



	Recommended age: 6+
	Number of players: 2-5
	Playing time: 30 min

# Wojtek the Bear



INSTITUTE OF  
NATIONAL  
REMEMBRANCE

Original idea: Aleksandra and Magdalena Gąsiorek from Anna Jasińska Elementary School no. 63 in Wrocław

The original version of “Wojtek the Bear” was created for a contest of Wrocław Teachers’ Training Center on the occasion of Happy Independence Day under the guidance of Ewa Skrzywanek.

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Join Wojtek the bear and the Polish II Corps, traveling from the USSR to Edinburgh, Scotland. Along the way, collect souvenirs related to the fate of General Anders's soldiers and their famous bear. The winner is whoever collects the best set of souvenirs!

## Game components

- 1 game board depicting the map of Europe and the route of the Polish II Corps army
- 104 bear cards
  - 96 cards of fun, food, emblems and flags
  - 8 portraits of historical persons
- 6 city cards
- 55 travel cards
  - 49 cards, 7 each in 7 different colors with a bear traveling by truck
  - 6 rainbow cards with a bear walking
- 5 wooden bear pawns in five different colors (silver, white, dark brown, light brown and black)
- This booklet with game rules and historical info.



*Some components (city cards, board) are double-sided, with English on one side and Polish on the other side*



## Game preparation

1. Gather some berries for the bears. Help yourself too.
2. Place the board on the table where all players can reach it easily.
3. Put the 6 city cards on their place on the board.
4. Shuffle the deck of bear cards. Draw 7 cards and put them face up on the 7 colored spaces on the board.
5. Stack the other bear cards as a face down deck on the indicated space.
6. Shuffle the deck of travel cards and deal 5 to each player.
7. Stack the other travel cards face down on the indicated space next to the Poland space.
8. Wake up the bears. Each player takes a bear pawn in their favorite color and puts it on the Poland space.
9. Whoever last hugged a bear is the starting player.



Space for discarded bear cards

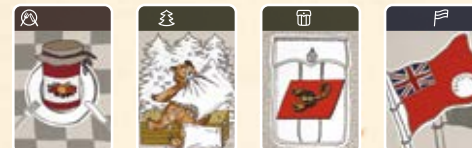
Space for discarded travel cards

## Goal of the game

The goal is to travel from camps in the USSR to Edinburgh, Scotland and collect a set of 6 different bear cards of one type.

There are four types of bear cards in the game:

- food,
- fun,
- emblems,
- flags.



Each type consists of 6 different cards, and each card appears 4 times for each type. Among the bear cards, there are 8 cards with people, who help you fill in gaps in your card collection.



## Sequence of play

Players take turns in clockwise order. (The starting player goes first, then the player on their left, and so on). On their turn, a player:

1. Travels
2. Takes a bear card
3. Refill their travel card hand

or

Does not travel, and exchanges any number of travel cards from their hand with others.

**Note!** In this case the player does not take a bear card!

To refill their travel card hand, a player takes travel cards from the deck until they have 5 in their hand, which ends their turn.

To exchange cards, a player chooses any travel cards from their hand and discards them. Next, they take travel cards from the deck until they have 5 in their hand, which ends their turn.

Now the next player (on the left) starts their turn.

During the first round, deportations phase happens.

## Deportations

During the first round, players' pawns are deported from Poland to the USSR. Each player draws 1 travel card from the stack and moves their pawn to the deportation site in the USSR with the color shown on the card.



Example: Thaddeus draws a light green card with a bear traveling by truck. So, he moves his pawn from Poland to Uzbekistan.

If a player draws a rainbow card with a walking bear, then they choose their destination. A deportation site can have more than one pawn.

From deportation sites pawns move toward Buzuluk and beyond, as white arrows indicate.

## How to travel?

To move their pawn, a player can:

- Play 1 card with a bear traveling by truck** and move their pawn to the next (closest) empty space in the color of the card played,
- play 1 card with a walking bear** and move their pawn to the next (closest) empty space in the chosen color, but not passing another pawn,
- choose a bear card on the board, discard it, and replace it with the top one drawn from the stack, and then play 3 travel cards (any combination of walking cards and same-color truck cards)** to move their pawn to the next (closest) empty space in the chosen color (using the rules for bears traveling by truck).

