

Montpellier Pilots

The decision to start training Polish pilots was linked with the situation of the main Polish Air Force base at Lyon-Bron. Living conditions of the airmen arriving at Lyon were spartan, to put it mildly. While senior officers were able to rent accommodation in the city, the other ranks, including cadet officers, had to make do with what they were offered. Difficult living conditions and the feeling of lack of interest from the high command and from the French resulted in growing unrest. Soldiers continued to use civilian clothes, purchased back in Rumania or in Hungary. This unsatisfactory state of affairs continued until the end of January 1940! Added to this, attempts to identify senior officers 'responsible' for the 1939 defeat, the situation clearly encouraged open mutiny. The decision to post the first pilots to Montpellier for training was probably seen by the Polish Air Force HQ as a way of appeasing the negative feelings at Lyon.

Right to left:

*Nowakiewicz, Beda,
Flanek, Anders, Chciuk,
Gnyś, Bursztyn, Chałupa,
Rychlicki, Król, Kawnik,
Karwowski, Brzeziński,
Zantara, Goettel,
Sulerzycki, Pentz,
Łaskiewicz.*

PI&SM London coll.

The circumstances under which pilots were chosen for the group remain uncertain. It is generally assumed that the list resulted from a discussion between płk Pawlikowski, the Polish commander of the CWL, and commanders of individual fighter squadrons. It should be remembered that the term 'fighter squadron' should be seen as nominal as these were still in the early stages of organisation.





March-past of the cadet officers.

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Mass in the hangar with Potez 63.11 tail surfaces used as the altar. Part of the wing of a Caudron C.445 can be seen in the foreground, while two Romano Ro.82s and a Caudron C.635 Simoun are in the background.

PI&SM London coll.



French pilots present the Poles with pilot's wings. in the foreground are ppor. W. Król and por. W.Goettel, at right ppor. E. Kawnik.

PI&SM London coll.



MS.406 c/n 923 (L-952)
damaged and abandoned
at Cambrai.

P. Taghon coll.



Another Morane 406 from
the GC III/2, '7' c/n 923
(L-952) of Cne Edouard
Corgniglion-Molinier,
captured by the Germans on
17 May 1940 at Cambrai.

K. Chołoniowski coll.



MS.406 c/n 939
of por. Zantara at Cambrai
airfield. Note the French
roundels showing
through the Polish
markings.

J. L. Roba coll.

Section no. 4 Bursztyn GC III/1

Toul – Croix-de-Metz 29 March 1940

Rouen-Boos 13 April 1940

The section commanded by por. Bursztyn was attached to GC III/1 (commander Cne Paoli) based at Toul – Croix-de-Metz airfield located some 30 km away from the border on the Rhine. The pilots arrived there on 29 March 1940. The section included eleven mechanics led by sierż. Basiński.¹

At the time the main task was to escort reconnaissance Potez 63s that operated over the border area. After a fortnight, on 13 April² the unit moved to a new airfield at Rouen-Boos to cover the area of Rouen – Le Havre.

Gen. Sikorski meets por. Bursztyn while ppor. Chałupa salutes. Standing on Bursztyn's left are Gnyś, Chciuk, Anders.

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Left to right: Brzeziński, Treger, Kawnik, Sulerzycki, Łaszkiwicz, Gnyś, Rougevin-Baville, Bursztyn, Flanek, Król, Nowakiewicz, Chałupa, Rychlicki.

PI&SM London coll.



On 15 June GC II/7 moved to a new airfield at Feurs, on the 17th it went to Carcassonne, and the following day to Perpignan. From there, on 20 June²⁷ GC II/7, led by a bomber aircraft, flew across the Mediterranean to Algiers. Mümler turned back during the flight, worried by the rapid fuel consumption. Eventually Mümler rejoined GC II/7 on 22 June. The last flights (in a Potez) were made on 25 June 1940, and the following day the Poles (Mümler, Januszewicz, Król, Szope and Nowakiewicz) left GC II/7.

Por. Władysław Goettel, born on 17 November 1908. In 1932 completed a flying school as an observer and posted to the 61st Line Flight 6th Air Regiment in Lwów. In 1931 went to the 63rd Army Cooperation Flight. In 1934 he completed a flying course, and the following year a fighter pilots course. Posted to a training establishment, and in 1937 appointed deputy commander of the 161st Fighter Flight 6th Air Regiment. With this flight he fought in the 1939 campaign. Commander of the Polish section at GC II/7. In Britain in 302 Squadron (Battle of Britain), and from December 1940 in training establishments. Shot down one German aircraft. Died on 17 November 1966 in Britain.



