

# Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom

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## ASTANA

3XHC+7J2 RADIONOVKA,  
ASTANA

02.06.2022 - 25.06.2022

KAZAKHSTAN

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## Exposures

Kazakhstan and the steppes of Kyrgyzstan became the destination for mass deportation of the Polish people as early as in the end of the 18th century, when the authorities of tsarist Russia expatriated participants in the Polish independence uprisings to that distant region. Our compatriots contributed to the research of Kyrgyz culture, folklore, and language.

Joseph Stalin continued the policy initiated by the tsar by deporting thousands of Polish people to Kazakhstan in 1940–41. After the invasion of the Third Reich on the USSR, those regions provided a safe rear area for the Soviet State and the Red Army. Hundreds of thousands of people, as well as several hundred of production plants, hospitals, universities, the USSR Academy of Sciences and even the Mosfilm studios were evacuated to the area. At the same time the military units of the Red Army were trained in Kazakhstan.

After the conclusion of Sikorsky-Mayski agreement, the soviet authorities designated the Kazakh SSR as one of the areas for the formation of the Polish Army in the USSR. Thousands of Polish people set off towards it from the prisons, camps, and places of forced labour. The road to the south was far from being easy. Many died on the road, exhausted and weakened by diseases unable to cope with the horrors of the transport. Nevertheless, thousands of Poles and Polish citizens managed to reach the drafting points scattered around this broad expanse of land: in Petropavlovsk, Alma-Ata, Aktiubinsk and Semipalatinsk. The climate, gentler than in the neighbouring Uzbekistan, helped to decrease the number of deaths and diseases.

Early in February 1942 the Polish Army began to form in southern Kazakhstan. However, the formation of the Polish Army in the USSR encountered problems, especially due to the shortage of officers, equipment, and uniforms, but also due to insufficient food rations. A further burden for the emerging army were the Polish civilians, who found seeking the aid of Polish troops the only way of saving themselves and their families. The command of the Anders' Army did everything they could to save the largest number of Polish citizens. They were all aware that the people were exhausted by soviet repressions, lack of food, and contagious diseases. Leaving them without support would mean sentencing them to difficult sanitary conditions leading to eventual death.

The trained units spent most of the time on military practice, yet also found space for civic and patriotic activity, and religious life. The locals living in the area where the Polish troops were being formed tried to help Poles in every way they could.

The memory of the support provided by the Kazakhs is still very much alive in the family tales of those who managed to survive.

Due to the shortage of adequate supplies, Anders' Army left Kazakhstan with Stalin's permission in 1942 and set forth for the Middle East. There they received the missing equipment and were trained by the British. They left behind the steppes of Kazakhstan speckled with the graves of soldiers and civilians who died of diseases and exhaustion.



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### TASHKENT

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87WG+Q79, TASHKENT,  
04.10.2022 - 31.10.2022  
UZBEKISTAN



>



Gustaw Herling-Grudziński  
(1919-2000)

Writer, essayist, literary critic, inmate of a Soviet Gulag, soldier of General Władysław Anders' Army

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