polish people. Following one such talk on 26th November 1941 in Palmerston North, the Countess spoke with Mrs Ann W. Jacques about the

loneliness of Poles fighting alongside the NZ Division in the Middle East. In December 1941 the Polish Army League was established in Palmerston North with Mrs Jacques as its organising secretary.

Countess Wodzicka was very engaged in the preparations for the Polish Children's Camp at Pahiatua as the only Polish member of the Committee set up by Prime Minister Fraser to act as „a liaison between the public and the Polish children and Staff. She worked tirelessly on the children's behalf, acting as a mediator between the camp and many governmental and non-governmental agencies involved with their welfare.

POLISH ARMY LEAGUE

„This friendship is a very real thing indeed.”

By January 1942, the first shipment of parcels and letters was mailed out to the Polish Consulate in Cairo. A system where one person could "adopt" a soldier, gearing their parcels to his needs, made sure no-one was forgotten. 10,000 Polish soldiers were 'under the protection' of their New Zealand 'foster-mothers', who were sending them letters, books and food parcels. In return, the soldiers wrote appreciation messages and sent their own artwork and crafts to Palmerston North.



Dear Miss Jacques,
I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letters of March 3rd and April 2nd 1942 as well as 27 packages containing gifts for the Polish soldiers in the Middle East.

In their name and in mine I thank you and the Polish Army League for your kindness and generosity.

These parcels have been distributed among our soldiers lying in hospital and I am sure that most of them will write you directly.

We several times had the pleasure of meeting some of the New Zealand Units in the Middle East and we were proud to fight side by side with such fine men.

Thanking you again for the great effort you have done for us Poles, I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

S. Kopanski

O.C. Polish Carpathian Division



POLISH ARMY LEAGUE



Exhibition of gifts made by Polish soldiers to be sent to New Zealand, as displayed at Cupra Marittima, Italy.

„Members of the Polish Army League in Palmerston North forwarded 57 parcels yesterday to Polish soldiers in the Middle East. This league has been formed in order that these soldiers, who have been entirely separated from their homes and families should receive comforts, and the help of more women in this work is being sought. It is hoped that an individual parcel will be sent to every Polish soldier in the Middle East, each one containing a knitted garment, hussif, face-cloth, tinned food, toilet requisites, and a personal letter. The committee welcomes assistance in the form of donations for the gift parcels, particularly knitted goods and hussifs or money to purchase tinned foods. Since Poland is in the hands of the enemy personal letters from New Zealanders are also much appreciated by the Polish soldiers fighting side by side with the men of the Empire.”

Manawatu Standard, 2 April 1942

(...) It is fitting that Palmerston North should be the home of the Polish Collection as it was in that city that the Polish Army League was founded, and due to the warm-hearted generosity of the Palmerston residents that the work of the League was established so rapidly and permanently, forming an unbreakable bond of friendship between our country and that of our Polish allies, many of whom think of New Zealand as a land far removed from the horrors of war and misery, a land where – as one Pole wrote – „people are different, where goodness and kindness still reign.” - from a letter by Miss G C Tennent of Dannevirke



Selected gifts made by Polish soldiers as an expression of their heartfelt gratitude for New Zealand's treatment of the Polish children refugees and appreciation of the great friendship shown to the soldiers through the sending of correspondence and parcels.



New Zealand Governor General, Lt-Gen Sir Bernard Cyril Freyberg, and Mrs Ann Jacques at opening of exhibition of gifts from Polish soldiers. The exhibition was held at the C Palmerston North Central Library) in September 1946





„They leave today for a hospitality camp which has been prepared for them at Pahiatua, where they can continue their education and enjoy in the sanctuary of New Zealand the peace which their own land cannot at present offer.” [Evening Post, 1 November 1944]

On 31 October 1944, a total of 733 Polish children and their 105 guardians reached Wellington Harbour. On 1 November they settled into the Polish Children's Camp at Pahiatua, north of Wellington. Together they had shared the fate of 1.7 million Poles who had been ethnically cleansed from their homes in eastern Poland by the Soviet authorities, and deported to forced-labour camps throughout the Soviet Union. Many of the deportees, due to the harsh conditions and inhumane treatment by the Soviets, did not survive the journey or their exile in Siberia or Kazakhstan. Of those 1.7 million, 1 million died of illness or starvation. In 1941, after being attacked by Germany, the USSR joined the Allies and granted „amnesty” to the Poles. The Polish Army in the USSR was formed in 1941-1942. This Army, together with the Carpathian bridge formed the II Polish Corps under the command of General Władysław Anders. After crossing the border into Iran, the fighting units began to travel back to Europe via Palestine.

