

2019



SŁUŻYMY
NIEPODLEGŁEJ

Special edition

POLSKA ZBROJNA

PISMO CODZIENNE

Independence Day, November 11, 2019

FREE AGAIN!



O God! Thou who from on high
Hurls thine arrows at the defenders of the nation,
We beseech Thee, through this heap of bones!
Let the sun shine on us, at least in death!
May the daylight shine forth from heaven's bright portals!
Let us be seen - as we die!

Piotr Korczyński

This last verse of Juliusz Słowacki's poem "The Funeral of Captain Meyzner" became an epitaph for the legionaries of the First Brigade of Polish Legions who died in November 1914 at the Battle of Krzywopłoty. It was no coincidence this

was the poet whose words were supposed to encourage reflection and emotion over the collective grave of the legionaries. For Commander Józef Piłsudski, Słowacki was the first among the national bards. It was thanks to Słowacki, as he repeatedly stressed, that he believed the spark smol-

dering in the nation would finally ignite a pile of freedom despite so many disasters. He often quoted words from another poem of this poet, "Angels Stand on Native Fields...":

My heart breaks, but my eye sheds no tear. →



THEY FOUGHT FOR INDEPENDENT POLAND

Dear Readers,

The day of November 11 – the National Independence Day – is not accidentally associated with the Polish military uniform, its symbolism and traditions. Polish soldiers on almost all World War I fronts "threw on the pyre their lives' fate." When the Polish occupiers were drowning in disasters and revolutions, white-and-red flags were fluttering on Polish streets to mark Poland's independence. The Republic of Poland was back on the map of Europe, although this was only the beginning of the battle for its borders. Józef Piłsudski in his first order to the united Polish Army shared his feeling of joy with his soldiers: "I'm taking command of you, Soldiers, at the time when the heart of every Pole is beating stronger and faster, when the children of our land have seen the sun of freedom in all its glory." He never promised them any battle laurels or well-merited rest, though. On the contrary – he appealed to them for even greater effort in their service for Poland. And they never let him down when in 1920 Poland had to defend not only its own sovereignty, but also entire Europe against flooding bolshevism. For their Independent Poland, Polish soldiers would later fight many a time in uneven battles with two totalitarianisms, which started World War II. We should keep that in mind when celebrating our Polish National Independence Day. ■

Mariusz Błaszczak
Polish Minister of National Defense



**Captain
Kazimierz
Herwin**
loved Słowacki's
poetry so much
that the poetry
book was always
with him, even
in the greatest
battle fire.

→ The horse drew sparks on the marble
grave

And the vengeful sword was drawn
From the shagreen scabbard.

Piłsudski was also a preacher of a claim, unpopular in the era of positivism, that the January Uprising was not a fruitless defeat which deprived Congress Poland of the remnants of autonomy. According to him, it showed that under extremely unfavorable conditions of enslavement, without much help from outside, Poles were able to organize themselves and challenge one of the greatest military powers in Europe. For Piłsudski, the creation and functioning of the National Government in 1863 was a miracle, the experience of which he decided to make use of in 1914.

With Słowacki in His Backpack

Many of his soldiers shared the Commander's views on both Słowacki's poetry and the January Uprising, but there were two officers in the 1st Brigade who gave an exceptional testimony of their attachment to Słowacki's poetry and the insurgent tradition of 1863.

Captain Kazimierz Herwin-Piątek (born March 2, 1886) loved Słowacki's poetry so much that the poetry book was always with him, even in the greatest battle fire. This

graduate of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University, and a conservator of monuments at the National Museum in Cracow, also proved to be one of Piłsudski's most talented officers. He joined the Riflemen's Association in 1912 and completed an officer's course there. He was quickly promoted to commander of the Kraków-Podgórze unit. The Commandant also appointed "Herwin," which was his rifleman's pseudonym, to be the commander of the First Cadre Company. However, he could not take this function on the memorable August 3, 1914 at the Cracow's Oleandry Street, because as an Austro-Hungarian citizen he was subject to recruitment to the Imperial and Royal Army. In order not to be "conspicuous" he became the head of the first platoon, and Tadeusz Zbigniew-Kasprzycki, native to Congress Poland, took command of the Company. On August 8, when the First Cadre Company entered Miechów, Kasprzycki gave the command to Piątek (Modest Słoń-Słoniowski was appointed the commander of the 1st Platoon). Herwin was the first to enter Kielce at the head of the Cadre Company and manned the local railway station with his soldiers. Soon afterwards, the Austrian Supreme Command renamed Józef Piłsudski's group the 1st Infantry Regiment. On September 26, the

former commander of the Cadre Company became the commander of the 6th Battalion after Lieutenant Marian Kukiel, and then the 5th Battalion after Captain Witold Rylski. On October 9, in Jakubowice on the Vistula River, Piątek was promoted to captain, joining the lucky group of 134 soldiers who received the first Polish officer's patents since the January Uprising from the hands of the Commandant.

