



## Polish military emigration in Pakistan after World War II.

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The end of World War II meant that a large group of Poles, mainly military personnel of the Polish Armed Forces in the West and their families, had to make a difficult, painful choice: should they return to the Soviet sphere of influence or remain in exile? This choice was particularly difficult for those Poles who lived in the provinces incorporated into the Soviet Union before the war. They often had tragic experiences of the first occupation in 1939-1941, deportations, gulags and torture in NKVD detention centers. Many of them lost their loved ones on the "inhuman land". Such a personal or family experience deprived them of illusions and hope about the possibility of a safe life in Poland, dominated by an "ally of our allies". Knowledge about what was happening in the country after its occupation by the Red Army, which reached through soldiers of the Home Army and the National Armed Forces released from prisoner-of-war camps, as well as escapees or from relatives remaining in Poland, also became quite common and did not encourage people to return. Such reflections were particularly frequent among representatives of the social elites, including the officer cadre in exile. A factor that spoke in favor of staying in exile was also the (as it turned out unfounded) belief in the impending conflict with the Soviets, popularly referred to as "World War III", which was to bring full independence to Poland. In such a war, Polish emigrants wanted to take an active part on the side of Western countries. Great Britain became a natural place for Polish emigrants to settle, which became a shelter for many of them as early as 1939/40. Over the years of forced emigration, they got to know its language and culture, made friends (often also loves) and adapted well to the local conditions. However, the socio-economic situation in the United Kingdom after the end of the war was not encouraging for everyone. The economic crisis was conducive to the growing antagonism between Poles and the British. The opinion that in view of the end of the war and the "restoration of the Polish state", Poles should return home as soon as possible (whatever that would mean in practice) was quite popular in British society. The old sympathy, compassion and gratitude for the common fight

against the Germans was replaced by manifestations of xenophobia and aggression<sup>1</sup>. Communist propaganda tried to create the impression that every Pole who stays abroad can safely return to his homeland, where he will find work and a roof over his head. In fact, the repatriation policy, implemented by the military mission, headed for some time by the ex-Soviet general Karol Świerczewski, was completely different. Apart from the desire to win over a few well-known officers and politicians to the idea of "rebuilding Polish Poland", the communist authorities did not care about the mass return of experienced soldiers and officers, who could become the nucleus/reinforcement for armed and political resistance to the "people's power". It was a generation brought up in the ethos of the fight for independence, which included the tradition of the victorious Polish-Bolshevik war of 1919-1921, i.e. anti-communism and "anti-Sovietism". In such circumstances, for the majority of Poles who remained outside Poland, it became an urgent need to organize conditions for further life in exile. The British authorities organized various vocational courses to help emigrants acquire a "civilian" profession, but these were most often jobs far from the ambitions and former social position of the officer cadre. However, in most cases, officers were ready for such a radical change in life. In the group of emigrants, officers and soldiers of the Polish Air Force and the Navy found themselves in an exceptional situation. Regardless of their military rank, they had the desired high professional qualifications. Of course, the British labour market could not "absorb" everyone, because it already "had" its specialists. However, the possibilities of emigration to other countries of the British Empire opened up, including those that were just regaining independence. Among them was Pakistan, which was created as a result of the partition of British India in 1947. This country received nearly 1/3 of the military resources of the former Indian Army. However, there was a shortage of qualified

<sup>1</sup>A. Zamojski, Orły nad Europą. Losy polskich lotników w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Krakow 2004 p. 339