YOUNG POLISH GUESTS



Alexander Turnbull Library



Alexander Turnbull Library



Alexander Turnbull Library



Alexander Turnbull Library

POLISH CHILDREN OF PAHIATUA

„(...) in the sanctuary of New Zealand (...)”

POLISH CHILDREN'S CAMP



Alexander Turnbull Library



Alexander Turnbull Library



Alexander Turnbull Library

Poles Appreciate N.Z.
Care Of Children



When on 9 June 1943 the US transport ship Hermitage, carrying a group of 706 Polish children from Iran to Mexico, anchored for a short time in Wellington, Maria Wodzicka visited them and envisaged bringing a similar group of Polish children to New Zealand. She shared her idea with Janet Fraser – a wife of Prime Minister Peter Fraser - and eventually that idea became a reality.

700 Polish Refugee
Children For Dominion



DAWN OF HAPPINESS

The children, mostly orphaned or having lost family members, found a temporary refuge in Iran. An international appeal was sent out. In 1943 New Zealand Government invited the group to stay for the duration of the war. Little they knew then, but it would be here that most of the children had found their safe haven and permanent home.

The war ended, but Poland did not regain its independence. Eastern Poland, where the children of Pahiatua had been born, became part of the Soviet Union and the rest of the country fell under the communist domination. It was unsafe for the children to return to their homeland and most of them had nothing, and no one, to return to.

Their story is one of remarkable survival against all odds in war and successfully integrating into a foreign country. They became self-sufficient, hard-working, loyal citizens of New Zealand.





"We shall have to take very severe measures. I can only tell you the men who have escaped will be shot; probably the majority of them are dead already."

Field Marshal Wilhelm Keite [known as Hitler's yes-man in charge of PoW camps]



A cart used to remove the earth and a device for pumping air into escape tunnels, both made by POWs, in the storage at Stalag Luft III. © IWM (HU 21225)



One of the German guards in the entrance to the escape tunnel 'Tom' at Stalag Luft III © IWM (HU 21238)

On the night of 24 March 1944, the largest prisoner of war breakout ever attempted occurred at Stalag Luft III, a German camp for captured Allied airmen in Sagan (now Zagan, Poland). Having taken over 750 men more than a year to prepare, this 'Great Escape' was unprecedented in its organisation and scale, but also in its tragedy.



A German guard in the "Harry" escape tunnel at Stalag Luft III. Photograph probably taken in late March 1944. © IWM (HU 21234)



A panoramic view of Stalag Luft III, Sagan © IWM (HU 21030)

"DEEPLY SHOCKED"

Works initially started on three tunnels codenamed 'Tom', 'Dick' and 'Harry'. Ultimately all the efforts concentrated on 'Harry'. By 25 March, the 102-metre-long tunnel was ready.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

„(...) the men who have escaped will be shot”



Of the 76 Allied airmen who broke out, 50 were later executed by the Gestapo on the direct orders of a humiliated Adolf Hitler. Only three successfully evaded capture (one Dutchman & two Norwegian pilots). Among the 50 shot were Britons, Canadians, South Africans, Australians, Norwegians, Lithuanians, Belgians, Frenchmen, Czech, Greeks as well as 3 New Zealanders and 6 Poles.



New Zealand & Polish pilots shot among the 50: Arnold Christensen, Porokoru (Johnny) Pohe, John Williams, Antoni Kiewnarski, Włodzimierz Kolanowski, Stanisław Król, Jerzy Mondschein, Kazimierz Pawluk, Paweł Tobolski

PRISONERS OF WAR



1. Ireland, J.
2. Jewell, J.
3. Ball, J.
4. James, J.
5. Ossey, J.
6. Catnach, J.
7. Christensen, A.G.
8. Gentry, J.
9. Oreda, J.
10. Dorella, H.
11. Evans, B.
12. Fuglesang, B.
13. Guse, J.
14. Grimman, J.J.
15. Gunn, A.
16. Hake, A.H.
17. Hall, J.P.
18. Hayes, A.H.H.
19. Humphreys, B.
20. Kidder, G.A.
21. Kierals, B.F.
22. Kiewnarski, A.
23. Kirby-Green, T.G.
24. Kolanowski, A.
25. Krol, S.