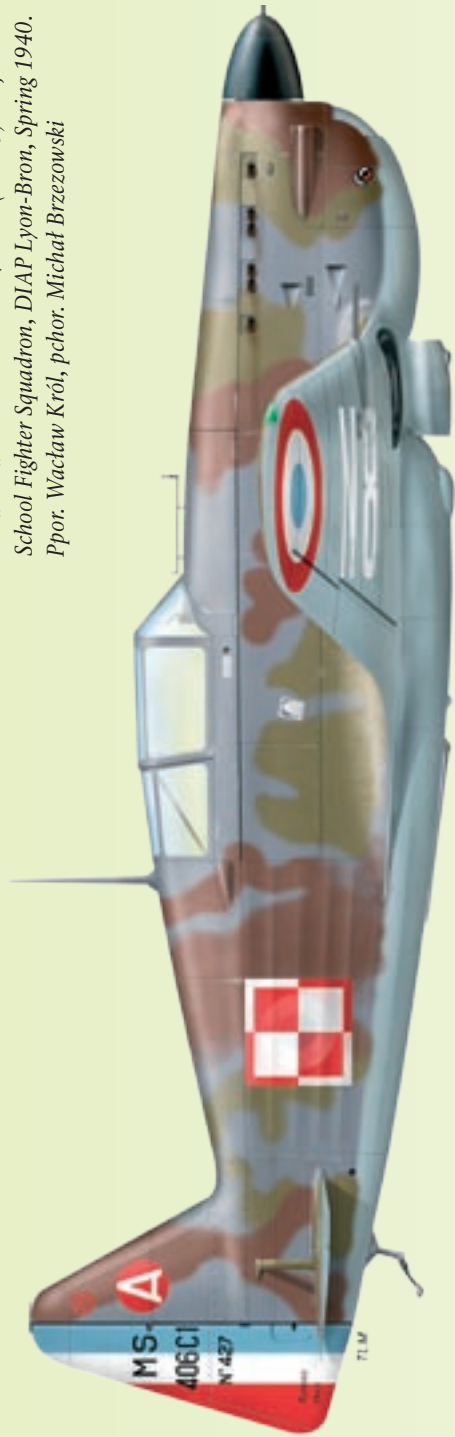
Ppor. Waclaw Król, born on 25 December 1915. In 1937 graduated from the Polish Air Force college and posted to the 123rd Fighter Flight of the Cracow-based 2nd Air Regiment. During the 1939 campaign flew in the 121st Fighter Flight, and from 9 September 1939 was acting commander of the flight. In 1940 in France a pilot in the section at GC II/7. In Britain in 302 Squadron (Battle of Britain), 58 OTU, 316 Squadron (flight commander), PFT (Skalski's Circus, C Flight of 145 Squadron RAF), 302 Squadron (commander), 61 OTU, 3rd Polish Fighter Wing. Shot down 8.5 enemy aircraft. After the war in 131 Polish Wing. Returned to Poland, served with the air force of communist Poland. Died on 15 June 1991 in Warsaw. Wrote many books that popularised aviation.



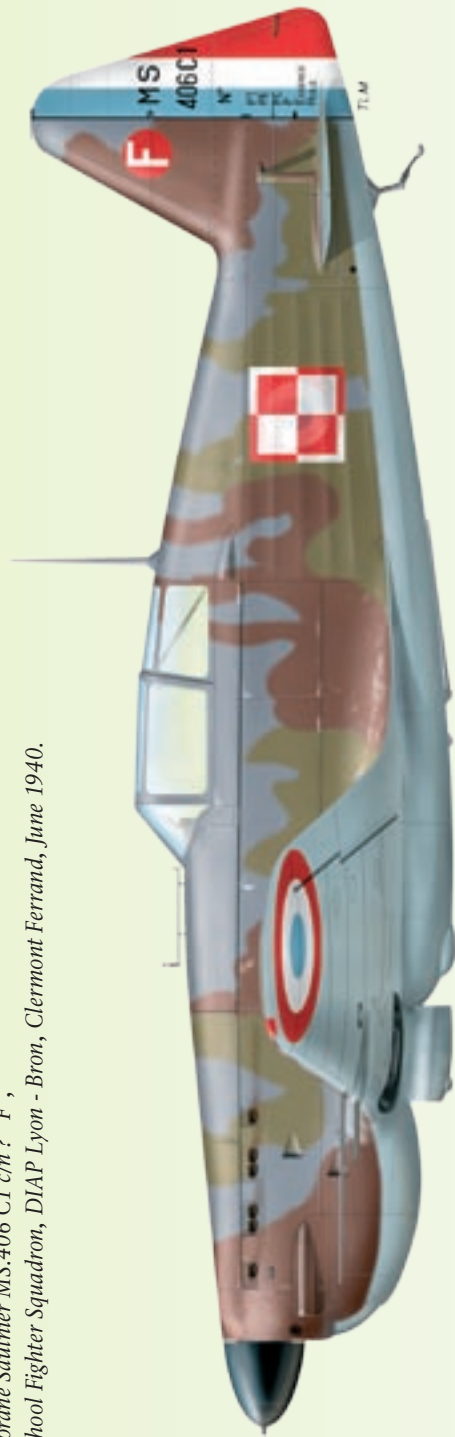
Kpr. Eugeniusz Nowakiewicz, born on 2 January 1920. In 1939 graduated from the SPLdM (Air Force School for minors) at Krosno and posted to the 123rd Fighter Flight of the Cracow-based 2nd Air Regiment. During the 1939 campaign the flight defended Warsaw as part of the Pursuit Brigade. Pilot of the Polish section at GC II/7. In Britain in 302 Squadron (Battle of Britain and afterwards). Commissioned on 1 June 1942, two months later shot down over France. Evaded, but then arrested by the Gestapo and sent to a PoW camp. Shot down 4 5/6 enemy aircraft. Died on 5 January 1998 at Bury, UK.