- Thaddeus moves his pawn to the first empty blue space.

The first blue space in front of Thaddeus's pawn is occupied. So, he moves to the next blue space, where there is no other pawn.
- Thaddeus can move his pawn to any next empty space in the chosen color in front of his pawn. He can choose yellow, light green or blue space. He can not go to the violet space because it is occupied, and he can not go to any space beyond because a walking pawn can not jump past another pawn. Thaddeus decides to move his pawn to the light green space.
- Thaddeus chooses and discards 1 bear card from the board ① and replaces it with the top one drawn from the stack ②. Then he plays three travel cards in the same color, chooses another color of his choice (in this case it is blue—, "!"") and moves his pawn ahead to the next empty space of chosen color (here: blue one).



**Note!** The 3 cards can be any combination of walking and truck cards, but all truck cards played must have the same color.



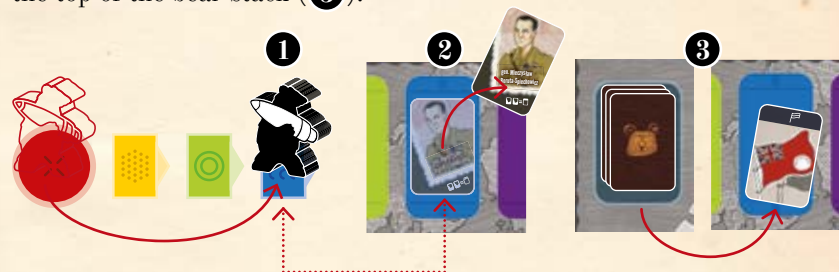
Put the used cards onto the discard pile on the board.

**Note!** Only 1 pawn can be in a space.

You can not go backwards—always go forward toward Edinburgh, following the arrows on the board.

## How to take bear cards?

After moving (1), a player takes 1 bear card from the board, from the box with the same color as the color of the space to which their pawn moved (2). Then the player refills that box with a new card drawn from the top of the bear stack (3).



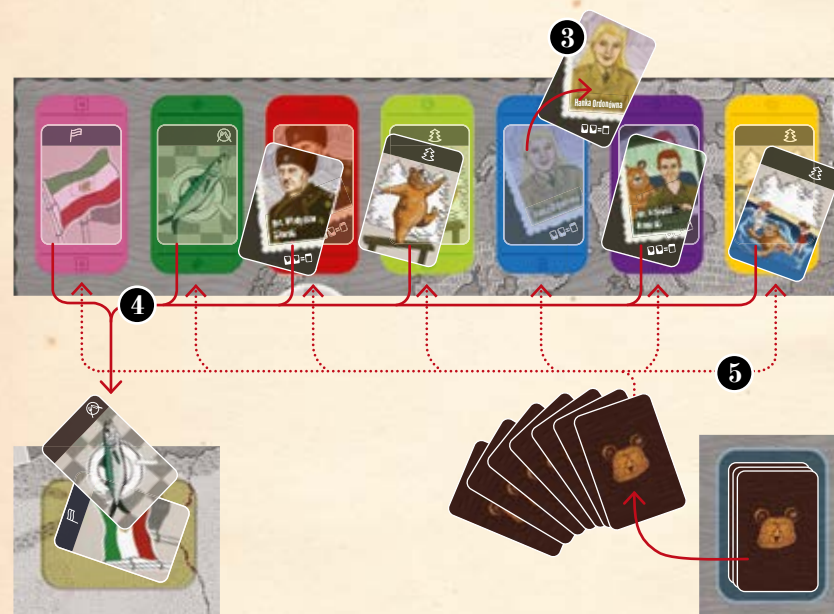
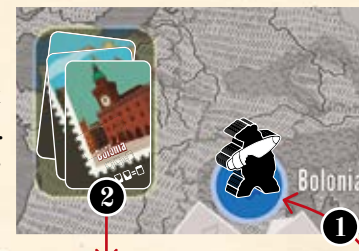
*Thaddeus moved his pawn to a blue space. So Thaddeus now takes the bear card from the blue box. Then he draws a new card from the stack and puts it face up onto the blue box.*

**Note!** This rule is applied in the deportations phase too!

When the bear stack becomes empty, shuffle the discarded bear cards to make a new stack.

