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## **TARGET STETTIN: THE ALLIED AIR FORCES OVER STETTIN 1940–1945**

Between 1939–1945 the Nazi Germany was the target of the Allied Bombing Offensive. The commanders of this operation against the Third Reich used the principles of the pre-war theoreticians who were developing the theory of the strategic bombing. Between 1940–1945, Stettin was the area of the mass bombing. After seventy years of these events, the city hasn't any lieux de mémoire of the effort of the Allied crews. How the policy of bombing of Stettin was carried out by the Allies? What factors cause, that the memory about pilots fighting over the city is a troublesome question? How would the memory about those events influenced on quality of Polish-German relations?

### **1. An important target**

The prewar period was characterized with large activity of various military theoreticians. In the considerations on subject of future workings of aviation were noted by two figures, the Italian general Giulio Douhet, the author of the book *Command of the Air* (*Il dominio dell'aria*), which includes the following thesis: to break the moral of an enemy's population and to be a victorious side, the constant bombardment is a necessity. Also an American general of aviation William Mitchell shared point of view of the Italian general. In order to present the efficiency of his theory between 1920–1921, William Mitchell sunk two obsolete German battleships from the WWI. Furthermore, US strategist published in 1925 a manuscript, entitled *Winged Defense*. The book consists of the description about

a future war with Japan as well as a possible attack by the Imperial Japanese Navy on the naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Nevertheless, the elite of US military wasn't interested in reading Mitchell's work. Both theoreticians became famous as authors of innovatory tenets of aerial warfare, foreseeing strategic bombing raids as a means smashing both the enemy's will and moral to fight.

The capital of the Pomerania, Stettin was the important industrial center, which worked for the needs of the army. A shipyard, manufacturing plants to include the Stoewer Motor Company, which from 1935 produced on need of army. In 1937 were extended to include the institutions of synthetic petrol Hydriewerke AG in Pölitz.

## 2. Defense

Barely had the Battle of Britain finished in September 1940, Germans started developing a network of shelters. They did not put off the development of an active defense (the fighters and the anti-aircraft artillery) and a passive defense (the bunkers and the shelters) for these defense. Both shelters and bunkers were building in Stettin. The first shelter was opened in April 1941 placed under main railway station. Nowadays such underground construction is still open because of tourism. The capacity of shelter was designed for five thousand people. The construction consists of many interesting solutions. Every mother could use a special wash room, in order to care for their children. The cork which had to muffle the sounds of the many feet upon the steps and floors lined all the portions. In addition the floor was painted in red in order to mask the view of blood. By means of this trick designers wanted to avoid a source of panic among several thousand crowd inside of the shelter. The famous movie of the 30's *All Quiet on the Western Front* made the public opinion anxious. A terrifying vision of gas warfare changed the whole societies. A cheap anti-gas mask became a valid element of daily life. The students and the pupils of basic schools of Stettin were evacuated to the Pomeranian country sides and on Rügen Island. Mothers of the pre-school children were removed from the city also.<sup>1</sup>

Draconian principles regulated entrance to the German shelters. The women who belonged to the *Luftschutz Bund* managed access to the shelters during of the

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<sup>1</sup> Report of Ilse Gudden, in: *Stettin/Szczecin 1945–1946. Dokumente – Erinnerungen. Dokumenty – Wspomnienia*, ed. by T. Białecki, Rostock 1994, p. 58.

air raids. Only Germans could be there. The representatives of national minorities acknowledge as Untermenschen (Gypsies, Jews, Poles etc.) and prostitutes as well as homosexuals were excluded. In order to recognize all these minorities their representatives had to carry special markings.

People acknowledged as Übermensch, had access to shelters. The author of memories Anja vom Stein highlights the fall of morale of human groups in conditions of harsh habitat. "Mother are neglecting their children [...] About 70 per cent of bunker inmates have so-called 'bunker disease' and there is no water, hardly any heating, no opportunities to delouse [...] Decent people become like animals after losing house and home, dwelling like cave men in the bunker night and day to escape with nothing but their lives."<sup>2</sup>

The growing number of allied air raids was a reason of building of shelters which was one of the top priorities of passive protection for the population. They gave the chance of survival thousands the occupants of German cities throughout the Greater Reich. Between April 1941 and July 1944 in Stettin over 780 shelters were built. The dynamics of building of mass shelters, highlights the following schedule.

Number of shelters in Stettin in period since April 1941 till July 1944.

