



SOKÓŁ



June 2007

FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you for reading the 2nd installment of the Polish Air Force Section of PALHA (Polish American Living History Association) newsletter "SOKÓŁ". I would like to report that the Polish American Living History Association's 1st annual Feast Day January 2006, hosted by 305 Squadron-PAF (Polish Air Force), was a success! I would like to personally thank everyone with PALHA, especially Chris Moore, Chris Petronis and our "Guest of Honor" Mr. Walter Ryder and his lovely wife Ela. Without you, PALHA's first Feast Day would have been far from reality. PALHA's Polish Para section hosted the 2nd annual Feast Day January 2007 with equal, if not greater, success. Our first year as an official PALHA group saw the PAF section representing several squadrons at events. Those squadrons include 305, 300, and 663. So far in 2007, we have represented 305 and 303 Squadrons at events. As we grow larger we will concentrate more on 305 Squadron (circa 1944-45) as it will be our primary focus and impression. This will make it easier and less expensive for new recruits to collect the uniforms and gear needed for one particular squadron and time frame instead of several. This issue of SOKÓŁ will focus on the Poles that served in the "Battle Of Britain". Enjoy reading! Please feel free to visit our website at: www.305squadron.com. Without further delay, I give you again... "SOKÓŁ"!

Jake Duda
Editor



FROM THE P.A.F. COMMANDING OFFICER'S DESK

It has been an exciting first year since the official launch of the PALHA PAF section at the 2006 Fort Indiantown Gap event. As Jake mentions above, the PAF hit the ground running by hosting the first annual PALHA Feast Day commemoration and dinner. The event started with a moving remembrance ceremony for those Polish veterans who have been helpful in PALHA's quest to honor the WWII Polish soldier and who have passed away in the last year. We then moved on to the Community Club for our dinner. This was done in high PAF style with formal invitations, a private room with table settings designed by Jake and our special guest speaker, Walter Ryder, who held our attention with the story of his search to document his father's PAF service. We look forward to the 2007 dinner where we will hear more of Walter's fascinating story. Many thanks to all who helped research, plan and stage this traditional Polish military event.

The next appearance of the PAF section was at the WWII Weekend event at Reading. This was another all out effort. The event saw the debut of the PAF tent as part of the PALHA display. The tent held a complete briefing room with everything needed to conduct mission briefing scenarios for the public. Chris Petronis is the squadron intelligence officer and he conducted extensive research to create realistic briefing scenarios for the public. By night the briefing tent converted into a fully equipped kitchen/mess hall. Again, this was done with the usual PAF flair, with period-correct table settings, including many war-time RAF items. Because of space limitations we decided to dedicate this first mess to our friends in No. 601 Squadron who have always welcomed us to their squadron mess and supported all of our efforts to get this impression "off the ground". Our good friends Walter and Ela also attended and helped a couple of frazzled hosts with the cooking/serving duties. Despite a torrential downpour and the quirkiness of period cooking stoves and lighting, I think all were impressed with what we accomplished.

Our biggest thrill of the air show, however, was the appearance of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Avro Lancaster bomber for the first time in many years in the US. To take advantage of the photo ops, we exchanged our 305 impression for 300 Squadron. Jake and I in full flight gear, along with Rich Holliday and Chris Petronis and his wife Vera, drew a lot of attention when we posed with the Lancaster. Our thanks go out to our good friend Mike Dobrzelecki who took many excellent photos of us (more on this later).

In September, the PAF broke new ground at the Eisenhower Farm event. We decided to debut our 663 Air Observation Post Squadron impression, which probably was the first time anyone had ever done it. While technically an army formation, the 663 pilots were trained by the PAF. This gave us a chance to get back into khaki without losing our aircrew connection. I don't know if the other reenactors knew what to make of two guys in Irvin jackets riding bicycles in the rain!

The final highlight in an eventful first year was a bit of an unexpected surprise. Well-known, master modeler Mike Dobrzelecki, who has always been a friend of the unit, submitted his Reading pictures of us along with an article to a Polish plastic modeling magazine. They ran the article in the September 2006 issue on the inside cover. So now we are known in Poland too! Thanks to Jake for providing the information on our group to Mike. I think the article was a nice reward for all the effort that went in to the PAF section's first year. Thanks to all!

Chris Moore
OC PAF Section



Poles that served with 601 Squadron of the R.A.F



By: Jake Duda

Our group PALHA has formed many friendships with other living history groups throughout the years. One of these groups are our "Brothers in Blue" the 601 Squadron Living History Group. They are truly good friends to our group and do a 1st rate living history impression. With that said, I thought it was necessary to write up an article that pertains to the Poles that served with the actual 601 Squadron in WWII. Information within these exerts are extracted from the book "Poles in Defense of Britain" by Robert Gretzyngier. Some of this information is from "after action reports". The first exert is about F/O Witold Urbanowicz and Sgt Jozef Kwiecinski. They both served with 601 for only a few days. An interesting note, F/O Urbanowicz went on to become, right behind Stanislaw Skalski (the top scoring Polish ace and also the Squadron Leader for 601 in 1943), the second highest scoring Polish ace of the war. The second exert is about F/O Juliusz Topolnicki, who later was killed serving with 601.

