

Blackpool Rocks Hitler

Great Britain, 1940: With the loss of Poland to the Nazi Blitzkrieg, the ignoble retreat of the British Army at Dunkirk, and the black, streaming runs of Luftwaffe bombers leaving from the shores of France to annihilate the British Isles, all seemed lost. To save the British children from the country's industrial cities, Churchill decided to evacuate them. The question was... where would be they safe?

Blackpool, Britain's largest seaside resort, was the ideal choice.

As British children clambered onto lorries, buses, and British rail lines, Blackpool became the center of another plan by the British Prime Minister. Prior to the Battle of Britain, England was in dire need of wartime fighter pilots and ground crews. Churchill looked for recruits from the nation whose people had been torn asunder by the Nazi occupation: POLAND.

Blackpool was beyond the range of Hitler's Luftwaffe, so there was a lot of built-in protection for the hundreds of thousands of soldiers, sailors and particularly airmen who were based in Lancashire.

And then came the RAF...



May 1940, Poles arrive in Blackpool to attend Air Training Corps established in an Amusement Park.

Blackpool was well equipped for all:

- There were 20 cinemas for training in the day and entertainment at night.
- The Opera House with its 3,920 seats was the largest theater in Britain.
- The large halls at the Winter Gardens were used for mass training during the day.
- The Winter Gardens was the RAF HQ during the war.
- Big ballrooms like the Empress were gymnasiums by day and dance halls by night.
- There were seven miles of sandy beaches for running and fitness programs.

Blackpool's capacity to accommodate 250,000 people enabled them to meet the billeting needs of the allied armed forces. With the accommodations, came the ability to easily feed, clothe, train and entertain all its occupants. Blackpool was also in an area of Britain that was a short distance from numerous airfields and factories at the heart of the wartime effort.

After training in Blackpool, the Polish airmen went off to all corners of the war zone and played important roles in the Battle of Britain, the Normandy Invasion and other critical theaters of war in Europe. In particular, the Polish forces played a key role in the winning of the pivotal Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy, where a Polish Cemetery plaque translation reads:

**We Polish soldiers
For our freedom and yours
Have given our souls to God
Our bodies to the soil of Italy
And our hearts to Poland.**



P/O Pietrzak and his colleagues celebrate the Polish Air Force 500th aerial victory.

The documentary will be divided into three segments:

- Images and interviews of the evacuation of 21,000 British children and 40,000 families to Blackpool, including such luminaries as Graham Nash, and Cindy Lennon, John's first wife.
- The training of 17,000 Polish crack fighter pilots in Blackpool, artfully juxtaposed with the current influx of Polish immigrants in today's life in Blackpool.
- The arrival of 200,000 American GIs stationed in Blackpool, where they were billeted and trained (drank, danced and married British war brides) to eventually participate in the battles that ended the war: D Day.



Ternhill, March 1941. Via R. Gretzynger.