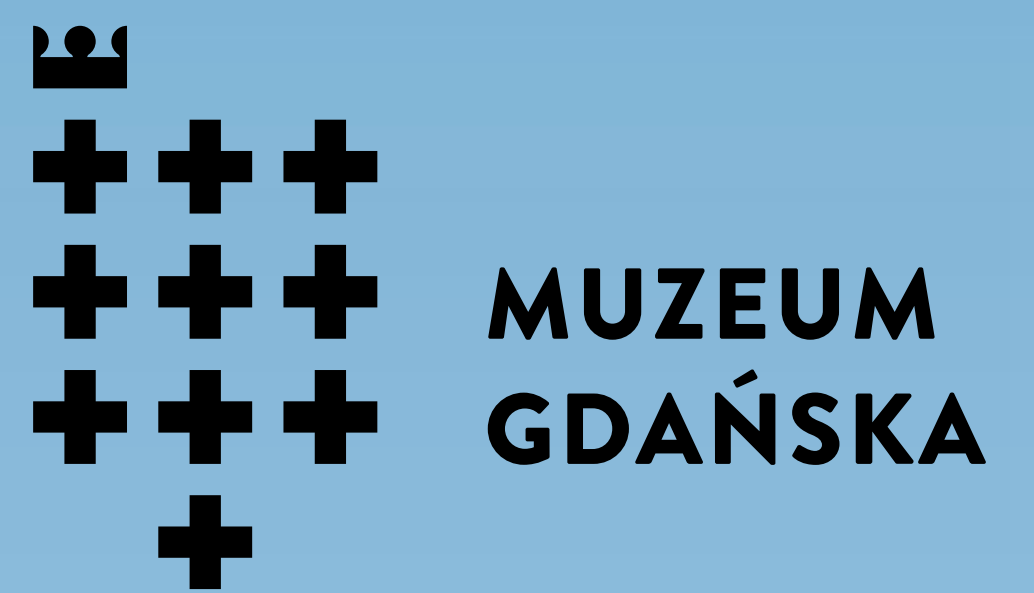
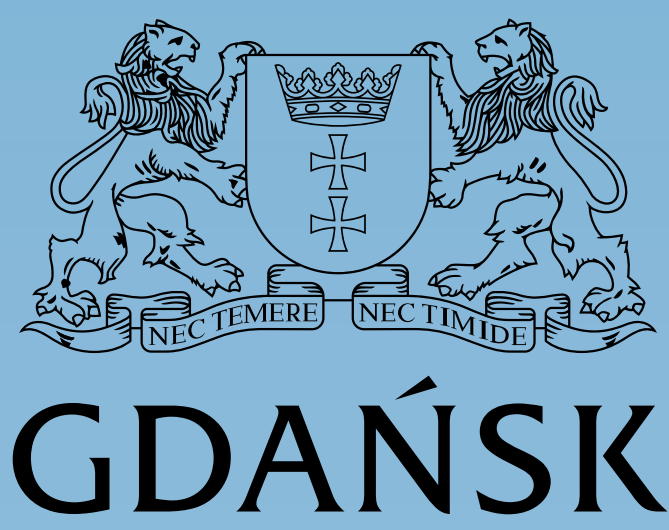


THE ONES WHO SPOKE UP FOR GDAŃSK

No. 318 "Gdańsk" Fighter-Reconnaissance Squadron



318



MUZEUM GDAŃSKA, 2 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 12 MAY 2024

Exhibition commemorating the 80th anniversary of the establishment of No. 318 Fighter-Reconnaissance Squadron

Curators: **Leszek Molendowski** (Muzeum Gdańska),

Andrzej Olejko (Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Techniczno-Ekonomiczna w Jarosławiu)

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Exhibits provided by:

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- Muzeum Lotnictwa Polskiego w Krakowie
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- Muzeum II Wojny Światowej
- Muzeum Ziemi Sochaczewskiej i Pola Bitwy nad Bzurą
- PAN Biblioteka Gdańska
- Wielkopolskie Muzeum Wojskowe – oddział Muzeum Narodowego w Poznaniu

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- Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe (NAC)
- PAN Biblioteka Gdańska (PAN BG)
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- polishairforce.pl
- Jacek Friedrich (JF)
- Wojciech Gruszczyński (WG)

The movie presented at the exhibition is from the collection of:

- Imperial War Museum (IWM)

**Before I tell you the story, pass me wine
So that I may wash off the dust of Quassassin.
Then give me something stronger
And I'll tell you of Muquebilla.**

**And after that I'll tell you
how the Squadron of Gdańsk
Fought valiantly on the Italian Front.**

**In eastern Italy, on the coast of the sea
We had an airfield, if you can call it that!
The worst thing about all this flying
Is that you have to end it with a landing.
You'll crunch the metal and prang your plane,
Next thing you know it – your face is in the sand!**

**When I'm home, I'll tell the kids:
Your father had targets at Chieti.
Sometimes I'll lay it on thick
to other patrons at the bar
How I spotted the ships at Pescara,
And I'll also tell the stupid neighbours
How I slept at night – always under a net.**

**In Poland we've all known the komar,
But here the folks called it, 'mosquito.'
A cruel bug, noisy at night.
If you're a teetotaller, you get pricked right away.
So myself, as soon as I think of the mosquito,
With a single leap I get to the bar!**

Squadron song, music by Stanisław Grzesiuk,
lyrics by Flight Lieutenant Włodzimierz Bereżecki

Władysław Nycz, *W powietrznym zwiadzie*, Warszawa 1982



No. 318 Squadron's route in World War Two:

20 Mar 1943, RAF Detling near Maidstone, UK – establishment of the squadron

15 Aug 1943, Liverpool, UK – the squadron puts to sea, beginning the journey from Britain to Egypt on the HMS Empress of Australia

29 Aug 1943, Port Said, Egypt – the squadron disembarks

30 Aug 1943, RAF Almaza

10 Sep 1943, RAF Muqeible, Palestine

12 Oct 1943, RAF Gaza, Palestine

22 Oct 1943, RAF Lydda, Palestine

30 Oct 1943, RAF Gaza, Palestine

23 Nov 1943, Qassasin, Egypt

9 Apr 1944, RAF Helwan

15 Apr 1944, Alexandria, Egypt, the ground echelon embarks on the troopship HMT Derbyshire

20 Apr 1944, Taranto, Italy, the ground personnel arrives by sea

23–24 Apr 1944, Helwan, Egypt – Marble Arch near Benghazi, Libya, flight from Egypt to an airfield in Cyrenaica

24–25 Apr 1944, Marble Arch, Libya, flight to an airfield in Tripolitania

28 Apr 1944, Tunis, Libya – Malta – Madna, Italy – flight from Libya to Italy

1 May 1944, Trigno, Italy, the squadron's ground and air echelons meet

17 Jun 1944, San Vito, Italy

30 Apr 1944, Tortoreto, Italy

2 Jul 1944, San Fermo, Italy

22 Jul 1944, Castiglione, Italy, Flight A's airfield

31 Jul 1944, Falconara, Italy

26 Aug 1944, Chiaravalle, Italy

31 Aug 1944, Piagiolino, Italy

31 Aug 1944, Malignano, Italy, Flight A's airfield

17 Sep 1944, Cassandro, Italy, the two flights meet

27 Sep 1944, Rimini, Italy

6 Nov 1944, Ballaria near Rimini, Italy

2 Dec 1944, Forli, Italy

2 May 1945, La Russia, Italy

4 May 1945, Treviso, Italy

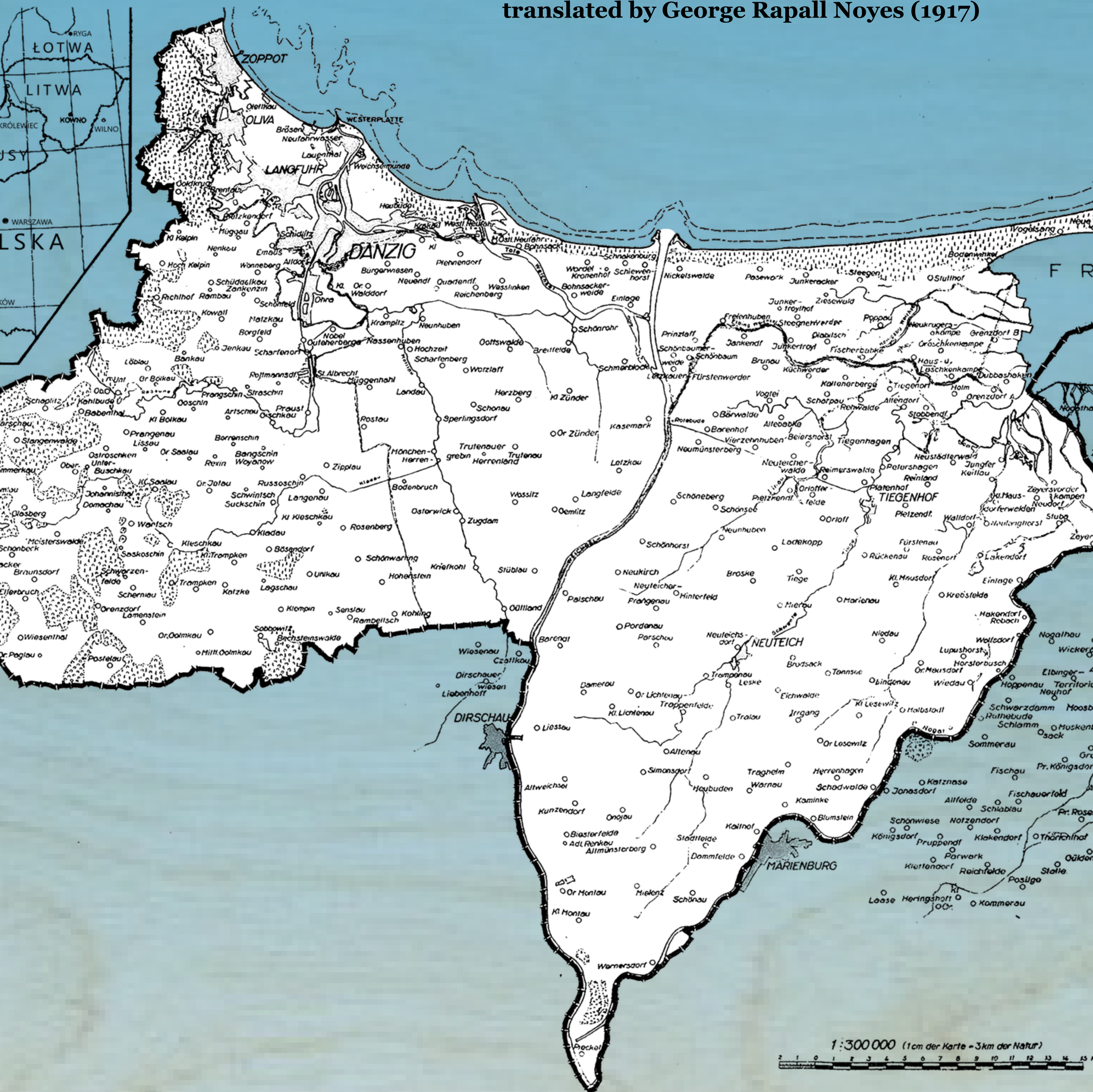
14 May 1945, Risano, Italy

POLAND, POLES, AND GDAŃSK

“

“Long live Dantzic!”
cried the Judge,
raising the flask on high;
“the city once was ours,
and it will be ours again!”

Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz* (1834 r.),
translated by George Rapall Noyes (1917)



Poles visiting Gdańsk in the 1900s saw few signs of the city's "Polishness", but they did not forget about Gdańsk. The centuries it had spent as part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth persevered in Polish memory. The city was still present in the vision of a reborn Polish state, which became possible after Germany had lost World War One (1914–1918).

Decisions in this regard were made in 1919 during the Paris peace conference. Germany expected that Gdańsk would remain within its borders according to the principle of respecting ethnic boundaries. For Poland, this would mean losing its only port. The Poles were hoping that, in accordance with one of the Fourteen Points of US President Woodrow Wilson, Poland would be "assured a free and secure access to the sea." Eventually, a compromise was forged to reconcile the opposing interests, but it satisfied nobody. The Free City of Gdańsk was created in 1920 and its 1922 constitution established it as a parliamentary republic.



