

Poland and Poles during World War II

RADOSŁAW DOMKE

Government in exile



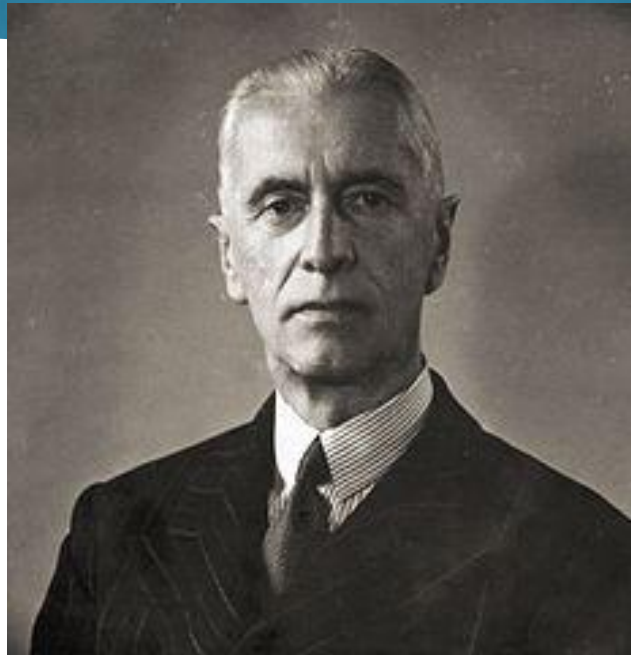


On September 17, 1939, the President of the Republic of Poland **Ignacy Mościcki**, the Commander-in-Chief **Edward Śmigły-Rydz** and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland **Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski** and the government crossed the border with **Romania** late in the evening, where they were interned.

The president appointed his successor

- ▶ Using his personal prerogatives for the duration of the war, President Ignacy Mościcki, who was interned in Romania, appointed **Władysław Raczkiewicz** as his successor. He took office in exile based on the April Constitution. However, as part of the agreement with the opposition parties, he committed to using his personal prerogatives in consultation with the government he appointed.

Władysław Raczkiewicz



A new prime minister and commander-in-chief were also appointed

- ▶ On September 30, 1939, **Władysław Sikorski** became prime minister and minister of military affairs of the Polish government in exile, and on October 7 he took up the position of commander-in-chief. The Polish Armed Forces, created by the Polish government alongside its allies, reached approximately 80,000 strength by the spring of 1940.

Władysław Sikorski





Actions of the Polish government in exile:

- ▶ Supremacy and formation of armed forces in **France** and the **UK**
- ▶ Establishment of a conspiratorial unit in Poland (Union of Armed Struggle)
- ▶ Concluding alliances with the Allies and the countries of Central Europe
- ▶ Attempting to regulate relations with the USSR (July 30, 1941 - the Polish-Soviet agreement was broken in April 1943 after the discovery of the graves of Polish officers in Katyn)
- ▶ Attempts to reach an agreement with Stalin and limit his influence on Poland
- ▶ After 1945, he supported the opposition in the country and sought international support in the fight for Polish independence.

1941 Treaty of Sikorski-Majski



Sikorski-Maisky Treaty

- ▶ After Germany attacked the USSR, when our eastern neighbor found itself in the camp of countries fighting Hitler, the British government pressed Sikorski to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR. Formally, **Poland did not declare war on the Soviet Union**, but after the Red Army entered Poland on September 17, 1939, the situation was complicated. However, under British pressure, diplomatic relations were established between the Polish and Soviet governments.

Sikorski-Maisky Treaty

- ▶ On **July 30, 1941, the Sikorski-Maisky Pact was signed** (Maisky was the Soviet ambassador in London). The agreement did not address the problem of the Polish-Soviet border. The Soviet side only stated that the treaties with Germany from 1939 "concerning territorial changes in Poland" had lost their force. However, this was not tantamount to recognizing the inviolability of the eastern border.

