

Szulborski, Walter J.

## Two Local Gunners In First AAF Shuttle Mission To Soviet Russia

JUL 11 1944

Two Bethlehem airmen were among an American task force which made the first shuttle-mission to Russia. The men, Staff Sergeants Walter J. Szulborski, 22, son of Mrs. Rose Szulborski, of 669 Atlantic Street, and Russell E. Becker, 21, son of Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Becker, of 503 Fourth Avenue, are both attached to the 15th AAF based in Italy.

The force left their Italian bases on June 2, in B-17 Flying Fortresses, and attacked a railroad yard and junction at Debreszen, Hungary, and then continued on to an undisclosed American base in Russia. Operating from the Soviet Union, the American Fortresses and their Mustang Fighter escort attacked an airdrome near Galatz, Rumania. On July 11, they attacked the airfield at Focsani, near Budapest, on their return to Italy.

During the historic visit, pilots compared tactical notes and discussed performance of airplanes with the Russian fliers. The ground crews exchanged service suggestions while Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, Commanding General of the Mediterranean Allied Air Force, and

other AAF officials met with officers of the Russian Air Force.

Staff Sergeant Szulborski is a tail gunner on a B-17 fortress, and has flown over 48 combat missions over enemy territory.

He joined the Army on September 23, 1942, and was awarded his gunner's wings on December 30, 1942, at Harlingen, Texas.

A graduate of Bethlehem Technical High School, Sgt. Szulborski was a machinist employed at the Bethlehem Steel Company in civilian life. He has been awarded the Air Medal for "meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight."

Staff Sergeant Becker is a ball turret gunner on the B-17 fortress "Flat Fifty." He is a graduate of Bethlehem High School, and was employed by the Bethlehem Steel Company as a heat treater.

He received his technical training at Lowry Field, Col., Buckley Field, Colo., and was awarded his gunner's wings at Las Vegas, Nev., September 19, 1943. He was assigned to overseas duty with the 15th AAF in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations where he has flown over 25 combat missions.

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