## Cities

The **FIRST** player to reach a city (1) takes the city card for that city (2), as well as 1 bear card as usual (from the box with the same color as the city's space) (3). Then the player discards all the remaining bear cards from the board (4) and deal out 7 new ones (5).



*Thaddeus's bear is the first to reach Bologna. Thaddeus takes the "Bologna" card and puts it in front of him. Then he takes the bear card from the blue box (because Bologna is blue). Then he discards the remaining bear cards from the board and puts 7 new cards from the stack into the 7 boxes.*

## Edinburgh

You can reach the “Edinburgh” space by playing a travel card of any color.

The first player to reach Edinburgh takes its city card as usual.

If a player arrives in Edinburgh by **truck**, then they take the bear card from the box with the color of the truck card which they played.

If a player arrives in Edinburgh by **walking** or by **3 cards of the same color**, then they take a bear card from any box they like.

Afterwards a player discards all the remaining bear cards from the board and deal out 7 new ones, as in case of every other city.

**After reaching Edinburgh, that player takes no more turns.**

After the **first player reaches Edinburgh**, each other player will have only one more turn. (See: **End of Game**.)

**Note!** The Edinburgh space is special: any number of pawns can be in Edinburgh.

## End of Game

At the moment when:

- The first pawn reaches Edinburgh, or
- any player has a complete set of bear cards (6 different cards of the same type), the last round of the game begins!

This means that each remaining player (other then the one who triggered the last round) takes one more turn, as usual.

## Who won?

After ending the last round, players score their bear cards.

Players sort their cards into sets. Each set must have the same type of cards, with no repeated cards. The largest possible set is a complete set of **6 different cards in one color**.

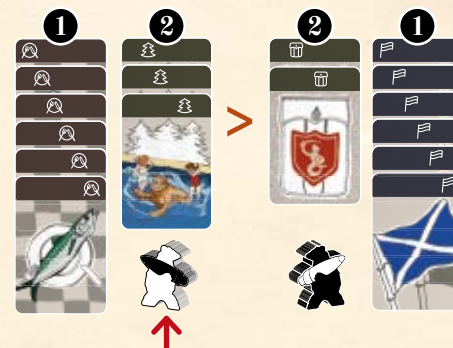
**The player with the largest set wins.**

*Sophie has a complete set of 6 bear cards showing Wojtek's favorite foods. If no one else has a set of 6 cards, then Sophie wins the game.*



In case of a tie, the tying players each put aside their largest set (1), and then compare their second largest sets to see which is largest (2). If there is still a tie, then the tying players compare their third largest sets, and so on. (If a tying player has no remaining sets, then they cannot win a tie.)

*Mary has a complete set of food cards. Thaddeus has a complete set of flag cards. So Mary and Thaddeus must compare their second largest sets to break the tie. Mary's second largest set is 3 fun cards, while Thaddeus has 2 emblem cards. Mary wins, because she has 6 and 3. Thaddeus finishes the game in second place, because he has 6 and 2.*





**Note!** Duplicate (identical) bear cards of a given type cannot be in the same set: each duplicate card will be in a separate set of that type



Jack has 5 food cards and two extra cards: corned beef as well as fruits and honey. So, he has one set of 5 food cards, and an additional set of 2 food cards.

## A tip for beginners

Sometimes you are collecting one type of bear card, but on your turn there is no move which would let you take a card of that type. In that case, you should start collecting another type of bear card!

## Playing with younger children

Playing with younger children you can simplify the game by giving up some rules:

- You can opt out of discarding a bear card on the board after playing 3 travel cards (any combination of walking cards and same-color truck cards).
- You can opt out of discarding all the bear cards on the board after taking a city card.

## Using city and person cards as missing bear cards

2 city cards, 2 person cards, or one card of each type can be used as a missing bear card in a set. Players can replace as many bear cards as they wish with pairs of city and/or person cards.

