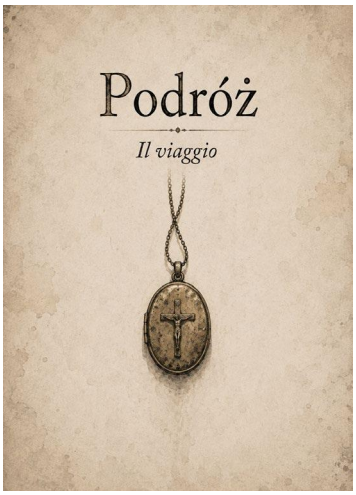
Podróż

Il viaggio

PODRÓŻ

Jednostronicowe streszczenie



Prawdziwa polska historia o wojnie, wygnaniu i drugiej ojczyźnie

Graphic novel inspirowana autentyczną historią żołnierza, którego droga prowadzi od września 1939 roku przez łagier, Armię Andersa i Monte Cassino aż do niespodziewanego zakorzenienia we Włoszech.

Forma: opowieść graficzna + precyzyjne tło historyczne

To nie jest tylko opowieść o utraconej ojczyźnie. To także historia o tym, jak obca ziemia może stać się domem.

SYNOPSIS

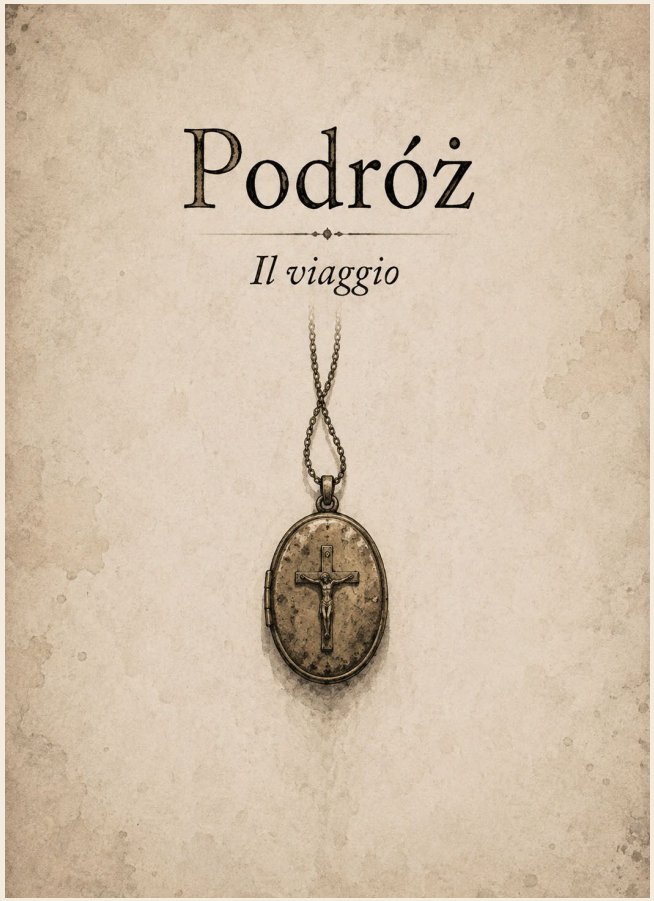
Podróż opowiada prawdziwą historię polskiego żołnierza-sapera, którego życie zostaje rozbite przez wojnę i przemoc wielkiej historii. Po niemieckiej inwazji walczy za ojczyznę, trafia do niewoli, ucieka, a następnie wraca do rodzinnych stron tylko po to, by odkryć, że znalazły się one pod okupacją sowiecką. Aresztowany przez NKWD, doświadcza łagru i świata, w którym człowieka próbuje się pozbawić pamięci, godności i przyszłości.

Przełom przychodzi wraz z układem Sikorski–Majski i formowaniem Armii Andersa. Z sowieckiej niewoli bohater wyrusza przez Azję Środkową i Bliski Wschód ku nowej służbie. Ostatecznie trafia do 2. Korpusu Polskiego i do Włoch, gdzie droga do wolnej Polski wydaje się prowadzić przez Monte Cassino.

W bitwie o Monte Cassino, walcząc w saperach, otwiera przejścia pod ogniem nieprzyjaciela i zostaje ciężko ranny. Jednak najgłębsza rana przychodzi po zwycięstwie: wojna się kończy, ale Polska, o którą walczył, nie wraca w znanej mu postaci. Jak wielu żołnierzy Andersa, staje wobec wyboru między powrotem a wygnaniem.

Pozostaje we Włoszech. To, co zaczyna się jako przymusowe wygnanie, z czasem staje się drugą ojczyzną. Podróż łączy intymną historię jednego człowieka z pamięcią zbiorową Europy — opowiadając o honorze, zdradzie, stracie, pamięci i nadziei, a także o głębokiej, szczególnej więzi między Polską a Włochami.