Month and year	Number of shelters	Number of places in shelters
April 1941	6	650
October 1941	14	2,620
January 1942	20	3,910
April 1942	31	490
July 1942	46	7,165
January 1943	117	14,861
July 1943	129	18,194
January 1944	207	28,732
July 1944	218	31,112
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>788</b>	<b>107,734</b>

Source: R. Kotla: Bastiony, forty, bunkry... Historia umocnień obronnych Szczecina [Bastions, Forts, Bunkers... History of Fortifications of Stettin], Szczecin 2001, p. 32.

Also cellars were adapted as a form of makeshift shelter. Today on streets 5 Lipca (Fifth July) and Bohaterów Warszawy (Heroes of Warsaw) as well as others can be seen extension walls. In the first half of 1944, one of the fourth population

<sup>2</sup> A. v. Stein: *Unser Köln. Erinnerungen 1910–1960. Erzählte Geschichte*, Erfurt 1999, p. 116.

of Stettin could protect themselves in shelters against allied bombs. Close to Lake Hertha (today Szmaragdowe – ‘Emerald Lake’), Gauleiter of Pomerania, Franz Schwede-Coburg had his own shelter.<sup>3</sup> The total cost of all defensive investments of the mass protection carried out 27 million marks.<sup>4</sup>

In 1943 attacks on a huge scale on the German cities began. The RAF completed night air raids. Additionally since January 1943 the US 8<sup>th</sup> Army by means of B-17’s<sup>5</sup> and B-24 heavy bombers involved in the Bombing Offensive against the Nazi Germany.

### 3. Air bombardments of Stettin

The RAF accomplished the first air raid on Stettin in June of 1940. The bomber crews dropped bombs on Kreckow/Krzekowo a deserted district. The author of the War Chronicle of Stettin, mentions about three night air raids carried out in August of 1940. The effect of these actions were following: the house near Greifenhagenerstrasse (today Piesza – ‘Foot street’) burned due to the crash of one of the bombers. Ten bombs fell on Sydowsaue/Żydowce, Podejuch/Podjuchy. In his memories, a witness of air raids the POW, a gunner Ignacy Kąkolewski, highlights the state of shock of occupants of Stettin. In 1940 Stettin was three times under attack by British bombers.<sup>6</sup>

Pölitz/Police in 1940 was under attack also. The first air raid occurred the night of 4/5 September. Both 12 Germans and 15 Slovakian workers were killed.<sup>7</sup> The nights of 14/15 as well as 26/27 October 1940, the RAF achieved two air raids. The growing activity of the Bomber Command forced anti-craft defense to put balloons in surroundings of the oil plant in Pölitz.

40 bombers appeared over Stettin 20/21 as well as 29/30 of September 1941. Over 150 bombs hit the urban targets. According to local data, six persons had

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<sup>3</sup> R. Kotla: op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> B. Frankiewicz: *Bombardowanie miasta przez lotnictwo alianckie* [Bombing by the Allies Air Force], in: *Dzieje Szczecina* [History of Stettin], vol. 3: 1806–1945, ed. by B. Wachowiak, Szczecin 1994, p. 880.

<sup>5</sup> The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress – the American heavy four jet bomb airplane of far range. Designed and built at American concern air Boeing Airplane Company. General features of Boeing B-17 G: crew: 11, own mass: 16,374 kg, total mass: 29,710 kg, maximum speed: 486 km/h, operating ceiling 10,850 m, maximum range: 5470 km. See L. Davis: *B-17 in Action*, Carrollton 1984, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> B. Frankiewicz: op. cit., p. 879.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 880.

died, and 22 had been wounded. Documents on this air raid emphasize that some of the bombs hit the main gate of the Central Cemetery. All the cemeteries archives were burned.<sup>8</sup>

The result of the Hitler's invasion of the USSR on June 22 1941 was disastrous. Within the first week of the war, the Soviet air forces lost over 4000 of airplanes, including both bombers and fighters.<sup>9</sup> In spite of enormous losses, Stalin demanded action against his mortal opponent – Hitler. The act of revenge was possible by means of the bases which were located on the Baltic island Saaremaa near coasts of Estonia. The Soviet bombers of the Baltic Fleet conducted both in August and in September of 1941 ten raids against the German capital. On night 7/8 August 1941 bombers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment attacked Berlin.