Blood-Stained Poetry Book

Soldier's fortune did not leave Captain Piątek in the first legionary battles. He fought under Ucisków and Stróżyska, in the fork of the Vistula and Dunajec rivers, and near Laski. On November 17, near Krzywopłoty, he took over the command of the 1st Battalion after Major Mieczysław Ryś-Trojanowski. It was only on December 23 near Łowczówek that he was seriously injured, commanding the 2nd Battalion. After convalescence he returned to the front, took over the 5th Battalion of the 1st Brigade, and led it, as it turned out, to his last battle of Konary. On May 19, 1915, the 5th Battalion was ordered to hit the Kozinek-Płaczko-wice hill, heavily manned by Russians. This attack, poorly supported by the Austrians, broke down in the hurricane of Russian artillery, and the legionaries retreated to the region of Kozinkowski Forest, where they were ordered to take position. Unfortunately, their commander was seriously wounded in the head and taken to the rear. Captain Kazimierz Herwin-Piątek died the next day in a field hospital. He was buried in the cemetery in the village of Pęcławice near Konary.

While he was still in the hospital, Lieutenant Franciszek Grudziński-Pększyc, the commander of the 4th Company of the 6th Battalion, took over his blood-covered volume of Słowacki's poetry. On the same day in the evening he lent this volume to lieutenant Mikołaj Sarmat-Szyszlowski, the commander of the 2nd Company of the 5th Battalion. On May 21, Sarmat met the same fate as the recently deceased commander. Leading the attack on the village of Kozinek, he was hit directly in the face with a series from a Russian rifle and died on the

spot. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Grudziński-Pększyc set off for the battle of Żarniki, and there on May 23 he was injured by a shrapnel piece. Brought to a hospital, he fled with an unhealed wound and on May 28 he again took command of his company. There, he found the book which he had lent to Szyszlowski. On June 3, leading a patrol near Modliborzyce, Lieutenant Franciszek Grudziński-Pększyc was seriously wounded in the head. Not wanting to be taken prisoner, he shot himself with his own gun. His friends buried him in the parish cemetery in neighboring Baćkowice. Together with him, they buried the volume of poetry by Juliusz Słowacki, dirty with blood of three officers of the Polish Legions. Its title was not recorded.

The Legions' "Wołodyjowski"

In the Battle of Łowczówek, in which Captain Herwin got his first wound, Lieutenant Stanisław Król-Kaszubski suffered a heroic death. He was killed in the same way as many companions of his father, Franciszek, from the insurgent "party" of 1863. Lieutenant Kaszubski was hanged by Russian soldiers for "betraying the tsar."

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UNKNOWN CROSS

The Cross of Polish Soldiers from America was one of the first Polish awards designed for Polish soldiers fighting for the shape of the borders of the independent Republic of Poland; unusual soldiers, because they came from another continent and countries distant from Poland – the United States of America and Canada.

Krzysztof Filipow

Its origins date back to the beginning of 1920s, thus it is connected with the period of the fiercest fights on the front line of the Polish-Bolshevik war. This original military distinction was known under various names, which remained in the memory of soldiers and later veterans. Initially it was known as the "Cross of Demobilized Haller Soldiers," then as the "Medal of the former

Haller's Army – To Her Soldiers from America – Reborn Poland." Later, in the mid-1920s, the following names were used interchangeably: The Cross of the Polish Volunteers from America, or the Commemorative Cross of Volunteers from America.

The problem is the classification of this distinction. If it were to be perceived as a state decoration, then de facto it



This man, older than most legionnaires (born on October 10, 1888 in Warsaw), before joining the Riflemen's Association, had been a member of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), in which he assumed the pseudonym "Król" [King], and took part in the revolution of 1905. Arrested then, he was sentenced to exile to Arkhangelsk. Due to the efforts of his family, by means of bribes, the sentence was changed to extradition from Russia. The recent revolutionary settled in Cracow, where he began studies at the Jagiellonian University. Changing his faculties several times, he finally decided to study medicine.