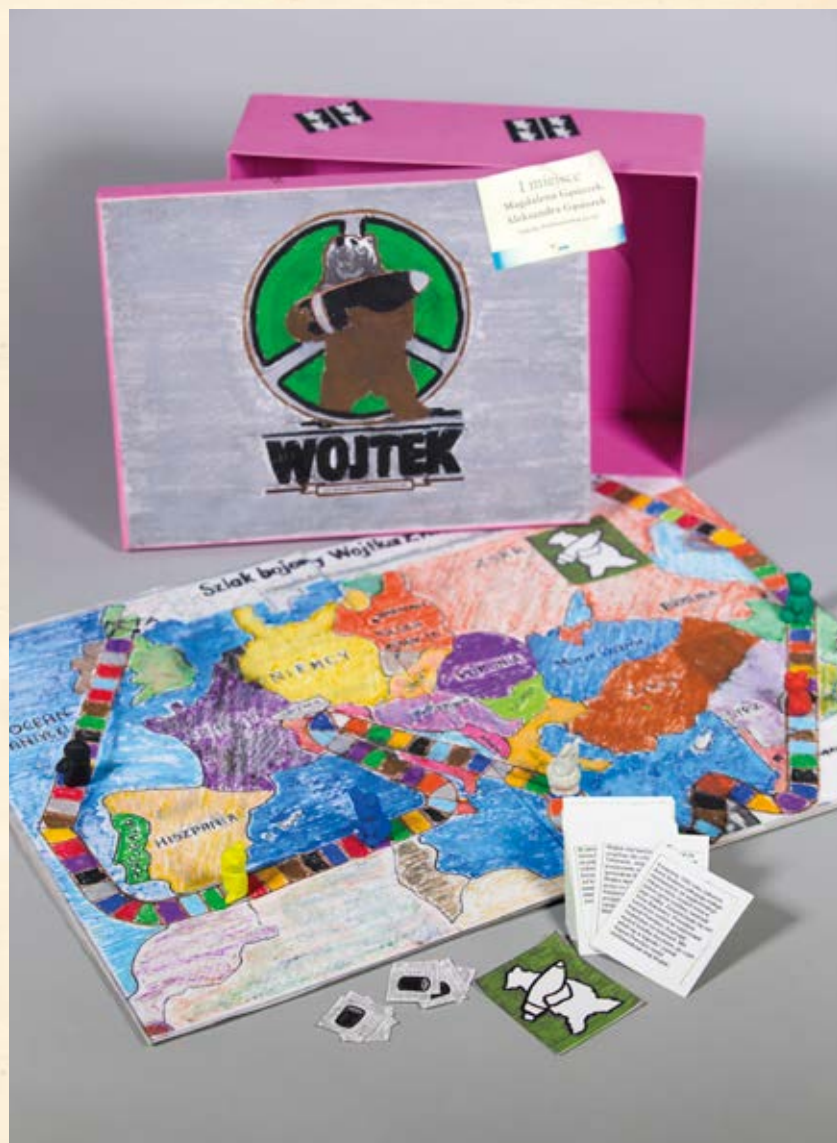


Thaddeus has 5 flag cards. He is missing flag of Scotland. But he also has 1 city card and 2 person cards. Thaddeus can use one of his person cards (2) and his city card (3) to represent the missing flag of Scotland (4). Alternatively, he could use his 2 person cards to do this (with the same effect) (1 + 2).



After using pairs of city and person cards in this way, if a player has one left over, then it is discarded with no effect.

Thaddeus has 1 person card left 1 – this card has no effect on Thaddeus's final result.



The original version of “Wojtek the Bear” by Aleksandra and Magdalena Gasiorek from Anna Jasińska Elementary School no. 63 in Wrocław

In September 1939, Poland was attacked by a neighboring country—Germany, under the rule of Adolf Hitler. Shortly after that, Poland was invaded by another neighbor—Germany’s ally, the Soviet Union, under the rule of Joseph Stalin. This is how World War II began.

Polish soldiers—despite great courage and dedication—were unable to defend their country against the two hostile armies. Poland was beaten and divided between the invaders. Many Polish soldiers who wished to continue fighting managed to reach France, where the Polish government began to reorganize the Polish Army. Most of those who remained in Poland were sent to German and Soviet prisoner-of-war camps.