The last Soviet bombing of Berlin took place on September 11/12 1942. The crew of Alexander Lomov did not return. Leaking fuel was a reason. Being aware that he could not reach Berlin. Instead of attacking the German capital he decided to bomb the secondary target Stettin. Barely had his crew dropped bombs, the anti-craft gun hit the Soviet bomber. Instead of flying toward neutral Sweden, Lomov's plane reached the area over Lithuania. There the bomber hit the lake with such force that the navigator, Vasili Kuzin, along with radio operator Ivan and crewman Frolov drowned. Both Lomov as well as Bielousov were caught by Lithuanian policemen. Despite harsh investigation carried out by German, they kept silence. They experienced difficulties of being a Soviet POW in German captivity. Nonetheless, scarcely had they been liberated by the Red Army, they became the prisoners of the NKVD. Stalin saw Soviet POW, as traitors and not to be trusted. In such circumstances was noted to be the last Soviet raid the German capital accomplished in September 1942.<sup>10</sup>

In 1942 the inhabitants of Stettin experienced 20 air alarms. British bombers executed air raids twice. The first took place on 20/21 April 1942. It was reported that a partial destruction of the Castel of the Pomeranian Dukes had taken place. In August the next air attack occurred. The catholic church of Christ King and the habitable camp for foreign workers, near Liliencornweg (today Ostrawicka street) were burnt.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 881.

<sup>9</sup> T. Kopański: *Barbarossa Victims: Luftwaffe Kills in the East*, Tarnobrzeg 2001, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> W. Reszetnikow: *Od Barbarossy do Berlina* [From Barbarossa to Berlin], Warszawa 2009, p. 119.

<sup>11</sup> B. Frankiewicz: op. cit., p. 881.

In February of 1942 the new commander of the Bomber Command, Arthur "Bomber" Harris introduced according to Douhet's doctrine the new order of the Bombing Offensive.<sup>12</sup> Both Lübeck<sup>13</sup> as well as Rostock became symbol of the new attitude. The Baltic agglomeration were leveled to the ground. After years the former marshal of aviation explained his decisions as follows. "I put them on northern harbors in the Baltic, because I dropped the easiest targets because if you see anything you can see the coast line, then you can find a way to harbor. As harbors there were easy to find and they were burn well. [...] In March 1942 230 bombers destroyed half of Lübeck, in April Rostock was bombed to burnt. This was already such style of night air raids. This style was in force by three years. It was terrific, done at haphazard, but Bomber Command had no choice."<sup>14</sup>

The effort of Arthur Harris would have been useless, unless the features of the Avro Lancaster. The new weapon of the Bomber Command, introduced into service in the end of 1941, was a masterpiece of military aviation. The machine was capable of carrying great loads of up to 14,000 pounds. In spite of its phenomenal lifting power it was fast and maneuverable. It could reach nearly 290 mph and was quick enough to corkscrew out of trouble when under attack from a night-fighter. As a result their crews had very positive opinion about features of the new four-engine bomber. Tony Iveson, the pilot of the new design said, "The Lanc was a lovely aircraft."<sup>15</sup>

From 1943 the Wehrmacht was retreating on all fronts. On 14 January 1943, at the conference in Casablanca both the president of the USA Franklin Delano

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<sup>12</sup> The new commander of the Bomber Command had an ideal service background for the job. Arthur Harris had joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1915 and flown on the Western Front before being given command of a home defense squadron where he acquired a reputation as a pioneer of night flying. Between the wars he served in Iraq helping keep rebellious tribes in line by bombarding them from the air. P. Bishop: *Bomber Boys*, London 2007, p. 88.

<sup>13</sup> 234 aircraft – 146 Wellingtons, 41 Hampdens, 26 Stirlings, 21 Manchesters. 12 aircraft – 7 Wellingtons, 3 Stirlings, 1 Hampden, 1 Manchester – lost. This raid was the first major success for Bomber Command against German target. The attack was carried out in good visibility, with the help of an almost full moon and, because of the light defences of this target, from and low level, many crews coming down this 2,000 ft. The force was split into 3 waves, the leading one being composed of experienced crews with Gee-fitted aircraft; although Lübeck was beyond the range of Gee, the device helped with preliminary navigation. More than 400 tons of bombs were dropped; two thirds of this tonnage you incendiary. 191 crews claimed successful attacks. German sources show that 1,425 buildings in Lübeck were destroyed, 1,976 were seriously damaged and 8,411 were lightly damaged; these represented 62 per cent of all buildings in Lübeck. See <http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/mar42.html>.

