

PREZYDENT
RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ POLSKIEJ

AKT
mianowania na stopień generała brygady

Pan
pułkownik Witold URBANOWICZ

Na podstawie art. 76 ust. 4 w związku z art. 77
ust. 1 ustawy z dnia 21 listopada 1967 r. o
powszechnym obowiązku obrony Rzeczypospolitej
Polskiej m i a n u j ę Pana na stopień
generała brygady.

Za zgodność z oryginałem



11 listopada 1980.

Lech Wałęsa

W

COLONEL WITOLD A. URBANOWICZ

I don't know how many members got to meet and talk with our distinguished Polish fighter ace in San Antonio. Colonel Witold Urbanowicz is truly one of the most outstanding fighter pilots and gentlemen who it has been my pleasure to meet. I am sure you didn't have too much time nor did he divulge too much about himself if you talked to him. However, I feel that his is a story that will be of great interest to all of you so I want to pass it along to you.

Witold A. Urbanowicz was born in Poland, March 30, 1908. Poland was then occupied by Russia, Germany and Austria. The Urbanowicz family lived under Russian occupation, perhaps the worst of the three. Due to an out and out patriotic resistance and fight with the Russian occupants, the family lost everything. Five year old Witold was forced to attend Russian schools and from the first moment was named by the Russian teacher a "rebel", because he refused to pray for the Russian Tsar before the beginning of the lessons. His second and more serious offense was an answer to the question of the teacher - "Who is the greatest Russian hero?" Witold said - "Thaddeus Kosciuszko", (Fighter in the American War of Independence, leader-patriot and fighter against Russia in Poland's Insurrection of 1794). Witold was punished by kneeling with bare knees on dried peas. At home he was told that Russia occupies not only Poland but other countries as well. He heard about the resistance of the Polish people in all three occupied territories. This has tremendous impact on forming his character, his life, and absolute need to fight for the freedom of man.

In August of 1914, World War I started. Witold's family found itself in the middle of the struggle of the two armies: German and Russian. He witnessed hand to hand bayonet combat. After the battles, older people and Witold took part in the burial of the killed soldiers of both armies. It was during this time he saw for the first time airplanes in the air and on the ground. He was particularly fascinated watching air combat of the fighters.

The fighting armies laid waste the countryside. The civilian population was left with nothing; it barely existed. Witold experienced what hunger, cold, and horrors of the war were.

With the end of the war Poland regained its independence -- after one hundred and fifty years of occupation -- for the most part, thanks to the United States (President Wilson's 13th point). Russia on the other hand, after the Revolution of 1917, was under communist dictatorship and wanted again to occupy Poland first, then Europe, and the world. In 1918 Russia attacked Poland. The barely organized Polish Army fought the onslaught of the Red Army.

At that time American volunteers came to Poland headed by Major Cedric Faunt-le Roy and Capt. Merian Cooper. They organized a fighter squadron, named it "Kosciuszko Squadron" and as an emblem on the planes painted a round badge on white field with red stripes surrounded at the edge with 13 gold stars. The center dominated by Kosciuszko's hat and two crossed scythes.

They fought against the Red Army. Witold Urbanowicz heard and read a lot about the Kosciuszko Squadron and its combat.

In 1920 the Russian army was defeated and forced to withdraw from Polish territory, and sign a treaty with Poland. This young Polish Army withheld the march of the Russian armies into Western Europe. American fliers received highest decorations and Polish officers ranks. They returned after the end of the war to America and continued to keep in friendly touch with the Polish Air Force.



Witold A. Urbanowicz
Permanent rank: Colonel

Witold Urbanowicz was now studying in a Polish school and praying to God, not to the Russian tsar. He read a lot about America.

After finishing the secondary schools he decided to enter the air force. This was a romantic career and suited his character and temperament.

In 1932 he graduated from Air Force College as a second lieutenant. He was assigned to the First Air Force Regiment in Poland's capital, Warsaw. This was Thaddeus Kosciuszko Fighter Squadron - the same in which American fighters as volunteers served in the Polish-Russian war.

At the cemetery of the Polish city Lwow, where the biggest battles took place and where American pilots fought so gallantly, Poles erected a monument to the memory of the fallen American fliers. In peace time (prior to 1939) every year the Kosciuszko Squadron (Witold Urbanowicz was deputy squadron commander) flew down to Lwow to lay wreaths at the monument.

After World War II Russia plowed under the ancient cemetery in Lwow and destroyed the monument to the memory of the fallen American fliers.

In 1936 Russian planes flew with impunity over the eastern Polish borders where work was being done on fortifications and defense against possible Russian attack on Poland. Witold Urbanowicz was moved with his Kosciuszko Squadron to the Polish eastern border in order to combat Russian reconnaissance planes. In one of the flights a Russian reconnaissance plane was shot down. Russia never acknowledged this officially and did not pursue it diplomatically. In Poland no one spoke of it either it was a secret mission of the Kosciuszko Squadron.

The same year Witold Urbanowicz was assigned to Fighter School in Deblin near Warsaw as a flying instructor and educator.

September 1st, 1939 Germany attacked Poland. Witold Urbanowicz and other instructors fought against the German Luftwaffe.

The 17th of September 1939 Poland was occupied by Germany and Russia. Witold decided to take his cadets as their instructor and commander and escape through Rumania and other countries to France, where the new Polish Government and Army were forming. After getting his men into Rumania, he returned to occupied Poland -- Warsaw was still resisting and fighting. Luck would have it, he was captured by the Russians. Fortunately he escaped the same night and caught up with his cadets and from Rumania they traveled to Beirut, then on a French ship to Marseille, France.

In January 1940 together with other Polish fliers they got to England where Polish Air Force was being organized anew.

