Passenger ships in Gdynia

The Legend of the Transatlantic Liners

The legend of the Polish transatlantic liners covers a 58 year period, the first of liner to raise the red and white flag doing so in 1930 and the last in 1988. Gdynia was the home port for them all. Passenger ships are the aristocracy of ocean-going craft. They are most perfect technically, often described and photographed, and have a prominent place in the history of ships. The Polish fleet of transatlantic liners was created initially to serve emigration traffic from Poland on the North Atlantic route. It was also a means of communication, a kind of bridge connecting the Polish community in the United States with that in the old country. The Polish transatlantic liners continued to play a similar role after the Second World War, where in addition to liner duties they served as cruise ships.

- **Pioneer Trio** – these steamers bore names that were close to every Pole's heart on both sides of the Atlantic: 'Polonia', 'Kościuszko' and 'Pułaski'. They were typical liners designed to serve emigration traffic.
- **The Most Famous Twins** – 'Pilsudski' and 'Batory' were modern ships, built in Italy in accordance with Polish guidelines. They were prime examples of Polish transatlantic liners and have passed into legend.
- **Royal Pair** – 'Sobieski' and 'Chrobry' were ships constructed for the emigration of Poles to South America.
- **Post-war Episode** – 'Jagiello' was received as a part of war reparations, used in the period 1947-1949 between the Mediterranean Sea ports and South America.
- **Last King** – 'Stefan Batory' was popular among the Polish community abroad and liked by tourists; it sailed for around 20 years between Gdynia and Montreal, also taking people on cruises. It was retired from service in 1988.

Out of the fleet of seven transatlantic liners, two continued to serve after the war. 'Pilsudski', the first modern ship to a design by the most outstanding of Polish artists, was among the first victims of war. 'Chrobry' went to war straight from its maiden voyage, before being bombed in 1940 and burnt in a Norwegian fjord. The first three steam-powered ships, 'Polonia', 'Pułaski', and 'Kościuszko', never returned to serve under the Polish flag.

'Batory' survived the war: it carried Allied troops on ocean convoys, and took the gold from the Bank of England and the treasures of Polish culture to Canada. British children were taken to Australia, and Polish war veterans were returned to Poland after the war. Later it diligently crossed the Atlantic Ocean both ways for almost a quarter of a century, being an enclave of luxury under the coarse communist reality. After years of military service, 'Sobieski' returned to Poland, before being sold to the USSR in 1950, to finish its service life 25 years later as the 'Georgia'.

The crews of Polish transatlantic liners enjoyed an elite status and had the best captains, still legendary today. They were press favourites and enjoyed the lives of celebrities in their times. They lived with a rich décor during the voyages, with great uniforms and attractive maritime ceremonies. The legend of Polish transatlantic ships remains one of the most vivid chapters in Poland's history of ocean travel.