

Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom

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Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja (1895-1966)

An Indian aristocrat and diplomat, Maharaja of Nawanagar, called "the Good Maharaja" by the Polish children that he sheltered during World War II.

Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja was born on 18 September 1895 in Sarodar as the son of the younger brother of the ruler of Nawanagar, Ranjitsinhji Vibhaji Jadeja. This Maharaja of the Princely State of Nawanagar in north-western India on the Kathiawar Peninsula, who was also a famous cricketer, adopted Digvijaysinhji and brought him up as his successor.

Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji received his education at schools in India and England (Rajkumar College, Malvern College and University College London). He began his military career in 1919, ending it with the rank of Lieutenant General in 1947. He was awarded the British War Medal for his participation in World War I.

On 2 April 1933, after his uncle had died, he assumed the title of Maharaja of Nawanagar. He was also Chancellor of the Indian Chamber of Princes. During World War II, he had a seat in the Imperial War Cabinet in London and represented India on the Pacific War Council. After the war, he became a delegate of independent India to the United Nations, where he served as the deputy leader of the Indian delegation, and was, among other things, the president of the UN Administration Tribunal (1950-1951).

The Maharaja of Nawanagar became an advocate for Polish children evacuated with the Anders Army after the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement had been signed. He proposed that the children should live near his summer residence, in the Balachadi refugee settlement.

The Polish Children Camp established in July 1942 provided shelter to 650 children. The Maharaja was personally involved in the construction of this settlement. In order to improve the living conditions, he ordered the area to be afforested and enriched with banana and papaya saplings and flowers. He also persuaded the Indian Chamber of Princes to support the Polish

refugees financially.

The Indian aristocrat earned great sympathy among Polish children, he often visited them and participated in celebrations organised in the settlement. When asked by General Władysław Sikorski how to repay his kindness, the Maharaja was to reply "In liberated Poland, name a street in Warsaw after me." Today, in the Ochota district of Warsaw, there is the Square of the Good Maharaja and a monument commemorating him.

He died on 3 February 1966 in Bombay.

On 11 March 2016, 50 years after his death, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland adopted *the resolution on the commemoration of the Good Maharaja* for his help for Polish children and refugees during World War II.

Pursuant to the Decision of the President of the Republic of Poland, the Good Maharaja was posthumously awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland in recognition of his outstanding service in providing support for the children of Polish exiles.

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