Długi Targ (Long Market) in Gdańsk in Nazi ornamentation, 1935–1939 (PAN BG)



Canvassing in front of a polling station in Gdańsk 1935 (PAN BG)



Election rally of Gdańsk's Poles, 1935 (PAN BG)



A visual representation of the Poland-versus-Germany rivalry over Gdańsk on the cover of Paul Enderling's book *Die Glocken von Danzig* (JF)



Posters with election slogans on buildings in Gdańsk, 1935 (PAN BG)

The Polish community of the Free City constituted about a tenth of the population and was very well organised. In 1930, some seventy various unions, associations, and clubs were in operation. Poles were represented in the Free City's parliament, had their own labour, economic, church, educational, and scientific organisations as well as organisations for women and for students, and sports clubs. Poland was granted free access to the port of Gdańsk and a right to maintain its own postal service. Soldiers of the Military Transit Depot at Westerplatte protected transports of military equipment entering the port.

The political and social situation began to change after the election of May 1933, when the Nazi Party (NSDAP) came to power. It began the Nazification of the Free City, using propaganda, administrative action, and violence. All opposition political parties were outlawed in 1935–1937. The NSDAP seized control of the administration, police, judiciary, and press. It cultivated the resentment of the German-speaking population towards the separation of Gdańsk from Germany. The main propaganda slogan was, "Zurück zum Reich," or "Back to the Reich," and thus the German government repeatedly demanded that the Free City be incorporated into Germany.

Poland opposed vehemently. As soon as the war began, in the morning of 1 September 1939, Albert Forster – the Gauleiter (regional NSDAP chief) who had also, against the provisions of the Free City's constitution, served as Gdańsk's head of state since 23 August – introduced a new constitution, by which Gdańsk was incorporated into the Third Reich.



Post box of the Polish Post Office in Gdańsk, 1925–1939 (MG)



Streets of Gdańsk in Nazi ornamentation, 1935–1939 (PAN BG)



Pupils of a Polish school in "Gdańsk costumes" during a patriotic celebration, 1938 (AAN)



Postage stamps from the Free City of Gdańsk with additional imprints from after its incorporation into Germany and issued to celebrate the visit of Adolf Hitler on 19 September 1939 (MG)



Officers and men of the Military Transit Depot at Westerplatte, 1939 (PAN BG)



Posters with election slogans on buildings in Gdańsk, 1935 (PAN BG)

2

FROM POLAND TO FRANCE AND ENGLAND

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I'm suddenly acutely aware that this is not a simulated opponent, like during an exercise. It's the Germans.

**Flying Officer Witold Urbanowicz,
Początek jutra, Kraków 1968**



POLISH AVIATION IN SEPTEMBER 1939

When Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, the Polish Air Force had 392 aeroplanes: fighters, reconnaissance bombers, bombers, as well as observation, transport, and liaison aircraft. Even though industry was being expanded and the commander of military aviation, Air Cdre Ludomił A. Rayski, had formulated plans of its development, the aircraft were generally old and small in number. The German Air Force – the Luftwaffe – had 2,039 bomber, fighter, observation, transport, and liaison aircraft, thus having the upper hand both in numbers and the quality of its equipment. Polish aviators, however, thanks to their courage and splendid training, were able to inflict painful losses upon the enemy. Pilot Officer Stanisław Skalski and Pilot Officer Hieronim Dudwał both scored four kills. A lack of spare aeroplanes, spare parts, fuel, and ammunition, as well as progress of the German army and the Red Army's invasion on 17 September combined to cause the cessation of any activity of the Polish Air Force. 325 aeroplanes had been lost, 171 pilots had been killed or missing in action, and 63 were wounded. The Luftwaffe had lost 734 men and 285 aeroplanes.



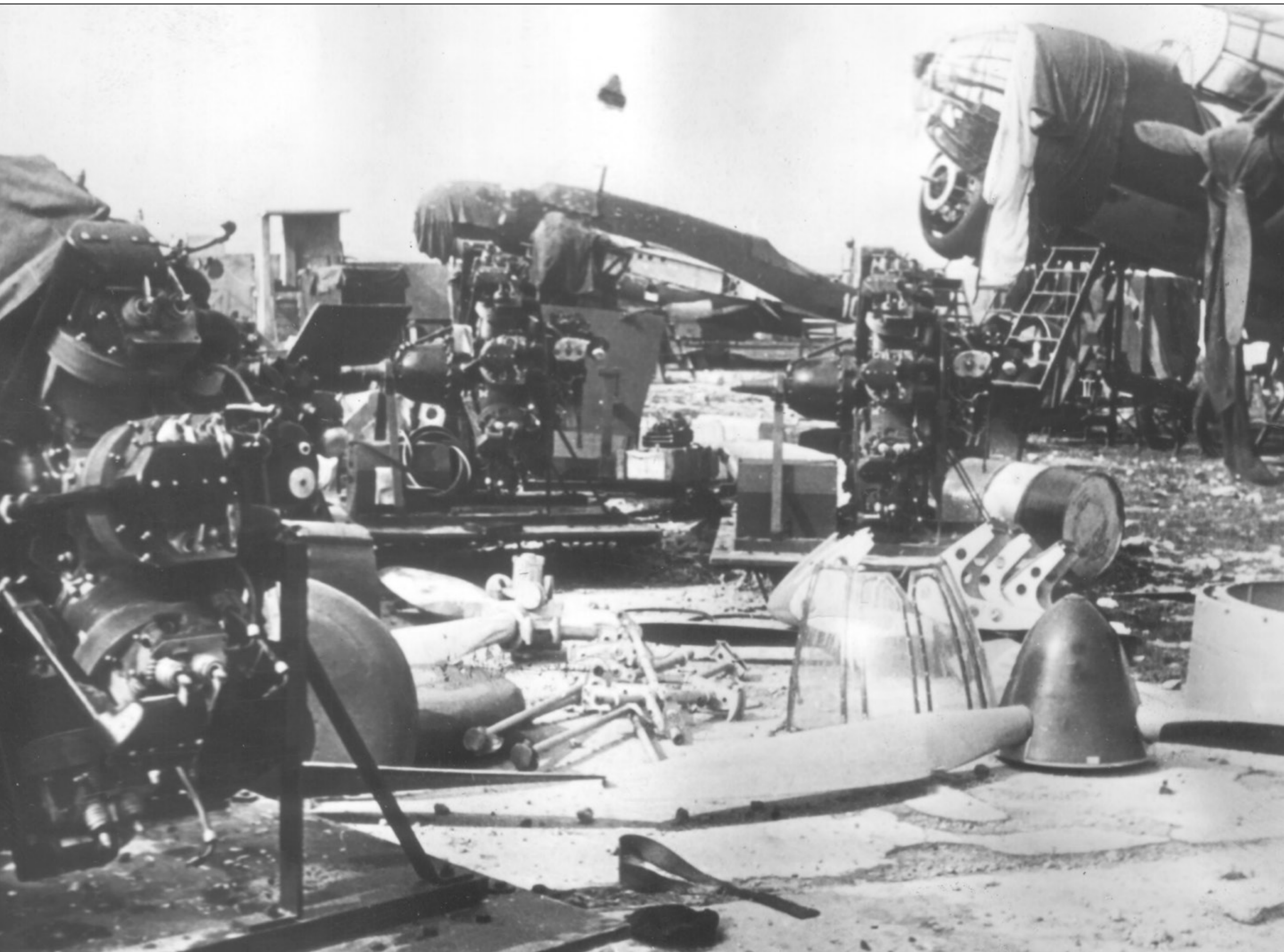
Polish PZL P.11c fighters of the 113th Fighter Escadrille of the 1st Aviation Regiment, Warszawa-Okęcie, 1939 (NAC)



The escadrille's pilots on an airfield during an exercise, 1939 (MIWS)



The escadrille's pilots on an airfield during an exercise, 1939 (MIWS)



Polish PZL.37 Łoś bombers captured and dismantled by the Germans. Radial engines can be seen on the left, September–October 1939 (NAC)



German soldiers examining a destroyed Polish aeroplane, September 1939 (NAC)

HOW TO KEEP FIGHTING

Polish aviators and ground crews were trying to leave Poland by a myriad of ways. Around eight in ten of the mobilized personnel managed to evacuate, mainly to Romania (ca. 10,000), Hungary (ca. 900), Lithuania, and Latvia. There they were interned and their aeroplanes, in spite of protests of the Polish, French, and British governments, were seized and incorporated into the local air forces. For the personnel, leaving these countries proved difficult – due to pressure exerted by the Germans, it had to be done under the guise of civilian migration. The Poles attempted to reach France by any route available. The main two were either a sea route from the ports of Romania, through the Black Sea and the Aegean; or via the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and northern Italy. There was also a third, through the Kingdom of Greece and thence Turkey, to French and British territories in the Middle East. In all, 43,000 Polish servicemembers reached France, and among those – more than 7,000 aviators.



A column of civilian and military vehicles after crossing the Romanian border, with Zaleszczyki in the distance, 17 September 1939 (MLP)



Polish pilots being evacuated to Romania, September 1939 (MLP)



Air force officers with a car on a ferry near Tulcea, Romania, 1939 (MSP)



Air force officers in the sea resort of Balcic, Romania, 1939 (MSP)



On the *Patris* – which evacuated Polish airmen from Romania to France, 1939–1940 (MSP)



Polish air force officers with French colonial soldiers on a ship in Oran, Algeria, 1940 (MSP)



Polish air force officer with a French officer, 1940 (MSP)

IN FRANCE

The Polish Aviation Command (renamed the Polish Air Force on 22 February 1940) became operational in France on 20 October 1939. Airmen and ground crews were verified with regard to their combat service and training, after which they were sent to the main airbase of Lyon-Bron and to other training bases, including those in North Africa. On 4 January 1940, the process of establishing aviation units began: the Polish "Warsaw" Fighter Squadron (unofficially referred to as the "Finnish" Squadron, since it was to take part in the war against the Soviets), the Montpellier Group (more than ten flights incorporated into French units), and ten "smokestack" flights – of three aeroplanes each – which were utilized in the defence of industrial sites, cities, and other rear areas. On the day of the German invasion of France, 10 May 1940, the Polish Air Force consisted of 6,971 people, of whom 1,599 were pilots. 230 pilots participated in combat action, including 180 fighter pilots. They were credited with shooting down 53 enemy aircraft and damaging nine, while losing 14 pilots (as many as had been killed during training). After the fall of France of 22 June, the majority of Polish Air Force personnel were evacuated to the United Kingdom.



General Władysław Sikorski with Polish and French air force officers in the training centre at Lyon-Bron, France, 27 March 1940 (MSP)



Polish airmen in the park of Tête d'Or, Lyon, France, 1940 (MSP)



Air Commodore Władysław Kalkus, commander of the Polish Air Force in France, visiting the airbase in Salon-de-Provence, France, 1940 (MSP)



Briefing in the barracks of Polish pilots in the training centre at Lyon-Bron, 27 March 1940 (MLP)



Hangars and a Potez 63 aeroplane of a Polish squadron in the training centre at Lyon-Bron, France, 1940 (MLP)



Postcards of a Polish airman from Romania, Syria, and Palestine, showing his route to France, 1939–1940 (MSP)

IN BRITAIN

On 25 October 1939, the UK agreed to take in 2,300 Polish airmen. Their training began at two Royal Air Force stations – Eastchurch and Redhill – near London. An agreement regarding the creation of Polish aviation units was signed by the Polish and British governments on 11 June 1940, and on 5 August, the cooperation of those units with the RAF was formalised in another agreement. Thus, the formation of four Polish Air Force squadrons began: Nos. 300 and 301, which were bomber squadrons, and Nos. 302 and 303, which were fighter squadrons. Polish pilots had been participating in the Battle of Britain (10 July – 31 October 1940) from the very beginning, albeit as RAF servicemen. The first Polish squadron to see combat was No. 302 on 25 August, followed by No. 303 on 31 August. The bomber squadrons participated in raids on amphibious landing craft in the ports of Boulogne, Calais, and Ostend. Altogether, Polish pilots shot down ca. 130 Luftwaffe aircraft. Over the years, the Polish Air Force grew to ca. 17,000 people who formed a total of fifteen squadrons. They were the third largest air force in Western Europe.



