

MEDIA ADVISORY

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AQUILA POLONICA PUBLISHING DEBUTS WITH “THE MERMAID AND THE MESSERSCHMITT”

Aquila Polonica Publishing, founded by partners Terry Tegnazian in the U.S. and Stefan Mucha in the U.K., is dedicated to publishing the Polish World War II story in English.

“The Polish experience in World War II is perhaps the most heroic and most tragic of all the Allies. Yet when the Allied story of World War II is told in the West, Poland’s role remains in the shadows,” Ms. Tegnazian says.

Mr. Mucha adds: “We feel it is time to bring the Polish experience into the light, and for Poland to take its rightful place in the story, alongside the United States, Great Britain, France and the other Western Allies.”

Ms. Tegnazian, who practiced law in Los Angeles, is not at all Polish. Her interest in this topic stems from research she was doing for a novel. Reading memoirs of Poles caught up in the war, she felt incredibly moved and inspired by the heroism and honor with which they faced unimaginable horror amidst insurmountable odds. To explain her otherwise inexplicable part in Aquila Polonica, she truly feels that she has been led by a higher power, step by step, to undertake this mission.

Mr. Mucha’s interest is more personal. He is half Polish -- his father was born in Warsaw, saw the Nazis shoot his parents, and was dragged off to a German forced labor camp as a 14-year-old. Because of his extremely traumatic experience, his father severed all emotional ties with his Polish roots, and raised his children as completely British.

Neither of the two partners can speak or read Polish. Yet both are committed to telling this amazing story in a way that will reach out, not only to the Polish community, but beyond to the rest of the English-speaking world.

Mr. Mucha explains: “Aquila Polonica is publishing books that originally appeared in English but have been out of print for many years, translating from Polish to English books that have never before been translated, and in some cases acquiring original manuscripts. We also intend to carry DVDs, artwork and other material related to Poland in World War II.”

“We decided to form Aquila Polonica in late 2005, and to date, we have been entirely self-financed. During the first three years of our existence,” Ms. Tegnazian continues, “we concentrated on acquiring rights to more than thirty books, in order to give us a starting base for our catalogue. We made several trips to Warsaw during that period. To date, the books for which we have acquired rights include some by Zbigniew Zieliński, former Polish Secretary of State for Veterans Affairs; noted historian Jędrzej Tucholski; General Stefan ‘Starba’ Bałuk;

Virtuti Militari recipient Maria Sobocińska; noted author Józef Garliński; and the beloved *Squadron 303* by Arcady Fiedler.”

Because this September was the 70th anniversary of the beginning of World War II, Aquila Polonica thought it would be appropriate to start its publishing program with a book that covers the beginning period of the war. The first of its books to be published, *The Mermaid and the Messerschmitt: War Through a Woman's Eyes, 1939-1940*, by Rulka Langer (ISBN 978-1-60772-000-3), does just that – spanning a six-month period from the end of the last peacetime summer, through the Nazi German invasion of Poland, the Siege of Warsaw and the first months of the Nazi occupation.

“We were particularly drawn to this book, an exceptionally well-written eyewitness account originally published in English in the U.S. in 1942, because it presents an unusual viewpoint of modern war – that of a Polish civilian, career woman and mother – which is both universal and timeless, and therefore still of relevance today,” says Mr. Mucha.

“Our new edition includes more than 100 historical photos (some never before published), maps and illustrations, as well as other supplemental material. The original edition had no photos or illustrations at all,” he added.

Ms. Tegnazian elaborated: “We spent more than a year researching and licensing such photos and illustrations. We were greatly assisted by Warsaw historic photo expert, Zygmunt Walkowski, who gave generously of his time, expertise and personal collection of photos. In addition, we licensed numerous photos from three other private collections. We also obtained photos and other illustrations from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration; and in Warsaw, from the State Archive of the Capital City of Warsaw, the National Library, and the Museum of the Polish Army.”

“We are very proud to announce that our edition of *The Mermaid and the Messerschmitt* was recently chosen as a selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club, the History Book Club, and the Military Book Club – three of the largest and best-known book clubs in the U.S. We feel that this is quite an honor for the first book published by a new company,” Ms. Tegnazian told us.

Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski of the Center for Strategic & International Studies in Washington, D.C. gave an endorsement for the back cover of the Aquila Polonica edition of *The Mermaid and the Messerschmitt*, as did the recently retired head of the Los Angeles Public Library, one of the ten largest public library systems in the U.S., who wrote: “I couldn’t put the book down. Her story is riveting ... utterly contemporary and compelling.”

The partners tell us that they have also licensed, and are able to offer to purchasers of *The Mermaid and the Messerschmitt*, the rarely seen 1940 Academy Award-nominated newsreel *Siege*, consisting of original film footage of the Siege of Warsaw filmed by American photojournalist Julien Bryan, the last neutral journalist to remain in Warsaw during September 1939.

“This is a great start for our mission of getting the true story of Poland in World War II into the wider English-speaking world,” concluded Mr. Mucha. “We hope that the Polish community around the world will support us in this mission, by buying our books and spreading the word to friends and colleagues.”