



Notatnik

Biuletyn Informacyjny
Stowarzyszenia Techników Polskich w RPA

TECHNIKA



Komitet Obchodów Lotów nad Warszawę
ze wsparciem Ambasady RP w Południowej Afryce
mają przyjemność zaprosić Państwa na

Wieczór z prof. Normanem Davies
który wygłosi prelekcję
"Polska – normalny kraj?"

Ditsong Museum of SA Military History (Audytorium)
22 Earswold Way, corner of Eastwold, Saxonwold
(Obok ogrodu zoologicznego, dojazd z Killarney ulicą Riviera)
Poniedziałek, 14 kwietnia 2014

Godz. 18:00

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Norman Davies jest sławnym historykiem, znanym z prac dotyczących historii Europy, Polski i Wysp Brytyjskich. Wykładał na Uniwersytecie Londyńskim, Uniwersytecie Oksfordzkim oraz Uniwersytecie Europejskim. Studiował m.in. na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim w Krakowie, gdzie się doktoryzował w 1968 roku. W przeciągu swojej kariery napisał kilkanaście książek oraz liczne eseje i artykuły. Tytuły chyba najbardziej znane Polakom to "Boże igrzysko, historia Polski" oraz "Powstanie '44" o Powstaniu Warszawskim przeciw najeźdźcom hitlerowskim.

Norman Davies jest członkiem Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności i Akademii Brytyjskiej, oraz Królewskiego Stowarzyszenia Historycznego. Davies jest również Kawalerem Orderu Orła Białego, Orderu Odrodzenia Polski (Polonia Restituta), Orderu Zasługi Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, otrzymał Medal Zasłużony Kulturze Gloria Artis, Krzyż Wielki Orderu św. Stanisława i Odznakę Honorową Bene Merito.

Rising '44: Warsaw Airlift



by Norman Davies

The Warsaw Airlift of 1944 is one of the great unsung sagas of the Second World War. In theory it had three participants – the Soviets, Americans, and British. In reality, only the British and their partners made a significant contribution. Soviet warplanes, which had been flying over Warsaw in late July, disappeared from the skies after the outbreak of the Rising and failed to reappear for the best part of six weeks. American planes, which were supposed to fly out from England in August, did not manage to take off until mid-September, and then only once. As a result, it was RAF squadrons operating from Italy which assumed the overwhelming brunt of the missions. They did so at a juncture when RAF Bomber Command was regularly pounding targets on the Baltic coast not far from Warsaw. On two nights at the end of August, for example, nearly 200 Lancasters from Britain attacked Königsberg, suffering only 5 per cent losses.

Warsaw lay 1,311 km (815 miles) from the RAF base at Brindisi in Calabria. The chosen route to Poland took the form of an elongated lozenge with Brindisi at the southern end and Warsaw at the northern tip. The planes took off in the evening over the Adriatic, crossed the Croatian coast in the last rays of the setting sun, overflew the Danube in Hungary in darkness, and climbed north-east over the Carpathians before approaching Warsaw from the east over Soviet-held territory. The return journey, which brought the fliers back to Brindisi in midmorning after fourteen hours in the air, was spent in large part over Germany and Austria. It descended from the Austrian Alps into full daylight over Italy.

The airmen faced manifold dangers. They had no fighter escort, and had nothing but their own guns to ward off German planes sent up in ground-controlled interception areas. They were fully visible crossing the Adriatic coast in both directions, and a Luftwaffe night-fighter training centre near Cracow presented a constant hazard. Visibility over Warsaw was severely limited in clouds of smoke, whilst their approach run, which was made at only 45 metres (150 feet) and at mere 200 km/h (125 mph), made them specially vulnerable to ground fire. Electric storms were a common summer occurrence over the Alps and Carpathians. Pilots frequently reported instances of St Elmo's fire, when blue flames trailed from wingtips and propeller blades.