In the summer of 1940 German Luftwaffe attacked England. This was the beginning of the historical Battle of Britain. Witold Urbanowicz took part in it from the start to the end, first in an R.A.F. Fighter Squadron, later as a commander of Polish Fighter Squadron 303 "Thadeus Kosciuszko". This was the very same squadron organized by the Americans in Poland in 1919.

Squadron 303 shot down 126 German planes (the largest amount in the Battle of Britain of all R.A.F. squadrons). Witold Urbanowicz's personal record was 17 German planes.

Col. Merian Cooper visited 303 Kosciuszko Squadron in Northolt near London where he gave his original badge of this squadron to Witold Urbanowicz.

After Battle of Britain Witold Urbanowicz was assigned to staff of 11th Fighter Group R.A.F.

In the spring of 1941 Witold Urbanowicz organized the First Polish Fighter Wing and became its C. O. - fighting the Luftwaffe over France.

When America entered the war Witold Urbanowicz escorted at times American bombers in sorties over Germany European targets.

In the summer of 1941 he went to Canada and America to recruit Americans of Polish descent to the Polish Air Force in England. At this time he was invited by U.S.A.A.F. to lecture at air bases on fighter tactics and the Battle of Britain.

In 1942 Witold Urbanowicz was nominated Assistant Air Attache in Washington D. C. - Polish Embassy.

In the spring of 1943 he met General Claire Lee Chennault, Commander of the 14th Air Force in China in Washington. The General invited Urbanowicz to China to fight against the Japanese.

In the second part of 1943 Witold Urbanowicz flew to China. (He paid his salary from his own pocket and was in Polish uniform. He represented the smallest army in World War II - one fighter pilot). Witold Urbanowicz started combat from the Kunming air base on P-40's. After a few weeks he was transferred to the 75th Fighter Squadron in East China. With whom he flew combat and downed three Japanese aircraft.

In the first half of 1944 he came back to Kunming and continued operational flights. After this he left for England where the invasion of Europe was being prepared.

August 1944 he was nominated Air Attache of the Polish Embassy in Washington, D. C.

The war record of Witold Urbanowicz is: 28 German and Japanese planes shot down.

After the end of the war, and occupation of Poland by Russia, Witold Urbanowicz became a political emigre in the United States. He lives permanently in New York with his wife Jadwiga and son Witold - who was born while Witold Urbanowicz was in China in 1943.

THE FLYING McGEES

"As I see it the Air Force owes me some sort of a stipend for furnishing them pilots," so stated fighter ace member Donald C. McGee. While there have been quite a number of fighter ace families that have had sons to become service pilots, I believe that Don and Margaret McGee are the first of our members to have three pilot sons serving in the U.S. Air Force.

The eldest son Bob went to the Air Force through the AFROTC route, graduating as a Distinguished Military Student from Ohio State University and winning a regular commission. Bob is now a Captain Section Leader at Squadron Officers School at Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

Twin sons, John and Charles, graduated from the Air Force Academy with the Class of 1976 and both won their wings on September 29, 1977, at Columbus AFB, Mississippi. Charles is still at Columbus as an instructor pilot while John has moved on to Homestead AFB, Florida where he is learning to fly the F-4 Phantom.

Old Dad, fighter ace Don McGee, recently graduated, too. This time as a bonafied lawyer who was admitted to the Ohio State Bar last Fall. Don says that admittedly this is a far cry from being a fighter pilot, as he recalls his varied combat career.

Don was one of the few to chalk up victories in the good old P-39, having downed at least three Japanese planes while that bird was with the 36th Squadron of the 8th Fighter Group. He later moved over to the 80th Squadron and became an ace flying P-38s. All this wasn't enough so Don went to England in early 1945 where he commanded a Mustang squadron in the 357th Fighter Group of the 8th Air Force.

However, I would say that now Don has been adequately replaced in the Air Force. But never say die man that he is, Don still gets his time in flying a Mooney Ranger.

ATTENTION!! ALL FIGHTER ACES!

A sequel to my book FIGHTER ACES (Macmillan: 1965 - 1970) will be published this autumn in expanded and improved format similar to my recent book FIGHTER ACES OF THE LUFTWAFFE (AERO PUBLISHERS 1977). It will contain 550 to 700 photos. All aces who have not sent me their favorite picture, or whatever you'd like to see published, please do so before the deadline - July 1, 1978. If you wish the photo returned to you, please mark it accordingly on the back of the photo.

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COLONEL WITOLD URBANOWICZ

Witold Urbanowicz, flying ace of the Polish air force in the West, during the Second World War, has scored his greatest triumph in recent years as a writer. He has revealed himself as an admirable memorist, an accomplished man of letters with deep insight and talent for words. His first book *Ogień nad Chinami* (Fire over China) breaks fresh ground. Rarely does one encounter in this kind of autobiographical literature those bright flashes of humanism, love of man and faith in the ultimate victory of ideas and moral values that the author stood for and still stands for by virtue of his military genealogy and by virtue of the attitude that he clung to unswervingly through death, fire and barbarity of war. Before the last war Urbanowicz was a flight instructor, an excellent teacher and seasoned acrobatic flier. Not once in the war did the enemy hit him or was any of his machines ever crippled. Urbanowicz was 303 Squadron Leader in the Battle of Britain. The Squadron held the record of 110 enemy planes shot down. But this feat is by no means his biggest claim to fame. Urbanowicz always knew why he was fighting and his book and his statements provide the proof. Urbanowicz, the fighter pilot, master of masters in the deadly game of air fighting, states outright "war is always barbarous." This pilot, who seems to lead a charmed life, carries one overpowering emotion in his heart — a longing for his native country. This man who sits at the controls of the latest flying models with unerring mastery, escapes at every opportunity to the wilds of nature, to the uninhabited landscape. Though he may soar many miles above vast horizons, though he may fly many hundreds of miles in a few hours, he nevertheless yearns for

the simple four walls of a room and for human friendship. He is curious about human customs and every new and pure thought. In order to bring aid to others he is ready to break all regulations and to risk his neck time and time again.