# Poles in Soviet Union (1939–1942)

After the fighting ended, the Germans and Soviets began to persecute the inhabitants of Poland. Hundreds of thousands of people were thrown out of their homes and sent away. The Soviets sent Poles to Siberia, where it was very cold, or to Kazakhstan, where they suffered in the hot climate. Everywhere was hunger, disease, poverty, and people were forced to do exhausting work. Many Poles did not survive these harsh conditions and died.



	Main camps for Polish prisoners of war		Largest forced labor camps
	Main deportation areas		Main organization sites of Polish Army in the USSR

0 200 1000 km



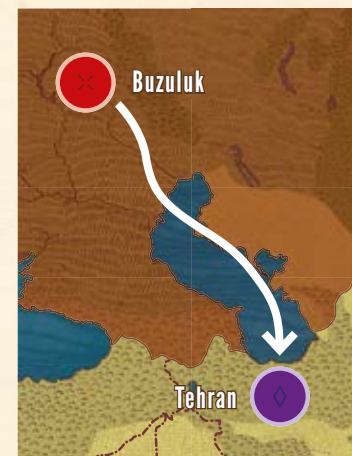
Two years of war passed. The Soviets occupied parts of Romania, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Germany conquered Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Yugoslavia and Greece. Germany also tried to defeat Great Britain, but Great Britain successfully defended itself, and Polish pilots greatly contributed to this defense. In June 1941, the German army unexpectedly invaded the USSR. They quickly advanced and almost reached Moscow, the Soviet capital. The Soviet Union then became Poland's ally. The Soviet Red Army was in a very difficult situation, so Joseph Stalin signed an agreement with the Polish government in London and freed all Poles who had been sent to prisons and camps deep in the USSR. They were to create a Polish army, which would help the Soviets fight the Germans and liberate Poland from German occupation.



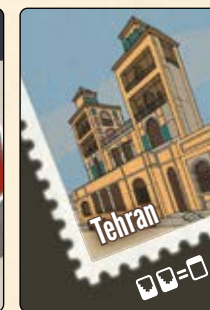
The commander of this army was **General Władysław Anders**. In **Buzuluk**, Totskoye and Tatishchevo gathering points were organized for the Poles coming from all parts of the Soviet Union. There were tens of thousands of them. Unfortunately, Stalin limited their food. Therefore, in March 1942, Polish commanders decided that some of the soldiers would leave the USSR to reinforce the strength of British allies fighting against Germany. Thus the Polish Armed Forces in the East came into being.



The only way that Polish soldiers could get out of Russia was across the border with **Iran**. They left the USSR through Iran, along with many women and children. Help for those in need was organized by people including the well-known pre-war actress and singer **Hanka Ordonówna**. The evacuated children come to Iran only temporarily. Then they went further—to India, New Zealand or Africa.



The Poles who stayed in the USSR had to wait until the end of the war to return to their homeland and be reunited with their relatives. But not everyone survived that long.





## A little orphan bear is adopted by Poles

In April 1942, Polish soldiers were moving from Iran to **Palestine**, where they formed the **Polish II Corps**. One day while marching they met a hungry Persian boy in whose luggage they discovered a small Syrian bear, barely alive.

Who had entrusted that boy with a bear? Probably the little bear's mother had been killed by hunters, and her offspring had been given to the boy. Or maybe the boy found the bear? A bear could be sold—and for poor mountain people, every way to earn a penny was good.

Fortunately for the boy—and for the bear!—the Polish soldiers liked the bear so much that they decided to buy him from the boy. In fact, the Poles did not have very much, but they offered a chocolate bar, some money, a Swiss army knife and—arguably the most important part of the deal—a large **can of meat**.

It is said that the purchase of the bear was suggested by Lieutenant Anatol Tarnowiecki, who wanted to surprise his sweetheart, **Irena Bokiewicz**. Irena was delighted with the gift. But the bear was very small and could eat neither meat nor bread. They had to dilute condensed milk with water, pour it into a bottle, and feed the little bear with a cloth teat.



## Wojtek in the Polish army

The little bear was given the name **Wojtek** (sounds like “VOY-tek”), which is short for **Wojeiech**. This name means a warrior who brings comfort, or one who fights with joy.