Sikorski-Maisky Treaty

- ▶ For some members of the government in exile, the lack of a precise provision on this issue was unacceptable. Due to this, the following people left the cabinet and resigned: Kazimierz Sosnkowski, Marian Seyda and August Zaleski. In their place, **Stanisław Mikołajczyk** and Edward Raczyński appeared in the government. The former took over the portfolio of deputy prime minister and minister of internal affairs, while the latter became head of the ministry of foreign policy.

1941-1942 Anders Army



1941-1942 Anders Army

- ▶ The creation of Anders' Army was supposed to be an opportunity for cooperation between Polish and Soviet forces. However, it quickly turned out that **the Soviets were not interested in cooperation, but in using the Poles**. Difficulties in supplying troops, terrible accommodation conditions and, finally, pressure from the Soviet side to quickly throw the Poles into battle were the final straw - **Anders' Army had to be evacuated to fight side by side with the British**.

Anders Army



Poles on the Western Front

- ▶ Poles participated in the French campaign, fighting, among others on the **Maginot Line, in Lorraine, Champagne and the Paris area and in the Battle of Britain**, where, among others, the famous Polish Air **Squadron 303** became famous. The Polish Independent **Carpathian Rifle Brigade** also took part in the defense of the **Tobruk** fortress in Libya.

1939 – 1945
POLACY NA FRONTACH
II WOJNY ŚWIATOWEJ
1 : 12 000 000



Squadron 303

On August 2, 1940, No. **303 Squadron** was formed.

During the Battle of Britain, **it shot down 110 German planes** - the most of any fighter squadron taking part in the fighting.