This is the portrait of a genuine writer and moralist. The comrade in arms, the brother pilot of the unforgettable Saint-Exupéry. Urbanowicz, a postwar emigrant, lives in New York. Far from his country he is, as he always was, a lonely moralist in the skyscraper stone desert of this great metropolis. The recluse escapes to another land, to the natural landscape of a small island somewhere on the coast of New England. Is it nostalgia that drives this man with the sad gray eyes who so often stopped just short of the mystery of death? It is not an escape in the manner of a hermit from the temptations of the hell of civilization. It is rather a search for the source of purity, for psychological balance which would help him maintain the moral sense and self-respect of earlier years — a sense of responsibility for every deed and word. Shorn of traditional illusions, filled with bitter meditations and benevolent memory he writes his confessions which will be preserved and which will count more in our world than the figures of the planes he once shot down. In this faithfulness to his past, to his life, to his military suffering, he is like a Conrad hero. If a new Conrad should ever appear who will write of the vast oceans of the air, his heroes will act, live and think in the same moral aura and with the attitudes that Witold Urbanowicz represents by his life and his writing.

JERZY PIÓRKOWSKI

FIGHTER PLANE "CURTIS P-40" — CHINA. 1943

Witold Urbanowicz, w okresie II wojny światowej jeden z asów Polskiego Lotnictwa na Zachodzie, największe swoje sukcesy odnosi w ostatnich latach.

Okazał się bowiem znakomitym pamiętnikarzem, pisarzem całą gębą o wielkiej celności słowa i ogromnym darze obserwacji. Jego debiut książkowy „Ogień nad Chinami“ jest w naszych warunkach wręcz nowatorski. Rzeczą niecodzienną są bowiem w tego typu wspomnieniach owe jasne fale humanizmu, miłości do człowieka, ufności w ostateczne zwycięstwo ideowo-moralnych racji, jakie on reprezentował i reprezentuje w swoim wojennym rodowodzie, w postawie zachowanej poprzez śmierć, ogień i wojenne barbarzyństwo. Urbanowicz, przedwojenny instruktor lotniczy, znakomity pedagog i wytrawny mistrz akrobacji (w ciągu całej wojny przeciwnik nie dostał go ani razu na celownik, nie uszkodził nawet jego maszyny), był w czasie „Bitwy o Anglię“ dowódcą Dywizjonu 303 — rekordzisty lotniczego, który zestrzelił 110 maszyn nieprzyjacielskich. Ale nie to bynajmniej jest powodem największym do wieńca sławy. Urbanowicz, a jego książka, jego wypowiedzi osobiste o tym dobitnie świadczą, wiedział zawsze, po co i dlaczego się bije. On, wojenny myśliciel, mistrz nad mistrze w śmiertelnej lotniczej grze, oświadcza wręcz „wojna zawsze jest barbarzyństwem“. Ten szczęściarz nad szczęściarze nosi w sobie cicha, przemożną tęsknotę: za rodzinnym krajem. Człowiek panujący bezbłędnie nad najbardziej nowoczesnymi aparatami lotniczymi — ucieka jak tylko może w naturę, w krajobraz. Bujający na tysiącach metrów nad olbrzymimi kręgami ziemi, przelatujący w godzinny tysiące kilometrów — spragniony jest zawsze prostych ludzkich czterech ścian, ludzkiego odruchu

ciepła, ciekaw każdego obyczaju, każdej myśli nieznannej a czystej. Dla wywiadczenia pomocy potrzebującym ludziom gotów jest łamać rozkazy, ryzykować skreśleniem karku po wielokroć.