Irena, living in a civilian camp, took care of Wojtek. During the day he ran after her like a little dog, and at night he slept in her bed. Often, however, he woke up at night and wandered in the tent, touching the heads of Irena's friends, who woke up screaming in surprise. In the end, they forced Irena to find a new home for the bear.



Someone proposed giving Wojtek to **General Mieczysław Boruta-Spiechowicz**, who, as of March 1942, was provisional commander of the Polish forces in Iran. The general in turn gave the bear to headquarters, who then decided to transfer him to 2nd Transport Company, whose name was soon changed to 22nd Artillery Supply Company. The company's chronicle for August 22, 1942, states: “Today Lieutenant Florczykowski brought a cute little bear [...]. The silver-gray animal is very friendly, and his playful behavior shows that he feels at home among the soldiers.”



And thus the bear became a Polish soldier. He received military papers and the rank of private. He was listed in the official register with his own serial number and received pay in the form of two food rations. He was entrusted to a new guardian, **Corporal Piotr Prendysz**. Although everyone had his own place to sleep, the bear often crept into his guardian's bed and hugged him. He missed his mother, like any orphan.

\* In Polish words, the letter “W” sounds like English “V”, and “J” sounds like English “Y”, and the accent is usually on the next to last syllable, so “Wojtek” sounds like “VOY-tek”.

There was another Wojtek in the company. **Wojciech Narebski** was 17 then, and was a truck driver during the war. After the war he finished his studies, started an academic career, and became a professor. He recalled, “Since there were two Wojteks in the company, we were called “Little Wojtek” and “Big Wojtek”. At first, the bear was Little Wojtek, but over time the future geology professor became the “little” one.



## The bear's habits and antics

The bear grew up fast and was always looking for something to eat. He sneaked into the canteen and ate eggs prepared for the soldiers' breakfast. He also ate **jam**. He grew big and strong on the soldiers' food, and his



favorite snacks were **fruits**, sweet syrups, marmalade, **honey** and **fish**. When he was fully grown, he could steal the entire company's breakfast.

Wojtek was gentle and trusting towards people. The soldiers loved to play with him. He could box for hours and **wrestle** for fun. When he was feeling playful, he would grab someone, push him to the ground, and lie on him—they called this “rolling a soldier”—but he never hurt anyone. He also liked other games, for ex-

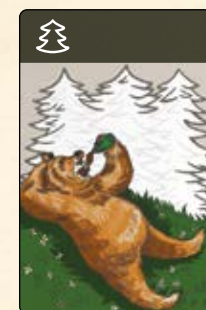


ample **walking on a wooden balance beam**, which was especially fun for him. He also enjoyed playing with a British officer's friendly Dalmatian.

Wojtek loved to **bathe**, which sometimes got him in trouble. For example, he sometimes broke a faucet, or used all the soldiers'

water. He was usually forgiven, but sometimes he was put on a leash as punishment.

When Wojtek was fully grown, the soldiers taught him to drink **beer**, which he was given for good behavior. He learned how to open the beer can with his claw. Luckily, he did not learn to smoke cigarettes. The soldiers laughed when he put cigarettes into his mouth, then swallowed them if lit, but spit them back out if not lit.



When the Polish troops were stationed in Iraq, in camps near Kirkuk, thieves often tried to steal guns, tents and other equipment. Wojtek was always on guard to protect the camp.

The bear loved to ride in a **military truck**. As a small bear, he rode in the cab, but soon he could no longer fit there. So he had to move to the rear cargo section of the truck.

When Wojtek became a very big bear, he got his own bedroom in a large wooden chest. But he did not like solitude and still came to hug the soldiers sleeping in tents, like when he was little.

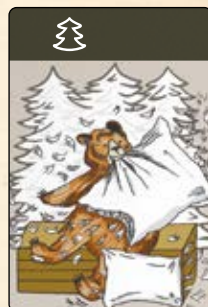




## Journey to Italy

At the start of 1944, the Polish troops were ordered to move to Italy. Wojtek accompanied the Polish II Corps from the port of **Alexandria** in Egypt to Italy aboard the ship “Batory”. Wojtek had bureaucratic problems boarding the ship because the English cargo officer refused to allow the bear aboard, even though all his papers were in order. The soldiers convinced the officer that the bear “inspires fighting spirit in the Polish soldiers”. On the ship Wojtek discovered a new game—**pillow fighting**—with feathers flying everywhere.