The aircraft most usually employed in the Warsaw Airlift was the Consolidated B24 Liberator. It had more speed and payload than the Boeing B17 Flying Fortress and a greater range than Avro Lancaster. Its four Pratt and Whitney double-banked radial engines were boosted by a super charger. They permitted a payload of 5.5 tons and a cruising speed of 210 mph. Fully loaded with 2,300 gallons of fuel and with twelve parachute-controlled containers in the bomb racks, take-off had to be undertaken overweight. The modern electronic equipment included a GEE box (a navigational radio-triangulation system) and a radio altimeter. Armament consisted of ten 05 in heavy machine guns. There was a crew of ten.

205 Group RAF in Italy, commanded by Maj. Gen. Durrant, consisted of four wings: three RAF and one South African Air Force. In the summer of 1944, the RAF's 334 Special Operations Wing was attached to the newly formed Balkan Airforce, whose principal task was liaison with Yugoslavia.

It included 148 and 624 Squadrons RAF, each equipped with fourteen Halifaxes, and the independent (Polish) 1586 Special Duties Flight with ten aircrews flying a mixture of Halifaxes and Liberators. 2 Wing of the SAAF consisted of 24, 31, and 34 Squadrons, all equipped with Liberators.

The first flight to Warsaw had been undertaken on 4-5 August by 1568 SDF accompanied by seven Halifaxes of 148 Squadron. It provided a grim warning of things to come. The orders mentioned drops in the Kampinos and Kabaty forests; and senior officers were unaware that four Polish crews had secretly volunteered to fly directly over Warsaw. On return, one Polish Liberator made a miraculous crash-landing on two engines with no undercarriage, stopping ten yards short of the sea. But five RAF planes were lost, and only two successful drops were made. Senior RAF commanders intervened, and flights were suspended.

At this point, the Warsaw Rising forced itself onto the agenda of Allied planners who were meeting at Naples to discuss the landing on the French Riviera:

"The Polish Question was on [Churchill's mind] as he contemplated the beauty of Naples Bay and the slopes of Vesuvius from the quarters at the Villa Rivalta.. He was expecting Marshal Tito for discussions on the situation in Yugoslavia. It was 12 August, and Churchill must have sensed that Warsaw could expect no help from Moscow. He agreed with Field Marshal Smuts that the airlift was of little military value. Gen. Mark Clark of the US Fifth Army in Italy could not understand the reasoning of the Combined Chiefs in supporting the operation, and Churchill wondered whether the latest news from Warsaw could mean much in the long run. Nonetheless, he sent off another signal to Stalin..

"Churchill discussed the matter again with Air Marshal Slessor. The RAF commander reiterated his conviction that the Russians would not drop supplies in Warsaw. The only feasible way to assist the AK adequately was for the US Eighth Airforce to fly the aircraft from Britain. The planes would have to land at Russian bases to refuel, as had been arranged for their bomber offensive. But the Polish appeal, of course, had been made to the British, not to the Americans. Churchill weighed the matter up carefully, knowing that the Russians would not help, and came to a painful decision. Help must be sent, he declared, even at risk of heavy losses."

As a result, 205 Group was ordered to maintain a regular supply line to Warsaw. In actual fact, 1586 SDF, 178 Squadron RAF, and 31 Squadron SAAF had already made several extra flights to Poland, presumably on their own account, or on their local commander's responsibility. In all, they took off from Brindisi for Warsaw on 4, 8, 11-18, and 20-28 August, on a total of nineteen nights.

The supplies which reached Home Army were not inconsiderable. Early in September, Gen. Boor acknowledged receipt of 250 PIAT antitank weapons, 1,000 Sten guns, 19,000 grenades, and 2 million rounds of ammunition.

But the losses were horrendous. Air Marshal Slessor calculated that one bomber was lost for every ton of supplies delivered. The sacrifices of 1586 SDF were particularly severe. On 1 August they had completed a tour of duty and were due for a period of rest. Only five aircraft and five air crews were available. By the end of the month, only one of those five crews survived.