<sup>14</sup> The interview of the marshal A. Harris for the Thames TV 1974, *Whirlwind the Bombing the Germany: The world at war*.

<sup>15</sup> P. Bishop: op. cit., p. 93.

Roosevelt and the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill were dealing with planning of the war. Among many matters, the two leaders discussed the strategy of combine and unlimited of the bombing offensive against the Nazi Germany.<sup>16</sup> The list issued by the Combined Chief of Staff in Casablanca included the following targets: the first priority shipyards, port facilities and submarine pens, the second the enemy air force and aerial industry, the third transportation and the fourth oil plants.<sup>17</sup> Soon after the conference, the US bombers carried out the first bombardment of the Nazi Germany.<sup>18</sup>

The activity of the British bomber crews and the US Air Force, increased over Stettin. In 1943, 54 aerial alarms were announced. In night of 5/6 January 1943, the armada of four-engine bombers consisted of 348 Avro Lancasters<sup>19</sup> and 10 Handley Page Halifax<sup>20</sup> attacked Stettin which this night was main aim of the RAF. Simultaneously 13 Mosquitoes<sup>21</sup> hit the targets in Berlin.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Bomber Command decided to continue night actions. The Americans decided to carry out daily actions. The attitude of the Brits determined the development of electronic war. R. Freeman: *Raiding the Reich: The Allied Strategic Bombing Offensive*, London 1997, p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> M. Murawski: *Sytuacja dziennych jednostek myśliwskich Luftwaffe na froncie zachodnim na przełomie lat 1944/45* [The Situation of the Luftwaffe Day Fighting Units on the Western Front 1944/45], "Militaria", 2 (18), 2011, pp. 74–75.

<sup>18</sup> 64 bombers of the US 8<sup>th</sup> Army attacked on January 26, 1943 the German naval base Wilhelmshaven. Americans dropped 636 tons of bombs. The US lost both two B-24 and a single B-17. The *Luftwaffe* lost seven fighters. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> Avro Lancaster, heavy four-engine British bomber, introduced into service 1942. The Lancaster was the basic heavy bomber of the Bomber Command of the period WWII. Basic data of the Avro Lancaster: crew: 7, own mass: 16,705 kg, total mass: 27,921 kg, maximum speed: 462 km/h, operating ceiling: 7468 m, range: 1673 km. T. J. Kowalski: *Samolot bombowy AVRO typ 683 Lancaster* [Bomber Airplane Avro Type 683 Lancaster], Warszawa 1984, p. 3–16.

<sup>20</sup> Handley Page Halifax was second, after the Avro Lancaster, basic heavy night bomber of the RAF of period WWII. General features of the H. P. Halifax (for version Mk. III B): crew: 7, own mass: 17,208 kg, total mass: 24,675 kg, maximum speed: 454 km/h, operating ceiling: 7315 m, range: 1658 km. Total number of Halifax build in years 1940–1946: 6176 copies of all versions. W. Bączkowski: *Samolot bombowy Halifax* [Bomber Airplane Halifax], Warszawa 1985, pp. 3–16.

<sup>21</sup> De Havilland Mosquito – a British twin-engined, crew: 2, multi role combat aircraft that served the WWII and post-war era, produced in different versions (tactical bomber, daily and night fighter, reconnaissance aircraft). Designed by the firm De Havilland he was innovatory construction, despite that he be built from wood mainly. Acknowledge as one of the most successful airplanes of the WWII. The aircraft was also known as "The Wooden Wonder". General profiles D. H. Mosquito (for version Mk. IV B-bomber): crew: 2, own mass: 6030 kg, total mass: 9658 kg, maximum speed: 611 km/h, operating ceiling: 10,330 m, range: 3282 km. W. Bączkowski, A. R. Janczak: *Samolot wielozadaniowy Mosquito* [Multi-role Airplane Mosquito], Warszawa 1982, pp. 3–16.

<sup>22</sup> L. Demps: *Die Luftangriffe auf Berlin. Ein dokumentarischer Bericht. Teil II*, "Jahrbuch des Märkischen Museums", 8, 1982, pp. 7–44; Source: A. C. Grayling: *Among the Dead Cities*, London 2006.