Tematy	Tło historyczne	Potencjał
wojna • wygnanie • pamięć • honor	1939 • łagier • Armia Andersa • Monte Cassino	prawdziwa historia • silna warstwa wizualna • aktualność



PUBLISHER PITCH

PODRÓŻ

THE JOURNEY

A true Polish story, seen through an Italian gaze.

A historical graphic novel rooted in a true story, reconstructed from family memory and set against documented historical events.

War. Captivity. Anders' Army. Monte Cassino. Betrayal. Exile. And the discovery of an unexpected second homeland in Italy.

THE CORE IDEA

A modern Odysseus

Podróż follows Sylwek, a Polish soldier whose life is torn apart by the Second World War. He fights for his country, is captured, survives Soviet imprisonment, joins the forces of General Władysław Anders, reaches Italy, fights at Monte Cassino — and discovers that military victory will not bring him home.

His journey is not a fictional story placed against a historical backdrop. It is rooted in real life, preserved through family memory.

The result is both intimate and historical: the private story of one man, and the larger story of a continent whose borders and identities were violently rewritten.

THE TRUE STORY BEHIND PODRÓŻ

A life carried across Europe

Born in Poland in 1910, the man behind Sylwek worked as a blacksmith and locksmith before being mobilised into the Polish Army in 1939. After fighting the German invasion, he was captured and deported into the German camp and forced-labour system. He escaped in 1940 and made his way home — only to find his region under Soviet occupation.

Arrested by the NKVD and sentenced to fifteen years in the Soviet camp system, he was released after the 1941 Sikorski–Mayski Agreement and joined the Polish forces under General Władysław Anders. His route then ran through Central Asia and the Middle East before bringing him to Italy with the 3 Dywizja Strzelców Karpackich (3rd Carpathian Rifle Division).

Serving as a sapper, he fought at Monte Cassino and later on the Adriatic front, where he was seriously wounded. Decorated for his wartime service, he faced one last choice after victory: return to a Poland now ruled by a Soviet-backed communist regime, or remain in exile.

He chose Italy. What began as displacement became a second homeland. He built a new family life on the Adriatic coast and remained there until his death in the early 1980s — carrying with him both the memory of Poland and the country that had finally given him peace.

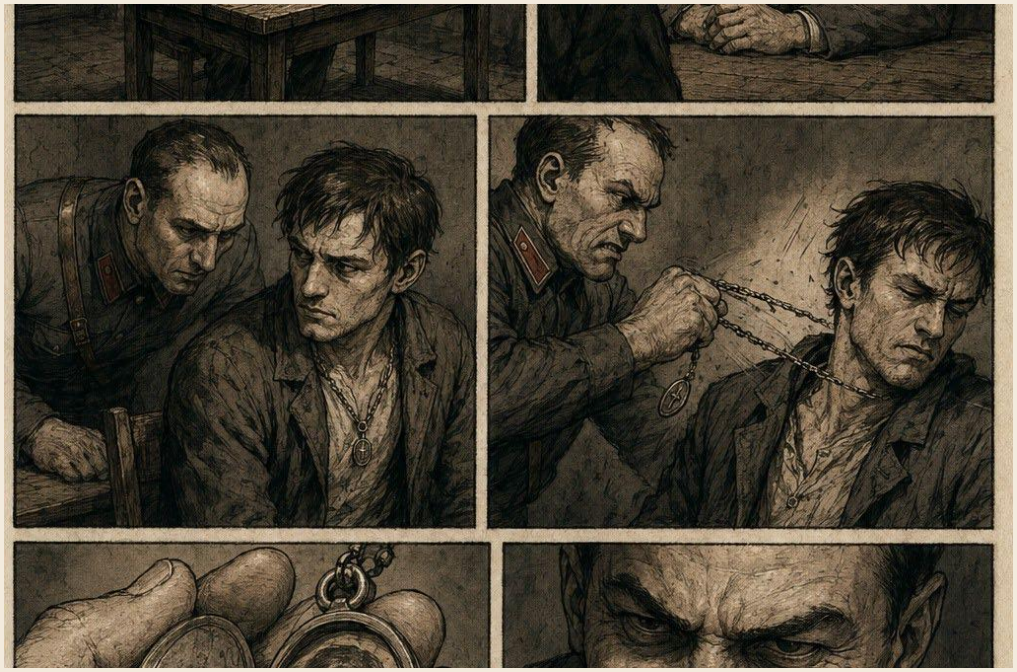
NARRATIVE BEAT I

A homeland broken

Before the war, “home” was something simple: a room, a voice, a gesture of love. In September 1939, Poland is invaded first by Nazi Germany and then by the Soviet Union, and divided between the two occupiers. Sylwek’s private world is swept into history.