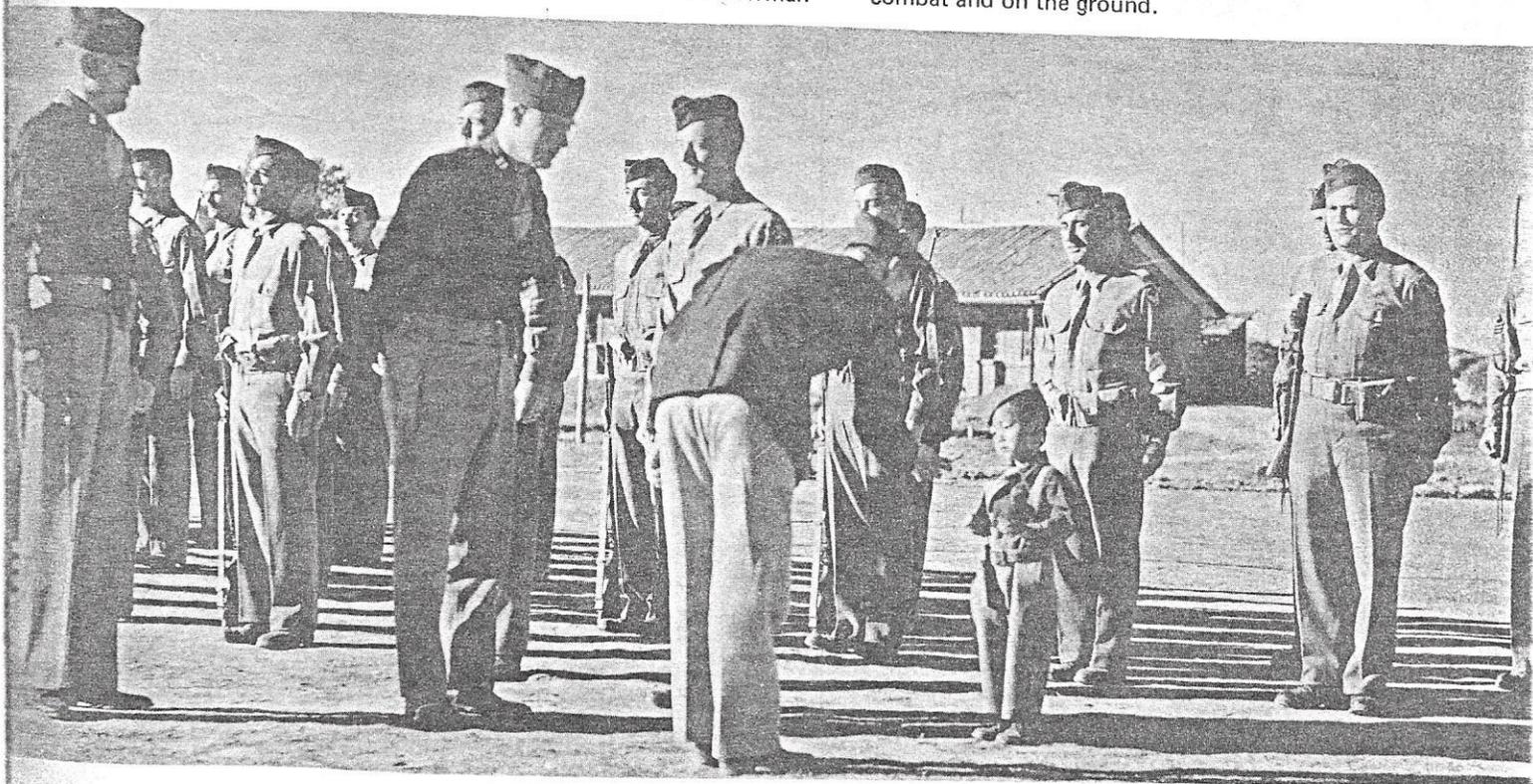
Oto macie portret autentycznego pisarza, moralisty, takiego polskiego wojennego i lotniczego brata niezapomnianego Saint-Exupéry. Urbanowicz przebywa z dala od kraju, na powojennej emigracji w Nowym Jorku. Ale jest to po dawnemu samotnik-moralista w kamienistej puszczy wielkomiejskich drapaczy chmur. Samotnik uciekający na „drugą ziemię“: do pierwotnych krajobrazów, maleńkiej wysepki zagubionej u wybrzeży Nowej Anglii. Czyż tylko tęsknota, nostalgia gna tego człowieka o wygaszonych, szarych oczach, który po wielokroć zatrzymał się przed samym programem tajemnicy śmierci? Nie jest to na pewno ucieczka od pokus czy raczej piekła cywilizacji na wzór pustelnicy. To raczej szukanie źródeł czystości, psychicznej równowagi, która by pomogła zachować, jak w tamtych latach, zmysł moralny, szacunek dla samego siebie, odpowiedzialność za każdy swój czyn i każde słowo. Odarty ze wszystkich tradycyjnych złudzeń, pełen gorzkiej zadumy i dobroczynnej pamięci przeszego dzisiaj wyznania, które pozostaną i będą się na pewno w naszym świecie bardziej liczyć aniżeli podwójne cyfry jego zestrzałów. Jest w tej wierności swojej przeszłości, swojemu życiu, swojej żołnierskiej mecie coś z bohaterów Conrada. I myślę, że jeśli kiedyś narodzi się taki nowy Conrad, tym razem powietrznych oceanów, to jego bohaterowie będą działać, żyć i myśleć w tej obyczajowej i moralnej aurze, jaką stworzył swoim życiem i piórem Witold Urbanowicz.

JERZY PIORKOWSKI



Witold Urbanowicz, former member of the Polish Air Force, is decorated by Chennault in China. Urbanowicz had a military career that circled the globe. He was a lieutenant in the Polish Air Force when Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939. After futile resistance, he and 50 other pilots escaped to Rumania and made their way to England, where the Polish government-in-exile was headquartered. Urbanowicz, flying with British squadrons, shot down four German

aircraft, and later, as commander of an all-Polish squadron, he down 13 more. In 1941 he came to the United States and lectured on tactics. In August 1943 he asked Chennault to get transferred to China. Here he got caught up in the Tung T'ing campaign of November-December 1943 and, as a member of the 75th Fighter Squadron, he destroyed 11 Japanese aircraft in combat and on the ground.



Aviation Lecture Series

“Combat East and West”