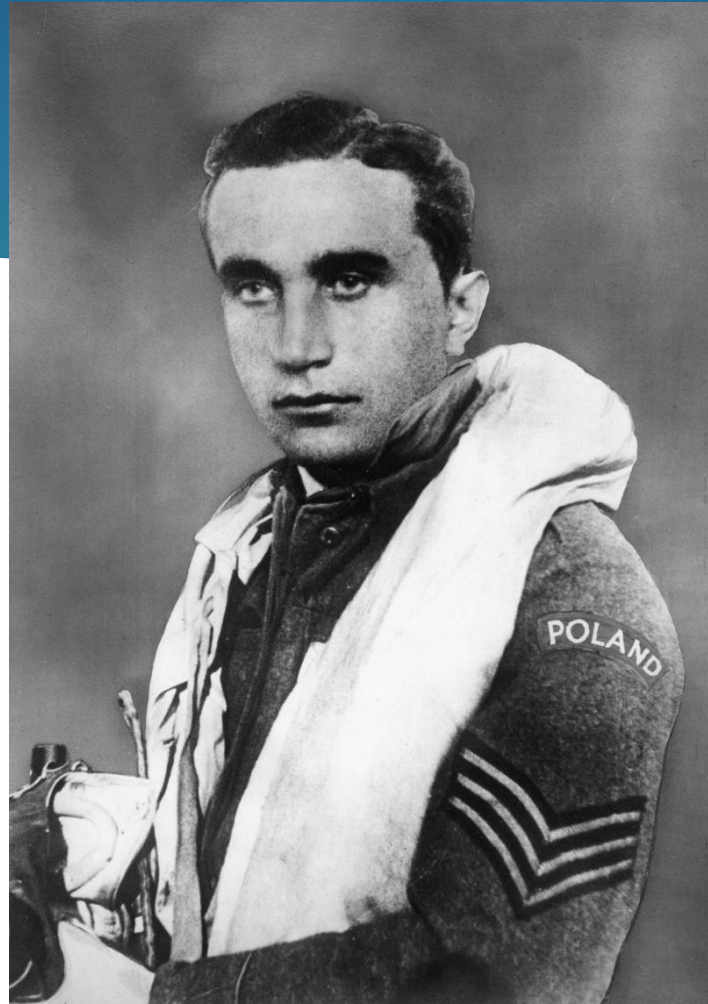
Battle of Britain

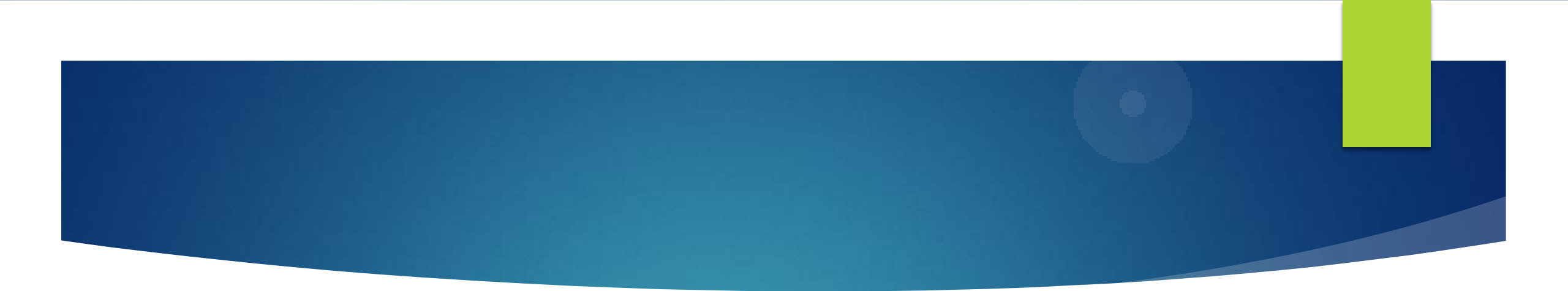
An **air battle that lasted from July to October 1940**. It was played over southern England and the English Channel. The fiercest battles took place in August and September. The massive German air offensive was to prepare the ground for an amphibious operation on the British Isles. The goal was to destroy the RAF (Royal Air Force), dominate English airspace, cut British communication routes, and paralyze war production and the British national economy.

Josef František. Czech, who was the best „polish” pilot in the Battle of Britain

Before he died 83 years ago, on October 8, 1940, **he shot down 17 enemy machines in a month.**

At the time of his death he was the most effective Polish pilot.



- 
- ▶ He was born in Moravia. In the summer of 1940, František reached England, joining the Polish 303rd Fighter Squadron formed in Northolt. Tadeusz Kościuszko. **He pretended to be Polish and refused to join the Czechoslovak Royal Air Force squadron.** He did not renounce his nationality, but he was attached to his colleagues, alongside whom he had fought since 1939. He was one of **two Czechoslovak pilots** who took part in the Battle of Britain in Polish uniforms - **the other was a Slovak, Jozef Kaňa.**

Polish Navy



ORP Orzeł solo cruise



ORP Orzeł solo cruise

Thanks to a daring escape, the Poles **escaped from Tallinn**. The eagle continued its trail. On October 14, 1939, **despite the lack of maps and weapons, they reached the coast of Scotland**, having previously freed two Estonian sailors who had been incapacitated while escaping. The Estonians, who BBC Radio reported had been murdered by Poles, were dropped off in Sweden.

Katyń



Katyń



Katastrofa w Gibraltarze





Polish army in USSR after evacuation of Anders Army

1st Polish Infantry Division named after T. Kościuszko

- ▶ In the spring of 1943, the Union of Polish Patriots (**ZPP**) was established in Moscow under the leadership of Wanda Wasilewska. Its goal was to turn to the Soviet government at an appropriate time with a request to establish a Polish army in the USSR. **The army to be created would in no way be subject to the government in London. Zygmunt Berling** was to take command of the designed units, and the Soviets planned to start the entire organizational process with the formation of an infantry division.

1st Polish Infantry Division named after T. Kościuszko

- ▶ In May, the formation of the **1st Infantry Division** began in **Sielce on the Oka river**. Tadeusz Kościuszko. Berling took command of the division, in line with expectations and original plans. Even though the division was considered a union that was almost completely dependent on the Red Army, many Poles who hoped to improve their lives and living conditions joined it.

Čtyři z tanku a pes



Czterej pancerni i pies

- ▶ The Polish series was broadcast in Czechoslovakia titled „Čtyři z tanku a pes” – **in the early 1970s in Československá televize**. In 2006, it was re-broadcast by Prima TV.







Thank you for attention