In night 20/21 April 1943 the Bomber Command executed action on day of Hitler's birthday. The headquarters of the Luftwaffe believed wrongly, that the main target of the combined British American air raid would be Berlin. As a result they made an enormous mistake. All anti-aircraft guns were located around the German capital thus leaving Stettin helpless. The inhabitants of Stettin were under total attack. At 23:30 over the city appeared 350 British Avro Lancasters. "They began from Pommerensdorf/Pomorzany which they hit before to harbor" – remembering the raid Kazimierz Bogusz, then a compulsory worker. – "In the darkness both the heavy crushing bombs and incendiary fell in target in 45 minutes."<sup>23</sup>

The flying officer, Bill Cole who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force as a gunner in the rear turret of the Lancaster, took part in the night bombardment of Stettin. "I fired my guns in anger over Stettin one night. I took a whack at a Fw 190. There were searchlights all over the place. It appeared as though the Fw 190 was riding up this one beam. That beam must have been in front of us, because when you looked down, you could see the front profile of the aircraft. Now, he was quite possibly going after a plane ahead of us following the searchlight, maybe there was one coned, I don't know. I fired a burst and immediately thought, 'forget this nonsense', and we did a corkscrew starboard. That was scary. The skipper had problems pulling out because of the speed. The corkscrew was so violent, I swear I saw darn rudders twisting."<sup>24</sup>

Manfred Schroeder, the soldier who arrived home the day after the air raid, noted: "We arrived to my family in Stettin. Here I could enter to café where team played forgotten pieces. I arrived with a comrade on 22 April: – Buses do not run – some sergeant said us on border of the city. For what? I asked. – Buses transport on dead men's cemetery now, thousands dead men – broken down sergeant said clearly."<sup>25</sup> It was noted down that 400 persons had been killed, 300 heavily wounded and 300 severely wounded. 25,000 population of Stettin became homeless. British's losses consisted of 21 machines – 13 Lancasters, seven Halifax and one Stirling, 6.2% of the attacking forces.<sup>26</sup> Next night air raids took place both on 13 May and on 18 July but little information kept about them.

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<sup>23</sup> B. Frankiewicz: op. cit., p. 882.

<sup>24</sup> D. Nijboer: *Gunner: An Illustrated History of World War II Aircraft Turrets and Gun Positions*, Hong Kong 2001, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> A. Kraśnicki: *Jak zniszczono Szczecin* [How Stettin was destroyed], <http://www.sedina.pl> (16.08.2004).

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.raf.mod.uk> (16.08.2004).



In night 5/6 January 1944, over the city appeared 250 bombers of the RAF. According to official data the casualties reached 250 people. Anarchy was ubiquitous. In order to maintain discipline, on 10 March 1944, the Nazi authorities set up a capital punishment for looting. Attacking forces lost 14 Avro Lancasters and 2 Halifax 4.5% strengths the RAF. On 11 April 1944, over Stettin appeared for the first time American bombers of the US 8<sup>th</sup> Army. Zabelsdorf/Niebuszewo in after effect of air raid was worn out seriously. The target, industrial objects of Stettin, Scholwin/Skolwin and Altdamm/Dąbie were both hit by about 650 bombs and 1800 phosphorous bombs. In the city occurred a hurricane of fire (Feuersturm). Some of the bombs damaged shipyards "Vulcan" and "Oder". The aircraft engines factory was hit in the Arnimswalde/Załom district also, with a lost over hundred persons, among them five sailors from a nearby U-boat 803.<sup>27</sup> The German defenders shot down 11 bombers Boeing B-17.<sup>28</sup> The next air raids of the USAF occurred on 29 April and on 13 May. On May 13, Americans dropped 1700 bombs on the northern part of the city. In the Züllchow/Żelechowa district were worn out 42 houses entirely. Similar losses were in the region of shipyard. The tram line was broken on Gotzlow/Gocław running along the Oder river small ships were used as a replacement.

#### 4. The battle of oil plant Hydrierwerke AG Pölitz

The next air raid accomplished on 29 May 1944 was directed on the synthetic oil plant Hydrierwerke AG Pölitz. Pilots of the Luftwaffe had a successful day. Crews of the Zerstörergeschwader 26 and American crews met over Wollin island. The Americans lost 8 B-24.<sup>29</sup>

The third US action occurred on 20 June 1944. Unfortunately crews of Liberators separated from their escort of fighters. German pilots from Zerstörergeschwader 26 were now able to attack US bombers with ease. During the aerial battle American's losses from the 358 Liberators involved was 34. Six of the US crews fled to neutral Sweden where the crews were interred. The lost of the 14 Liberators of the 492 BG (Bomber Group) was the highest among US units.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> A. Niestle: *German U-Boat Losses during World War II: Details of Destruction*, Annapolis 1998, p. 116.