German officers looking at the entrance to an earlier tunnel dug by POWs under a stove at Stalag Luft III © IWM (HU 21217)

25 out of 50 escapees from Stalag Luft III, recaptured and executed by Gestapo in March and April 1944 after failure of the Great Escape © IWM (HU 1591)



„(...) Squadron leader Trent, escaper number seventy-nine, poked his head cautiously into a land of snow beyond the wire. The freezing bite of the morning air, compounded in chills and heightened in purity in contrast to the fetor of the tunnel fug, was sweet with the fragrance of the pine woods and rich with wild promises. Its sharpness stung the membranes of his nose and brought moisture to his eyes.

„My God, my God! He whispered his exultation – which was also a fervid prayer of thanksgiving. Time telescoped upon itself and in a vivid flash the past and the present and the future merged and tumbled joyously around him. He was already back in England with Ursula and little baby daughter Christine.

And now, in the fields around Methwold, daffodils would be peeping through the snow as, blossom by blossom, the spring began.(...)”

„Escape!” Matthew Wright, chapter The greatest escape of all by James Sanders



OPERATION MOST III

„ We were running out of time and we discussed burning the plane.”

The Polish intelligence service played an important role in the Allied camp. In 1944, the Polish Home Army managed to recover an entire German V2 rocket. Polish experts carried out tests on the rocket. The results and the most important components of the rocket were to be sent to London. Crucial in this operation were New Zealand - Polish pilots duo.



Flight Lieutenant Stanley George Culliford.



Flight Officer Kazimierz Szrajter



N.Z. Airman Wins Highest Polish Decoration



267 Squadron Dakotas at North African landing ground



A German V2 rocket © IWM (BU 11149)

Jan Nowak-Jeziorański (1914-2005) – Polish journalist, writer, social worker and patriot, known as „Courier from Warsaw” for his work as an emissary between the Home Army command and the Polish Government in Exile in London, participant of the Warsaw Uprising – was one of 4 passengers brought to Poland by F/Lt S.G. Culliford as part of Most III operation.



THE V2 WEAPON
SAMPLE IN BRITAIN BEFORE
BOMBARDMENT



The operation was undertaken cautiously as the German presence in nearby villages was substantial. The aircraft had problems as upon attempting to take-off the aircraft wouldn't move. Suspecting the wheel brakes had become locked in the 'on' position, a crew member cut the hydraulic lines leading to the brakes, before discovering the Dakota's wheels had sunk into the marshy meadows. The crew could have abandoned and destroyed the aircraft, but with the help of the partisans, the aircraft managed to take off at the third attempt and returned to Brindisi with the parts. In late July 1944, the parts were delivered to London.

The aircraft's crew also included F/O J.P. Williams (navigator), F/Sgt J. Appleby (radio-operator). Security for the operation (about 400 people) was provided by Armia Krajowa group "Urban".

Britain had secured a V2 rocket bomb for purposes of investigation before the Germans commenced firing these weapons at southern England. How this came about was revealed in London today (...)
Evening Post, 1 May 1945



HIGH POLISH HONOUR

A high Polish military decoration, the Order of Virtuti Militari, has been awarded to Flight Lieutenant Stanley George Culliford, of Norsewood, Hawke's Bay. He is the second New Zealand airman to receive this decoration, the first being Wing Commander A. H. C. Boxer, D.F.C., R.A.F., of Nelson, who received it last year. Culliford, who is a son of Mr. and Mrs. A F Culliford, of Norsewood, has since the battle of El Alamein been attached to Squadron 267 of the R.A.F. This squadron, which was engaged in transport flying, followed the Eighth Army to Tunisia, and operated in the Sicilian invasion, and then in Italy (...).
Evening Post, 19 August 1944

The operation was carried out on the night of 25/26 July 1944. New Zealander, a 22-year old pilot of Dakota of No. 267 Squadron RAF, Stanley George Culliford, flew a top-secret mission from Brindisi, Italy into a German-occupied Poland and landed at an Armia Krajowa outpost codenamed Motyl (Butterfly), a village near Jadowniki Mokre (Tarnów region).