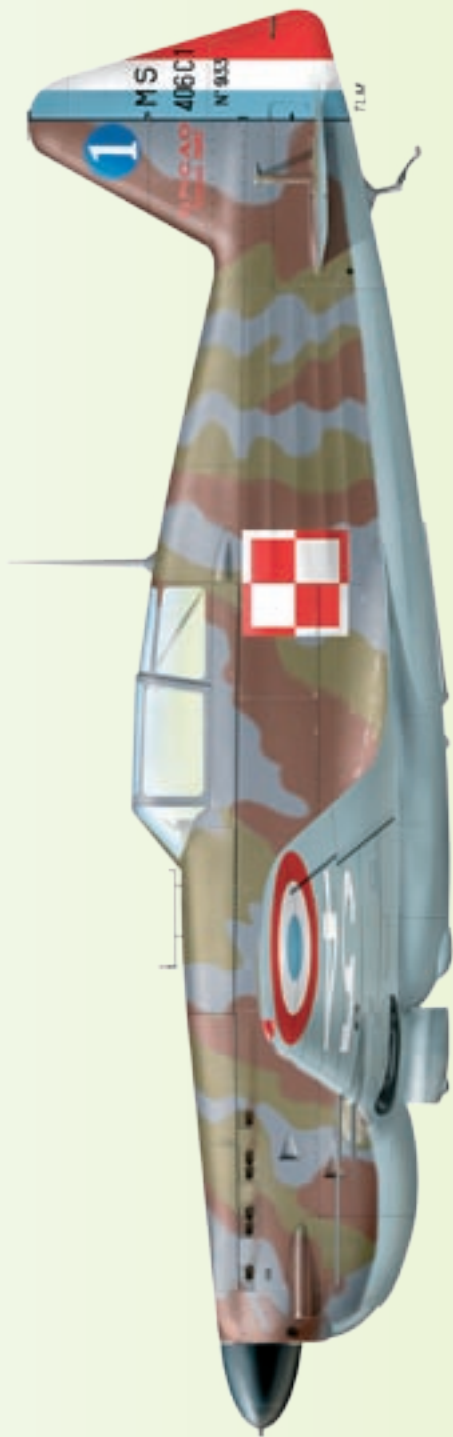


Morane Saulnier MS.406 C1 c/n 427 (N-845) "A",
School Fighter Squadron, DIAP Lyon-Bron, Spring 1940.
Ppor. Wacław Król, pchor. Michał Brzezowski



Morane Saulnier MS.406 C1 c/n ? "F",
School Fighter Squadron, DIAP Lyon - Bron, Clermont Ferrand, June 1940.





Morane Saulnier MS.406 C1
 c/n 933 (L-9622) "1",
 GC III/6, Arc-en-Senans,
 kpt. Mieczysław Sulerzycki,
 April 1940.

Left:
 Emblem of 5.Escadrille GC III/6

Right:
 Emblem of 6.Escadrille GC III/6





*Dewoitine D-520C1, c/n 119 "M",
3.Esc GC II/7, plk. Mieczysław Mumler,
Ounans 15 of June 1940*



*Left:
Emblem of 3.Escadrille GC II/7 (SPA 73)*

*Right:
Emblem of 4.Escadrille GC II/7 (SPA 78)*

