

Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom

<https://szlakinadziei.ipn.gov.pl/sne/exposures/places/9497,Tobruk.html>
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TOBRUK

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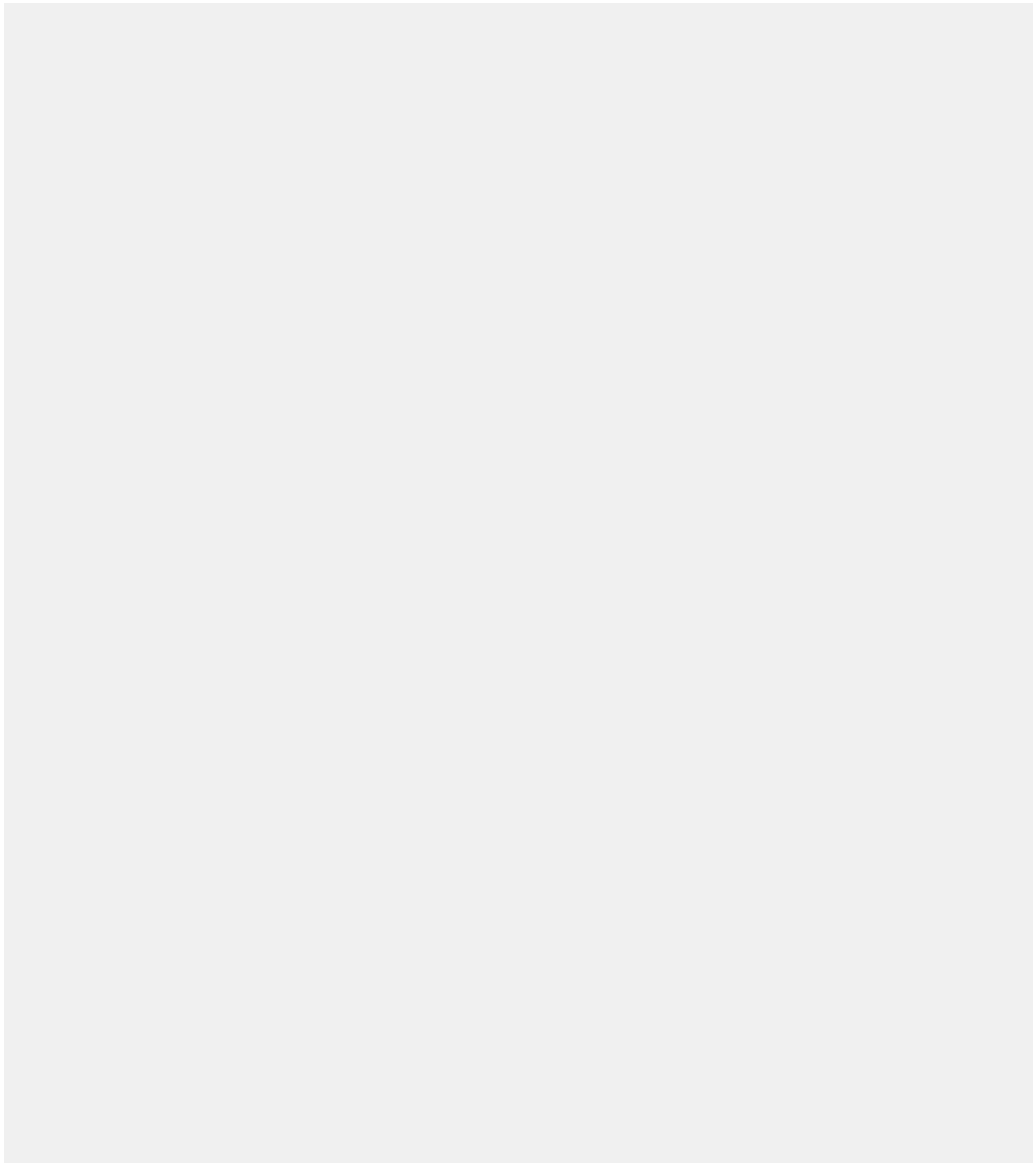
Tobruk's history dates back to antiquity, when it was a Greek colony and then a Roman fortress guarding the border of Cyrenaica.

It was also one of the convenient ports on the coastal shipping route in the Mediterranean Sea. In 1911, Tobruk came under Italian rule and became an important military base for them. After the outbreak of World War II, on 22 January 1941, it was captured by the Allies. The city was manned with troops of the Australian 9th Division as well as English and Indian troops. On April 10, Tobruk was surrounded by Axis forces.

In August 1941, units of the Polish Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade (SBSK) entered the besieged Tobruk. The brigade had been formed in Syria on 12 April 1940, under an agreement between General Władysław Sikorski and the French government. After the fall of France, the Polish unit moved to Palestine, where it became part of the British forces in the Middle East. The fighting in Tobruk was this unit's baptism by fire.

The SBSK was sent to fight in one of the most difficult battle zones. Initially, the Poles occupied the area of Fort Solaro; on 3 October they were moved to the western section of the defenses, opposite Madauar Hill. Despite the standstill in fighting, the Polish soldiers undertook combat and reconnaissance activities, for which they received well-deserved praise from their superiors in the Allied command. On 14 November, the Polish units were visited by the Commander-in-Chief, General Władysław Sikorski, who met with the soldiers and decorated those who had distinguished themselves during battle. On 21 November, the Poles took part in the Allied attack launched from the besieged fortress of Tobruk. On 10 December 1941, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the SBSK captured Madauar Hill and the town of Acroma. As a result, contact was established with the relief and the siege of Tobruk was broken. The Polish soldiers left Tobruk and took part in further combat operations of the British 8th Army. 109 soldiers of the SBSK died during the fighting to defend Tobruk.

In Tobruk, there is a cemetery where soldiers of the Carpathian Brigade are buried, both defenders of the fortress and those who died in the course of further African activities of the SBSK. 213 of the fallen, who died from wounds and other causes, rest there, including 132 "desert rats" or participants of the fights in Tobruk.



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18.03.2022 - 28.04.2022

POLAND



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