When the “Batory” docked in the port of Taranto, the Italians were amazed when a huge bear was the first passenger to greet them. They were even more amazed that the bear was tame and friendly with the soldiers.



## The Battle of Monte Cassino

Until then, Wojtek’s company had not fought in battles. In **Italy**, it was baptized in battle at **Monte Cassino**. Starting in January 1944, this hill—important for strategic reasons—was unsuccessfully stormed several times by Americans, Britons and New Zealanders.



In May 1944 the Poles attacked. The assault was preceded by intense artillery fire. The **3rd Carpathian Rifle Division**, the **4th “Scorpion” Armored Regiment**, and the **5th Kresowa Infantry Division** took part in the battle.

During the battle, the 22nd Company—in which Wojtek served—supplied ammunition to artillery positions. They moved along twisty rocky mountain paths. On one side of the path was a sheer rock face, and the other side dropped off into a steep abyss. Furthermore, due to German fire, they drove only at night and without lights. Not surprisingly, there were many accidents.

Although Wojtek loved traveling by car, he did not leave the camp during the first part of the battle. Only later, after he became accustomed to the sound of gunfire and artillery explosions, did he insist on riding with the transports. He was reluctantly accepted, since he took up a lot of space. But later the soldiers willingly invited Wojtek, because he was good luck and no one in a truck with Wojtek was ever killed. Superstitious people even said that soldiers who did not want to take Wojtek were unlucky and would die...

Once when the soldiers were working hard, carrying heavy ammunition boxes, Wojtek watched them and decided to help. He walked over to the truck, stood on his back legs, and extended his arms to the soldier who was handing out the boxes. The soldier was surprised, but then gave a box to Wojtek. The bear easily carried the heavy ammunition box to its destination and returned to the truck. And so, under fire, the bear helped his comrades. One of them drew a

sketch of the **bear carrying an artillery shell**. This image quickly became a symbol of Wojtek's company. This badge with the bear carrying a shell appeared on the company's military vehicles, pennants, and uniforms.

The battle for Monte Cassino lasted 13 days and 20 hours. There was not a moment of silence. The heavy fire devastated the whole area. The Germans were finally defeated on May 18. Polish soldiers raised a Polish flag atop the ruins of the destroyed monastery, and at noon a trumpeter played St. Mary's Trumpet Call, traditional historical music from Cracow.



## The Adriatic Campaign

In the summer of 1944, the Polish troops and allies launched a campaign along the Adriatic coast. It was a great time for Wojtek, because the bear could relax on the beach and bathe in the warm sea. Wojtek liked to **swim underwater** and emerge next to Italian women. The bear's unexpected appearance frightened the women at first, but then they admired the brave Poles who had tamed the "dangerous" animal.

Wojtek also accompanied the soldiers during the heavy fighting for the port of Ancona and the liberation of many other Italian towns. Polish II Corps ended its march in **Bologna** in northern Italy. A month later Germany surrendered, and the war in Europe ended.



## Demobilization and departure to Scotland



After almost a year in Italy, Polish II Corps was transferred to Great Britain. Wojtek and the 22nd Artillery Supply Company went to **Scotland**. In September 1946, soldiers from his company were quartered at Winfield Park in Hutton. Wojtek quickly became a favorite of the whole camp and

the surrounding population. Journalists were often interested in Wojtek.

## Farewell

After the war ended, many Polish soldiers decided not to return to Poland, where the communist regime was already in power. Their old homes near Vilnius or Lviv (Lwów in Polish) had been cut away from their homeland and annexed into the Soviet Union. They could not imagine themselves in this new situation, and they feared arrests and evictions. Some settled in Italy, and others decided to stay in Scotland.





In 1947, Wojtek was given to **Edinburgh's** zoo. "He was entrusted to our care until he could return to a free Poland" was noted in the documents of the Edinburgh Zoo, whose director agreed to take care of Wojtek. He promised not to give Wojtek away without the consent of the Polish company's commander, **Major Antoni Chelkowski**. November 15th, 1947, the day of parting, was very sad for Wojtek and his friends.