General Władysław Sikorski hands over the banner of the Polish Air Force at the Polish air base in Newark, UK, 1942 (MLP)



Fighter pilots in readiness, 1940 (MNP WA)



Loading bombs in No. 304 "Land of Silesia" Squadron, 1943 (MLP)



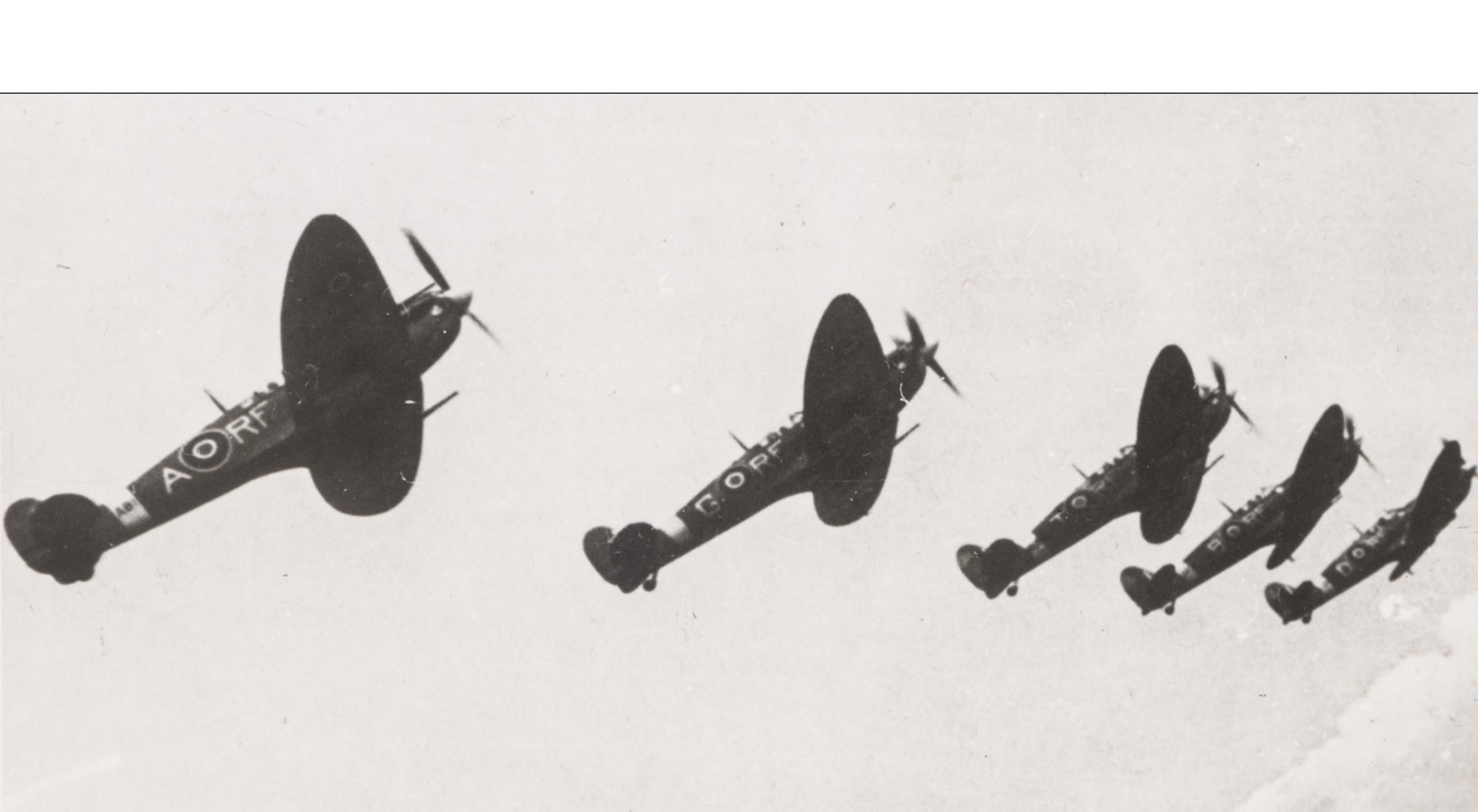
A Vickers Wellington bomber of No. 304 Squadron readied for take-off, 1943 (MLP)



Pilot Jan Zumbach receives the Virtuti Militari from Polish President Władysław Raczkiewicz, 1940 r. (MNP WA)



Ceremony at the Polish airmen's cemetery in Newark, UK. Right-to-left: Flight Lieutenant Wiesław Kłobukowski, General Władysław Sikorski, President Władysław Raczkiewicz, Bishop Józef Gawlina of the military vicariate, 1940–1943 (NAC)



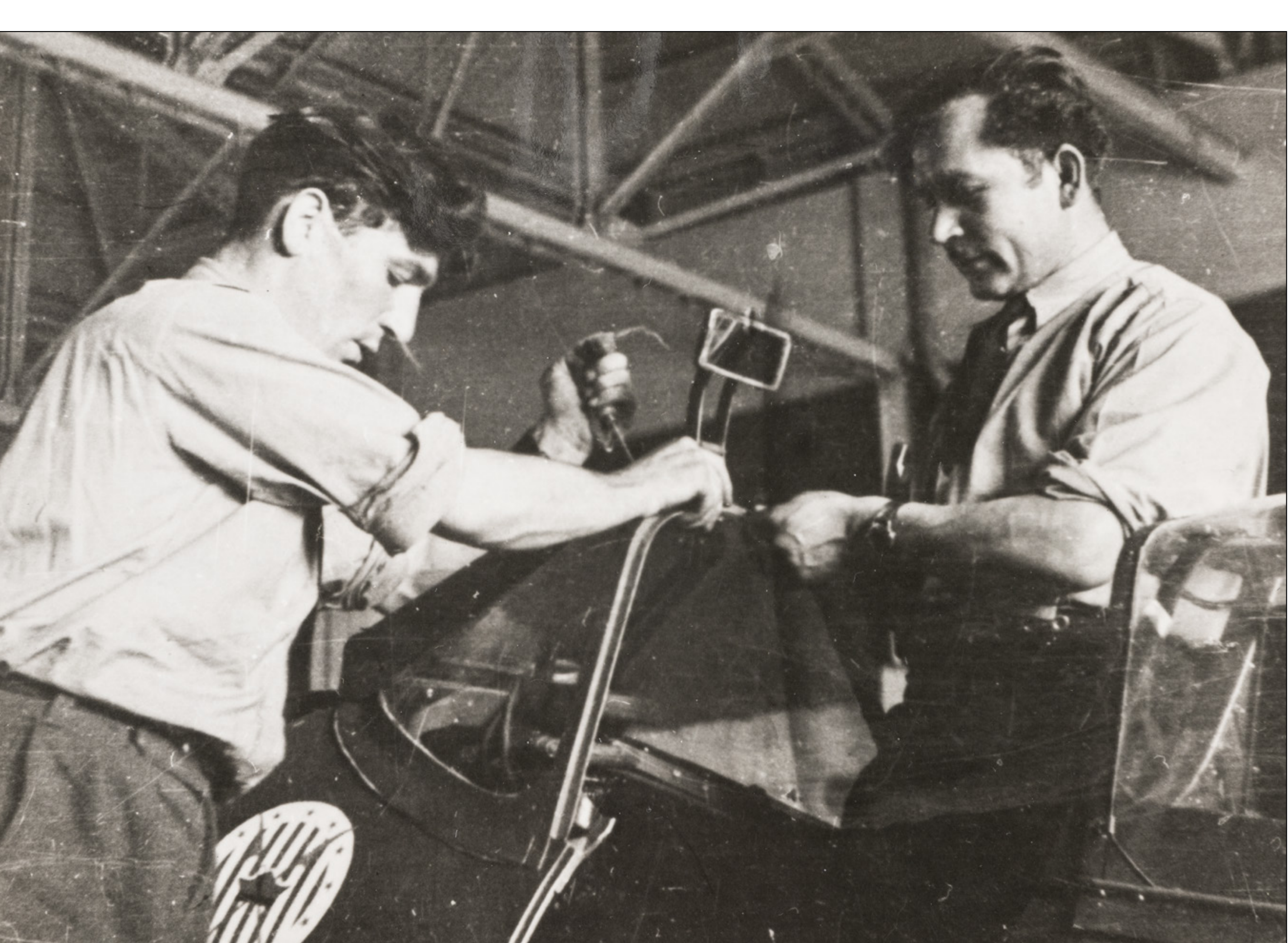
A formation of Supermarine Spitfire fighters of No. 303 "Warsaw-Tadeusz Kościuszko" Squadron, 1940 (MNP WA)



A Polish pilot exiting his Supermarine Spitfire fighter, 1940-1945 (NAC)



Pilot Officer Henryk Pietrzak (left) and his colleagues from No. 306 "Toruń" Fighter Squadron after a sortie, 1942 (NAC)



Mechanics of No. 303 "Warsaw-Tadeusz Kościuszko" Squadron, 1940 (MNP WA)



A trophy made from part of a tail of a German bomber, 1940 (NAC)



Flight Lieutenants Jan Daszewski and Jan Zumbach, two of the best Polish fighter pilots, 1940 (MNP WA)

POLISH AIR FORCE SQUADRONS

Fighter squadrons:

No. 302 "Poznań" Squadron (1940–1946)

No. 303 "Warsaw–Tadeusz Kościuszko" Squadron (1940–1946)

No. 306 "Toruń" Squadron (1940–1946)

No. 307 "Lwów Night Owls" (Night Fighter) Squadron (1940–1946)

No. 308 "Kraków" Squadron (1940–1947)

No. 309 "Land of Czerwień" (Fighter-Reconnaissance) Squadron
(1942–1947)

No. 315 "Dęblin" Squadron (1941–1946)

No. 316 "Warsaw" Squadron (1941–1946)

No. 317 "Wilno" Squadron (1941–1947)

No. 318 "Gdańsk" (Fighter-Reconnaissance) Squadron (1943–1946)

Polish Fighting Team a.k.a. Skalski's Circus (1943)

No. 663 (Air Observation Post) Squadron (1944–1946)

Bomber squadrons:

No. 300 "Land of Masovia" Squadron (1940–1947)

No. 301 "Land of Pomerania" Squadron (subsequently
"Land of Pomerania–Defenders of Warsaw"; 1940–1946)

No. 304 "Land of Silesia–Prince Józef Poniatowski" Squadron (1940–1946)

No. 305 "Land of Greater Poland–Marshal Józef Piłsudski" Squadron
(1940–1947)

3

THE CREATION OF NO. 318 SQUADRON

“

**We were a ragbag
in every meaning
of the word.**

*Władysław Nycz, W powietrznym zwiadzie,
Warszawa 1982*



AT RAF DETLING

Polish soldiers evacuated from the Soviet Union to the Middle East were used to create the Polish II Corps commanded by General Władysław Anders. The corps was to have a Polish squadron as its organic air support. To this end, on 20 March 1943, a new unit – No. 318 Fighter-Reconnaissance Squadron – was established at RAF Detling, near Maidstone in Kent. It was composed of pilots from various other Polish squadrons and newly trained pilots originating from other services, as well as ground crews. The squadron was divided into three flights (A, B, and C, each with nine aeroplanes), of which the third was a technical flight. Once the squadron had been created and the personnel was well-oiled and passed initial training, a decision was made to transfer the squadron to the Middle East, by sea via Gibraltar. The entire squadron boarded the HMS *Empress of Australia* in Liverpool and put to sea as part of convoy on 16 August 1943, heading to Alexandria in Egypt.

Na wiosnę roku Pańskiego 1943, Rozkazem Inspektoratu Lotnictwa w Anglii (L. da. 598/TJ/ORC/43) pomofano z dniem 20/III 43 do zrycia nasz dywizjon, nadajac mu Nr koleiny 318. Dywizjon byl juz w chwili powstania z gory przesnacony do nastopieracy z arucja Polsko, na Wschodzie.