personnel in technical weapons, because earlier the British were very reluctant to train the local population for this type of service, and British officers were often not interested in further service in the former colonies, this time for lower salaries than before. In this situation, the Pakistani government issued an appeal to Polish airmen, inviting them to take up contract service in the nascent Royal Pakistan Air Force. The offer was addressed not only to pilots with combat experience, but also to other personnel. The offer was attractive because it gave the opportunity to continue working in the profession, while maintaining the military ranks held (with the possibility of promotion). Those who still hoped for the outbreak of war with the Soviets saw an opportunity to improve their flying skills and operate newer models of aircraft that were in service with the RPAF. Others planned to gain savings in this way, allowing them to settle comfortably abroad, although rather in culturally closer countries, such as the USA, Australia or Canada. Only a few decided to tie their further lives to Pakistan. For the new state, the most important benefit, apart from acquiring professional service for the emerging aviation, was also the involvement of Poles in the process of training new Pakistani personnel. Interviews with Pakistani airmen who were students of the Poles indicate the high professionalism and devotion they met with from our compatriots. In a similar way, although a few years later, Commander (later Admiral) Romuald Nalecz-Tyminski was sent to serve in the Royal Pakistan Navy. If the history of the post-war Homeland had turned out differently (as the emigrants wished), these people would certainly have had an impact on the formation not only of the armed forces of free Poland, but also on the ideological and professional formation of subsequent generations of Poles who would have had contact with these veterans either during training or in other professional and private contacts. The most famous and still respected Pole in the history of Pakistan was General (Air Commodore) Władysław Turowicz. He was born on April 23, 1908 in Zubirze (according to other sources in Vadeyevsk) in Siberia, where his father worked as a railway engineer. He came to Poland after the civil war. He was a graduate of the Warsaw University of Technology and a pilot. Due to a visual impairment in the Polish Air Force in Great Britain, he was assigned to the ATF – a formation dealing with the delivery of Canadian-made aircraft to Great Britain, and there – to line units. As a qualified pilot and aircraft mechanic, he accepted an offer of contract service in Pakistan. He climbed the

ranks of the aviation career from the position of chief engineer at Drigh Road Air Base (now Faisal) in Karachi to the Deputy Commander of the Pakistan Air Force for technical matters. In the latter position, he dealt with the process of "rearming" the Pakistani Air Force from piston-powered aircraft to jet aircraft. In the memoirs of Pakistani officers, he is shown as a modest person, full of passion for flying and aviation technology. He also often spent his free time in the air, on a plane he had repaired. He was also an avid bridge player. After retiring in 1966, he became the head of SUPARCO, which produced rockets and space exploration systems. On his initiative, the Somiani Satellite Launch Centre was built, completed in 1970. Therefore, it is also considered one of the "fathers" of Pakistani missile weapons (i.e. indirectly Pakistan's nuclear potential) and cosmonautics. In 1970, he retired, which was related to his deteriorating health. He died on January 8, 1980 and was buried with military honors at the Christian Cemetery in Karachi. Interestingly, the ceremony was attended by the Consul General of the Polish People's Republic in Karachi. Władysław Turowicz was commemorated with a permanent exhibition at the Pakistan Air Force Museum in Karachi, and also became the patron of the SUPARCO center in Lahore<sup>2</sup>.

An equally well-known figure in Pakistan, and unfortunately forgotten in Poland, was W. Turowicz's wife, Zofia Szczecińska. Like her husband, she was a graduate of the Warsaw University of Technology. Already in pre-war Poland, she was passionate about gliding, having achievements in this sport. In Pakistan, she was involved in glider training for young military aviation adepts. It was very important, because Pakistan, like pre-war Poland, was a poor and technically backward country. Therefore, gliding was considered a very important element of the initial training of future pilots and a tool for popularizing aviation. And here the experience from Poland turned out to be very valuable. After retiring, she worked as a school teacher of mathematics and physics. The Turowicz couple decided to stay permanently in Pakistan. They also died there and were buried in the Christian cemetery in Karachi<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> A. Qadri, M. Ali, *Sentinels in the Sky. A Saga of PAF's Gallant Air Warriors*, Rawalpindi 2015 p.126

<sup>3</sup> J. Knopek, Władysław Turowicz (1908-1980). Zapomniany organizator lotnictwa pakistańskiego. [in:] „Przegląd Polonijny” 2006 no 1, *Memoirs of*