8 August 1940

F/O Witold Urbanowicz and Sgt Jozef Kwiecinski reported downing a Bf 110 and a Bf 109 respectively. Their claims were subsequently approved by the special Committee of the Polish Air Force that verified "Polish Fighter Pilots" achievements during the Second World War, and now this is the only official source of information about these two victories. The claims of Urbanowicz and Kwiecinski seem rather odd however: both pilots flew on that day with 601 Sqdrn, but in the statistics table set up by the Polish Liaison Officer to HQ Fighter Command, dated 11 February 1943, both credits were listed under 145 Squadron. In fact both pilots undertook no operational sorties in 145 Sqdrn until 11 August, so this is the probable date of the first victories of F/O Urbanowicz and Sgt Kwiecinski. 145 Sqdrn Operations Record Book recorded nothing about other Poles

than Ostowicz taking part in the afternoon combat on 8 August. As both Urbanowicz and Kwieciniski flew in 601 Sqdrn before moving to 145 Sqdrn, it was believed for a while that their first victories of 8 August were gained whilst with their former unit. In the 601 Operations Record Book, under the date of 8 August, the flight of F/O Urbanowicz was listed as “cancelled” and Sgt Kwieciniski did “local flying” late afternoon, about 6PM.

There is no evidence of these events in Personal Combat Reports preserved at Public Records Office at Kew nor at the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London. These mysterious victories still wait to be resolved.

The fact worth noting is that between 8 and 10 August 145 Sqdrn pilots were frequent visitors to Tangmere. They collected new Hurricanes and flew these to Westhampnett, so it is possible that Poles officially attached to 601 Sqdrn flew 145 Squadron Hurricanes.

6 September 1940

Eleven Hurricanes from 601 Squadron, vectored to patrol Mayfield area at 15,000 ft, joined the battle with the Messerschmitts. F/O Herbert Ashley, the Intelligence Officer for 601, wrote:

“about 50 Me 109’s were seen at 20,000 ft in sections of 4 or 5 milling around, apparently having been engaged by other fighters. No e/a bombers were seen in the neighborhood. Our fighters climbed to attack in a series of dog fights followed. P/O Topolnicki, who baled out slightly wounded, claims two Me 109’s. His combat report, with that of F/O Humphrey Gilbert, who also baled out and was slightly wounded has not been obtained.”

The only Polish pilot who took part in this action, F/O Juliusz Topolnicki, mentioned in Ashley’s report, shot down the Bf 109E-4 (Werk Nr. 5044) flown by Lt. Schimmelheler of Stab./JG 2, which crashed at Headcorn. This claim is shared with another 601 pilot. Topolnicki managed to write his report in the hospital, and added some details to the combat which ended with total claims for five Me 109’s destroyed and one Do 17 damaged. 601 Squadron lost F/Lt Rhodes Moorhouse and F/O Davis, both missing. Two others, P/O Topolnicki and F/O Humphrey Gilbert, were slightly wounded. Topolnicki claimed to have shot down by a Messerschmitt, and described his effort.

“I was Red 3. We took off from Tangmere at 08:52 and flew to the vicinity of Crowborough, then turned NE. When over Staplehurst at 20,000 ft I sighted 2 Me 109’s behind me, flying at 20,000 ft in a westerly direction, in close formation. I informed Red 1 and broke away to attack them from behind. I carried out astern and quarter attacks. Black smoke came from the e/a’s engine and he dived steeply with smoke increasing. In the meantime I had been wounded by what appeared to be splinters and therefore did not observe the e/a crash. After making sure that my Hurricane was quite under control, I observed the other Me 109 below and in front. I delivered a beam attack at point blank range after diving down on him, following up with astern attack and fired many short bursts. I then saw another plane coming up from behind me who also attacked the Me 109. My engine then started to miss and I could not keep up, but almost immediately I saw the e/a climbing and the pilot baled out. I then turned to fly back to base, but when near South Valence I received what appeared to be a burst of machine gun fire in the engine and past the cockpit and on looking up saw a/c milling around high over head. My Hurricane then went out of control and I was obliged to bale out. I landed on top of a tree near Sutton Valence but was unhurt apart from my wounds. I was taken to a hospital at Leeds Castle.”