The first entry in the chronicle of No. 318 Fighter-Reconnaissance Squadron, noting its creation, 20 March 1943 (IPMS)



Flying Officer Józef Krzywonos (centre) with the personnel of No. 318 Squadron's signals section, 1943 (MLP)



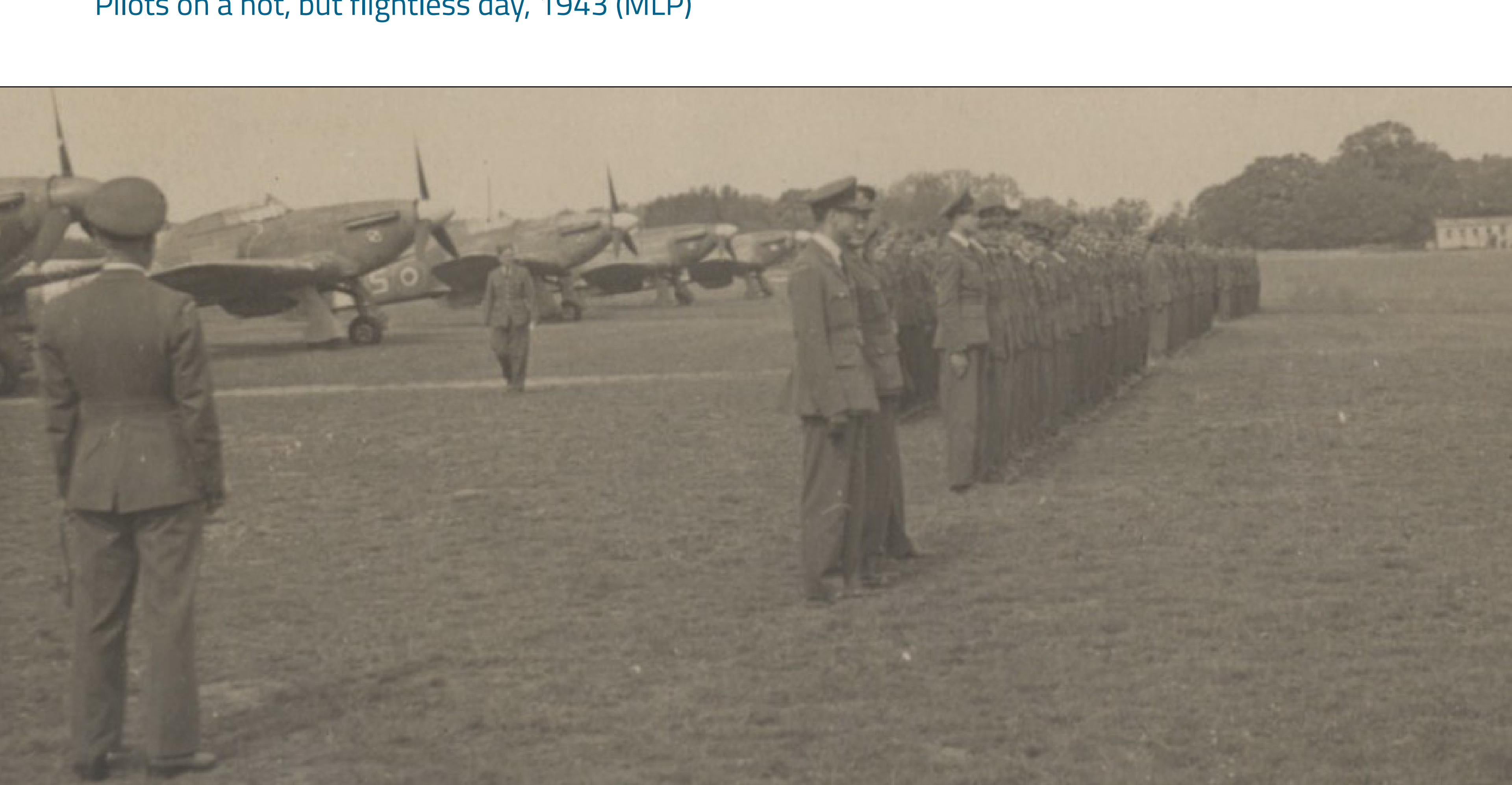
Polish officers resting in the mess hall of RAF Detling, UK. Left-to-right: squadron adjutant Flight Lieutenant Tadeusz Wiśniowski, operations officer Flying Officer Zbigniew Kalinowski, commanding officer Wing Commander Adam Wojtyga; standing left-to-right: Flying Officers Dr Michał Kraszewski (squadron medical officer), Józef Krzywonos (signals officer), and Franciszek Turek, 1943 (MLP)



In front of a building at RAF Detling, left-to-right: Squadron Leader Walls, translator Flying Officer Felicjan Gadomski, Flying Officer Alfons Czernecki, Flight Lieutenant Gordon, unidentified RAF officer, Flying Officer Józef Krzywonos, Flying Officer Zdzisław Uchwat, and Flying Officer Ferdynand Stutzmann, 1943 (MLP)



Pilots on a hot, but flightless day, 1943 (MLP)



Inspection and briefing for pilots and personnel of No. 318 Squadron, 6 August 1943 (MLP)

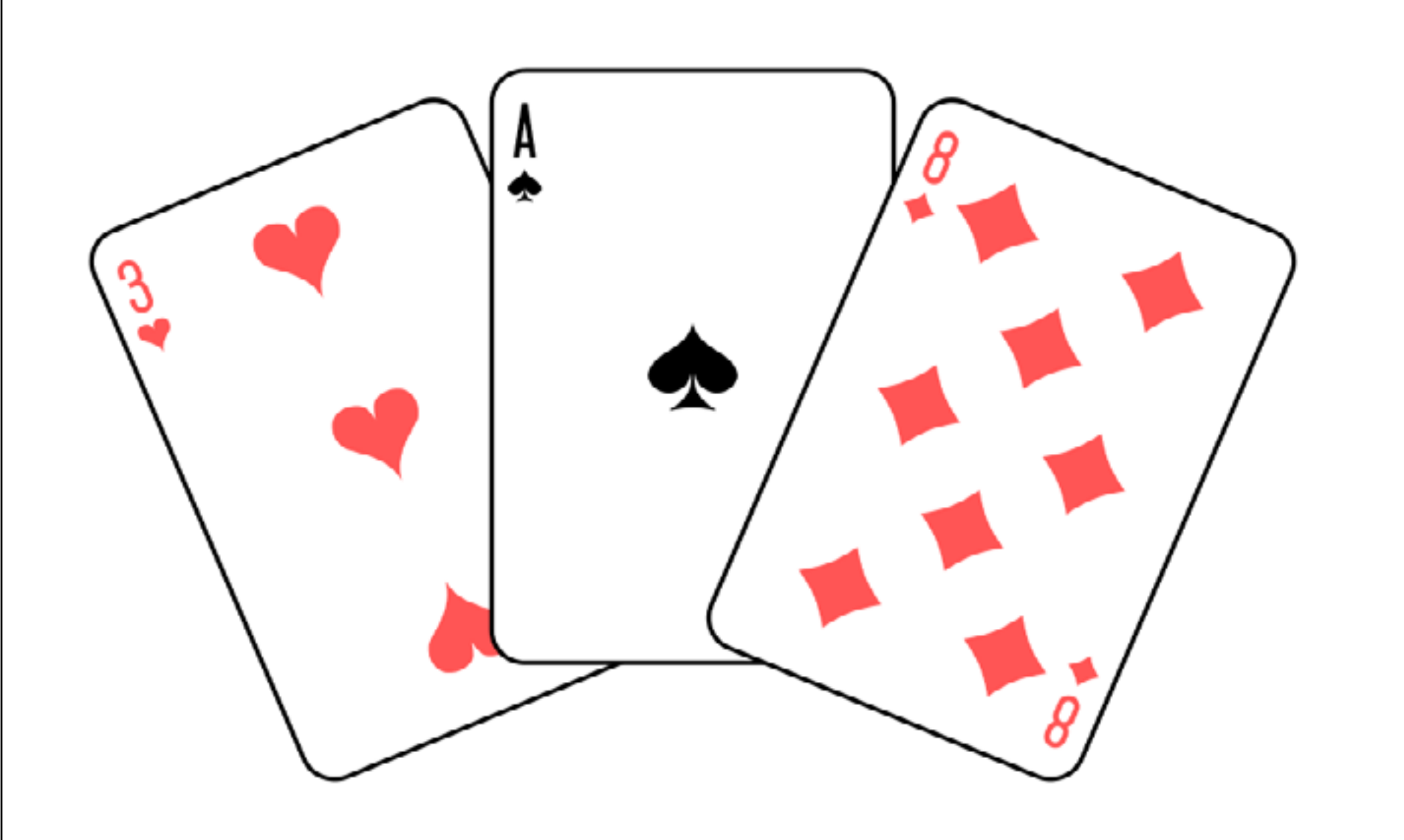


A pilot of No. 318 Squadron with a woman living near RAF Detling 1943 (MLP)

EMBLEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Initially, the unit was classified as No. 318 Army Co-operation Squadron, but on 29 June 1943, it was reclassified as a fighter-reconnaissance squadron. The idea of naming it after Gdańsk appeared on 25 April 1943, during a formal Easter lunch. British authorities rejected the idea, pointing out that before the war Gdańsk had not been within Poland's borders, existing instead as the Free City of Gdańsk. For this reason, the squadron's emblem contained three playing cards, the three of hearts, the ace of spades, and the eight of diamonds. However, a new emblem was designed in autumn of 1944: the coat of arms of Gdańsk, winged, and with the number 318 at the top. The British command denied permission to display the new emblem on the aeroplanes, but Polish pilots did wear it on their uniforms.

In England, the pilots had trained on obsolete Mark I Hawker Hurricanes before converting to the newer Mark IIs in the Middle East. The squadron's first combat aircraft, Supermarine Spitfire Mark Vs, arrived in March 1944. Eventually, the squadron switched to the most advanced Spitfires – the Mark IX. The squadron code, displayed on the fuselages of aeroplanes, was "LW".



The first emblem of No. 318 Squadron painted on its aeroplanes, 1943–1945 (public domain)



The emblem of No. 318 Squadron incorporating the coat of arms of Gdańsk, 1945–1946 (public domain)



One of Flight A's aircraft with Flying Officer Józef Krzywonos in the cockpit. These aeroplanes were used for training and thus only had the white-and-red chequerboard on their engine cowlings, 1943 (MLP)



A car of the signals section of No. 318 Squadron, 1943 (MLP)



The emblem of No. 318 Squadron clearly visible next to the cockpit, 1944 (MLP)



Flying Officer Józef Krzywonos with a Hawker Hurricane Mk. I fighter, 1943 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron pilots training on older Hawker Hurricane Mk. IA and C fighters, 1943 (MLP)



The first two modern Supermarine Spitfire Mk. VC fighters delivered to No. 318 Squadron, 14 December 1943 (MLP)



Pilots with a Hawker Hurricane Mk. IIB fighter/trainer at RAF Gaza, Palestine, 1943 (MLP)



Daily life at RAF Gaza, Palestine, a signals officer at work, 1943-1944 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron pilots with their new Supermarine Spitfire Mk. VCs, 1944 (MLP)



A Hawker Hurricane Mk. IIB during a training flight over the Egyptian desert, 1943 (MLP)



Supermarine Spitfire Mk. IXE fighters at an airfield near Rimini, Italy, 1944 (MLP)



Willys MB and lorries of No. 318 Squadron, Italy, 1944 (MLP)

THE MIDDLE EAST AND ONWARD TO ITALY

The personnel of No. 318 Squadron (52 officers, 279 non-commissioned officers and men) reached Alexandria on 29 August 1943. By 10 September, the column had arrived at RAF Muqeible, near Jalamah and Nazareth in Palestine. Subsequently, the airmen and ground crews were trained at the airfield in Gaza (12 October 1943) and Qassassin in Lower Egypt (18 November 1943). On 8 December 1943, the squadron was visited by the Commander-in-chief of the Polish Armed Forces, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, accompanied by General Władysław Anders and Air Commodore Ludomił A. Rayski. By 1 March 1944, the squadron had seen its final reshaping into a combat unit and on 20 April, after a two-day journey from Alexandria on the HMT Derbyshire, the main part of the squadron reached the Italian port of Taranto. Pilots arrived at the Castel Benito airfield on 24 April, having flown in their fighters from Marble Arch near Benghazi in Libya. On 1 May 1944 the entire squadron transferred to its new airfield of Trigno.



In a cabin on the *Empress of Australia*. Right-to-left: Flying Officers Włodzimierz Bereżecki "Wołodzia", Józef Krzywonos "Drucik", and Zbigniew Moszyński "Moszek", 26 August 1943 (MLP)



Flying Officer Józef Krzywonos and Flying Officer Tomasz Cybulski on the HMS *Empress of Australia* during the voyage from Britain to the Middle East, 26 August 1943 (MLP)



Officers of No. 318 Squadron on their way from RAF Muqeible to RAF Gaza in Palestine, 11–12 October 1943 (MLP)



Supermarine Spitfire Mk. VC fighter of No. 318 Squadron at the airfield in Qassasin, Egypt, early 1944 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron at RAF Gaza, Palestine, 1943 (MLP)



Polish pilots and members of the local community in Palestine, 1943 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron officers (including Flying Officer Ignacy Świąćicki) next to one of Giza's pyramids, Egypt, 1944 (MS)



The funeral of Flying Officer Jan Błaszczuk and Flying Officer Jerzy Głowacki, who perished in an accident during training, 4 December 1943 (MLP)



Standing under the pyramids of Giza, Egypt: Flying Officers Józef Krzywonos and Jerzy Hamankiewicz, Pilot Officers Robert G. Sharp and Seweryn Buckiewicz, Flying Officer Ferdynand Stutzmann, December 1943 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron at RAF Muqeible, Palestine, receiving their Hawker Hurricane Mk. IIB fighters, 14 September 1943 (MLP)

4

MONTE CASSINO TO BOLOGNA

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**The front welcomed us very cordially.
The Germans almost didn't shoot.**

Chronicle of No. 318 Squadron



BEYOND THE GUSTAV LINE

After the breakthrough at the Gustav Line, the Allies pressed on northward. On 4 June 1944, they captured Rome, and by the end of 1944, they reached the last line of German defence: the Gothic Line. The Polish II Corps participated in the victorious battles of Ancona and Rimini. No. 318 Squadron duly followed, relocating to airfields at San Vito, Tortoreto, Chiaravale, Cassandra, Forli, and others. In mid-June 1944, it began sorties in support of artillery and Polish and British units. The pilots' experience grew and the squadron received commendations from unit commanders. On 27 July 1944, in Castiglione, the squadron was visited by King George VI. In that period, the squadron lost one pilot: on 9 August, Flight Lieutenant Lew Kuryłowicz was shot down by anti-aircraft defences during a reconnaissance sortie and taken prisoner. In December 1944, the squadron was reorganised so that for the rest of the war, it would operate with two flights. By the end of 1944, No. 318 Squadron had flown 3,106 sorties lasting a total of 4,098 hours.