Stefan Mathews

We shall remember Him (1928 – 2014)

Stefan Matejczuk was born on 13th March 1928 in the village of Kutry, close to the town of Stanislawow, in the southeast corner of Poland, which, towards the end of the 2nd World War, was annexed to become part of the Soviet Union. The first years of the 2nd World War saw Stefan living under German occupation until 1942, when he turned 14, he became old enough to be deported into the heart of the 3rd Reich as a forced labourer. He stayed in various labour camps in the vicinity of the city of Dresden. He escaped from one of these camps and made his way back towards Poland but only made it as far as Breslau (Wroclaw) where he was stopped trying to cross the border. This attempt brought him a prison sentence of unspecified length in a Potsdam jail.

Heavy allied bombing of Berlin led to the prisoners in Potsdam being used to clear the rubble of bombed out buildings. It was during one of these work parties that Stefan, who was almost 17 by this time, slipped away and found a freight train heading west. He completed his journey to France by clinging to the underside of a wagon. The German army was in full retreat from France and taking advantage of the prevailing panic Stefan found an allied army unit and promptly volunteered, giving his age as 19. He was enlisted into a transport unit of the newly reforming French army in a detachment commanded by a Polish Officer. This detachment transported supplies from Strasbourg eastwards in support of the British and American armies.

It was in the army that Stefan was persuaded to change his surname to Mathews since it was easier to pronounce than Matejczuk. Once hostilities were over in 1945, Stefan continued to serve in this unit until September 1947. During this time his unit was used to transport UNRA food parcels for distribution amongst the tens of thousands of displaced persons in war ravaged Europe.

Stefan's unit was demobilized in October 1947 and he was transported to England where he found work in a coal mine in Wales. An injury he suffered in the coal mine resulted in Stefan being classified as an invalid, which gave him the opportunity to begin studying mechanical engineering at Cardiff Polytechnic. He completed his studies in 1953 and as a qualified mechanical engineer began his professional career at an engineering company in England.

In 1970 his Company transferred him to Johannesburg where, he not only continued his professional career but also, being a British Citizen, he became the British Consul in Johannesburg. Stefan joined the Polish ex-Combatants Association and the Polish Association of South Africa. Being the youngest of the Polish ex-combatants he spent a great deal of time helping and caring for older veterans. His position as British Consul and his fluency in English allowed him to resolve many problems that the ex-combatants encountered.

After two years Stefan's wife Pamela joined him and they decide to settle permanently in South Africa. He was also instrumental in establishment of the South-African – Polish Chamber of Commerce. One of his ambitious projects after trying to build Polish Commercial Centre was the refinery project planned for Valvis Bay in Namibia.

Regretfully financial support from Bahrain never materialized. Stefan also extended his help to South African war veterans. He was asked to become a mechanical engineering lecturer and teach members of the SA Army Engineering Corps. Several years ago, as a result of this co-operation with the Sappers, Stefan was awarded the honorary title of Colonel in the SA Army Engineers. He was always proud to wear this uniform at the various military commemorations he attended. For his service during the 2nd World War Stefan received 3 British Army Service Medals. More recently Stefan was decorated, in 2010, 2011 and 2012, by the Johannesburg City Council with their Military Veteran bronze medal of Gratitude in recognition of Stefan's many years of assistance to South African Military Veterans.

From 2004, until his death, Stefan was the Chairman of the Polish ex-Combatants Association in Southern Africa. In 2009 Stefan was made an Honorary Member of the Polish Association in Johannesburg. Stefan's great passion was taking photographs and creating albums of the various Polish commemorations he attended. He would then donate these albums to the Military Museum in Warsaw and Polish archives in London. In total he produced over 40 such albums of archival photos with descriptions. Stefan and his wife Pamela were well known and liked in both the English and Polish speaking communities. They attended many functions together. Thus, when Pamela passed away suddenly on 7th May 2013, it was a devastating blow to Stefan and he found difficulty in coming to terms with this loss. Stefan passed away on 31st January 2014 after a short illness. He will be remembered as a person ever willing to help anyone and especially military veterans. He never forgot his roots and was a devoted Polish patriot.