The transport plane had been fitted with additional fuel tanks to allow it to stay airborne for at least 13 hours. Captain Culliford's co-pilot was a Polish native Flight Officer Kazimierz Szrajter (who was also a translator).

“

Finally, in a morning of July 25th, I was informed that the flight would take place that night. (...) I suddenly realized that I never flew that type of aircraft, and started to be a little apprehensive. (...) It took F/Lt Culliford, a New Zealander, about five minutes to introduce me to Dakota. After referring me to instruments, fuel and undercarriage system, he made me a fully qualified co-pilot. (...) It was to be my twentieth flight to the occupied Poland. We took off from Brindisi at 7:30 p.m. escorted by a Polish Liberator. It was mostly for our psychical comfort, since both planes were an easy target for German fighters. On board we had some equipment and four passengers. Not only the common sense but also strict regulations prohibited us from knowing whom they were. (...) Our orientation point for landing was the outlet of the River Dunajec to the River Vistula. We reached it according to plan, right on time. Down there they waited for us, and after signals exchange, the lights appeared on four corners of the landing strip. (...)

We frantically tried to free the aircraft, all in vain. We were running out of time and we discussed burning the plane. Finally, after an hour and five minutes on the ground, we succeeded and took off for home. (...) Flying with the wheels down created a drag what threatened with running out of fuel before reaching our base. We filled the hydraulic tank with whatever fluid we could get: water, thermos tea, whatever. By the time we passed the Tatra Mountains, we had the wheels up. (...) It was a beautiful, starry and calm night and we all calmed down, calculating that after three hours of flight we'll be back home and relatively safe. I reflected on the group of people we left behind us, who already for five years fought with the hated occupant, and who put a lot of effort into the "Third Bridge". Our successful flight back to Allied territory with the parts of V-2 was their triumph. (...)

Reminiscence of Most III (Wildhorn III) Operation by its' co-pilot and interpreter
Major Kazimierz Szraj (1919-2012)

"I have seen many towns destroyed, but nowhere have I been faced with such destruction."

Gen. Dwight Eisenhower



The Warsaw Rising broke out on August 1, 1944 and lasted 63 days until October 3, 1944. Almost 50,000 Home Army insurgents faced the might of the German forces occupying the capital of Poland since 1939. Armed conflict spread to all districts of Warsaw. The passivity of the Soviet Red Army units stationed on the other side of the Vistula, and the degree to which the insurgents were outnumbered in their fight against the Nazis, led to death about 16,000 Home Army fighters and 150,000 Polish civilian victims.

WARSAW UPRISING

„(...) nowhere have I been faced with such destruction”



TRAGEDY OF WARSAW

ALL FRONTS ENGAGED

WARSAW IN FLAMES



A group of Home Army soldiers with a female companion posing for a photograph in a rubble street of Warsaw. © IWM (HU 39144)



A little girl passing by one of the many graveyards in the streets of Warsaw. © IWM (HU 105736)



Imperial War Museum, HU 10424-3
Foto: World War II September - October



Imperial War Museum, HU 01-00-00-11
Foto: World War II April - September



Imperial War Museum, HU 10424-3
Foto: World War II September - October

The failure of the Rising was an opportunity for Hitler to begin the destruction of the Polish capital, which he planned before the start of World War II. The Nazis destroyed over 70 percent of residential buildings and 90 percent of historic buildings. The exact amount of losses of pieces of art, monuments of science and culture is unknown but considered enormous.



Imperial War Museum, HU 10424-3
Foto: World War II September - October



Imperial War Museum, HU 01-00-00-11
Foto: World War II April - September

WARSAW UPRISING

„(...) nowhere have I been faced with such destruction”



★ KRAKÓW MILITARY CEMETERY - COMMONWEALTH SECTION

This cemetery contains 522 burials of the Second World War – 7 sailors, 360 soldiers, 128 airmen, 24 civilians and 3 which are unidentified. Of those identified 389 are British, 15 Canadian, 22 Australian, 26 New Zealand, 50 South African, 2 Indian and 15 Polish.

Poland and the Commonwealth countries were allies in the Second World War, but the German occupation made military and industrial installations and communications in Poland targets in the strategic bombing offensive, and, to help the Polish Home Army during the ill-fated Warsaw uprising of 1st of August to 3rd of October 1944, long range supply-dropping missions were flown from bases in Italy. In these and other operations many aircraft were lost and their crews killed or captured.