The crew of a B-24 Liberator bomber of No. 1586 (Special Duties) Flight visiting Trigno airfield, Italy, 2 June 1944 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron's Supermarine Spitfire Mk. V which crashed during an emergency landing, Fermo, Italy, 1944 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron's airfield in Rimini, Italy, 1944 (MLP)



Zwiad lotniczy nad nieprzyjacielskimi pozycjami w Monte Marciano we Włoszech, 30 VII 1944 r.



On their way north the pilots and personnel of No. 318 Squadron encounter a destroyed German field gun near Loreto, Italy, June–July 1944 (MLP)



A pilot of No. 318 Squadron along with Italian children examines a destroyed American bomber, 1944 (MLP)



Mechanics at work, 1944 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron's airfield in Rimini, Italy, 1944 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron's airfield, Tortoreto, Italy, 1944 (MLP)

SUPPORTING THE BATTLE OF MONTE CASSINO

Towards the end of 1943 battles came to a halt upon reaching the Gustav Line, which blocked the Allies' way to Rome. Among the crucial positions needing to be captured was the town of Cassino along with the surrounding hills and the monastery of Monte Cassino. Three times the Allies failed to achieve a breakthrough. No. 318 Squadron began operational sorties on 2 May 1944. Its main tasks were: reconnaissance over the enemy's rear, artillery spotting, directing artillery fire, and ground attacks. The first weeks of operational flying proved that the squadron would not be facing German or Italian aeroplanes, but rather exceptionally strong anti-aircraft defences, and that the squadron would need to fly sorties within its range. During Operation Honker (11–19 May) the squadron supported the Polish II Corps as well as units of the British Eighth Army and tallied 332 sorties throughout the entire month, on 18 May Polish soldiers captured the monastery of Monte Cassino.



Inspection at Fermo airfield, Italy. Left-to-right: Bishop Józef Gawlina, General Władysław Anders, No. 318 Squadron commanding officer Flight Lieutenant Leszek Wielochowski,



At the beach in Trigno, Italy. Left-to-right: RAF liaison officer, Australian Flying Officer D.W. Barclay, and squadron adjutant



Polish airmen and Italian civilians, 1944 (MLP)



Flying Officer Mieczysław Galicki after a sortie, 1944 (MLP)



Comms station of No. 318 Squadron, 1944 (MLP)



A Taylorcraft Auster Mk. III reconnaissance and liaison aircraft landing at Trigno airfield, Italy, 1944 (MLP)

FROM BOLOGNA TO FINAL FLIGHTS ABOVE VENICE

Inclement weather during the winter of 1944–45 made the use of armour and taking advantage of air superiority impossible; moreover, high losses prevented the Allies from pressing on with the offensive. The final strike only came in April of 1945. In that period, the Polish II Corps participated in the battle of Bologna, which was eventually captured on 21 April. No. 318 Squadron still followed and was stationed at La Russia, Risano, and finally at Treviso, which would become its last base in wartime. Between January 1945 and the cessation of hostilities in May, the squadron's pilots flew 1,758 sorties (2,142 hours). They conducted photo reconnaissance of northern Italy (around Padua, Venice, and Treviso) and supplied ground troops with thousands of photographs. Strafing attacks were rare (one barge was sunk on the Po).



Supermarine Spitfire Mk. IXE fighters of No. 318 Squadron at Forli airfield, Italy, spring 1945 (MLP)



Fighters of No. 318 Squadron at Forli airfield, Italy, 1944 (MLP)



Forli airfield, Italy, 1945 (MLP)



On their way to northern Italy the land component of the squadron wait to cross a river near Chiaravelle, 1944 (MLP)



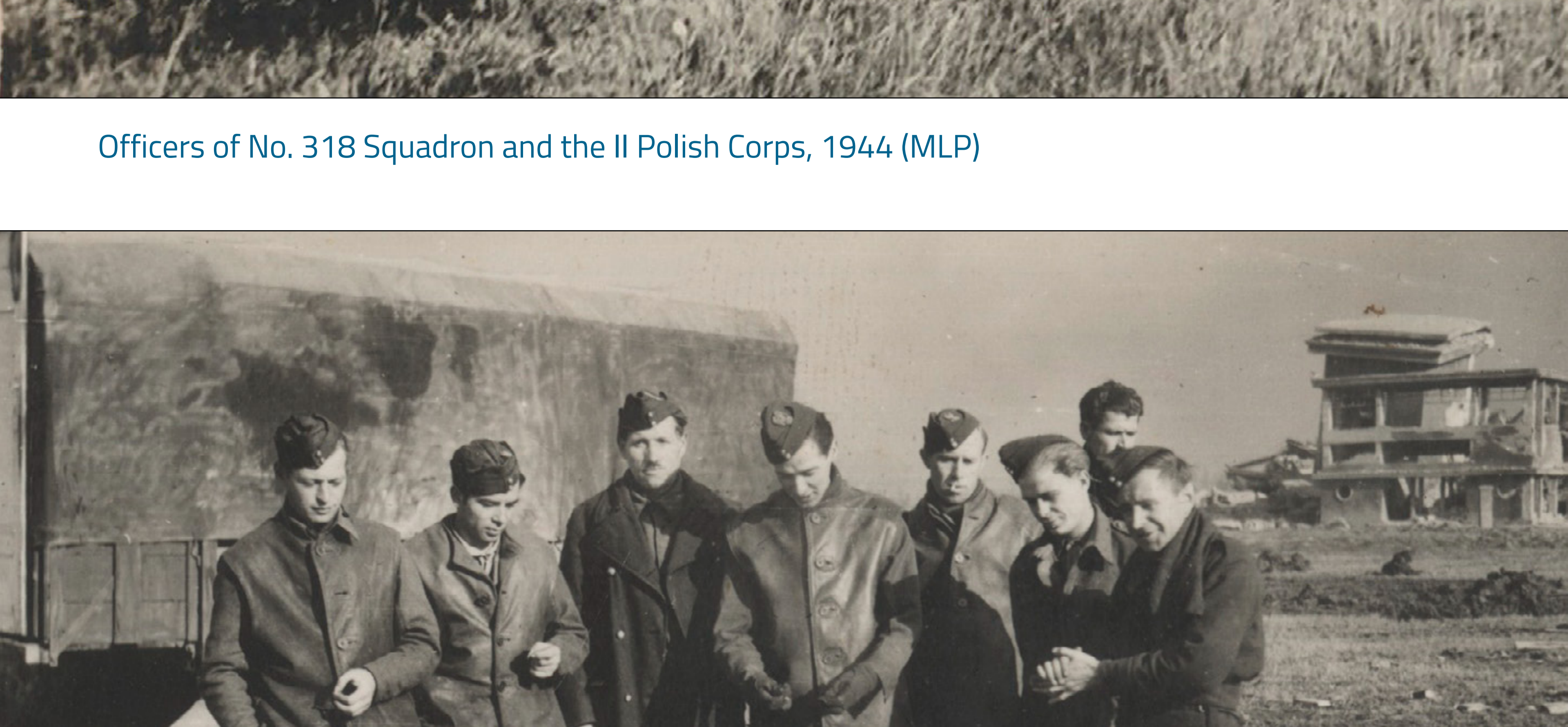
During landing Flight Sergeant Zygmunt Ostrowski of No. 318 Squadron's Flight A nosed-over his Supermarine Spitfire LF Mk. IXE LW-F. He was unharmed, 1944 (MLP)



Unloading a Douglas DC-3 (Dakota); due to very poor roads transport by air was the quickest, 12 March 1945 (MLP)



Officers of No. 318 Squadron and the II Polish Corps, 1944 (MLP)



Attempting to get warm near an Italian airfield, 1944 (MLP)

5

ON DUTY AND OFF DUTY

“

The mess hall is indeed our home. [...] But what else can one do over here?

**Recollections of an anonymous pilot,
318 Dywizjon Myśliwski Rozpoznawczy “Gdański”,
„Skrzydła” 1968, nr 5**

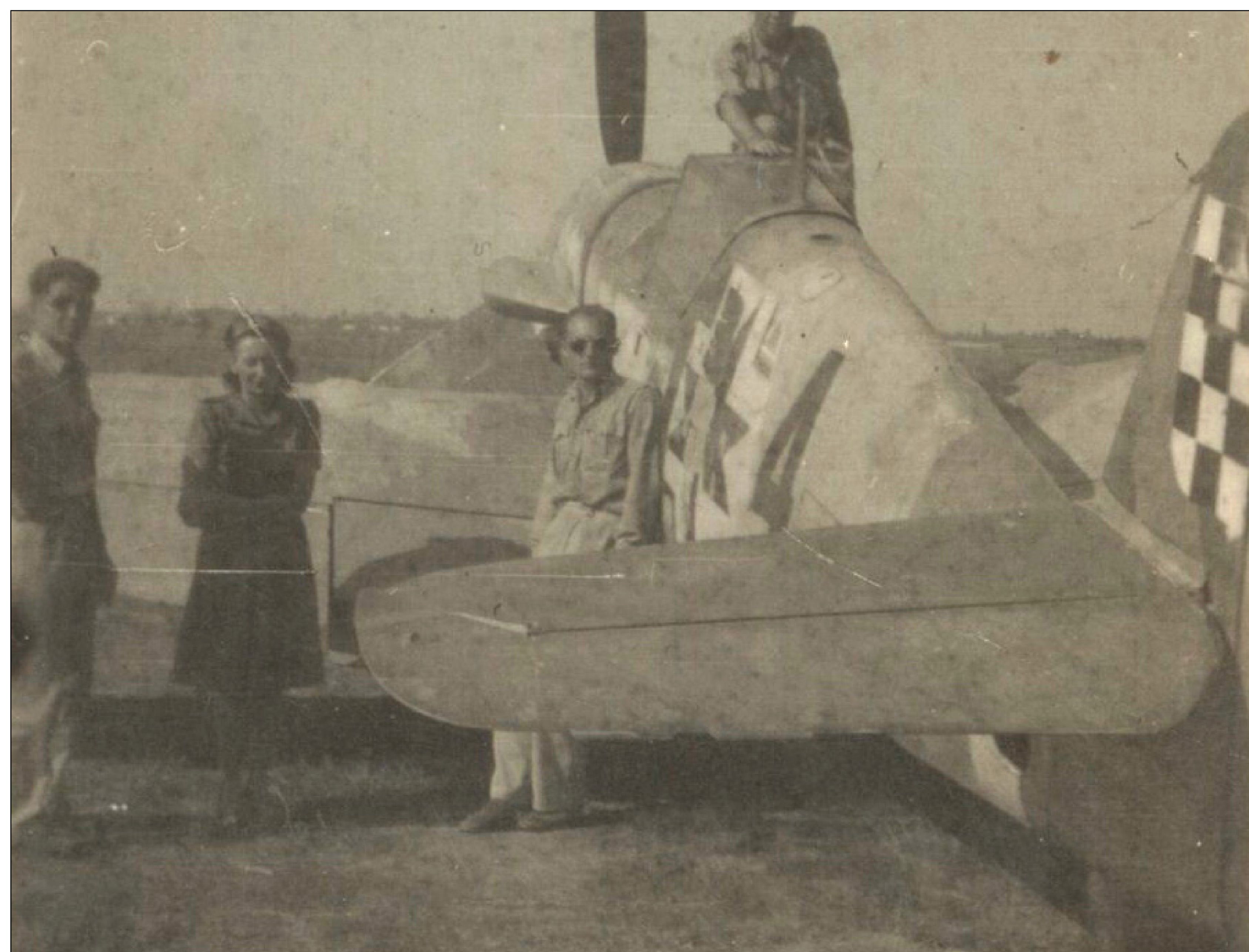


MESSERSCHMITT W RĘKACH POLAKÓW

On 16 April 1945 four Messerschmitt Bf 109Gs took off from Lučko in the Independent State of Croatia, or NDH (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska), an ally of Germany. Two pilots of the NDH air force, Sergeants Vladimir Sandtner and Josip Ceković, decided to defect and flew towards Italy. Sandtner landed at Falconara. In early 1946, the German-made fighter, formerly of the NDH air force, found itself in the hands of Polish pilots of No. 318 Squadron stationed at Tizzano. Flight Lieutenant Jan Preihs bought it from American soldiers, along with a Bücker Bü 181 liaison aircraft, for two bottles of bourbon. The Bf 109 was repainted in RAF colours with the "LW" code and adorned with a white-and-red chequerboard as well as the squadron's emblem: the three playing cards. Eventually, the Messerschmitt was taken away from the squadron, but the Bücker faithfully served on.