Another married couple who made a great contribution to the development of Pakistani glider education were Maj. (squadron leader) Jan Z. Mikulski and his wife, Maria Younga-Mikulska. Mrs. Mikulska was one of the best Polish gliders of the pre-war period, the winner of numerous records. In Pakistan, they were involved in glider training for young pilots. They co-founded the Central Gliding School (developing the experience they both gained before the war: J. Z. Mikulski was an instructor at the military gliding school, and M. Mikulska – in the cradle of Polish gliding in Bezmiechowa). They also founded the Air Scouts, also known as the Shaheen Scouts. After serving in Pakistan, they chose to emigrate to the United Kingdom<sup>4</sup>.

One of the most experienced Polish pilots who chose to serve in Pakistan was flight lieutenant Bolesław Kaczmarek, the last commander of the 302 Fighter Squadron of the Polish Armed Forces in the UK. In addition to training pilots, he also flew as a combat pilot. He died the death of an airman on a Sea Fury plane near Peshawar, saving a student from a collision with another plane. The family of the surviving officer (who himself reached the rank of Air Commodore general) remembers his heroism to this day. Captain B. Kaczmarek is also buried in the Christian cemetery in Karachi<sup>5</sup>.

Another Pole who remained in Pakistan forever was Lt. Władysław Banach, Pilot of the 317 Fighter Squadron of the Polish Air Force in the UK. In the RPAF, he served as a basic flight instructor (he flew Tiger Moth planes). He is also often mentioned by veterans who were his students. Among the school centers where he served is also the city of Dhaka, now the capital of Bangladesh. So it can be said that he was one of the "fathers" of not only Pakistani but also Bangladeshi aviation. After completing his service in military aviation, he worked as a civilian pilot for a Pakistani oil

company. He died in 1964. He is buried in the Christian cemetery in Rawalpindi<sup>6</sup>.

Mieczysław "Mike" Gorzula from the 315 Fighter Squadron was also a flight instructor in Pakistan. This pilot, born in Prokocim near Krakow at the time, went down in the history of Polish aviation as the first Pole to shoot down a German Messerschmitt 262 jet plane. He fought in the Battle of Britain in the ranks of the famous British 87 Fighter Squadron, whose honorary commander was Winston Churchill. In Pakistan, he trained on Texan T2 aircraft for a year. After completing his service in the Himalayas, he left for Australia, where he remained until the end of his life<sup>7</sup>.

The Polish pilot Maj. Czesław Tarkowski, a veteran of the Battle of Britain and the 315th and 307 Fighter Squadrons, served in the RPAF as a VIP pilot in the Governor – General's Flight & Communication Unit. Among the famous passengers of the planes he piloted were such figures as Khawaja Nazimuddin (Governor-General of Pakistan), AVM Richard Atcherly (British officer, first commander-in-chief of the RPAF), Anthony Eden (then deputy chairman of the opposition British Conservative Party, former foreign secretary and future prime minister of the United Kingdom). After completing this service, Tarkovsky served as a test pilot for overhauled aircraft at Drigh Road Air Base in Karachi. He later worked for Pakistan's private airline Orient Airways (now Pakistan International Airways), India's Indamer Gov. Ltd., Britain's Silver City Airways Ltd., and Nigeria's African Airways Corporation. He remained in exile in Great Britain<sup>8</sup>.

The only Pole who decided to return to communist Poland after the end of the Pakistani "adventure" was Major Wiktor Dobrzański from Krakow. Knight of the Order of Virtuti Militari and the Cross of Valour (three times), he was a veteran of the 300 and 301 Bomber Squadrons in Great

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the late Zofia Turowiczowa, written on 6 April 2010 – typescript in the author's collection,

<sup>4</sup> Historia lotnictwa. Red. M. Masalski, Warszawa 1995, „Przegląd Lotniczy”; J. Mikulski obituary - typescript in the author's collection,

<sup>5</sup> K. Ahmad Untold Tales of Pakistan Air Force. A Glimpse of Life in the PAF. Karaczi (brak daty wydania) p. 73; interview with the brother of the rescued P/O Khurazmi, Shujah Khurazmi, conducted on 27 August 2010.