THE FATE OF WARSAW

(...) Poland was the first, and for a time the strongest fighting ally of Britain. Yet her capital is (...) fighting the third battle in this war. Now Polish airmen, sailors, and soldiers in Italy and Normandy have to watch the final extermination of Warsaw and her people. However, they are perishing not because of wrong timing – the timing was excellent. The fact was that the city was extensively mined by the Germans, and the people of Warsaw commenced fighting when the Russians were in the eastern suburbs of Warsaw. They are being defeated in spite of their heroism because they are not being given the support they desperately need.(...)
(Dr) K.A. Wodzicki,
Consul-General of Poland
Evening Post, 17 August 1944



A Consolidated B-24 Liberator used to drop supplies to the Warsaw Insurgents

BATTLE FOR WARSAW.



HEROIC R.A.F. CREWS

DROP SUPPLIES TO PATRIOTS

Since the Warsaw rising at the beginning of August, states a Rome message, R.A.F. and South African bombers from Italy have been dropping supplies and ammunition to the Polish patriots in the capital. The British, South African, and Polish crews of Liberators and Halifaxes have been making a round trip of over 1700 miles through an area strongly defended by German fighters. To drop supplies accurately they have had to come down low and fly at slow speed, thus presenting very suitable targets to the ground gunners. A total of over 100 aircraft have been sent on these missions. More than half have successfully fought their way through all hazards. Twenty, one bombers have so far been lost. The courage and endurance of the crews will rank with the outstanding acts of heroism of this war.