He fights the German enemy, is captured, escapes — and believes that crossing the wire will mean a return to freedom.

It does not. The road home leads instead into Soviet-controlled territory, and into another system of fear.



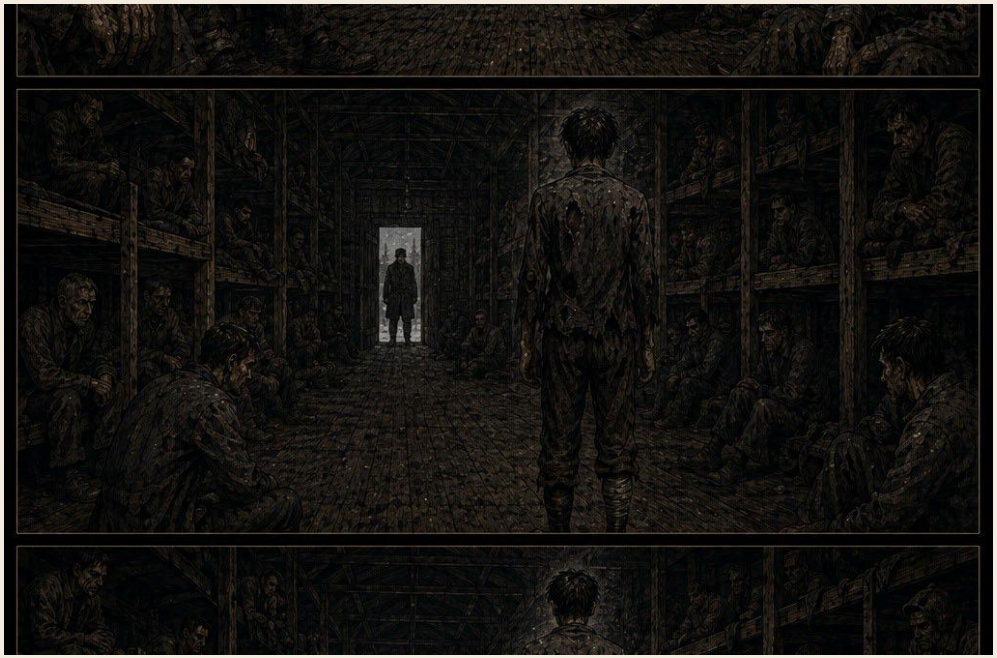
NARRATIVE BEAT II

Captured by another enemy

An NKVD interrogation turns Poland’s political catastrophe into something brutally personal. Names, units, loyalties — and finally the small medallion containing his wife’s photograph — become instruments of humiliation.

The medallion is the novel’s central visual motif: home reduced to something small enough to fit in a hand, survive a prison, cross a desert and reach another country.

The Soviet chapter remains deliberately human in scale. History is present, but always through the body: cold, hunger, fear, memory.



NARRATIVE BEAT III

“I chose honour”

In the camp, Sylwek is physically diminished but morally unbroken. After the Sikorski–Mayski Agreement of 30 July 1941 restored Polish–Soviet diplomatic relations, the Soviet authorities proclaimed an “amnesty” for Polish citizens held in the USSR. A separate military agreement enabled the formation of a Polish army on Soviet territory under General Władysław Anders. Sylwek’s release and enlistment belong to this wider historical moment.

The image captures a simple moment: a man enters the barracks and asks who is willing to fight for Poland. The room remains still.

Sylwek stands.

The moment is deliberately restrained. No speech, no heroic pose. The choice itself becomes an act of resistance.

It becomes one of the project’s key emotional ideas: honour not as rhetoric, but as the refusal to surrender one’s inner freedom.

NARRATIVE BEAT IV

With Anders, toward Italy

Released into a new military life, Sylwek joins the Polish forces formed under General Władysław Anders. Evacuated from the Soviet Union in 1942, these forces passed through Iran and the Middle East; in 1943 the Polish II Corps was formed and later deployed to the Italian campaign.

Wojtek — the Syrian brown bear adopted by soldiers of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company — appears as a small but instantly recognisable historical detail. He travelled with the unit through the Middle East and Italy and is reported to have helped move ammunition during the Battle of Monte Cassino. He is not used merely as a charming mascot, but as part of the extraordinary reality that surrounded these soldiers.

The journey itself becomes the structure of the novel: Poland remains the destination, even as every road seems to lead farther away.

NARRATIVE BEAT V

Monte Cassino

Italy is not a detour in Sylwek's story. It becomes the place where his hope of returning to Poland is tested with the greatest intensity.