<sup>28</sup> T. Lloyd: *Shu Woman's Shu*, <http://www.327th.org> (11.04.2010).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> S. Tetera, *Messerschmitt Me 410 Hornisse*, "Lotnictwo" [Aviation], 2008, 3, p. 85.

On June 20 1944, in action against Pölitz, 245 bombers of the 389<sup>th</sup>, 445<sup>th</sup>, 492<sup>nd</sup>, 856<sup>th</sup> squadrons of the US 8<sup>th</sup> Army bombed once again the oil plant in Pölitz. The squadron was led by the J. Harris Crew 707, with Major Losee aboard. The Luftwaffe took advantage of the situation. In spite of numerous escort (271 fighters) they were able to keep the escorts away in order to attack the unprotected part of the armada. There wasn't anything that the 492<sup>nd</sup> did or didn't do that made themselves the central point of the Luftwaffe. It was simply the turn of an unlucky card. The German fighters' swooped in for the attack, haphazardly targeting the left side of the Group flown by the 856<sup>th</sup> Squadron. Reports underline that the Luftwaffe attacked with Me-109s, Me-110s, Ju-88s and Me-410s. By means of rockets, 20 mm canon and machine guns, they organized their attacks at such a performance level that they had to be some of Germany's best pilots. The memories of Edward Edwards Wayne highlights the conditions of the action over Pölitz: "Fisher was riding in the tail turret and called out on the intercom 'there goes one' and 'another' as the German fighters shot down the eleven planes behind us. I was in the nose turret and thought to myself we were next. Just then two P-51s flew in front of us doing about 500 miles per hour. The little P-51s scattered the German fighters and we never saw them again. I looked out to the right and saw a camouflaged B-24, the only one I saw all the time I was overseas. Over target we got shot full of holes. After dropping our bombs Herk yelled over the intercom, 'The ship keeps climbing. I can't hold her down!' I suggested trying the auto pilot. Herk flew us home using the elevator control on the auto pilot. On landing we hit on the nose wheel three times before the plane stayed on the runway. No brakes! We ran off the end of the runway. Mission over!"<sup>31</sup> During the mission the 856<sup>th</sup> Squadron experienced the highest losses in the war. The formation had lost 14 crews. Including the Commander, Major Losee. The 358 Liberators were escorted by 271 fighters. They got into the battle and destroyed 28 enemy fighters in the air. Only three of the escorts were lost. As a result of air raid 99 people were killed, including 88 foreigner workers. Despite high losses the allied forces were still interested in reducing Pölitz's contribution to the war. The crews of the Bomber Command of the RAF carried out heavy attacks both in night 8/9 August and 21/22 December 1944.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.492ndbombgroup.com> (11.04.2010).

<sup>32</sup> *The wartime story of pilot Fred Shorney DFC and his crew in Lancaster PH-E Easy, PD201*, <http://www.fredshorney.com>.

## 5. August 1944

In August of 1944, Stettin experienced the climax of night raids. The first took place on the night 16/17 part with over 460 British four-engine Avro Lancasters .

“At 21 was announced Voralarm, lasting from two and half hours sounded” – one of Polish compulsory workers remembering the air raid. – “Bombs began falling. The hail of bombs ugly whistling, destroying and incendiary. We know right away that the main aim of air raid was not the city center, but the harbor and the port district, shipyards and the closest region of the city centre.”<sup>33</sup> The results of the action were shocking. The old city became the most smashed. All buildings in this area were worn out. The church of Saint Jacob was damaged and the terrains of today’s streets Odzieżowa, Czesława as well as the building round the Lotników square. As a result of the air raid ca. 100,000 men lost their houses. According to the German archives the lack of coffins took place.

Next, more powerful and precious air raid took place in night 29/30 August 1944. 402 Avro Lancasters were engaged in the action.<sup>34</sup> The result of the air raid was spectacular. The allied pilots saw a hurricane of fire. Temperature reached a thousand degrees. Pavement burnt on streets. There was concurrent phenomenon of this type of storms. The lack of oxygen caused a death of nearly thousand people located in undergrounds of the Castle of the Pomeranian Dukes. Even debris of bombs on the Oder river burnt. It was the effect of the use of the benzol bombs which content overflowed to river causing the river fires. Numbers that most distinctly give back the scale of destructions: the bombers of the RAF dropped 2200 bombs destroying, 100,000 incendiary bombs and 12,000 containers of a liquid incendiary. The Old Town, neighborhoods around the shipyard, the Zabelsdorf/Niebuszewo district were completely destroyed. The German data stating the destruction at 60% of buildings. Roman Łyczywek, the barrister, who in 1945 began to work in Polish Szczecin wrote: “Influence of the heavy bombs and the use of aerial mines was incredible. On long sections of streets one could see the demolition of houses. Only a modest outline of building under mass of bricks does not look could be seen.” The largest losses were on the Old Town. According to sources, 95% of buildings were either destroyed or damaged.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> A. Kraśnicki: *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> *The wartime story ...*