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<sup>6</sup> K. Ahmad, op.cit. s.70; Kamal Ahmad's statement in the documentary "Polish Eaglets in the Pakistani Sky" dir. A. Pietraszek

<sup>7</sup> A. Scheckenbach, biography of M. Gorzula [www.Aircrewremembrancesociety.com/veterans/gorzula.html](http://www.Aircrewremembrancesociety.com/veterans/gorzula.html) 10.12.2023

<sup>8</sup> M. Battersby, Real History. Flight Lieutenant Czesław Tarkowski's remembrances, "The Independent", Independent Blogs, [www.blogs.independent.co.uk/2010/08/10/real-history-flight-lieutenant-czeslaw-tarkowskis-remembrances](http://www.blogs.independent.co.uk/2010/08/10/real-history-flight-lieutenant-czeslaw-tarkowskis-remembrances) (12.11.2023)



Britain, later serving as an instructor in 16 OTU in Bramcote. In 1953 he moved to the United Kingdom, where he worked as a paper machine operator. In the 60s, for personal reasons (divorce), he returned to Poland. He settled in Poznań, where he worked as a warehouseman in the Transped company<sup>9</sup>. After his death, he was buried in Raciborowice near Kraków near Kraków. Some of his memorabilia are in the local Primary School.

Romuald Nałęcz-Tymiński was born on 13 November 1905 in Szenderów in Podolia. In 1924, he entered the Unitary Officer Cadet School in Warsaw. A year later, he moved to the Naval Officers' School in Toruń. He received the rank of second lieutenant in the navy on August 15, 1928. In the years 1932-1936, he was in charge of the seafaring sport and actively participated in it himself. He actively practiced modern pentathlon, athletics, shooting, swimming, fencing and sailing. Before the outbreak of the war, he was the deputy commander of ORP "Iskra". On September 2, 1939, he sailed to Casablanca with his cadets. From mid-March to mid-July 1940, as deputy commander of the destroyer ORP "Błyskawica", he participated in the Norwegian campaign and the evacuation of the shattered troops at Dunkirk. The first ship he commanded during World War II was the French "Pomerol", which also sailed under the Polish flag. From September 1941 to the end of February 1942, she participated in Atlantic convoys. On February 24, 1942, he was appointed commander of HMS "Bedale" (later ORP "Ślązak"). He became the first commander of the ship, covering the landing at Dieppe (17-19 August 1942) From the end of October 1942 to April 1943, she served on land. He was the first staff officer in the "South" Maritime Command. From April 18, 1943, he again commanded ORP "Ślązak". This time she took part in the Gibraltar convoys, covered the landing on Sicily, escorted the battleship HMS Warspite, and the Allied landings in Salerno and Normandy. On September 13, 1944, he became the head of the Educational Department in the Naval Management. On 30 June 1945, he began an internship on ORP Conrad, and on 10 July he took command of this ship. He commanded it until the