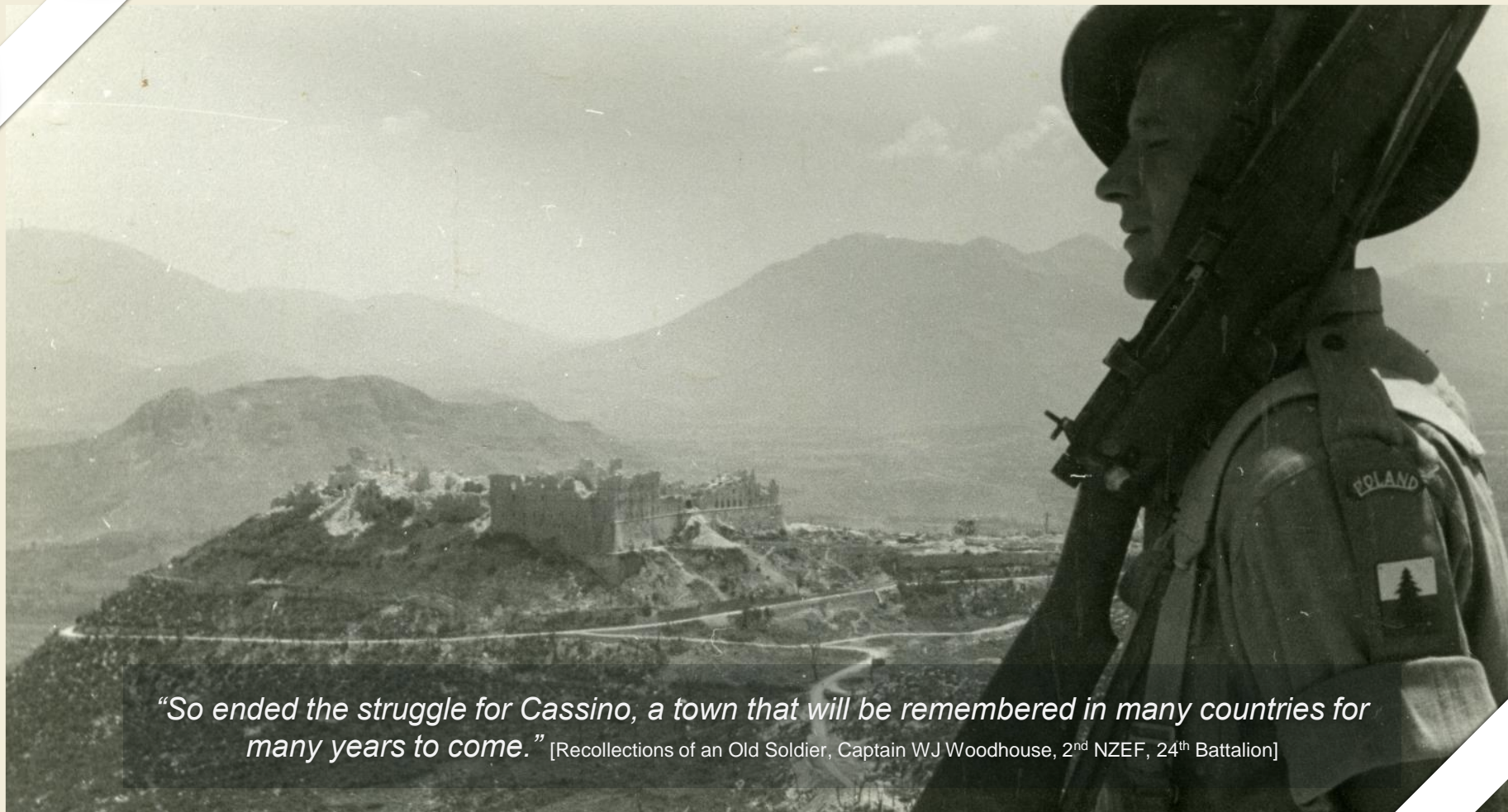
Evening Post, 19 August 1944

Squadron Leader Stanislaw Krol (left) and Warrant Officer Stanislaw Kosowski looking out of a machine gun hatch of their Liberator in Brindisi.

Photograph taken in September 1944 during the Flight's involvement in supply drops for the Polish Home Army in Warsaw. © IWM (MH 1213)



The Warsaw Airlift was a British-led operation to re-supply the besieged Polish resistance Home Army in the Warsaw Uprising, after nearby Soviet forces chose not to come to its aid. It took place between 4 August and 28 September 1944, and was conducted by Polish, British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African airmen flying from Celone and Brindisi in Italy. They were denied the flyover rights from their Soviet allies, who shot at them when the planes entered Soviet airspace.



“So ended the struggle for Cassino, a town that will be remembered in many countries for many years to come.” [Recollections of an Old Soldier, Captain WJ Woodhouse, 2nd NZEF, 24th Battalion]

The struggle for Cassino was one of the most brutal and costly battles involving Polish and New Zealand forces in Second World War.



New Zealand soldiers at Monte Cassino, 15 March 1944; The Jozef Pilsudski Institute

In October 1943, the New Zealand division led by Lieutenant-General Sir Bernard Freyberg arrived in Italy, now under German occupation. In November the New Zealanders joined the Allied effort to breach the Germans' defensive Gustav Line by attacking its eastern margins. Early in 1944 it was involved in an attempt to take Monte Cassino, the key point in the German line blocking the way to Rome.

ALLIED RING CLOSES IN

VICIOUS FIGHTING



Commander of the Indian and New Zealand Divisions at Cassino, Lt Gen Sir Bernard Freyberg VC, 3 January 1944



A Vickers machine gun crew of the 2nd New Zealand Division in action during attacks on German positions at Monte Cassino. © IWM (NA 12552)



German troops captured by the New Zealanders at Cassino being held beside a Sherman tank

MONTE CASSINO BATTLE

"So ended the struggle for Cassino, a town that will be remembered in many countries for many years to come."

The way to Rome led through the strategically pivotal Liri Valley. The entrance to the valley, however, was just over 10 kilometres wide and was overlooked by the 500-metre-high Monte Cassino, topped by an historic Benedictine monastery. Augmented by the Germans' meticulous deployment of minefields, fortifications and flooding through demolition of stop-banks, Cassino was a defender's dream and an attacking army's nightmare. Following a massive bombardment of the German defences, the subsequent aerial bombardment on the 15 February which laid waste to the monastery and its environs, the assault of the town's well-defended railway station by the 28th Maori Battalion on 17 February and a series of other brave but unsuccessful assaults, the cost proved to be too high and New Zealand troops ceased seeking to advance and in early April the New Zealand Division withdrew from the Cassino area.



'SAVAGE ANIMAL STRUGGLE'

(By Telegraph—Press Association—Copyright.)