<sup>35</sup> A. Kraśnicki: *op. cit.*

During the action the allies lost 23 bombers, 5.7% participating in this action.<sup>36</sup>

In result of the air raid, were worn out 1569 households and 32 industrial objects. Bombs sank about draught ship also two thousands BRT and they damaged more far seven individuals about draught 31 thousands BRT. Life lost 1033 occupants meanwhile they next 1034 persons became wounded. Victims' total number to today was not qualified. After both air raids in August 1944, 42,000 inhabitants of the city were killed.<sup>37</sup>

Hardly the Red Army had seized control of the Romanian oil fields at Ploesti in August 1944, Germans enforced the defense around Stettin and Hydrierwerke AG Pölitz. As a result the number of defense consisted of 310 anti-aircraft guns. In comparison, this area was second in total anti-craft defense to that of Berlin, which had 325 guns.<sup>38</sup>

Even today people can still find rusty remnants of the past. In June of 2009 the fishermen picked up from the floor of the Baltic Sea a rusty wing. An investigation carried by Polish as well as British experts to establish that indeed it was a British Avro Lancaster Mk I. By means of the number of wing was easy to establish the past of the machine. The airplane was built an the Vickers Armstrong factory in Castel Bromwich Great Britain. The total number produced at this factory Lancasters consisted of 300 bombers. A further inquiry uncovered the fate of machine and crew. The Lancaster had number AA-G, HK594 belonged to 75. Bomber Command RAF. According to English records machine was part of a mission on 29/30 August to bomb Stettin. An airplane was shot down by anti-aircraft artillery over Swinemünde/Świnoujście. The burning four engine plane hit the Baltic sea. The pilot proved with crew of bomber D. A. S. King, who was the only survivor of the crew. The fate of other six crewmembers remains still a mystery in cold waters around Świnoujście.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> S. C. Flensted: *Combat on 29–30 August 1944*, [www.flensted.eu.com](http://www.flensted.eu.com) (11.04.2010).

<sup>37</sup> B. Frankiewicz: *op. cit.*, p. 887.

<sup>38</sup> K. Golczewski: *Porzucona twierdza. Szczecin 1944–1945* [The Abandoned Fortress: Stettin 1944–1945], Poznań 1967, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> P. Piwowarczyk: *Bombowiec z Bałtyku* [A Bomber from the Baltic Sea], “Odkrywca” [The Discoverer], 2009, 7, p. 19.

## 6. Epilogue: 1945

The year 1945 caused far more destruction. In the further annihilation of Stettin took part the Polish bomb squadrons. The report, Joseph Czarnecki, the navigator of the Polish 300<sup>th</sup> bomb squadron, made for television Szczecin, highlights how the air raid was realized over Pülitz/Police in night from 8/9 February 1945. Took off about 19:40, due to difficult atmospheric conditions the raid was exceptionally difficult. Joseph Czarnecki remembers: "Only Poles were on time to take off, because they did not wait for an improvement on the weather. Those English, who did wait on an improvement in the weather were not able to assembly in the air on time."<sup>40</sup> The mass of aircraft as well as the difficult atmospheric conditions caused forced the flight to fly at a height 200 m. The stream of the bombers passed over the North Sea. "Really it over the Jutland Peninsula and was successful in evading enemy detection all the way to Baltic and then on to Police."<sup>41</sup> Poles didn't lost any machine. According to the British sources 12 Lancasters were shot down. One of machines fled to the neutral Sweden. In March of 1945 any further production of the synthetic oil was impossible.<sup>42</sup>