In his zoo enclosure, whenever he heard Polish speech, the bear raised his head and murmured a friendly reply. The soldiers, now in civilian clothes, visited him many times. To the horror of zoo workers and visitors, Wojtek's military colleagues sometimes entered his enclosure to play once again with their friend.

Wojtek lived in the Edinburgh zoo for 16 years. His life ended in 1963 at the age of 21 or 22. Even British radio stations reported about his death. Some soldiers who knew him said that Wojtek considered himself more of a human than a bear.

Away from their families and country, the soldiers of General Anders's army shared their war experience with a bear who had no one but them. And thus, they felt such a strong bond.



Bears are the largest land predators. An average adult brown bear weighs 250 to 300 kilograms (550 to 650 pounds)—as much as three big men. Standing vertically, a bear can be up to 2.5 meters (8 feet) tall. Do you know any person that tall?

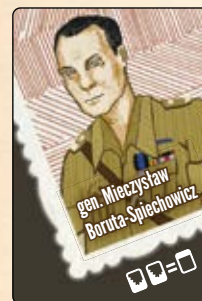
There have been a few brown bears weighing twice as much as the average individual (780 kilograms or 1700 pounds, about the weight of a small car) and almost 3 meters (10 feet) tall! Wojtek was not that big—as a Syrian bear, he was a bit smaller than other bears and also looked different due to the lighter color of his fur.



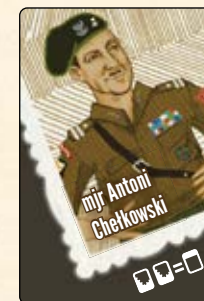
Polish Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces until 1943.



Commander of Polish II Corps.



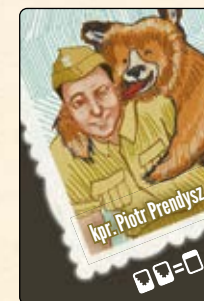
Commander of Polish forces evacuated to Iran from USSR.



Commander of the 22nd Company.



Wojtek's first caregiver.



Wojtek's caregiver in the 22nd Company.



Driver in the 22nd Company.



Famous Polish singer and actress, helped Polish orphans saved from USSR.



Emblem of the Polish II Corps.



Emblem of the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division.



Emblem of the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division.



Emblem of the 4th Armored Regiment "Scorpion".



Emblem of the 6th Armor Regiment "Children of Lviv".



Emblem of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company.



A city in southern Russia, formation area of the Polish Army in USSR.



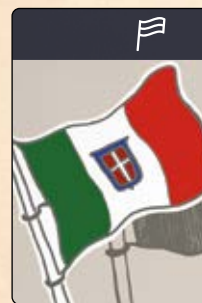
Edifice of the Sun, Shams ol Emareh, part of the Golestan Palace in Tehran built in the 16th century and rebuilt in the 18th and 19th century.



The lion and sun on a white background is a traditional symbol of Iran, used from the 12th century until 1979.



Until 1947, Palestine was under British rule and did not have its own flag. In 1948, the independent state of Israel was created on its territory.



The coat of arms on the white background is the coat of arms of the House of Savoy, which ruled Italy from 1861 to 1946, when Italy became a republic.



The diagonal white cross is the cross of St. Andrew, the patron saint of the Kingdom of Scotland.



The Citadel of Qaitbay in Alexandria, Egypt, built on the remains of the ancient Lighthouse of Alexandria.



The oldest Benedictine monastery, founded in the 6th century.



Palazzo d'Accursio—the City Hall of Bologna in northern Italy, with the oldest university in Europe.



Edinburgh Castle, in the capital of Scotland.



## Further Reading

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*Dear Reader, our story ends here. If you would like to learn more about Wojtek, we encourage you to read some books about this remarkable bear and the history of the Polish II Corps. The game's authors have read the following books and recommend them. This is not a complete or exhaustive list—there are many additional books about the Polish bear-soldier that the game's authors have not yet read...*

## For younger readers

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Bibi Dumon Tak, *Soldier Bear*, Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2013, ISBN 978-0802854360

## For adult readers

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Aileen Orr, *Wojtek the Bear: Polish War Hero*, Birlinn, 2014, ISBN 978-1843410652