day of leaving the Polish flag 28 September 1946<sup>10</sup>. After the war, Nałęcz-Tymiński met his wife and daughter in Germany, after they had been smuggled out of Poland. They went to Scotland and then to Pakistan. On 1 June 1952, he took command of HMPS Tippu Sultan (formerly HMS Onslow, an O-class British destroyer, launched in 1940, serving in Arctic convoys), the first destroyer in Pakistani service. He then took command of the 25th Destroyer Squadron. In 1954/55 he was the commander of the Pakistani naval training base PNS Himalaya. As before in pre-war Poland, in Pakistan he was involved in the popularization of sport among sailors. He introduced, among other things, fencing, of which he was a coach. He also trained athletics, football, basketball and boxing. This sport gradually disappeared after Tyimiński left the navy. Captain Tyimiński also cared about the welfare of the sailors and in order to remedy the shortage of housing for the sailors, he commissioned the construction of several quarters called "Tyimiński's Colony". Mrs. Jadwiga Tyimińska and her daughter, who was a student at Senior Cambridge at Karachi Grammar School, were involved in numerous Navy social welfare programs. Tyimiński was also a fencing and boxing teacher at this school<sup>11</sup>. After completing his service in the Pakistan Navy, the family settled in the Bahamas, where for the next 20 years Nałęcz-Tymiński was the port director and president of the Freeport Harbour Company. In 1979, he retired and moved to Toronto. He helped form the Toronto branch of the Naval Union and was made an honorary member of the Royal Regiment of Canada for his heroism at Dieppe. Aldona Rideau's daughter described her father as someone who was very healthy and fit until the very end. "He believed in a healthy lifestyle. He did not drink, except in official situations, and he did not smoke," she said, adding that until the age of 95, he got up early in the morning and exercised. ] Rideau recalled that he was an avid fencer and hoped to compete in the Olympics. In 1938, he won the Polish Fencing Championships and was on track to compete in the 1940 Olympic Games, later cancelled due to the war<sup>12</sup>. By the decision of the President of the Republic of Poland Aleksander

<sup>9</sup> Memoirs of Major W. Dobrzański. Typescript in the collection of the Primary School in Raciborowice. Copy in the author's collection. D. Tomecka's reminiscence of Major W. Dobrzański in the collection of the Primary School in Raciborowice. Copy in the author's collection.

<sup>10</sup><https://archiwum.mw.wp.mil.pl/mw.mil.pl/index6765.html> 21.10.2024

<sup>11</sup> Writeup on Captain Romould Nalecz Tyminski VM, DSC - Service in RPN (Developed by PN History & Archive Centre Karachi) Typescript in the author's collection

<sup>12</sup><https://stefanbatoryoceanliner.weebly.com/cpt-nalecz-tyminski.html> 21.10.2024





Kwaśniewski of 31 May 2000, he was appointed to the rank of Rear Admiral<sup>13</sup>. He died in Toronto on December 29, 2003, and his ashes were laid to rest at the Naval Cemetery in Gdynia.

The example of the fate of 53 Polish airmen and a Navy officer who took up service in various positions in the Pakistani Armed Forces proves considerable courage. They took up service in an unknown country, in difficult geographical and climatic conditions. The fact that the young Pakistani state offered them the responsible task of training new cadres proves the excellent reputation they enjoyed during the Second World War. Undoubtedly, their knowledge of British equipment and regulations, which were still used in Pakistan at the time, was also important. It is also an example of the tragic post-war fate of Poles, in this case the technical intelligentsia. Excellent professionals, with combat and/or training experience, often decorated with the highest Polish and Allied combat decorations, did not find a place in post-war Poland. Not wanting to risk a confrontation with the Military Information or the Security Office, they decided to entrust their services to a foreign country. They often hoped that this would allow them to "wait out" the uncertain period and perhaps fight for the liberation of their homeland from the Soviet occupation alongside the Western Allies on board planes with white and red flags or on a ship with a white and red flag. Great Britain, for which they risked their lives many times, did not give them working conditions in their profession. Pakistan, on the other hand, offered the opportunity to continue serving and improve skills. Unfortunately, the geopolitical situation in the world meant that these excellent professionals have never been useful to Poland. Those few Poles who decided to return to 'Polish as it is', after the initial period of 'peace', often became victims of purges and political trials, and first of all, bloody persecutions, the most famous example of which is the fate of seven Polish commanders of the Navy, sentenced to death on 21 July 1952 on the basis of false accusations of espionage and sabotage, and the ace of the Polish fighter aviation, general Stanisław Skalski, sentenced to death, which fortunately was not carried out...

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<sup>13</sup>Janusz Królikowski: *Admirałowie Polskiej Marynarki Wojennej 1945–2004*. Toruń 2004 p. 152

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