

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/10593,quotTrails-of-Hope-The-Odyssey-of-Freedom-Tobruk-1941-History-Point-in-the-Bleda.html>

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"Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom" – Tobruk 1941 – History Point in the Błędów Desert























On 9–11 June 2023, Polish Błędów Desert became a Libyan desert in the IPN "Living History Point". Approximately 160 reenactors acted out the fights of Polish, English, Australian, French, German and Italian troops in North Africa and the Mediterranean, with special focus on the Siege of Tobruk (1941).

The accompanying display included uniforms and equipment of troops fighting at Tobruk, armoured vehicles, as well as civilian fashion from the 1930s. Moreover, the visitors had an opportunity to see the IPN *Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom* exhibition. It has already been shown in many countries on four continents – wherever soldiers and civilians reached after leaving the "inhuman Soviet land" with General Anders' army. For more information about the exhibitions and the project, see: <https://szlakinadziei.ipn.gov.pl/sne>

On Saturday evening, 10 June, the visitors could see the historical spectacle "Tobruk 1941". During his speech before the performance, the IPN President Karol Nawrocki, Ph.D., said: *After 1939, Polish soldiers fought for freedom and independence of their country, which was taken from them by Germany and Soviet Union. As Gen. Stanislaw Maczek said, "the Polish soldier fights for the freedom of all nations, but dies only for Poland".*

The representatives of the IPN Publishing House encouraged visitors to purchase books at the mobile bookstore. The Cobi Company presented the "Little Army" building blocks and other collections for children.

The event was organized by the IPN Office of History Points and the IPN Branch in Krakow, in cooperation with the Małopolska Voivodship, Municipality of Klucze and leading reenactment groups from all over Poland.

In late August 1941, approx. 5,000 Poles from the Polish Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade commanded by Colonel Stanisław Kopański were moved into Tobruk, which was besieged by the Italians and Germans. The Polish unit entered the battle in December 1941. Poles

captured the Madauar Hill and the Acroma town, contributing to the relieve of the 1941 siege of Tobruk by the British, New Zealand, and South African forces. Polish soldiers were awarded the prestigious title of the Tobruk Rats by their Australian brothers in arms. It was the first major Axis defeat during the Western Desert Campaign of the World War II. In 1942, the Polish unit was withdrawn from the African front and joined the Polish forces of Gen. Anders in Palestine. It was transformed into the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division and took part in the Italian Campaign, participating in the capture of Monte Casino in 1944.

For more information on the Polish Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade, see the IPN publication: *Along the Sandy Trails with the Carpathian Riflemen*

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