The battle holds a distinct place in Polish national memory, and the Polish military cemetery below the abbey remains one of its most powerful sites of remembrance.

The graphic novel approaches the battle from ground level: ammunition, mud, exhaustion, comrades, injury. Monumental history is seen from the perspective of a single soldier.

NARRATIVE BEAT VI

Victory without return

The deepest wound comes after the fighting. Sylwek is told that he may return to Poland — but the Poland that emerges from the war is no longer the state for which he had set out to fight. Its borders have been redrawn, and political power is passing to a Soviet-backed communist regime.

For many soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces in the West, victory over Germany did not bring the restoration of the independent Poland for which they had fought. Return was possible, and many did return, but for others it meant accepting a radically transformed political order and, in some cases, the risk of surveillance or repression.

This is the emotional paradox at the heart of Podróż:

“They won the war.
They lost our homeland.”

NARRATIVE BEAT VII

A second homeland

Sylwek remains in Italy. What begins as exile slowly becomes another form of belonging: not an erasure of Poland, but a second homeland built through everyday life, family, love and continuity.

The final image returns to the hand. The same hand that crawled beneath wire, endured the cold, held a rifle, protected a medallion and clenched in anger now simply rests upon another.

“He had lost one homeland.
He found another in a hand that never let go of his.”

WHY THIS STORY NOW

History that refuses to stay in the past

Podróż is set in the 1940s, but its questions feel painfully contemporary: what is a homeland when borders are shattered? What survives exile? What does freedom mean when larger powers decide the fate of smaller nations?

The novel does not use the present to simplify the past, nor the past to deliver a political slogan. Its relevance lies in recognition: war has returned to the European imagination not as an abstraction, but as a lived reality of displacement, fear, resistance and belonging.

By keeping its focus on one ordinary life, the project gives younger readers a way into difficult history through empathy rather than instruction.

POLAND AND ITALY

A bond across centuries

Podróż is also a story about a Polish–Italian bond that reaches deep into history. From the Polish Legions formed in Italy at the end of the eighteenth century to the shared nineteenth-century language of national independence, both traditions have associated freedom with exile, insurrection and resistance to foreign domination.

That connection is written into the two national anthems themselves. Poland's anthem was written in Reggio Emilia in 1797 for the Polish Legions in Italy and still sings of marching "from the Italian land to Poland"; in the final stanza of the Italian anthem, Goffredo Mameli invokes "Polish blood" alongside Italian blood as victims of imperial oppression. It is an unusual and powerful trace of shared historical memory.

For a Polish publisher, the project offers an Italian act of attention toward a Polish story and toward a historical relationship that both cultures still carry within them.

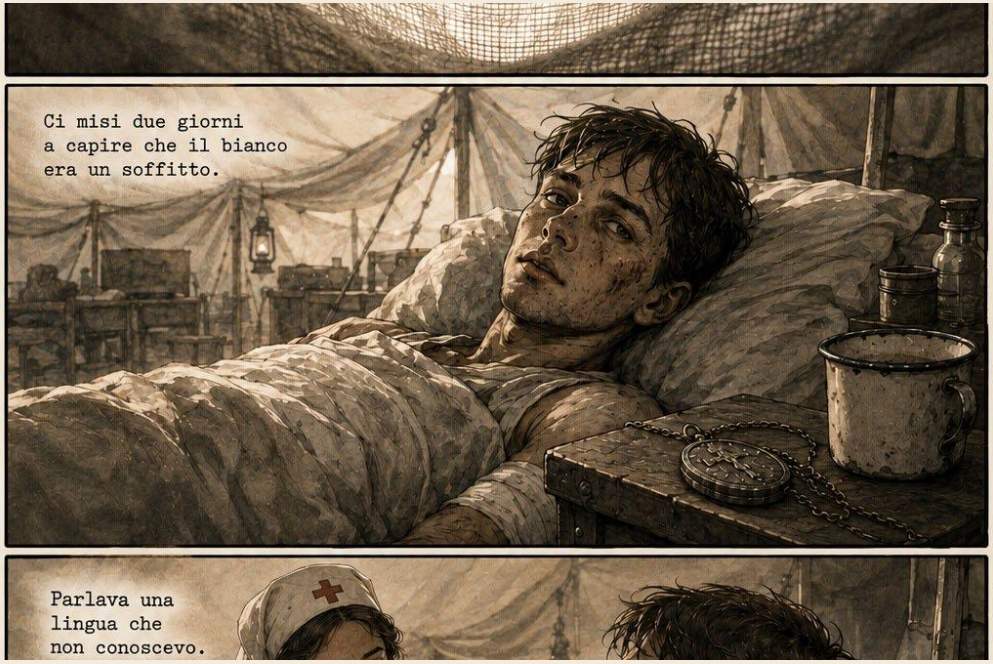
THE FORM

Two levels of reading

Podróż is designed to work on two levels at once:

- **as an immediate, emotional graphic novel, driven by images, recurring symbols and a clear personal journey;**
- **as a work of historical memory, with concise contextual passages that explain the events surrounding Sylwek without interrupting the narrative flow.**

The reader can move through the story quickly, or slow down and discover the wider historical frame. The ambition is accessibility without simplification.