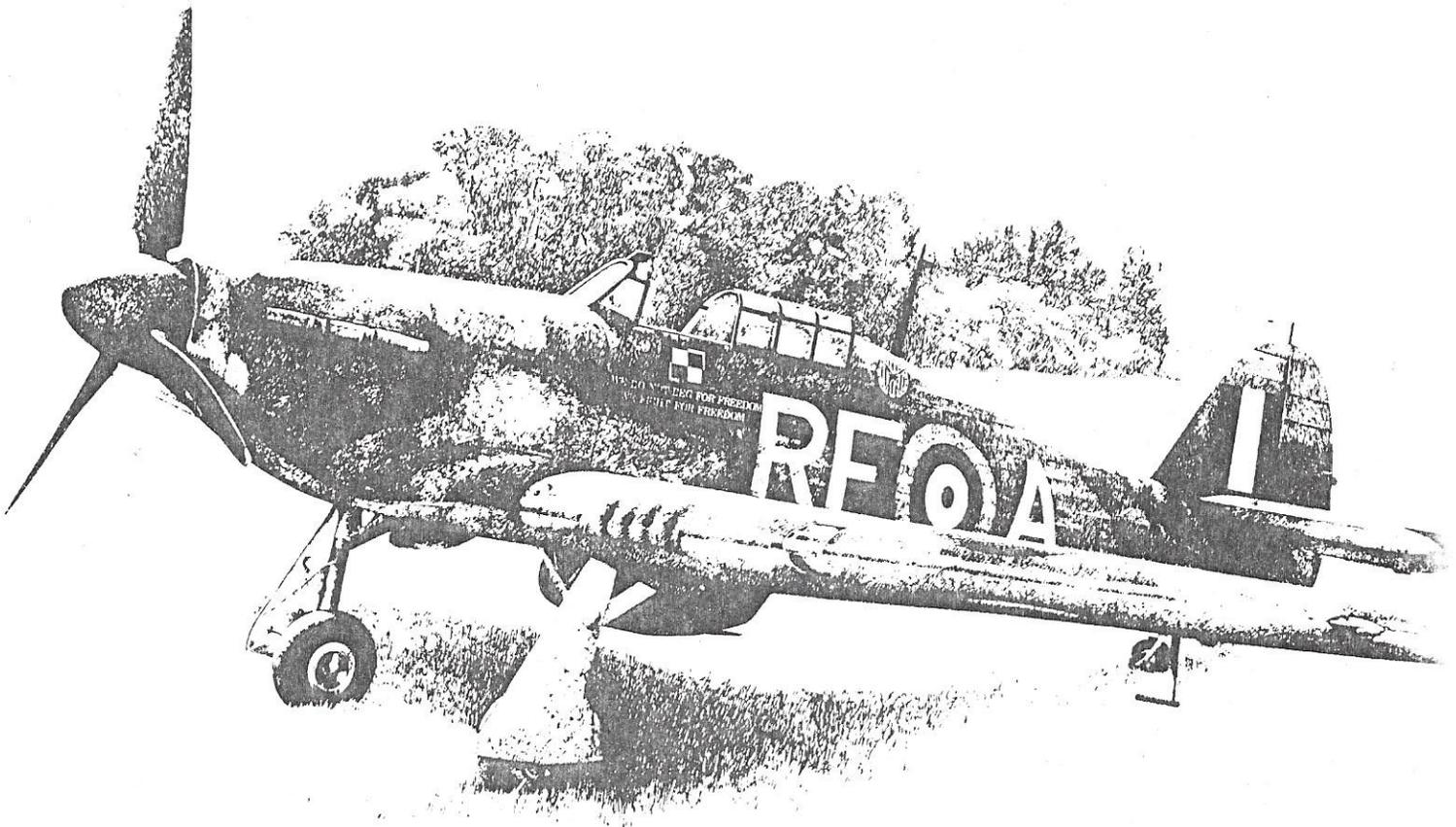
Col. Witold A. Urbanowicz

November 17, 1981

7:30 pm

Theater

Free



We Do Not Beg For Freedom

We Fight For Freedom

SQUADRON 303

The Story of

The Polish Fighter Squadron with

the R.A.F.

BY

ARKADY FIEDLER



LONDON: PETER DAVIES



← GEORGE VI, KING

THANKS TO "303"

WITOLD URBANOWICZ
Dowódca 303 Squadron
WITNIE O WIEKA BRITANIE

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RAAF
SPITFIRES
OVER
DARWIN

TALLMANTZ
HOLLYWOOD
MITCHELLS



ONE-MAN POLISH AIR FORCE



ONE-MAN AIR FORCE

Group Captain Witold Urbanowicz fought for freedom all over the world during the Second World War

By Milt Miller



POLISH



It was a bright, clear day in late August of 1943 when the C-47 landed at Kunming, China. It was an Air Transport Command plane and had flown across the Himalayan Hump from Chabua, India. Kunming was the headquarters of the 14th Air Force, the famed Fly-

ing Tigers, who flew under the command of Major General Claire Lee Chennault. China was landlocked and the only avenue for supplies was across the Hump. Therefore, Air Transport Command planes were always welcome in China because they brought much-needed gas, ammunition, bombs, replacement parts, bales of new Chinese currency, and jeeps, as well as the much-appreciated mail from home and occasional cases of beer.

This plane, however, brought something different—a most unusual and unique V.I.P. The G.I.s in their trucks and jeeps, ready to unload the DC-3, gaped at the first passenger to debark. He was ruggedly handsome, of medium height and build, and with an air of authority. But it was the uniform that threw the G.I.s. They had never seen anything like it before. It was powder blue with a Sam Browne belt, white shirt and dark blue tie. The cap was powder blue, as well, and sported an emblem which no one could recognize.

Over the left breast pocket there was another set of wings—but from what Air Force? The passenger walked to the nearest jeep and smartly saluted the amazed driver. “I’m Group Captain Witold Urbanowicz of the Polish Air Force,” he said with just the trace of an accent. “Please take me to General Chennault’s headquarters. I’m expected.” At first the driver could do no more than stare, but he quickly “yes sirred,” saluted sharply, and stowed Group Captain Urbanowicz’s gear in the rear seat.

With every eye following the jeep across the field to the 14th Headquarters, let us pause to recount the background of Witold Urbanowicz of the Polish Air Force and set the stage for his presence in China in August of 1943.

He was born in northeastern Poland in 1908. Still a child at the end of World War One, his heroes were all men of the air—men of daring—such as the Wrights, Bleriot, Richt-hofen and Rickenbacker. His special hero was an American pilot, Merian C. Cooper, who had distinguished himself fighting against the Bolsheviks during the Russo-Polish War, 1919-20. He flew with the Polish Kosciuszko Squadron and eventually wound up as the squadron commanding officer. To the twelve-year-old boy, Cooper was indeed a super-hero.

As soon as he was eligible, Witold was enrolled as a cadet in the Mili-

tary Officers’ School, but while he aspired to a military career his sights were on the fledgling Polish air arm rather than cavalry, infantry or artillery.

Commissioned in 1930, he went directly into aviation training avoiding the usual infantry service. He first qualified as an aerial observer and then went on to his dream—pilot training. He soloed in 1933 and that same year was granted his wings. Witold A. Urbanowicz was at last a pilot, a military pilot!