The interesting description about the life in the war time Stettin, highlights in the memories the teacher, Ilse Gudden: "Breakthrough years 1944/45 did not distinguish those occupants of Stettin since previous weeks in old year because they survived the war yet far. However the night air raids of the British and American bombers as well as the disturbance of air raids of individual airplanes diving during day, they rose on strength." The military meaning of agglomeration, the damage formed on it as a result of activity of the allied air strengths was removed was skillfully and quickly. The lack of blackout was treated as an act of sabotage. The woman's auxiliary service of anti-aircraft means of defense was compulsory and common. "In order to avoid shooting of individual fighters, I had to run with children to nearest shelter." Despite the harsh conditions of war, the life in school was almost normally, till moment of notice of anti-aircraft alarms. Teachers par-

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<sup>40</sup> "Synteza" ["Synthesis"], <http://www.youtube.com> (14.02.2008).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> The effective destroying of the Hydrierwerke AG Pölitz was possible due to effort of action Polish intelligence. The Home Army set up the action "Synthesis". Aleksy Jędrzycka the Polish engineer of chemistry arrived this Stettin in 1942. He used to visit the oil plant, in the uniform of the officer of the *Todt* Organization. He asked the Polish compulsory workers. As a result a lot of information about effectiveness air raids were sent via Warsaw to the Bomber Command.

ticipated in all-night vigil on the school grounds and in a case of raid to quench any small fires started.<sup>43</sup>

Contemporary Stettin was the important point, in road on West, for the swarms of refugees who gradually were coming from the East Prussia and Pomerania in winter 1944/1945. Ilse was a member of the German Red Cross the largest challenge was to take care over pregnant women required special supervision. The population of the city was engaged in digging of anti-tank trenches. This was difficult because of the frozen ground. Working people were the target of many attacks from air. The Soviet assault fighters ruled in the sky this and it was common practice to strafe and used to bomb any of the individuals. The Aerial Army operating over Pomerania and over Stettin went also the twin-engine Tupolev 2. The battle of Stettin began in March 1945 on the right-bank of the Oder near Stettin. The growing sounds of artillery fire between Soviet and German armies, didn't cause panics among young and old both inhabitants as well as flocks of refugees. The constant influx of new refugees agglomeration stood for occupants of the city the most important matter. The flocks of the refugees used to march in March 1945 through today's street of Mieszka I. The target of the wave of refugees were either the main stations on Pommerensdorf/Pomorzany or Scheune/Gumieńce.<sup>44</sup> There dramatic scenes took place between March 7–20. The vast swarms of refugees moved in great chaos. Families which somehow held together so far were in fear of separation by pressing to get a place in trains which went to the Western direction. The history of the German Stettin in these circumstances was over.

## Epilogue

Nowadays, Polish Szczecin is devoid of any place of memory of effort of the allied bomb crews. The thick concrete walls of cellars still remind about the air bombardment. The remnants of the oil plant in Police, nature absorbs. In these conditions, the hobbyists maintain the policy of memory. These groups, initiate the investigative process of reconstruction of the last war, still hidden in the Pomeranian ground or in the Baltic Sea. The attitude of the modern generation, to

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<sup>43</sup> Report of Ilse Gudden, in: *Stettin/Szczecin ...*, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> K. Golczewski: op. cit., p. 155.

the Bombing Offensive of the World War II, highlights the unwillingness to the German past of city. The lack of policy of memory, makes impossible to understand the modernizations of thinking of the modern German society, about reality of the last war, connected directly with the Nazi period. The lack of awareness about results of this piece of history triggers that Poles and Germans are, despite geographical closeness, distant mentally and socially.

**CEL: STETTIN  
POWIETRZNE NALOTY ALIANCKIE NA SZCZECIN 1940–1945**

**Streszczenie**

Realizowana w latach 1939–1945 wedle założeń przedwojennych teoretyków ofensywa bombowa sprzymierzonych była istotnym wkładem w rozgromienie potęgi nazistowskich Niemiec.

Szczecin, jako dogodnie położone skupisko przemysłu i port, stanowił atrakcyjny cel dla planistów z Bomber Command. W rezultacie miasto i jego mieszkańcy doświadczyli kampanii bombowej. W krótkim czasie Szczecin stał się jedną z najbardziej zniszczonych aglomeracji.

Po siedemdziesięciu latach od tamtych wydarzeń nadodrzańskie miasto jest pozbawione miejsca pamięci wysiłku załóg bombowych. Jakie czynniki powodują, że pamięć o pilotach walczących nad miastem jest kłopotliwym zagadnieniem? Jak pamięć o dokonaniach tamtej generacji wpłynęłaby na jakość stosunków polsko-niemieckich?