

# Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom

<https://szlakinadziei.ipn.gov.pl/sne/exposures/people/9842,Wladyslaw-Drelicharz-1913-1944.html>  
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## Władysław Drelicharz (1913-1944)

Soldier of the September campaign, participant in the Italian Campaign, armoured officer decorated with the Gold Cross of Virtuti Militari

He was born on 16 September 1913 in Tuchów into the family of Józef and Genowefa, née Schab. He was an active member of the Riflemen's Association since his school days. After graduating high school, he joined the Infantry Officer Cadet School in Ostrów-Komorowo. He graduated from the Infantry Officer Cadet School in 1934 and was sent to the 1st Podhale Rifle Regiment in Nowy Sącz for some 8-month training, and then to the 51st Infantry Regiment ("Strzelców Kresowych", literally: Border Rifles). After graduating in 1936, he was assigned to the 51st Infantry Regiment stationed in Beržėnai, where he met his future wife - Alexandra Weiss de Weissenfeld.

After the German aggression against Poland, he fought in the Battle of Iłża. After the battle, he made his way to Kovel and then to Zolochiv. His main destination was France, which he wanted to reach through Hungary. After reaching Hungary, he was imprisoned in the detention camp in Visegrad. On 27 February 1940, he left the camp and reached Beirut through Yugoslavia. He volunteered for service in the Carpathian Rifle Brigade and on 21 May 1940 - he officially became a soldier of the Polish Armed Forces. He took up the post of infantry platoon commander in the 1st Infantry Regiment.

After the surrender of France, he moved with the Brigade to Palestine and then to Alexandria. Once the unit was reorganised and transformed into the Polish Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade, he was appointed commander of a platoon of *carriers* (armoured reconnaissance tankettes). In May 1941, he was redeployed with his unit to defend the fortress of Mersa Matruh and then the fortress of Sidi Baggush. In June 1941, he was given command of the company.

In August of the same year, he was sent by sea to the fortress of Tobruk, which was besieged by the Italians. At that time, Drelicharz became known as the so-called "zagończyk" - a participant of night patrols harassing the enemy in hand-to-hand combat and collecting intelligence on the location of enemy positions. On the night of 20 November 1941, he took part in one of the Brigade's boldest offensive military operations near

Tobruk. The Polish company, where he had command over a reconnaissance platoon, destroyed a fortified Italian position code-named "The Village" (Polish: Wioska). He was injured in that raid and was evacuated to Alexandria for treatment. After his recovery, he was sent to a series of officer training courses in Tel-el-Kebir.

Drelicharz had an excellent reputation among his superiors and subordinates, which is why he was ultimately promoted to captain. In April 1944, his unit was sent to the Italian front. The 2nd Squadron of the 4th Armoured Regiment, which was under Capt. Drelicharz's command, was to support the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division during the fights to break through German fortifications at Monte Cassino. From 12 to 18 May 1944, he kept fighting in battles against enemy forces without a break. Capt. Drelicharz was awarded the Silver Cross of Virtuti Militari for his participation in the Battle of Monte Cassino.

Further intense battles involving Capt Drelicharz's unit were related to the initial phase of breaking the Gothic line - two days of clashes at the Cesano River and then attempts at breaking down the German defence at the Metauro River. In October 1944, the 2nd squadron of the 4th Armoured Regiment, commanded by Capt. Drelicharz, was assigned to infantry units fighting near Faenza and Forli in the Northern Apennines.

The attack on the Monte Fortino complex was launched on 21 November 1944. After capturing it, Polish tanks continued the assault on Ca de Fuci. The only way to advance was a road along an exposed mountain ridge, perfectly visible to German anti-tank artillery. It was there that Capt. Drelicharz's tank called "Pigmej" was hit three times and burned. Captain Władysław Drelicharz died on the spot. He was buried in a local cemetery in Dovadola. In 1946, he was exhumed and reburied in the Polish War Cemetery in Bologna.

For his service, Władysław Drelicharz was awarded the following Polish decorations: the Gold and Silver Cross of the Order of Virtuti Militari, twice the Cross of Valour, three times the Badge of Honour for Wounds and Injuries and the British Military Cross and Defence Medal.

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