MAORIS TO FORE AGAIN



CASSINO DEFENCES

"(...) Maoris of the New Zealand Division on the Eight Army front have distinguished themselves. The Germans in one sector of the Maoris' line broke through, but the Maoris immediately attacked and wiped out the entire German force. (...)”
Evening Post, 10 January 1944

Of all the battles involving the Maori Battalion in the Second World War, none was more brutal or costly than the struggle for Cassino. By the time WW2 ended in 1945 the 28th Battalion had become one of the most celebrated and decorated units in the New Zealand forces.

MONTE CASSINO BATTLE

“So ended the struggle for Cassino, a town that will be remembered in many countries for many years to come.”

From December 1943 to January 1944, the 2nd Polish Corps led by General Władysław Anders was transferred to Italy, where it fought until the end of the war. Polish troops were given orders to defend the Sangro-Volturno river line, including front positions in the Mainarde Mountains. They would then fight in the 4th Battle of Monte Cassino on a patch of land fiercely defended by elite German units. Since January 1944, the Allies had unsuccessfully tried to break the Gustav Line, suffering heavy casualties. The five-month-long Battle of Cassino was fought by soldiers from all continents: Europe, Africa, Asia, America and Oceania.



English soldiers from 1/6 East Surreys battalions with ruins in the background, May 1944; The Jozef Pilsudski Institute

POLES' HARD TASK



Troops of the 2nd Polish Corps manning a heavy mortar in a sandbagged mortar site in Cassino, April 1944. © IWM (HU 128236)



Sherman tank driving through the ruins of San Angelo town, 14 May 1944, Italy, The Jozef Pilsudski Institute



Monte Cassino Battle, May 1944; The Jozef Pilsudski Institute



“(…) We then had a spell of ten days before moving into a mountain area to take over from the Poles. This in itself was a new experience, as we had to load all our gear on to mules, and coax the animals along a narrow muddy track in darkness.

I had been up on the previous day with the advance party to look over the area, and as it was Easter Day, we shared our rations with the Poles – hardboiled eggs, carefully divided into small segments, chocolate and beer. Conversation was carried on through interpreters, who spoke at length in Polish and translated the equally long reply into a few words of English! (…)”

Recollections of an Old Soldier. Captain WJ Woodhouse, 2nd NZEF, 24th Battalion



INTO THE GUSTAV LINE



Polish and British flags hoisted over ruins of Monte Cassino Abbey after its capture. © IWM (MH 1680)

On the night of 11 May 1944, after long and difficult preparations, the decisive fourth battle began to break the Gustav Line by carrying out two operations which involved the encirclement of the monastery hill. The Polish advance was aimed at capturing the mountain massif of Monte Cassino-Monte Cairo. Despite fierce fighting and heavy casualties, the first attack on 12 May did not create the intended breakthrough, yet the operational objective was reached. The second attack began on the evening of 16 May. On 18 May at 9.45 am, a patrol of the 12th Podolski Lancers Regiment reached the ruins of the monastery at Monte Cassino. Soon after that, the Polish flag was raised there followed a little later by the British Union Jack next to it.

ALLIES TAKE CASSINO



923 dead & 2931 wounded
Polish 2nd Corps soldiers



350 dead & 1200 wounded
New Zealand Division
soldiers



Troops of the 2nd Polish Corps throwing grenades at the enemy during heavy fighting around Monte Cassino. © IWM (MH 1984)



„Soldiers! My dearest Brothers and Children!

The moment for battle has arrived. Long have we waited for this moment of revenge and retribution over our hereditary enemy. We will fight shoulder to shoulder with the British, American, Canadian, New Zealand divisions. (...)

The task that has befallen us will bring worldwide glory to the Polish soldier. In these moments of trial we will be in the minds and hearts of the entire Polish nation. The spirits of our fallen brothers in arms will support us. Let the lion awake in your heart! (...)

Soldiers – we march ahead with the holy motto of “God, Honor, Homeland” in our hearts, remembering Germany’s bandit attack against Poland, the German-Soviet partitions of Poland, the thousands of ruined towns and cities, the murders and tortures inflicted on hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters, the millions of Poles deported to Germany as slaves, the plight and sorrow of our country, our suffering and exile, with the faith in the justice of Divine Providence.”

- General Anders wrote in his order to the soldiers of the 2nd Polish Corps in the eve of the Cassino Battle

General Władysław Anders asked to be buried alongside his fellow soldiers at the Cassino Cemetery and his wish was met after he died in 1970 in London.