In 1933, across the border from Poland, a bombastic little man with a Chaplin moustache was shouting his Nietzschean nonsense about *lebensraum* and *untermenschen* and had become Chancellor of Germany. In the next half dozen years he continu-

“... As soon as he was eligible, Witold was enrolled as a cadet in the Military Officers’ School ...”

ed to rave and annex hunks of Europe such as the Saar, Austria and the Sudetenland while England and France applauded “peace in our time.” In 1939, Hitler turned his attention to the East. He insisted on the return of Danzig and the Polish Corridor and although the Republic of Poland pleaded for help, the world turned a deaf ear.

In September of 1939, after a contrived border incident, Hitler struck at Poland. It was no contest. The might of the German tank *blitzkrieg* was met by cavalry. There was no defense against the horrors of the demolition of the Stuka dive bombers. And in aerial combat, the Polish PZL 11 was no match for Willy Messerschmitt’s 109.

Although the brave Polish armed forces resisted as best they could with their antiquated weaponry, they were quickly overrun by the Germans from the West and Stalin from the East. Do you remember Russia’s rationale for attacking a practically defenseless Poland? “You wouldn’t want Hitler to have that territory, would you?” asked Stalin, and then sanctimoniously concluded, “I’m saving Eastern Poland from the Cruel Hun.”

When the German *blitz* hit Poland, Lieutenant Witold Urbanowicz was a fighter pilot instructor at Dublin. He, his students, and his fellow instructors took to the air against the German *Luftwaffe*. Flying their train-

ing planes against the best of the German Air Force was like a gnat attacking a hawk. The resistance was heroic but futile and finally Urbanowicz gathered 50 of his class and led them across Southern Poland to Rumania where they were interned. From Rumania they made it to France and, at long last, England, which was the seat of the Polish government in exile.

Each of the escaped Polish fliers was anxious to take to the air against the *Luftwaffe* as a member of an all-Polish squadron or group, commanded by Polish officers, and flying the new, fast, maneuverable Spitfires.

While the English and Poles worked to form such a group, the pilots were scattered as replacements throughout the R.A.F. Fighter Command flying a melange of obsolete French, American and Dutch planes.

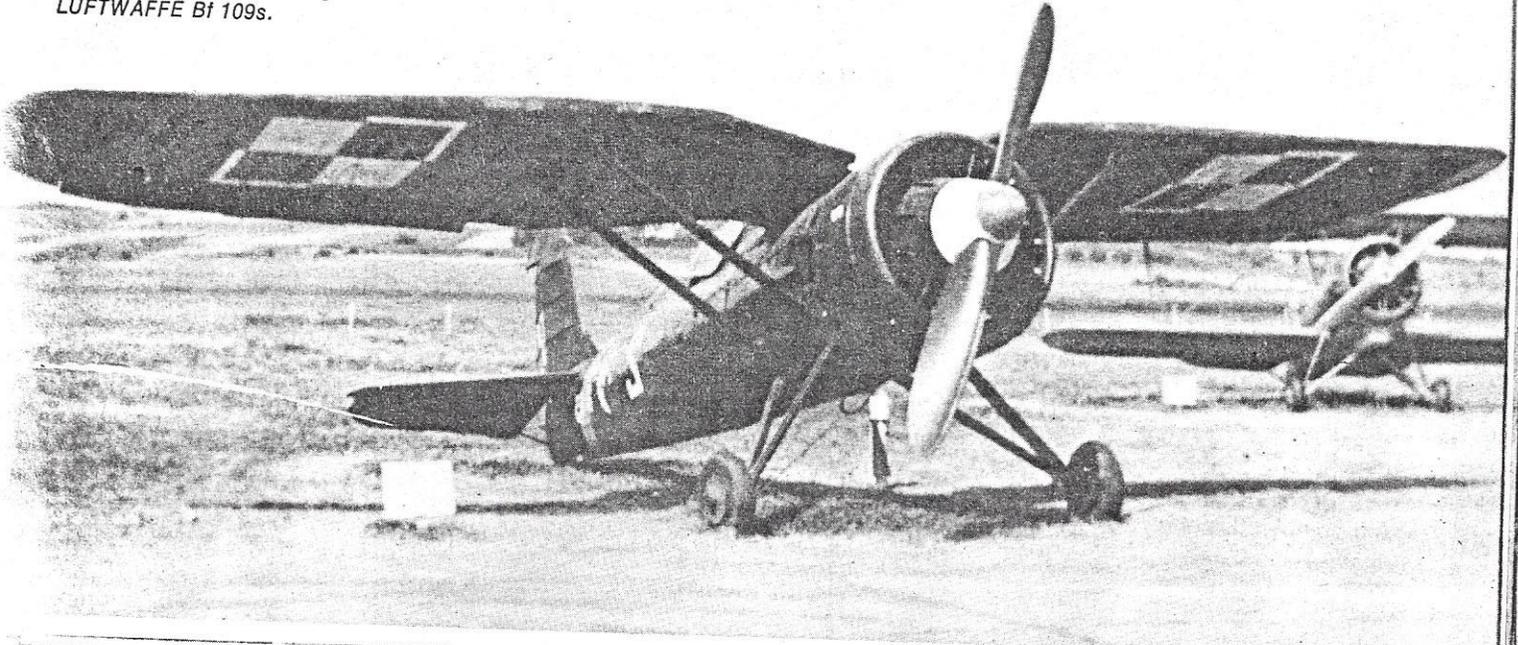
Urbanowicz was assigned first to No. 145 Squadron R.A.F. and later to No. 601 Squadron. It was while flying with these squadrons over England and Western Europe that he tasted the satisfaction of his first kill. He is credited with shooting down four German planes while flying with the British.

