

**THEY POLISHED THE ROYAL  
PAKISTAN AIR FORCE**



**ALEKSANDER GŁOGOWSKI**

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Translated by Artur Zwolski



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prof. dr hab. Krzysztof Kubiak

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KSIĘGARNIA AKADEMICKA  
ul. św. Anny 6, 31-008 Kraków  
tel./faks: 12 431 27 43, 12 421 13 87  
e-mail: akademicka@akademicka.pl

Online bookstore:  
[www.akademicka.pl](http://www.akademicka.pl)

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

In 2011, when I presented the first edition of the book “Polskie Orły nad Himalajami” [“The Polish Eagles above the Himalaya”] to the readers, I was contacted by the representatives of the families of the protagonists of the book as well as by a number of people from Pakistan. They asked me whether or not the book was available in an English version. I had the intention of having the book translated for a long time until such a possibility arose. Therefore I present to the reader the second, extended version of the publication about the history of Polish airmen who helped to form the Royal Pakistan Airforce.

On the one hand, the history of the Polish officers and aviation technicians after the end of the Second World War is a relatively typical example of the history of people who could not or who did not want to return to their Fatherland due to political reasons. On the other hand, this history is unique, for only a few of the hundreds of thousands of Polish military men who decided to stay abroad managed to continue to exercise their military profession. Many others, including the notable ones such as the commander of the 1st Armoured Division, General Stanisław Maczek, were forced to perform manual labour until the end of their lives. Many of those who returned to the country which was ruled by communists were locked up in prisons or even placed on death row on suspicion of treason and espionage. This was so because the authorities that were installed in Warsaw perceived everyone who served in the Allied forces in the West as a potential threat in the case of a possible armed conflict. There were also concerns about the influence that the war heroes

could exert upon the young generation of Poles who challenged the authorities which were imposed by the Yalta Conference.

The defeat in the Defensive War in September 1939 did not mark the end of the struggle of the Polish people for independence. First in France and then in Great Britain the Polish Armed Forces were re-established. The latter actively participated in the war effort of the Allies. The Polish Air Force was an important component. At the height of their glory they consisted of fifteen squadrons: eight fighter squadrons, four bomber squadrons, one fighter-reconnaissance squadron, one artillery aircraft squadron and one cooperation squadron. There were also training centres. Polish airmen also served in British squadrons. Of all the squadrons the No. 303 Fighter Squadron distinguished itself with the highest number of German planes that were shot down. Bomber squadrons participated in the Allied air raids against the strategic targets in Germany and supported the resistance movement in Poland and other countries by providing supplies and personnel. Polish pilots also supplied Great Britain with planes produced in the USA. Therefore the personnel of the Polish Air Force were familiar with the equipment and the British regulations. They were also relatively well-versed in English. This was undoubtedly an asset... but not for the communist authorities which were imposed in Poland as a consequence of the Second World War. These experienced people posed a threat to these authorities... However, these people constituted a considerable asset of the human resources of the Pakistani air force which was being established. Among those who decided to sign contracts in Pakistan there were officers and soldiers with considerable experience in combat (veterans of the Battle of Britain, participants of air raids in Germany, cavaliers of Poland's highest military decoration – *Virtuti Militari* – and of British and Allied decorations). There were also young graduates of aviation schools who did not get to fight against the enemy but who sought work opportunities in the aviation profession due to the impossibility of going back to their country. Both airmen (pilots, radiotelegraph operators, bombardiers, aerial gunners) and the ground crew (qualified mechanics and weapons specialists)



served in Pakistan. This was a significant contribution to the initial stage of the establishment of the Royal Pakistan Air Force, which suffered from serious shortages of personnel after the British left the country before their local successors could be trained.

The Polish officers and soldiers who decided to remain abroad in the West used to believe that the post-Yalta state of affairs was not permanent and that it would collapse during the course of another war, a Third World War. Therefore they attempted to preserve and maintain their military experience and skills. This was quite difficult considering the European conditions, therefore they decided to serve in the Asian and African countries that were being established. In London there were also state structures of the Second Polish Republic: despite the gradual withdrawal of international recognition, the President, Government and the National Council of Poland, which performed the role of a parliament, functioned until the beginning of the 1990s. In the period which is treated in this book i.e. in the years 1945-56, the London community of Polish émigrés constituted a peculiar network of contacts between officers and soldiers who remained abroad and who still wanted to fight for an independent Poland. However, history took a different turn. The majority of these people had to arrange their lives in exile, becoming important elements of the societies of Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia or South Africa. Some of these people returned to communist Poland after 1956, when the regime loosened its grip by relinquishing the pursuit of a strict, Stalinist line.

In Pakistan, Polish aviation specialists filled the gap that arose after the majority of the British personnel withdrew. We may infer from the accounts at our disposal that these people were liked because they were open and friendly. They did not present the “superiority of the colonisers above the colonised” that was so familiar to the local people. This could have been a result of historical experiences: for almost 125 years Polish lands were partitioned by Germany, Austria (subsequently Austria-Hungary) and Russia. Foreign domination frequently differed little from the colonisation that was experienced by the Pakistani people. The two groups also shared

similar experiences associated with the rebirth of their respective statehood. Both Poland in 1918 as well as Pakistan in 1947 had to face the problem of a very limited amount of resources left behind by their former superiors and turn them into a tool for the construction of an efficient state. This aspect was crucial due to the presence of unfriendly neighbours across the borders. Moreover, during the period when the foundations of statehood were laid both of these countries fought wars with their respective neighbouring countries: in 1920 Poland fought against Bolshevik Russia, and in 1948 Pakistan fought against India. In both cases these wars became an important element of a "founding myth". One may also perceive a certain community of values between Polish and Pakistani officers which is discernible e.g. in the mottos of the armed forces: "Bóg, Honor, Ojczyzna" [God, Honour and the Fatherland] and "Faith, Unity, Discipline". This aspect is also perceptible in the memoirs of those who participated in the events that are described. One may also doubtlessly perceive a passion in the performance of this difficult service, this peculiar *esprit de corps* which characterises and unites probably all airmen regardless of their nationality or religious affiliation.

The reader should also remember that due to the Cold War the events that are described in the book were unfamiliar in Poland and in the West. The service of Polish airmen in the army of the country which remained on the other side of the Iron Curtain did not belong in the dialectic that was exercised by communist propaganda. The first person who broke through this wall of silence was Anna Pietraszek, who presented a documentary film entitled "Polskie Orłęta na pakistańskim niebie" [Polish Eaglets in the Pakistani sky], which featured Pakistani students of Polish instructors – these students are currently retired senior officers. The Polish edition of the book which the reader now has before his or her eyes was not the first monograph devoted to this subject whereas in Pakistan there are practically no monographs devoted to the origins of the Air Force that would fail to mention General Władysław Turowicz and other Polish instructors.

Over the course of many years the war stories of the ancestors faded away even in the memory of the families of the protagonists of

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Adres: ul. św. Anny 6, 31-008 Kraków,  
tel./fax (12) 43 127 43, tel. (12) 422 10 33 w. 1167  
e-mail: [akademicka@akademicka.pl](mailto:akademicka@akademicka.pl)  
KRS: 145510, NIP: 676-007-55-73

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