*"Red poppies on Monte Cassino,
 Instead of dew, drank Polish blood.
 As the soldier crushed them in falling,
 For the anger was more potent than death.
 Years will pass and ages will roll,
 But traces of bygone days will stay,
 And the poppies on Monte Cassino
 Will be redder having quaffed Polish blood."*

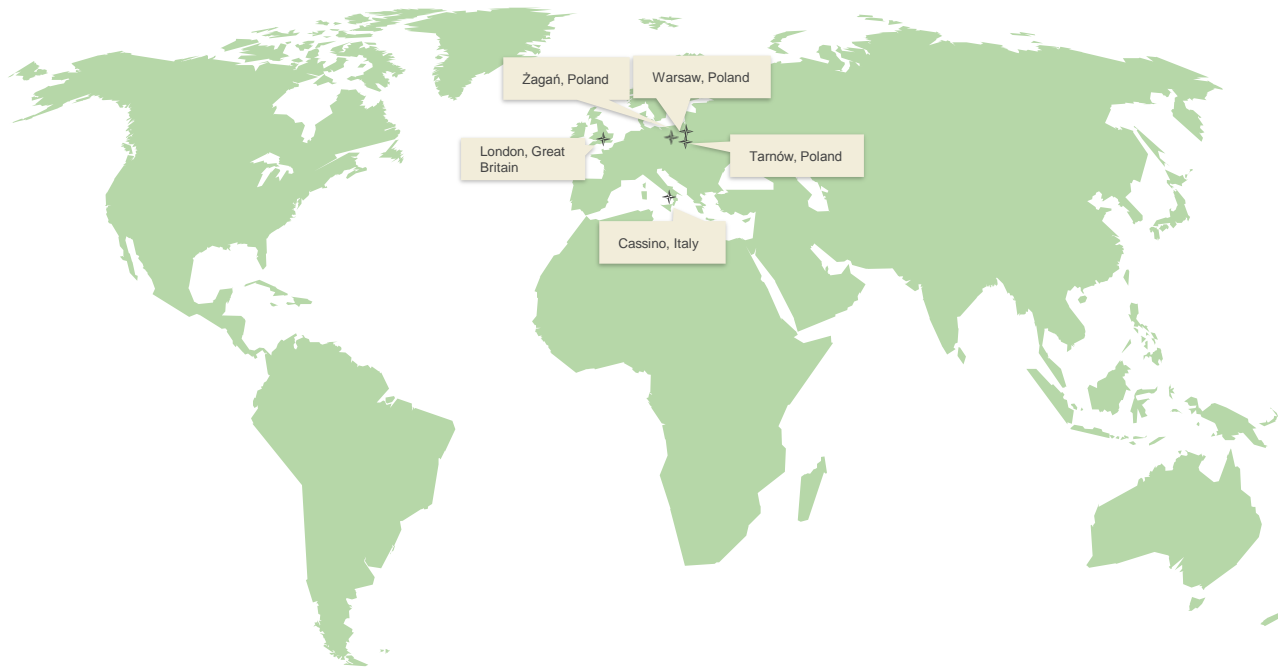
*Polish military song
 of WW2 composed during the Battle of
 Monte Cassino;
 lyrics by Feliks
 Konarski, music by Alfred
 Schütz*

*"They shall grow not old as we that
 are left grow old
 Age shall not weary them, nor the
 years condemn
 At the going down of the sun and in
 the morning
 We will remember them"*



*"The Ode", from "For the Fallen"
 Laurence Binyon, London, 1914*

LOCATIONS



Pahiatua, New Zealand

Palmerston North, New Zealand



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- (9) Polish refugee children arriving in New Zealand on board the ship General Randall.

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- (23) Kaye, George Frederick, 1914-2004. World War 2 New Zealand soldiers, Atina, Italy, New Zealand. Department of Internal Affairs. War History Branch :Photographs relating to World War 1914-1918, World War 1939-1945, occupation of Japan, Korean War, and Malayan Emergency. Ref: DA-06015-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand // The Jozef Pilsudski Institute // Guthrie, Bruce, active 1939-1945. Graves of members of the 26th Battalion, New Zealand Expeditionary Force, Cassino, Italy, New Zealand. Department of Internal Affairs. War History Branch :Photographs relating to World War 1914-1918, World War 1939-1945, occupation of Japan, Korean War, and Malayan Emergency. Ref: DA-12430. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand



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