Meanwhile, during the summer and fall of 1940, Marshal Hermann Goering launched his aerial *blitz* which came to be known as the Battle of Britain. During the battle peak in September of 1940, No. 303 Squadron R.A.F. (all Polish) was formed and Witold A. Urbanowicz was assigned as the Squadron Commander. There was deep disappointment when they were given Hawker Hurricanes instead of the high performance Spitfires. “The Hurricanes flew like cows,” commented Urbanowicz recently, referring to the plane’s sluggish characteristics.

But the Poles were so thrilled to be with their own squadron and battling the Germans as a Polish unit, they would have, according to Urbanowicz, flown anything that would have taken to the air.

It was a year since Germany had invaded Poland and now was the chance for a handful of Poles to reaffirm Polish honor in battle. The 303rd became well known to, and feared by, the *Luftwaffe*. They flew with a controlled anger and each German fighter or bomber shot down over the Channel or over England was payment in small part, but payment indeed, for the Nazi rape of Poland.

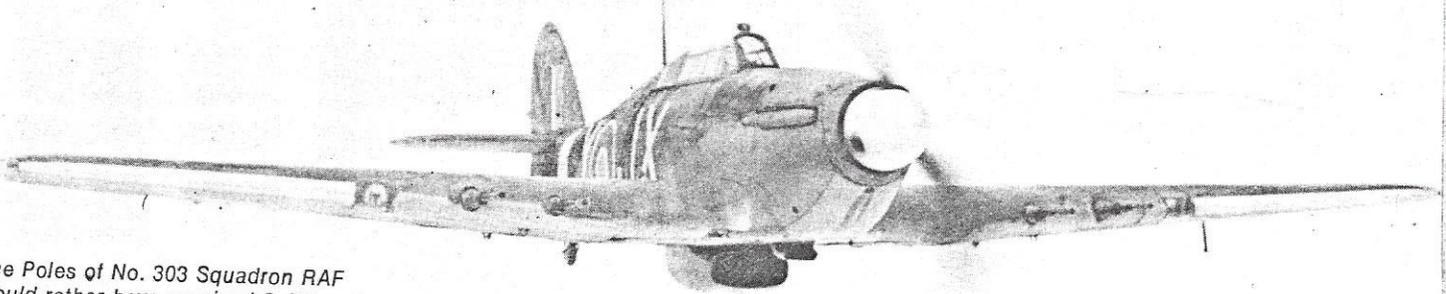
Polish Air Force PZL fighter flown by Urbanowicz during 1939 against LUFTWAFFE Bf 109s.



Memorial at Lvov for the American flyers who fought in Poland during the 1919-1920 conflict.



Marshal of Poland Pilsudski is seen decorating ~~an~~ AMERICAN PILOTS



The Poles of No. 303 Squadron RAF would rather have received Spitfires but they used their hand-me-down Hurricanes with a vengeance against the hated LUFTWAFFE, racking up a high score of victories.

And when the Battle of Britain was over and the brave defenders of freedom were given their immortal accolade by Winston Churchill, these statistics emerged: Squadron 303 score, 126 planes; Urbanowicz score, 13 planes.

The 126 planes destroyed was tops for any squadron in the R.A.F. and Urbanowicz's 17 (four with the 145th and 601st and 13 with the 303rd) was the highest for any flier. "We would have done better," said Urbanowicz wryly, "if we had Spitfires like the English flew."

In recognition of his role as squadron commander and high-scoring ace in the R.A.F. Witold Urbanowicz was awarded the British Distinguished Flying Cross and the Polish *Virtuti Militari* Medal.

But, according to Witold, his greatest honor came in meeting his boyhood hero, Merian C. Cooper in London, who presented him with his 20-year-old Kosciuszko Squadron badge. This is one memory Witold will never forget.

Two years later, Colonel Merian Cooper would be in China as chief-of-staff of the China Air Task Force and three years later Witold Urbanowicz would come to China as a fighter pilot. After the Battle of Britain, Urbanowicz was assigned to Fighter Command Headquarters and in April of 1941 was promoted to Commander of the Polish Wing at Northolt.

That summer, at the request of the U.S. Army Air Corps, he crisscrossed from one end of the U.S. to the other lecturing to both aviation cadets and rated officers on combat fighter tactics.

But Urbanowicz would rather fly than lecture and he fidgeted at the inactivity. In the meantime, he took the opportunity to check out in every American combat pursuit plane he could borrow, including the P-38, P-39 and P-40.

At the conclusion of his lecture tour, he asked to be re-assigned to his wing or anywhere else where he could fly, but his fame could not be "wasted" in combat and he was told that he would better serve the Polish government and people as Assistant Air Attache at the Polish Embassy in Washington.

In the Spring of 1943, Claire Chennault was called from his command in China for a consultation in Washington. Merian Cooper had suggested that General Chennault look up that "fabulous Polish ace" at the Embassy and he did. Chen-

nault and Urbanowicz hit it off like long lost brothers. Each admired the other as an air strategist and tactician but, more important, as a human being.

At their last session before Chennault returned to Kunming, he asked Urbanowicz if there was anything he could do for him.

"Yes," replied the group leader quickly, "take me with you."

"I'd like nothing better," said Chennault, taken aback, "but-but-but-but."

There were a hundred buts. And Urbanowicz had an answer for each.

"You're not an officer in the U.S. Army Air Corps," said Chennault.

"Poland is at war with Japan and I did fly with the R.A.F.," answered Urbanowicz.

"Who would pay you?" asked Chennault.

"No worry, I'll pay myself," was the reply.

"We fly P-40s."

"I've been checked out in a P-40." And on and on and on until Gen-

**"... The might of the
German tank BLITZKRIEG
was met by cavalry ..."**

eral Chennault said, "O.K., I'll work on it from my side and you see what you can do here in Washington."

Urbanowicz started the ball rolling with his contacts at the Pentagon until he finally got to General Hap Arnold, Chief of the United States Army Air Corps, who put his stamp of approval on Group Captain Witold Urbanowicz's service in China attached to the 14th Air Force.