FIRST KILL

By: Jake Duda

One of the most successful Squadrons of the Polish Air Force in Exile was the 303 Squadron. As with all Polish Squadrons that first were formed on English soil in the early days of 1940, the relationship between the RAF and the PAF was rather cold and distant. The RAF was hesitant in using the Poles as front line Pilots in defense of their homeland. Some members of the Air Ministry questioned the skills of the Polish Pilots as they were apart of two losing campaigns not to mention the RAF view the Poles as a tactical risk as most did not speak English. As the Battle of Britain heated up, the Poles would soon prove the RAF's initial hesitation a falsehood. The Polish pilots from 303 Squadron were tired, as since they have been in England all they were posted to was prolonged training. This was about to change. On August 30, during a training flight, F/O Ludwik Paszkiewicz saw a group of German bombers. He ignored the order, given by 303's English Sqdrn Leader, to avoid combat and attacked them on his own, achieving one kill. It was the first shot made by 303 Squadron. This made the RAF commanders realize that the Polish unit achieved full operational capability and detached it on frontline. On the very first day of action – August 31 – six pilots from 303 squadron shot six German aircraft with no loses. On this day RAF incurred the greatest loses in all Battle of Britain. Polish pilots were put to the battle just on time.



On August 30, F/O Ludwik Paszkiewicz, of 303 Polish Squadron, ignored the order not to engage German bombers and attacked the enemy aircraft, by himself, achieving a kill. It was the "First Kill" for 303 Squadron.



303 SQUADRON

By: Jake Duda



The 303 Squadron was formed on August 2, 1940 and became operational on August 31, 1940. It was one of two Polish Fighter Squadrons that were formed early enough to take part in the “Battle of Britain” (the other was 302 “City of Poznan” Polish Squadron). It’s initial strength consisted of 13 officers and 8 NCO pilots with approximately 135 Polish ground crew. Initially, RAF officers were appointed to serve as Commanding Officer and Flight Commanders alongside their Polish counterparts as it was thought that the Poles were not yet familiar with the RAF Command language (English), procedures and training. The name “Kosciuszko” Squadron was chosen by 303 to honor the original Squadron (the 7th Eskadra) with the same name that served in the 1919-1920 Polish-Soviet War. Some of 303’s personnel actually served in the 7th Squadron in 1920. After the 1920 war, the 7th Squadron was renamed 121st and later it became the 111th Squadron of the Polish Air Force. Most of 303 Squadron’s initial personnel were remnants from the 111th Squadron that were able to escape Poland after her collapse in 1939. On August 30, 1940, the squadron scored it’s first victory, while still officially being “non-operational”, against a German DO-17 bomber (story listed previous to this article). Even though it joined combat two months after the battle began, the 303 “Kosciuszko” Squadron claimed the largest number of “downed” enemy aircraft out of all the Allied squadrons engaged on the Battle of Britain. The Squadron’s success can be attributed to the years of extensive and rigorous prewar training and the previous combat encounters in the two previous campaigns most of the Pilots fought in (1939 Invasion of Poland and the Battle for France) which were far more than their younger and inexperienced RAF comrades of whom were being thrown into battle. In it’s first seven days of battle, the Squadron claimed almost 40 Enemy planes. By the time 303 was withdrawn from the Battle for a rest on October 11, 1940, the Squadron had claimed 126 kills in six weeks. The losses of the Squadron were also heavy. 303 lost 18 Hurricanes, seven Pilots killed, and five badly wounded. 303 Squadron’s official score for the Battle of Britain are as follows: **126 Destroyed, 13 Probable, and 9 Damaged**

POLISH COOKING SECTION

By: Jake Duda

In the spirit of exploring our Polish heritage, I thought it would be nice to incorporate a section to Polish food. Meals in Poland have become a cornerstone of family relationships as well as the hospitality shown toward any guest that may visit a household. Many Polish foods have become a core tradition to Poles worldwide. How many memories do you have that reflect fondly back to when “Grandmother” used to make a delicious Polish meal? Wherever Poles may end up, their favorite food dishes go along with them. Feel free to try the different recipes I will be listing. If you are a Pole or a Pole at heart, I am sure you will enjoy this part of Polish tradition.

BIGOS *(a old Polish favorite)*

Ingredients:

1 Onion, diced	1 lb. Polish sausage, diced
2 lb. Sauerkraut, diced	4 dried mushrooms
¼ lb. Salt pork, diced	1 T. sugar
optional Venison	1 Bouillon cube
Salt and pepper	2 Apples, peeled and diced
2 T. mustard	3 Fresh tomatoes, diced

Cook the sauerkraut and dried mushrooms. Add diced apples and tomatoes. Brown the salt pork with the onion. Combine with the sauerkraut. Chop all meat and Polish sausage and add to sauerkraut. Season well. Add sugar and mustard. Also add the bullion cube. Cook for 1 hour. Serve with potatoes. The longer it cooks, the better it taste. Have a shot of Polish Vodka and Enjoy!

"Honor i Ojczyzna"