Messerschmitt Bf 109G-14/AS ("Black 4") of Sergeant (narednik) Vladimir Sandtner of the Air Force of the Independent State of Croatia examined by pilots of No. 318 Squadron in Lavariano near Udine, Italy, 1946 (MLP)



Messerschmitt Bf 109G-14/AS ("Black 4") of Sergeant (narednik) Vladimir Sandtner of the Air Force of the Independent State of Croatia examined by pilots of No. 318 Squadron in Lavariano near Udine, Italy, 1946 (MLP)



A Messerschmitt Bf 109G-14/AS acquired by No. 318 Squadron in September 1945 from the Americans. Note the discoloration from the aircraft being on fire, on the left on the upper fuselage. Treviso, Italy, March 1946 (www.polishairforce.pl)



The left side of the Bf 109G-14/AS. The wingtip on the left is of the Bücker 181 Bestmann acquired together with the Messerschmitt, likely Lavariano or Risano/Tizzano, Italy, 1946 (www.polishairforce.pl)

A SQUADRON OF OFFICERS

Unlike many other air force units, No. 318 Squadron's pilots were entirely of officers, formerly serving in other Polish Air Force squadrons (fighters, reconnaissance, night fighters, and bombers), as well as officers from other services (such as artillery), specifically trained to transition to aviation. The squadron was to be composed of highly specialised experts with combat experience. The pilots – none of whose rank was lower than pilot officer – were taken from Polish squadrons (Nos. 301, 302, 304, 305, 306, 308, 309, and 317), as well as Royal Air Force squadrons. Pilots of other nationalities served in the squadron, too: two Britons, two Irishmen, one New Zealander, and one Brazilian.



No. 318 Squadron officers of Flight A, Italy, 1945 (MLP)



No. 318 Squadron officers in Egypt, 1944 (MLP)

M.p. dnia 5 lutego 1945.

Rozkaz dzienny Nr.36

177. Służba.
 Oficer służbowy Dyonu na dzień 6.2.45 - ppor. pil. Rosinski
 Oficer służbowy Dyonu na dzień 7.2.45 - st. sierż. Jodko
 2-ca ofic. służb. Dyonu na dzień 6.2.45 - plut. P/sgt. Domin
 Dowódca warty na dzień 6.2.45 - sierż. cył. Witka
 Wartownicy na dzień 6.2.45 - wyznaczy po 1 szereg: Bskadry A, B, T, Druż. D-cy.
 Patrol na dzień 6.2.45 - wyznaczy Sekoja Foto
 Dyż. kier. i mechanik na dzień 6.2.45 - wyznaczy Plut. Tiansp.
 Dyżurny magazynier na dzień 6.2.45 - wyznaczy Oficer Elwip.
 Zaciemnienie od godz. 17.30 do godz. 06.30.

178. Nadanie odznaczeń bojowych.
 W uznaniu nęstwa i odwagi, wykazanych w czasie walk Polskich Sił Powietrznych z terenu Włoch, Pan Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej zarządzenia z dnia 7 grudnia 1944 nadał:

Krzyż Walecznych po raz drugi:
 P0231 kpt. pil. Kalinowski Zbigniewowi
 F1199 por. pil. Andrzejko Michałowi
 P2061 por. pil. Buckiewicz Sewerynowi
 F1682 por. pil. Gaworski Bronisławowi
 P0760 por. pil. Kesserlingowi Rudolfowi
 P2071 por. pil. Piaskowski Andrzejowi
 P2185 por. pil. Święcicki Ignacemu

Krzyż Walecznych po raz pierwszy i drugi:

Nr. odzn.	Nr. swid.	Nr. imię
8084	F1761 kpt. pil.	Kuryłowicz Lew
8085	F1643 por. pil.	Hamankiewicz Jerzemu
8086	P0162 por. pil.	Słażyński Leonowi
8087	F1648 por. pil.	Szarzynski-Szp Oswaldowi
8088	F1627 por. pil.	Turek Franciszkowi

Krzyż Walecznych po raz pierwszy:

8089	P0945 por. pil.	Barwicz Tadeuszowi
8090	F1366 por. pil.	Koń Stanisławowi Grzegorzowi
8091	F1859 por. pil.	Paczuski Jerzemu Stefanowi
8092	P0219 por. pil.	Preihs Janowi Kazimiersowi
8093	F1735 por. pil.	Radwanski Jerzemu Aleksandrowi
8094	P2260 ppor. pil.	Lipp Józefowi

Postawa: Rozkaz Dowódcy 312 Powietrznych Nr. 55/4 z dnia 7.2.45

Daily order from the commander of No. 318 Squadron regarding promotions and decorations, 5 February 1945 (IPMS)



No. 318 Squadron officers at RAF Gaza, Palestine, 1943 (MLP)

Skład personelu

w chwili tworzenia się dywizjonu wyładował następująco:

Dca ppłk. pilot Wajtyga Adam - poprzednio komendantem Technicznej Sekcji pilotów w Brighton.

Dca Dcy - kpt. pilot Wielochowski z 301 Dyonu Bombowego

Adjutant - kpt. Brenk z RAF Station Northolt, który odebrał już po upływie miesiąc zdejść funkcję kapitanowi Wisniewskiemu.

Oficer Taktyczny - por. pil. Kalinowski z 317 Dyonu

Oficer Techniczny - por. inż. Bortkiewicz z Fighter Command

Oficer Pancerzy - por. Klaywonas z 304 Dyonu Bombowego

Lekant - por. Krasemski z 304 Dyonu rozpoznawczego

Oficer eskadrowy - por. Maciukiewicz z 304 Dyonu (odszedł po miesiąc)

Oficer informacyjny - por. pil. Smielowski z Blackpool.

Dcy eskadry - kpt. pil. Nasemski i por. pil. Bereziński obaj z 304 Dyonu

Piloci, eskadra A.

por. Moszynski z 183go Dyonu	por. Polek z 609
por. Bzassczyk z 308	por. Bogutski z 302
por. Turek z 222	por. Górnjak z 306
por. Tatarski z 317	por. Preihs z 302
por. Różański z 306	por. Stutzmann z 315
por. Uchwat z 317	por. Kon z 308
por. Jakubowski z 308	por. Szaryński z 306
por. Czerniecki z 16 SFTS	por. Hamankiewicz z 222
por. Pawuski z 303	por. Radziemski z 317
por. Urban z 315	por. Cybulski z 309
ppm. Beyer z 302	por. Morobowski z 302.

The initial personnel of No. 318 Squadron with indication of the pilots' previous units, 1943 (IPMS)



Air Commodore Ludomił Rayski, pre-war commander of the Polish Air Force, with pilots of No. 318 Squadron, 1944 (MLP)

A GENERAL OVER THE FRONTLINE – AIR COMMODORE LUDOMIŁ A. RAYSKI

“The Old Gentleman”, as he was known among the pilots, visited the squadron often. Air Commodore Ludomił Antoni Rayski (1892–1977) was a graduate of the Lviv Technical University, a soldier of the Polish Legions, and a pilot in the Turkish air force during World War I (including the Battle of Gallipoli). He was commissioned as an officer in 1919, and served as commander of Polish military aviation from 1926 until 1939. He was conflicted with General Władysław Sikorski and served in the RAF, but after Sikorski’s tragic death in July 1943, he was transferred to the Polish Air Force and given the command of its Middle Eastern component. So as to be closer to his units, he moved from Cairo to Italy and took part in many combat missions. As a bomber co-pilot in No. 1586 (Polish Special Duties) Flight, formerly No. 301 Squadron, he participated in five supply flights for the Warsaw Uprising. In No. 318 Squadron he flew 21 sorties. A record holder among officers of such high rank, by 1946 he had flown missions lasting a total of 1,523 hours.



Air Cdre Ludomił A. Rayski, ranking officer of No. 318 Squadron (MLP)



Air Cdre Ludomił A. Rayski in North Africa, Gaza, Palestine, 1943 (MLP)



Air Cdre Ludomił A. Rayski engrossed in reading. Pilots recalled that “nobody dared to call him ‘grandpappy’, that would be an insult to an officer who was still ‘young.’” Qassasin, Egypt, 1944 (MLP)



Air Cdre Ludomił A. Rayski with pilots at Qassasin airfield, Egypt, 1944 (MLP)

EVERYDAY LIFE ON THE ITALIAN BOOT

From their days at the Italian front, the pilots and ground crews of No. 318 Squadron were aware that, unlike air bases in the UK, Middle East, and Egypt, one needed to quickly get accustomed to often primitive living conditions. The base was made up of tents, in the summer the personnel suffered from heat, in the autumn – from rainfall and ‘horrific mud, in which one may easily lose his shoes or even his Wellingtons’, in the winter – from snow and freezing temperatures. As the front moved on, the squadron had to relocate often. ‘We had achieved great skill in packing up our personal belongings and tents. . . . Even stomping one’s foot brings up clouds of dust, let alone an aeroplane taking off.’ Having their days filled only with flying and combat missions, the personnel saw their lives infested with boredom. ‘The mess hall is indeed our home. . . . Visitors might conclude we drink too much and play cards, but what else can one do over here?’ recalled one pilot. Some diversion was provided by the football team, established while the squadron was still in Britain. It faced off on makeshift fields against teams from other RAF and Allied units.



Playing cards was the dominant pastime, Trigano, Italy, 1944 (MLP)



A soldier must always be clean-shaven, 1944 (MLP)



Before a briefing in an Italian airbase, 1944 (MLP)



A modest wedding of a pilot of No. 318 Squadron, 18 January 1946 (MLP)



A short leave and time to bathe in the sea, 1945 (MLP)

THE TASTE OF BITTER VICTORY

“

The air of tension and discipline was gone, replaced by calmness and relaxation.

Mieczysław Galicki, 318. *Dywizjon Myśliwsko-Rozpoznawczy*. *Wspomnienia pilota*,
Poznań 1996



THE SQUADRON IS DISBANDED

In the period of 1945–1946, the pilots of No. 318 Squadron only flew training missions. The disbandment of the squadron was authorised in 1946. On 13 August, all the aeroplanes and equipment were transferred to the RAF's Italian command. Two days later, the squadron departed for Britain. On 18 August, after travelling by rail via the Brenner Pass, Austria, and southern Germany, it reached the French port of Calais, whence it proceeded by sea to Dover. The final destination was RAF Coltishall. On 31 August 1946 the Polish Air Force – and with it No. 318 Squadron – was formally disbanded. Afterward, the pilots only participated in the aviation parade above London on 14 September 1946, the sixth anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Beyond that, both the pilots and the ground crews were preparing to continue their lives outside of the military.



Inspector General of the Polish Air Force Air Commodore Mateusz Iżycki and Air Commodore Ludomił A. Rayski speaking with officers of No. 318 Squadron, likely for one of the final times, Treviso, Italy, 1 May 1946 (MLP)



General Władysław Anders during the final inspection of No. 318 Squadron, Treviso, Italy, May 1946 (MLP)



Last days in Italy, Treviso, October 1946 (MLP)



Back in Britain, General Sikorski and President of Poland Władysław Raczkiewicz at the Polish airmen's cemetery in Newark, UK, 1947 (MLP)

DIFFICULT DECISIONS

For many Poles the international situation after World War 2 failed to give reasons for optimism. Communists were gradually seizing power in Poland, the country found itself – to use the words of Prime Minister Winston Churchill – beyond the Iron Curtain, that is, in the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. On 5 July 1946, the British and American governments recognized the government in Warsaw (dominated by the communists) and withdrew their recognition of the London-based Polish government-in-exile. The London government conducted a partial demobilisation as early as in June 1945. In 1947, the Polish Armed Forces in the West were completely disbanded. Some 3,000 persons of the 17,000-strong Polish Air Force decided to return to Poland. The personnel of No. 318 Squadron made similar choices. Upon its disbandment, few declared they wanted to return to their homeland. The rest scattered around the world.