EDITORIAL POSITIONING

A Polish story with European reach

Primary audience: readers of historical graphic novels, family-history narratives and Second World War stories, with an immediate relevance for Polish readers and for Italian readers interested in the role of the Polish II Corps in the Allied campaign in Italy.

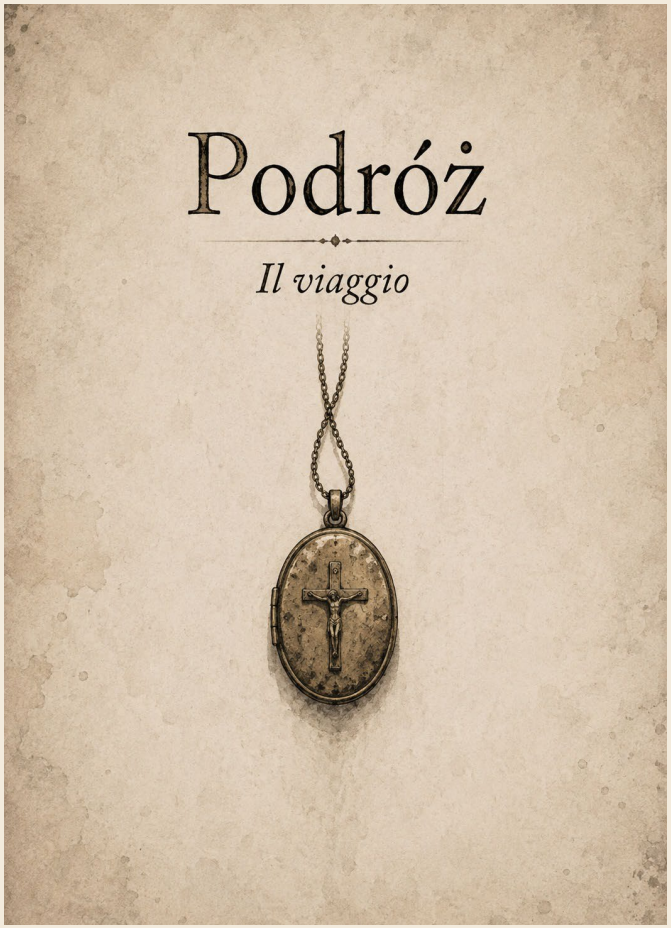
The project also has potential beyond the traditional comics shelf: schools, cultural institutes, historical museums, Polish–Italian cultural initiatives, exhibitions, and events connected with Monte Cassino and the Polish II Corps.

The visual language is deliberately non-photorealistic: ink, watercolour, earth and sepia tones dominate the historical sections, while the epilogue shifts into warmer, more saturated colours — like a family photograph slowly returning to life.

A rough first draft of the complete project is attached as a working sample, showing the main narrative beats, visual rhythm and overall arc.

The story, script and narrative are original authorial work. Generative AI is used openly and deliberately as a creative tool in the visual development.

The final version will further refine and develop these sequences and accompany them with concise, carefully researched historical passages that provide precise context without interrupting the narrative flow.



AUTHOR

Gabriele Capecchi

Gabriele Capecchi is an Italian lawyer and author based in Milan, with an international professional background and a long-standing interest in history, philosophy, memory, and the ways in which individual lives intersect with major historical events.

His academic path reflects this interdisciplinary approach. He holds a degree in Law, an LL.M. earned in London, and a degree in History, and is currently pursuing a degree in Philosophy. His research interests range from the history of Christianity to the study of Jewish communities in territories occupied by the Italian Army during the Second World War, with particular attention to the relationship between institutions, individual choices, and historical responsibility.

Alongside his professional and academic work, he serves in the Military Corps of the Italian Red Cross, where he performs duties as an ambulance driver. This direct involvement in humanitarian service in a military context has further strengthened his interest in the human dimension of conflict, together with a deep awareness that the tragedies of the past are never entirely beyond return.

Podróż grows naturally out of these different strands: historical research, family memory, and visual storytelling, brought together in an attempt to recover one individual life without separating it from the larger forces that shaped it.