List z Wierzbna

Bardzo żałuję, że to pokolenie odchodzi. Moje pokolenie, następne po Kolumbach rocznik 20. Nie nad sobą płacze, żałuję nie w swoim imieniu, chociaż przecież odejdę też razem z nim. Żałuję w imieniu tych, którzy pozostaną bez niego. Pustka zostanie, taka następna dziura w landszafcie polskiej pamięci. To ostatnie pokolenie związane jeszcze mentalnie ze światem międzywojnia, a nawet z wiekiem XIX, mające dostęp do niezmiernych, a teraz nieosiągalnych już skarbów wartości i tradycji. To było, jeszcze jest, takie pokolenie pomostowe, łączące różne epoki. Nasi pradziadowie walczyli w Powstaniu Styczniowym, dziadowie bili bolszewików w 1920, ojcowie Kolumbowie przed wojną zdawali maturę, a później byli na barykadach Powstania, by stamtąd udać się do oflagów i ubeckich katowni. No, może nie wszyscy, niektórzy tam w trudzie pracowali, ale przecież też byli aktorami tego teatru, a nad tymi wszystkimi naszymi dziecięcymi łóżeczkami unosiły się dymy pożarów. Z kurzem krwi bratniej do tego.

Nasi profesorowie w szkołach, liceach i na uczelniach to była dawna, dobra przedwojenna profesura i zdążyli nam jeszcze, Bogu chwała, przekazać swoje wartości.

Rodzice nasi w epoce bez telewizji, komputerów, mp3, play station i smartfonów przekazywali nam umiejętności dziś już zupełnie nieznane, niepotrzebne, ba – śmieszne.

Mój Ojciec nauczył mnie robić kolejkę EKD z pudełek od zapalek, rakieta do tenisa z kuchennej deseczki (na pomysł użycia w tym celu cennego lusterka wpadłem sam), zapalać ognisko okularami, sklecić projektor do własnorecznie rysowanych na kalce filmów, rozbierać, oliwić i składać na nowo w piwnicy pistolet marki Lignose, ale także jak być człowiekiem na skalę swoich możliwości porządnym, biorącym odpowiedzialność za swoje czyny i słowa,

odróżniającym dobro od zła z uwzględnieniem wszystkich odcieni szarości, także tej która nas otaczała. I czytać, czytać. Ostatnie już czytające pokolenie.

Z trudem bo z trudem, później i my, przedstawiciele tego postkolumbowego chaosu, staraliśmy się jakoś te otrzymane wartości hołubić w skrajnie nieprzyjaznym środowisku i przekazywać dalej, podobnie jak swoją wiedzę w pewnych zakresach też już niedzisiejszą i zbędną, ale czyniącą nasze pokoleniowe spojrzenie na świat... mędrca szkiełkiem i okiem. Robiliśmy to lat temu pięćdziesiąt, dwadzieścia i wczoraj. I już koniec.

Jakież to było piękne pokolenie. Wyjechaliśmy z wojny zahartowani na swoich małych rowerkach, w komunie jedynie lekko ranni (wiem Witku, nie wszyscy mieli to szczęście), wyrosliśmy na smukłych, mądrych i niewinnych czarodziejów. Tak, ten łysy zoombie w dżinsach, to widmo w falbankach, siwy kotlet w tweedach, szkielet w szortach są od nas, to my, tak teraz wyglądamy, ale jakie serca gorące pod tymi T-shirtami i stanikami XXXL, jakie mózgi pod bejsbolówkami i perukami – zobaczycie jak Wam tego będzie brakować. Kogo tu o radę spytać, za przykład podać, w rękę lub d... ucałować?

Słowa i wargi w pustkę trafiają. Odchodzi pokolenie urodzonych za wcześniej lub zbyt późno. Za późno aby w pełni odziedziczyć, za wcześniej aby później, po latach, odnaleźć się w długo niewyobrażalnym, w tym dzisiaj. Wielu w tym kafkowskim świecie w którym się żyło bardzo dużo osiągnęło, wielu ma białe karty za nekrologi.

Agnieszka Osiecka, ta też z naszych, napisała kiedyś o łatwopalnych. To jest o nas, o każdym z nas. A żadne pokolenie nie przeżyło swoich pierwszych pięciu lat życia w czasie największej z wojen. To nas nobilituje. I to nas usprawiedliwia. Na szczęście...

Andrzej Brochacki

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