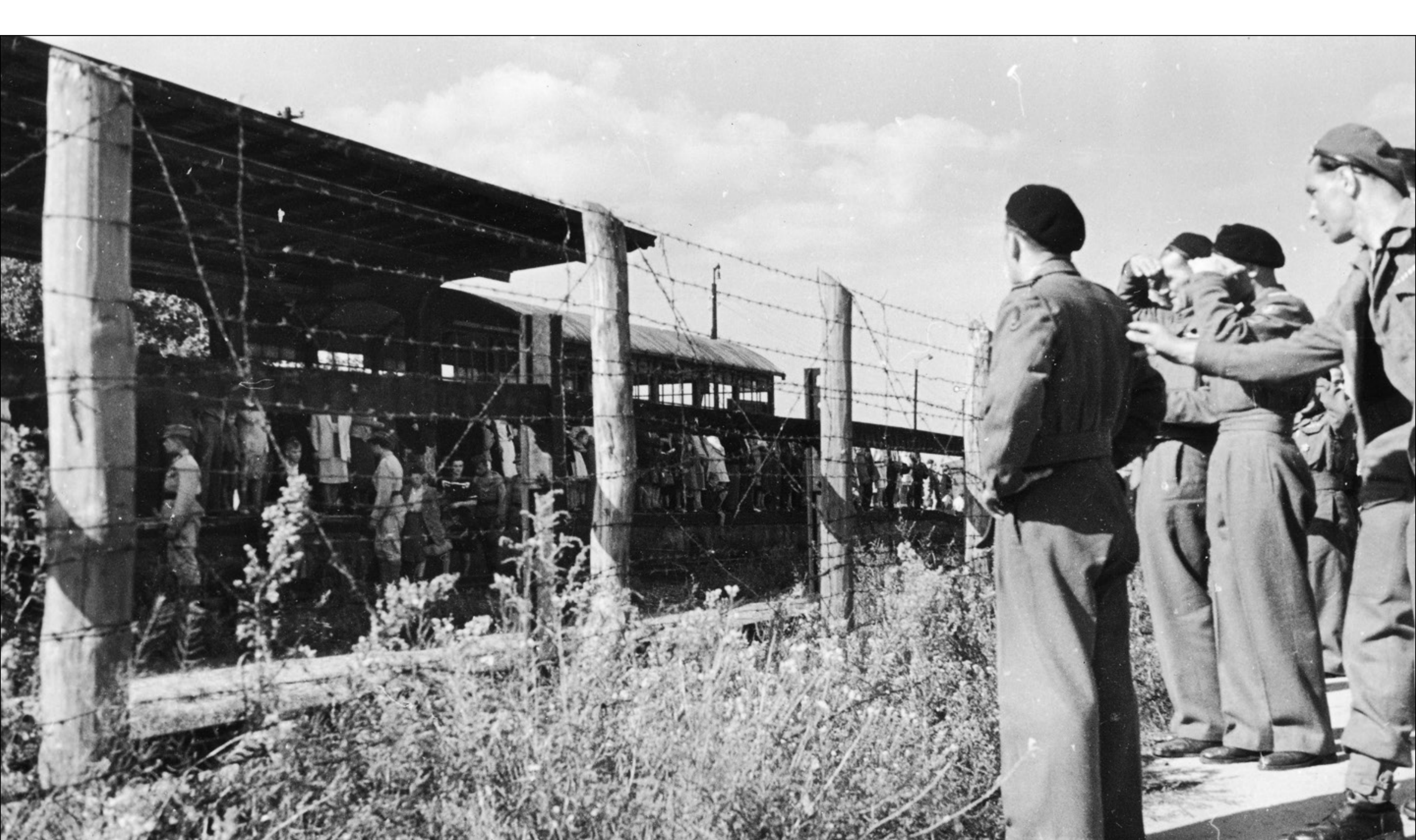
Men returning from Britain (of the 2nd "Warsaw" Armoured Division) meeting a soldier in the homeland, Gdańsk-Nowy Port, 3 August 1947 (NAC)



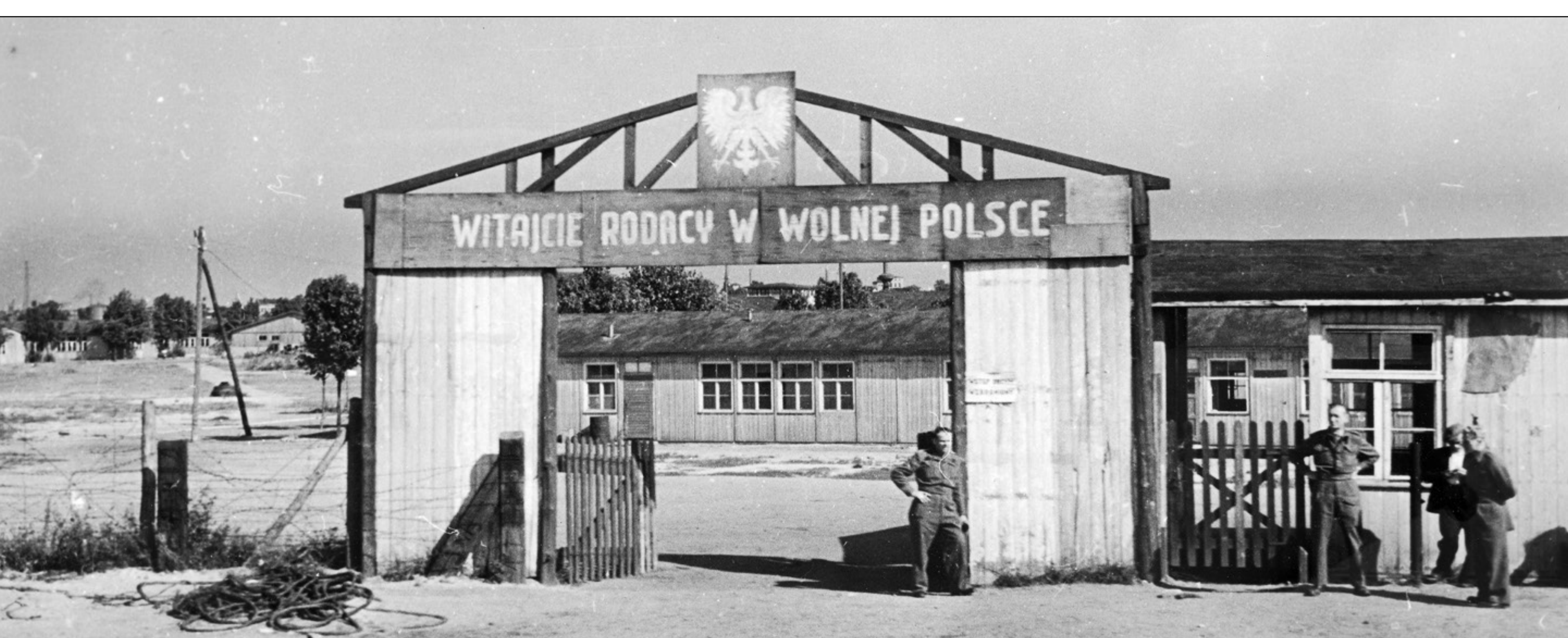
Disembarking in Gdańsk-Nowy Port, August 1947 (NAC)



Soldiers in front of the gate of the repatriation camp in Gdańsk-Nowy Port, August 1947 (NAC)



Soldiers of the 2nd "Warsaw" Armoured Division meeting with the local population across a barbed-wire fence, Gdańsk-Nowy Port, August 1947 (NAC)



The gate of the repatriation camp in Gdańsk-Nowy Port, August 1947. The sign above the gate says, "Welcome to free Poland, compatriots" (NAC)

AFTER THE WAR

On 8 May 1945, the Germans signed the instrument of unconditional surrender. World War 2 in Europe reached its end. During the war, pilots of No. 318 Squadron flew 4,864 sorties, losing five men killed in accidents (five more were injured) and one POW. All the way to late May 1945 the squadron flew reconnaissance missions, mainly over Austria. Even though the squadron did not score a single kill, it provided tremendous support for the Allied war effort in the Italian theatre. On 9 May 1945, a dozen pilots received the Virtuti Militari – Poland’s highest military decoration – and the Cross of Valour. The pilots also participated in celebrations and parades, including the opening of the Polish military cemetery at Monte Cassino.



The wedding of Flying Officer Henryk Rosiński and Corporal R. Piekarska in Sesto, Italy, December 1946 (MLP)

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT
				UP	DOWN	
MAY 13.	Spit IX SM-177	F/L W REMBOWSKI P0522	Pilot	OPERATION No.1. 08.10 10.15		TAC/R over S.AUSTRIA. Vis good. No AA.
	PT-676	F/L W MINISZEWSKI P1568	"	08.10 10.15		
	MH-724	F/O A BABER P2750	"	08.25 10.30		TAC/R over S.AUSTRIA. Vis good. No AA.
	MJ-226	F/O A GALWIN P2259	"	08.25 10.30		
14.	NO OPERATIONAL FLYING.					
15.	SM-177	F/O K KARLIKOWSKI P2844	"	OPERATION No.1. 08.10 10.30		TAC/R over S.AUSTRIA. Vis good. No AA.
	PT-717	F/O JC TAYLOR NZ417125	"	08.30 10.30		
16.	NO FLYING.					
17.	NO FLYING.					
18.	OPERATIONAL FLYING - NIL.					
19.	OPERATIONAL FLYING - NIL.					
20.	Spit IX MH-599	F/O B PODKOJECIANY P2672	Pilot	OPERATION No.1. 08.00 09.35		TAC/R Over S.AUSTRIA. Vis good. No AA.
	MH-724	F/O J OSOSTOWICZ P2350	"	08.00 09.35		
	MJ-426	F/O M SAWICKI P	"	08.00 10.10		TAC/R Over S.AUSTRIA. Vis good. No AA.
	MH-887	F/O B STRAMIK P2881	"	08.00 10.10		
	MH-599	F/O B CHUDZINSKI P2359	"	OPERATION No.3. 11.25 13.15		TAC/R over S.AUSTRIA. Vis good. No AA.
	MJ-226	F/O THH TUNNINGCLIFFE 15874.9	"	11.25 13.15		
21.	OPERATIONAL FLYING - NIL.					
22.	NO FLYING.					
23.	OPERATIONAL FLYING - NIL.					
24.	NO FLYING.					
25.	NO FLYING.					
26.	NO FLYING.					
27.	NO FLYING.					
28.	OPERATIONAL FLYING - NIL.					

FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 1945

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT
				UP	DOWN	
29.	OPERATIONAL FLYING - NIL.					
30.	OPERATIONAL FLYING - NIL.					
31.	NO FLYING.					