Which brings us back to the start of our tale and August of 1943 at which time the one-man Polish Air Force (Far East Division) in the person of W. Urbanowicz landed at Kunming, China, to do battle with His Imperial Majesty's Japanese Air Force.

Now that Chennault had Urbanowicz there was the question of what to do with him.

Witold solved that problem easily. "Just give me a plane and I'll find enough to do," he said.

And that's exactly what Chennault did.

Urbanowicz tells about his couple of months of flying out of Kunming. If there was an escort mission by the 16th Fighter Squadron flying out of nearby Chengkung, Witold tagged along. If it were the 74th Fighter

Squadron, he went with them. But most of the time he was on his own.

He had a ball strafing Jap troop concentrations, or truck convoys or airfields in Indo-China.

The Japs didn't bother him much but the aerial maps did.

"They were real crazy. The map might show a town at the bend in the river but it was likely that there'd be no town or no bend or no river. Real crazy."

By December, Witold Urbanowicz was a seasoned Old China Hand and itching for more action than he could find flying out of Kunming. He had heard about the beleaguered 75th Chinese Army and the battle for Changteh. He knew that the East China Task Force led by the 75th Fighter Squadron was skip-bombing supplies of pork, salt and rice to the Chinese in make-shift bamboo baskets and he wanted to be on the scene. But he also heard that there were air battles over Changteh and Heng Yang and that really whetted his appetite.

Finally, Chennault told him to report to Brigadier General Casey Vincent in Kweilin. Vincent was Commanding General of the Eastern Bases in China.

General Edgar Glenn knew how anxious Urbanowicz was and saw to it that his orders were ready within the hour.

As our Peerless Pole was entering the C-47 for the flight to Kweilin a jeep, horn blaring, roared to the aircraft.

"Hey Urbanowicz," yelled the driver, "you're a father. We just heard on a Stateside news broadcast that your wife gave birth in Washington. Congratulations."

Witold Urbanowicz's flight to Kweilin, even without champagne and cigars, was an aerial party. He was a father!

In Kweilin, he could hardly wait to tell Casey Vincent. "I'm a father," he informed Casey while clicking his heels and saluting smartly.

"Of what?" asked the practical Casey.

"A baby, of course," explained Urbanowicz.

"Boy or girl?" whispered Casey. Urbanowicz's mouth dropped.

"You know, I never asked," he said at last. The cables flew between Kunming and the Pentagon and at last the news was received. It was a boy!

Casey sent Witold to Heng Yang to fly with the 75th Fighter Squad-



P-40s of the 75th Fighter Squadron at Hengyang, China, during 1943.

ron under Major Elmer Richardson. Don Lopez, a pilot with the 75th Fighter Squadron and who flew with Urbanowicz, recalls. "He was highly respected both for his record in Europe and his obvious ability in China. After his first mission we were amazed at his total knowledge as to what went on. He saw everything. He shot down two Zeros during the battle for Changteh.

The two Zeros referred to by Don Lopez were on the tail of Major Elmer Richardson and just about to blast him. "I saw that they were about to shoot Richardson out of the sky," says Urbanowicz modestly, "so I shot them down instead."

Myron Levy, adjutant of the 75th Fighter Squadron states, "We were an elite outfit in China and we knew it. To be 75th was something special. We accepted Group Captain Urbanowicz with a degree of reservation. We had seen some of these European heroes fall flat on their butts. Not Urbanowicz. He measured up fast and we were proud that he was one of us."

Don Van Cleve, a fighter pilot with the 75th Fighter Squadron, recalled "Ask him how he cracked up Captain Carlson's new plane."

Replied Witold Urbanowicz, "Well, I got lost. Then, at last, I found Tung Ting Lake and then the river that led to Heng Yang. By the time I got to the airfield it was dark. I landed O.K. but while taxiing I hit some rocks that some workmen left.

They shouldn't have been there. Anyway, I didn't crack up Carlson's plane. I just bent it in a couple of places."

Comments Elmer Richardson on Group Captain Urbanowicz, "He was a quiet sort and even though he spoke English well enough, he would not talk on the radio. We'd chat at night in our room or my office, but Witold hardly spoke on the line or around the rest of the pilots. I re-

"... In recognition of his role as squadron commander and high-scoring ace in the RAF, Witold Urbanowicz was awarded the British Distinguished Flying Cross and the Polish VIRTUTI MILITARI medal ..."

member a day where we failed to intercept a Jap bombing mission but found them on their way home. We hit them after most had landed and some were still in the traffic pattern. Witold was flying my wing. While strafing the bombers parked on the ramp, I got one Zero head on. Then Witold hit the bombers and the munition dump. The whole place blew up."

Came the late winter and Urbanowicz grew restless. He knew from Polish government sources that there

would be an invasion across the English Channel in 1944, and he was determined to command a Polish Air Group against the *Luftwaffe*.

So, he sadly bid his 14th Air Force comrades a farewell but not before being decorated by both the Americans and the Chinese. His combat record in China? Eleven Japanese aircraft, in the air and on the ground, and fourteen troop barges.

Returning to England he flew strafing missions with his old squadron, No. 303, after the invasion of Europe. This time, however, in Spitfires and Mustangs.

In August of 1944, still on diplomatic status, he was ordered again to Washington and the Polish Embassy, as full Air Attache. In July of 1945, the United States withdrew recognition of the Polish Government in London in favor of the Russian sponsored government and Witold Urbanowicz was out of a job.

He remained in the United States and, over the years, has worked for American Airlines, Eastern Airlines, and Republic Aviation.

Recently retired he occupies himself as proud grandfather, history scholar, and author. He has written four books and countless articles concerning his fabulous military experiences. They are written in Polish and have been translated into many foreign languages, but not English. His book, *The Flying Tigers*, is now being translated into the Urdu language of India.