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Podróż

The Journey

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a modern Odysseus.
Of a man who fought for his homeland
and for an idea of freedom.

His homeland was invaded, broken, and betrayed.
He crossed prisons, escapes, snow, desert and war,
chasing for years the chance to return home.

This story reached me through the memories
that his grandson has carefully preserved.
I have tried to retell it with respect,
without presuming to fill every silence
and without turning into certainty what
belongs to memory.

It is one of the many personal stories that
great History so often leaves at the margins.

And perhaps for this very reason it can still
speak to us, in newly restless years,
of homeland, freedom, loss and hope.

Villasimius, August 2026
Gabriele Capecchi
Script: GC - Artwork: AI

Cassino, May 1944.
The fourth battle.

AMMO!
MOVE!
7.62 mm
240 SZT.

Sylwek!
Stay down!

RAK!
RAK!

Before the war, home was a simple thing.

A room. A voice. A gesture of love.

Then everything changed in one night.
Or perhaps we had simply been too blind to see
that it had already been changing for some time.

We thought we had
a single front.

We thought the enemy
was only the one before us.

I crossed the barbed wire
believing I would be free.

But History was coming at us
from every side.

* *Famílija? = Surname?*
* *Čast'? = Unit?*

They could strike me.

Not her.

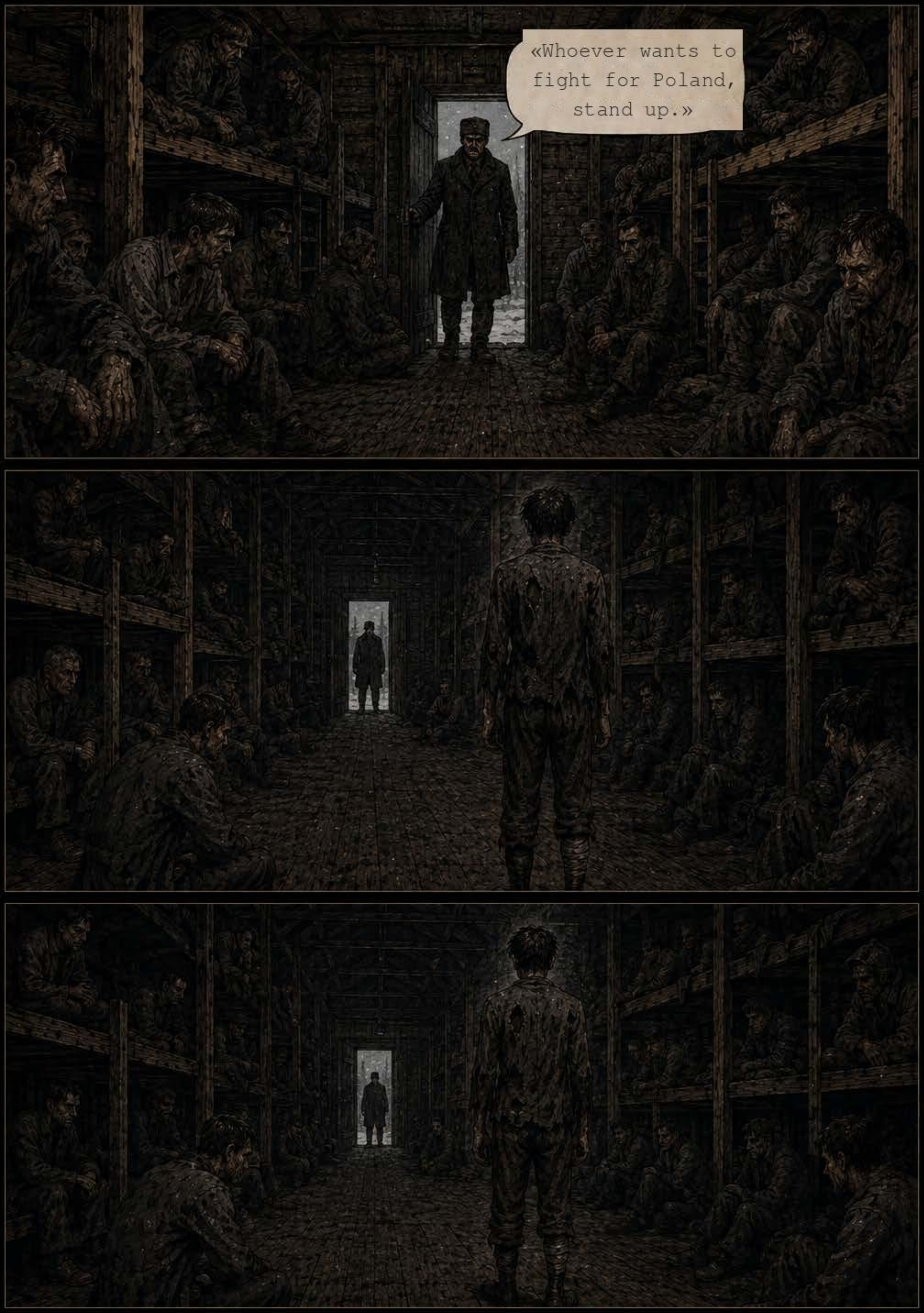
They took my name.

