

Appeal to the Polish Associations

The monuments of the 2nd Polish Corps in Montecassino are in danger.

The businessman who rented the Albaneta area of Montecassino - where, not far from the Polish cemetery, three monuments erected by the 2nd Polish Corps in 1945 are situated (obelisk, tank and iron cross) - is carrying out a project that risks preventing free access to those monuments again.

The project was officially presented at a conference - on June, 27 - in the Abbey of Montecassino, in the presence of civil and religious authorities as well as journalists and is based on the lease contract signed by the Abbot and the entrepreneur in October 2015.

The lease stipulates the possibility for the entry ticket to the entire rented area and therefore to the sites where the monuments are located. Since the roads leading to the monuments are located partly on land owned by the Abbey, access to the monuments will be therefore subject to payment or at the discretion of the tenant.

However:

1. the monuments and related access roads were built by the 2nd Polish Corps in 1945 with the consent of the Abbey and were freely usable until 2015;
2. the Italian state declared recently that the three monuments are a cultural heritage of a public interest and therefore must be freely accessible;
3. the Italian administrative court has rejected the attempt of the tenant and the abbey to "privatize" the public municipal road from which the roads leading to the monuments branch off.

We recall that in December 2015 the same entrepreneur - as the first act of his project - set up in the Albaneta area an outrageous "Santa Claus Village" (with admission ticket, loud music, and Christmas decorations hanging even on the historic Polish signals), which generated so much indignation throughout the world and that it was closed for protests.

Today the situation in some ways is even more serious than that of December 2015. At that time it was a single event, while the project illustrated on June 27, seems to set the conditions for permanent limitation of the Polish sovereignty over monuments.

The project presented by the entrepreneur involves the production of beer in the Albaneta area, named "Montecassino". This sounds like a real affront to the memory of soldiers who died in the Monte Cassino battle.

In October 2016, the Polish Embassy in Rome forwarded to the Abbey precise requests the acceptance of which would be considered essential for the settlement of contrasts created with the Polish side concerning the Albaneta.

There were two essential requests to the Abbey made by the Embassy:

1. to formalize the right of a free access to monuments that has existed for more than 70 years, stipulating a specific legal act which would make access to those monuments independent from the activities of the tenant.
2. modify the lease contract in a way that it will not allow to undertake activities which would be inappropriate to the sacred nature of the area, such as the production of beer.

None of the above requests has been accepted.

All this is unacceptable.

We appeal to all Poles in the world to make their voices heard in order to convince the Abbey of Montecassino to meet the requests presented by the Polish Embassy.

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Pietro Rogacien - President of the Memorial Museum Foundation of the 2nd Polish Corps