S. MALITA, P/Lt.,
for WING-COMMANDER, COMMANDING
No. 318 Polish Squadron,
ROYAL AIR FORCE, C/MF.

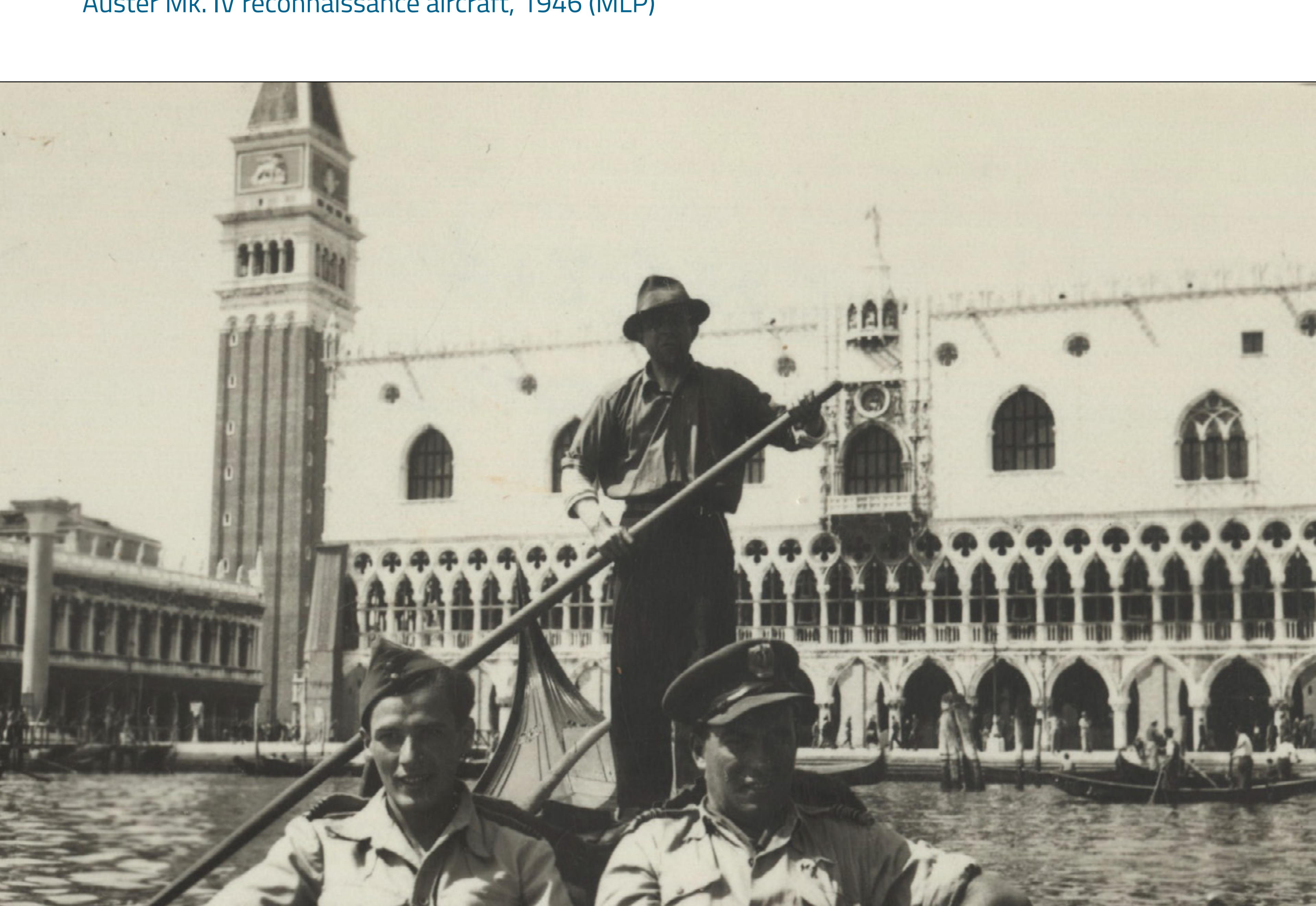
Final entries in No. 318 Squadron’s combat diary, 1945 (IPMS)



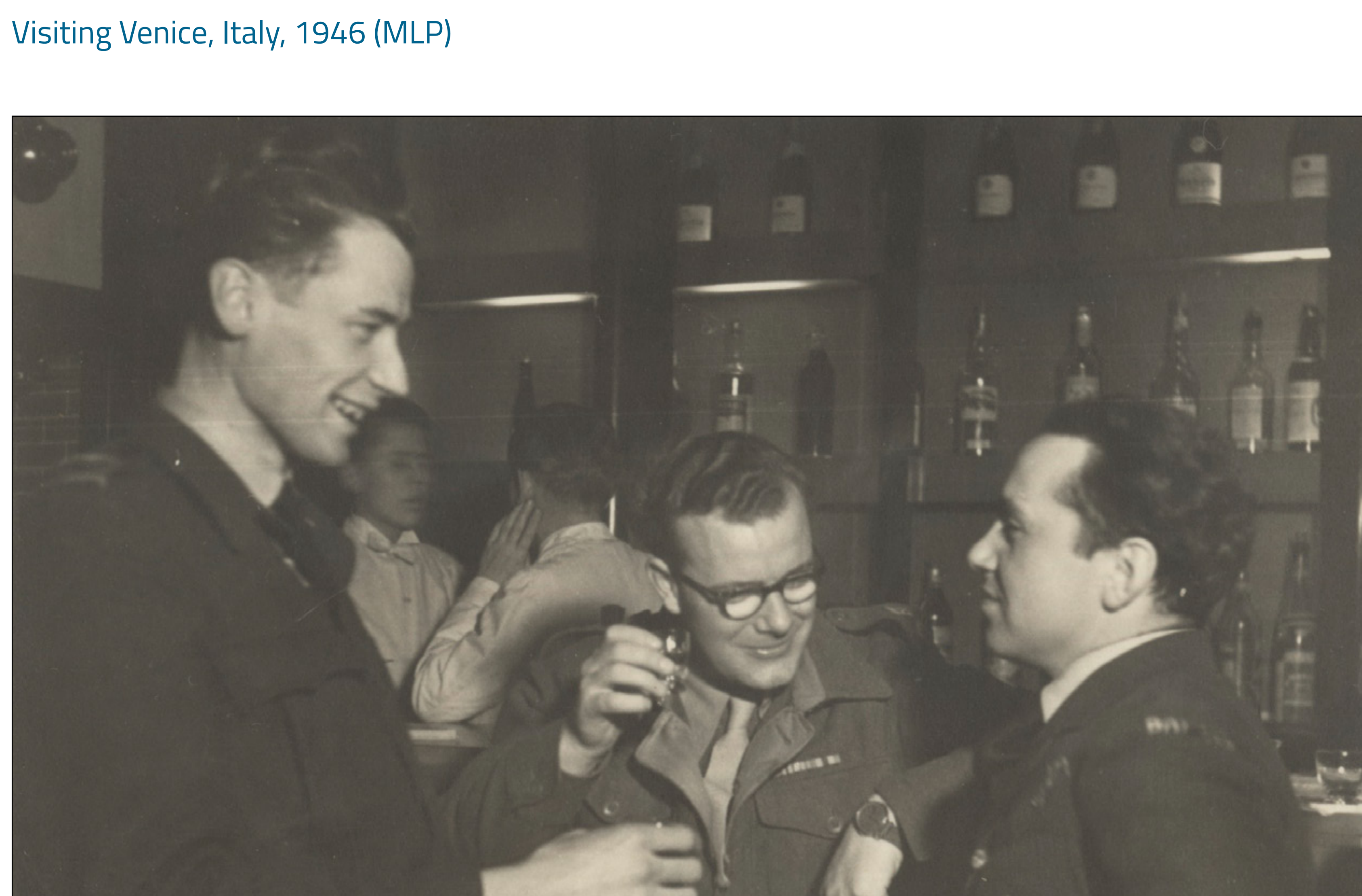
Airmen of No. 318 Squadron skiing in Sestio, Italy, January 1946 (MLP)



Final flights, not in combat. Flying Officers Józef Krzywonos and Kazimierz Górniak in a Taylorcraft Auster Mk. IV reconnaissance aircraft, 1946 (MLP)



Visiting Venice, Italy, 1946 (MLP)



In the bar of the Palazzo Cristallo hotel in Cortina, Italy, with British pilots, 1946 (MLP)

POST-WAR FORTUNES OF PILOTS – EXAMPLES



Left-to-right: Flying Officer Stanisław Koń of Flight A, the squadron's signals officer Flying Officer Józef Krzywonos, and Flying Officer Ferdynand Stutzmann of Flight B, Detling, UK, 4 August 1943

Stanisław Koń (1918–1984)

Officer (Flight Lieutenant), fighter pilot, in No. 318 Squadron from April 1943 until May 1945, Flight A leader from May 1944. Awarded the Cross of Valour twice and Air Force Medal thrice. Married an Italian woman with whom he moved to Argentina and lived in Rosario, at Calle Cochabamba. He was active in the diaspora and served as deputy chairman of the Polish Airmen's Association in Buenos Aires.

Józef Krzywonos (1920–)

Technical officer (Flying Officer), in No. 318 Squadron from 30 March 1943 until August 1946. Married an Italian woman and remained in Italy. Awarded the Air Force Medal thrice and commemorative British medals. Lived in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 29 April 1947 where he worked for airlines and built ground radio stations in Santa Fe. In 1959, he emigrated to the United States and settled in New York, where he worked at an airport, monitoring and repairing aircraft electronic systems. He graduated from the New York Institute of Technology.

Ferdynand Stutzmann (1918–1994)

Officer (Flight Lieutenant), fighter pilot, in No. 318 Squadron from 5 April 1943 to 21 February 1945, subsequently in the RAF. From 21 August 1945 he served in the basic flying training school in Newton where he completed the instructors' course. Awarded the Cross of Valour thrice, as well as the Air Force Medal and the Pilot's Field Badge. Returned to Poland on 9 May 1947 and settled in Przemyśl. In spite of multiple requests he was not accepted into the Polish Air Force.



Pilot Officer Bolesław Stramik in the cockpit of a German Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighter painted in RAF colours with the emblem of No. 318 Squadron, Lavariano near Udine, Italy, 1946 (MLP)

Bolesław Stramik (1922–1988)

Officer (Pilot Officer), fighter pilot and artilleryman (fought in the Battle of Tobruk), in No. 318 Squadron from 31 March 1945 until August 1946, discharged on 20 December 1948. Awarded the Cross of Valor, Air Force Medal, Pilot's Field Badge, the Italian Croce al Valore Militare (as one of a handful of Poles) and British commemorative medals. Remained in Britain, settled in Norwich, where he worked in a department store, and from 1957 in Fakenham Flying Group where he became chief flying instructor.

7 DANZIG BECOMES GDAŃSK

“ There used to be ‘Danzig’;
now, and for all eternity,
there will be Gdańsk.

*Stanisław Strąbski, Gdańsk po wyzwoleniu.
Rok pracy i osiągnięć, Gdańsk 1946*



DANZIG BECOMES GDAŃSK

On 28 March 1945, Red Army troops captured the Lower City and Granary Island while the Polish soldiers of the 1st "Heroes of Westerplatte" Armoured Brigade placed a white-and-red flag on the Artus Court. On 30 March, the Council of Ministers issued a decree establishing the voivodeship of Gdańsk and the following day officials from Warsaw arrived with the task of creating a Polish civilian administration. This was the year of sea-change: the memory of the German past began to fade and a new narrative emerged. The slogan promoted in ex-German lands of western Poland also resounded in Gdańsk: "We were, we are, we will be!" Not without reason. The Polish population of the city had been estimated at 30,000. The replacement of the population happened quickly. In 1946, there were 140,000 Poles and 15,000 Germans living in Gdańsk. A Polish journalist and propagandist remarked: "It is done. There used to be 'Danzig'; now, and for all eternity, there will be Gdańsk. Now we will rebuild it, we will tidy it up, we will shape it our way."

**Autochton –
to także Twój Rodak –
podaj Mu rękę!**

**ODEZWA
do ludności autochtonicznej
miasta Gdańska
RODACY!**

Wrogie narodowi i demokratycznemu Państwu Polskiemu elementy rozsiewają pogłoski, jakoby zweryfikowana ludność autochtoniczna miała być przesiedlona z Gdanska w głąb kraju. Wszelkie tego rodzaju plotki, godzące w interesy ludności autochtonicznej, krzywdzące ją moralnie i zmierzające do skłócenia jej z Macierzą, a tym samym osłabienia jedności i spójności społeczeństwa polskiego, są robotą antypaństwową!

Ludzie rozsiewający te plotki są agentami wrogiej propagandy mącicielami spokoju i szkodnikami społecznymi.

W ZWIĄZKU Z POWYŻSZYM STWIERDZAM, ŻE:

- I. Zweryfikowana ludność autochtoniczna posiada pełnie praw obywatelskich.
- II. Ludność autochtoniczna z Gdanska przesiedlona nie będzie.
- III. Rozsiewający bezpodstawne niepokojące pogłoski, będą pociągnięci do odpowiedzialności w myśl art. 170 K. K.

RODACY AUTOCHTONI!

Praw waszych na tej ziemi, której od lat broniliście przed zalewem niemieczyzny nikt wam nie odbierze! Nie słuchajcie podszeptów wrogiej propagandy. Mąciciele spokoju, burzyciele ładu społecznego, oddawajcie natychmiast w ręce Władz Bezpieczeństwa i Porządku - Publicznego. O wypadkach napotykanym uciążliwych z waszej strony, bądź nadużyć w stosunku do waszych praw i zapewnien wam spokoju proszę mnie zawiadomic.

**PREZYDENT M. GDANSKA
(-) Bolesław Nowicki**

Druk. Z. K. w Gdańsku. Wzrost 95, 30, 16-02, 2207.

Post-war Polish pronouncements regarding the native population (MG)



Rebuilding Neptune's Fountain, photo by Kazimierz Lelewicz, post-1954 (MG)



Postage stamps emphasizing the Polish history of Gdańsk, 1945–1966 (MG)



The Main Town Hall of Gdańsk, photo by Kazimierz Lelewicz, post-1945 (MG)



The Green Gate (Brama Zielona) during the celebration of the National Day of the Rebirth of Poland, author unknown, 1960 (MG)