They took my sleep.

They took my days.

They thought they had taken everything.

They had taken nothing from me.



I chose honour.

Allied training camp. Middle East.

«Italy.
With Anders.»

ITALIA

MAR TIRRENO

The road to Poland ran across an Italian hillside.

NAPOLI→

ITALIA

Tomorrow.

Cassino

First the darkness came back.
Then the darkness turned white.
It took me two days to see that the white was a ceiling.
She spoke a language I did not know.
She often came back to see me.

MONTE CASSINO

Commander
MONTE CASSINO

If you want to return to Poland, you can. But Poland is now under Soviet control. The decision is yours.

We had given our blood.

And they had betrayed us.

A new beginning

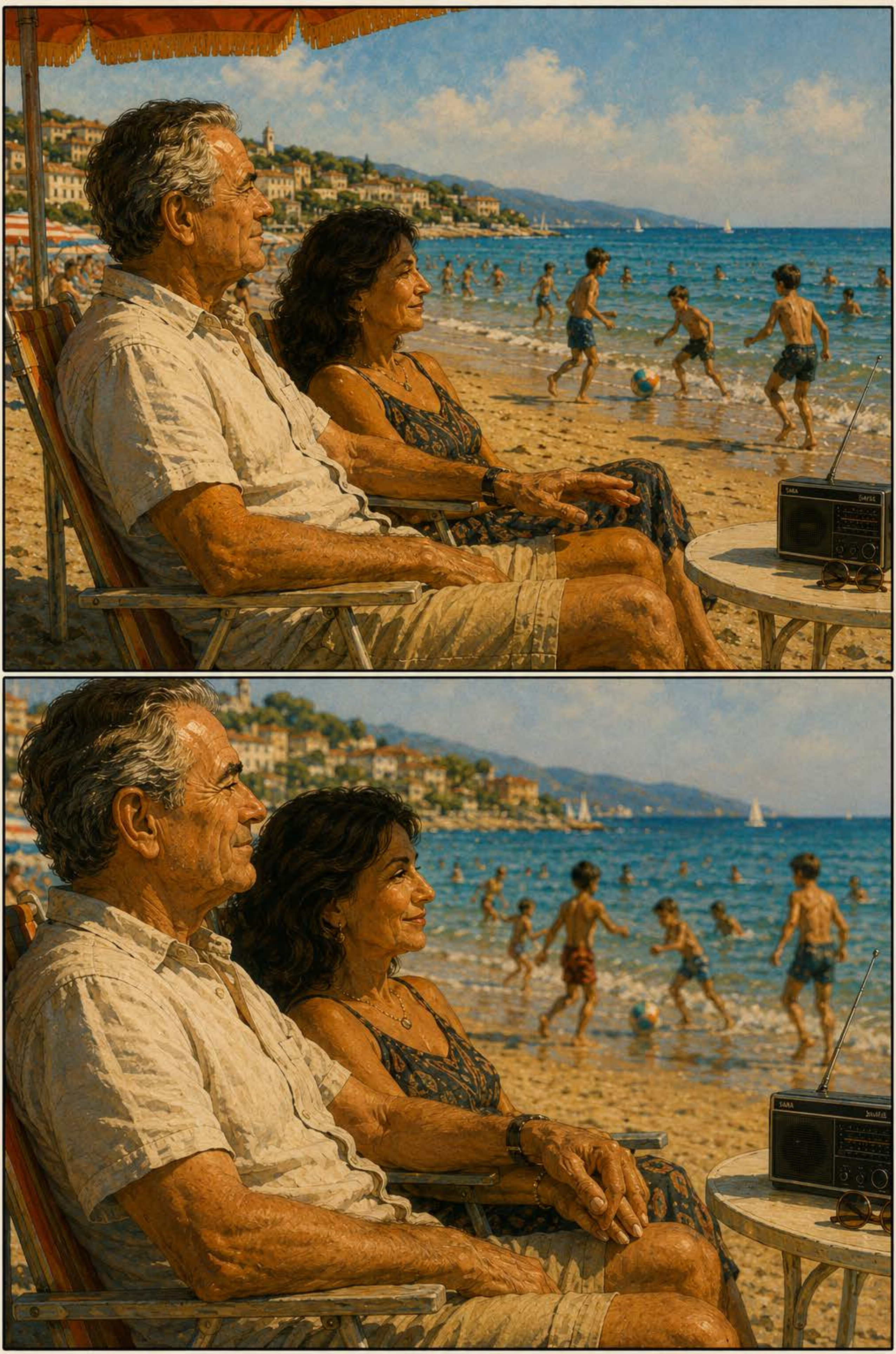
Porto San Giorgio, 1980

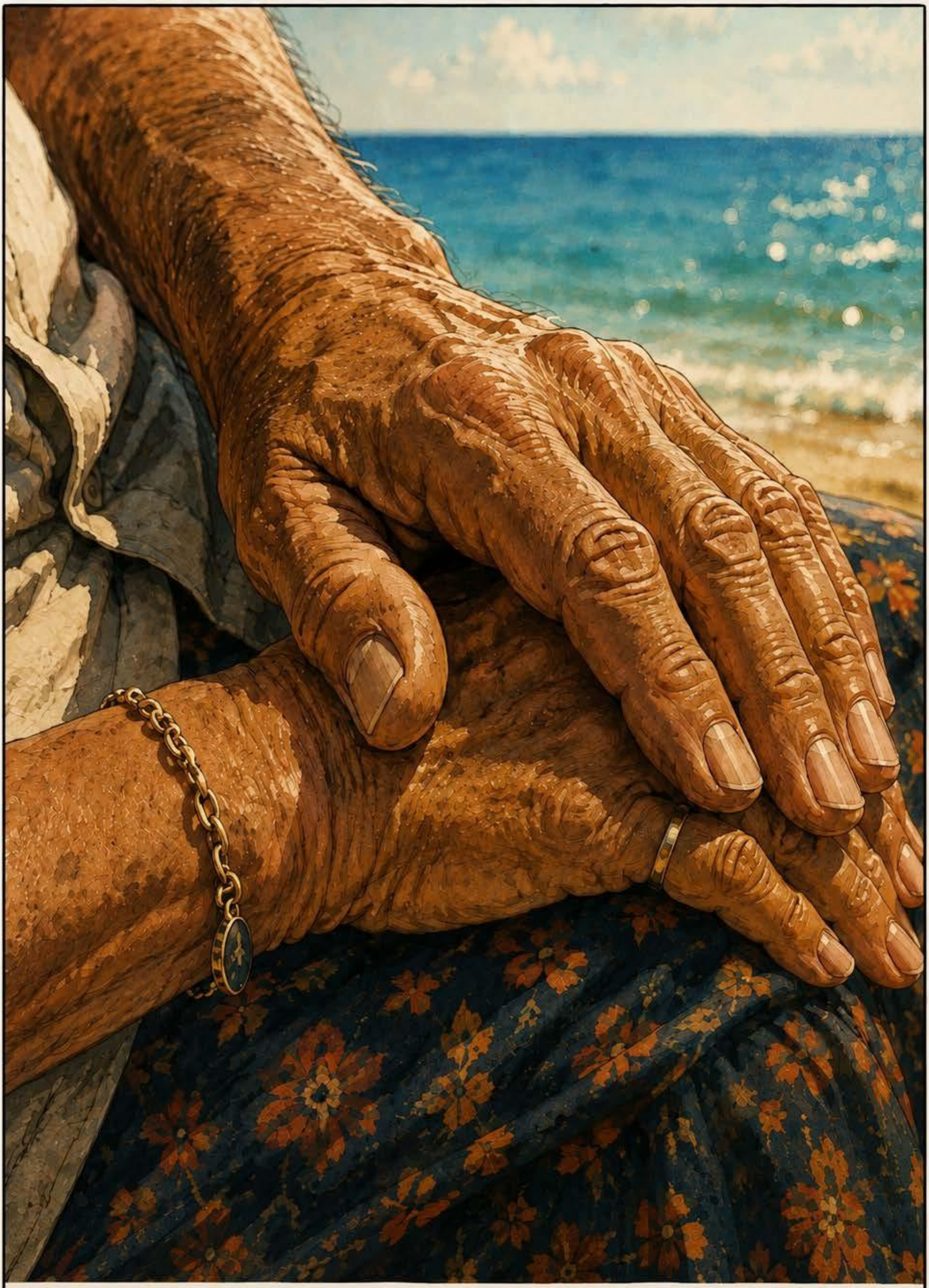
News keeps coming from Poland of Solidarność's resistance despite the repression. John Paul II renews his appeal for dialogue.

SABA

Meersburg 12S

«Grandpa!»





I had lost a homeland.

I found another in a hand that never let go of mine.

THE END