Aleksander Gabszewicz

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Aleksander Klemens Gabszewicz (6 December 1911 – 10 October 1983) was a Polish fighter pilot and a World War II fighter ace, with a score of 9⅓ confirmed and 2 probable kills.

Aleksander Gabszewicz	
Born	6 December 1911 Šiauliai, Russian Empire (now Lithuania)
Died	10 October 1983 (aged 71) Malvern, Worcestershire, England
Branch	Polish Land Forces Royal Air Force
Rank	Generał brygady
Service number	P-0163
Unit	Border Defence Corps No. 607 Squadron RAF No. 303 Polish Fighter Squadron
Commands	No. 316 Polish Fighter Squadron 2nd Polish Wing 1st Polish Wing 56th USAAF Fighter Group
Battles / wars	Second World War

Biography [edit]

Born in Šiauliai, then in the Russian Empire (now Lithuania), in 1931 he joined the Polish Army. Initially serving as an infantry NCO, in 1938, he graduated from the Dęblin-based *Eagles' School* and was attached to the air wing of the Border Defence Corps. Just before World War II he was a tactical officer of the IV/1 Fighter Group.[1]

After the outbreak of the Polish September Campaign on 1 September 1939, around 9 AM, he scored his first kill, a Heinkel He 111 of 5.(K)/LG 1 unit over Ciechanów.[2] According to some authors, it was the first kill of a German plane in World War II.[3]

Downed the same day, he made it to France where he became the commanding officer of the 5th key of Groupe de Chasse III/10 covering Besançon.[4] There, while piloting a Bloch 151, he downed a Dornier Do 17.[5]

After the capitulation, he made it to the United Kingdom, where he served in the ranks of No. 607 Squadron RAF and No. 303 Polish Fighter Squadron.[6] In December 1940 he was posted as a flight commander in No. 316 Polish Fighter Squadron. He became the commanding officer in November 1941.[7] He was posted to 11 Group HQ in June 1942, and then as an instructor to 58 OTU until June 1943. He was then made wing commander/flying of the 2nd Polish Wing and finally the 1st Polish Wing. He was also attached to the 56th USAAF Fighter Group in December 1943, and then commanded 131 Wing RAF in February 1944, leading the wing during the invasion of Normandy. He became the commanding officer of RAF Coltishall in February 1945.[8]

German MG 15 aerial machine gun, pilot's cap and some debris of a German Heinkel He 111 downed by Aleksander Gabszewicz on 1 September 1939

He ended the war in the Polish rank of *generał brygady* and remained in exile in the United Kingdom. He died in Malvern in 1983. His ashes were brought to Poland in 1992 and dispersed over Warsaw and Dęblin.[1]

Legacy [edit]

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's Spitfire *TE311* is painted to represent the aircraft flown by Gabszewicz in Germany from April to June 1945.[9]

Decorations [edit]

- Distinguished Service Order (with Bar)
- Distinguished Flying Cross
- Croix de Guerre (France)
- Virtuti Militari (Golden Cross)
- Virtuti Militari (Silver Cross)
- Commander's Cross with Star of the Order of Polonia Restituta
- Cross of Valour, four times

References [edit]

- (in Polish) Short biography
- (in Polish) extended biographical note at Myśliwcy web page
- Aleksander K. Gabszewicz

Citations

1. ^ [a] [b] Krzystek 2012, p. 185.
2. ^ Sikora 2014, p. 200.
3. ^ Marius Emerling: *Pierwszy zestrzał w kampanii wrześniowej 1939 r. – Mit ppor.pil. Władysława Gnysia* in: Lotnictwo Wojskowe Nr.5/2002 (in Polish)
4. ^ Belcarz 2012, p. 8.
5. ^ Aces High, Shores & Williams 1999, page 272
6. ^ Zieliński 1994, p. 20.
7. ^ Zieliński 2005, p. 50.
8. ^ Zieliński 2005, p. 51.
9. ^ "BBMF Spitfire TE311 is 75!". *memorialflightclub.com*. Retrieved 17 September 2021.

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Categories: 1911 births | 1983 deaths | People from Šiauliai | People from Shavelsky Uyezd | Polish World War II flying aces | Polish generals | Companions of the Distinguished Service Order | Recipients of the Croix de Guerre 1939–1945 (France) | Recipients of the Distinguished Flying Cross (United Kingdom) | Recipients of the Gold Cross of the Virtuti Militari | Commanders with Star of the Order of Polonia Restituta | Recipients of the Cross of Valour (Poland) | Royal Air Force officers | The Few | Royal Air Force pilots of World War II | Polish emigrants to the United Kingdom

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