Having met Józef Piłsudski, he left the SDKPiL without hesitation and, keeping only his conspiratorial pseudonym, joined the Riflemen's Association. In the summer of 1913, he completed an officer course at the officer school in Stróża. He was assigned to the 4th Platoon, where he was at the same time a lecturer, a cook and a doctor. After the outbreak of the war he took command of a platoon in the 1st Battalion of the 1st Infantry Regiment. It was no ordinary platoon, as the highlanders from Nowy Targ served there. Król, was not only a native of Warsaw by birth and upbringing, but also had a very inconspicuous figure. This is how one of the platoon's soldiers, Feliks Gwiżdż, recalled his meeting with the new commander: "This little man immediately sensed our anticipatory disposition towards him. He stood in front of us, embraced us with wide open eyes, leaned on the saber, curled up his loose mustache and said, »My name is Król. They know me in the Riflemen's Association. I am proud to be in charge of a platoon made up of Highlanders only. And you will be satisfied with me. In service I demand absolute discipline and obedience. Out of service we are equal – citizens.« (...) During our casual march through the borderline forests, we started talking with Król. We liked him more and more. We started to nudge one another and whisper that the commander »is a nice fellow after all.« A bit like Wołodjowski. We called him that right away. He liked it." The Highlanders liked their Wołodjowski so much that they promised themselves they



2nd Lieutenant Stanisław Król-Kaszubski, although born and bred in Warsaw, and being of a rather modest bodily structure, won the hearts of the mountain people in his unit.

wouldn't let him be "taken away by any other unit."

The "Insurgent Death" of the Legionary

In November 1914, Kaszubski was promoted to second lieutenant, and a month later, in a bloody battle of Łowczówek, he proved how worthy he was of an officer rank in the Polish Legions. On Christmas Day he went out with his unit on patrol, and he was unexpectedly surrounded by Russians in thick fog. Finding himself in a hopeless situation, he tried to commit suicide, but his revolver failed him – it didn't fire... After the first interrogations he was taken to the prison in Pilzno near Tarnów. Stefan Eichler, another POW taken prisoner near Łowczówek, witnessed that moment: "I noticed two Cossacks on horses, leading between them a marching legionary. He was in fact a short man. He marched on crooked legs, carrying a full backpack. He was led into a building in front of which we stood, a few dozen steps away. (...) When he was passing us, I read the inscription written in capital letters on his backpack: »KASZUBSKI« – it was his surname. The Cossacks informed others in dialect: »An officer.« »So tiny and an officer!« others laughed, »ha-ha-ha!« – one could hear when Lt. Stanisław Król-

Kaszubski entered the building of the command." After the interrogation, Kaszubski joined a group of prisoners. He stood next to Eichler and said, "»I'm finished.«; »Why?«, I asked him. »I admitted that I was from the Kingdom of Poland,« he said. »Why did you do it?« I asked resentfully. »Why should I keep it a secret?« he said with pride. »And where do you come from?« he asked me. »From Little Poland,« I replied, as if with regret. »Well, then you're not in danger of dying,« he said comfortingly. »I know...« – I answered drily."

Kaszubski bravely testified to the officers who questioned him that he was a citizen of the Kingdom and that he joined the Legions to fight against the greatest oppressor of Poland – the tsarist Russia. At the same time, he did not want to hear about the escape offered by his fellow prisoners. He only applied for changing the death penalty by hanging to a soldier's death – by shooting.

In the morning of February 7, 1915 in Pilzno, before entering the scaffold, Kaszubski was read a decree from the tsar, who gave him his life on condition that he joined the Russian Army. He rejected this proposal decisively, and just before his death he shouted "Long live Poland!" The officer's corpse was buried outside the cemetery, in the open field, and a Cossack sotnia galloped across

his fresh grave. Horse hooves were to blur all traces of the legionary. On the walls of Tarnów and the surrounding towns there appeared announcements of the Russian authorities, saying that "following a court order, a Russian subject, a Pole, an inhabitant of Warsaw, Stanisław Kaszubski, was sentenced to death by hanging for treason. (...) Raising weapons against us and thus committing an attack on the well-being of his Homeland, Kaszubski was a traitor and an apostate from his compatriots – Poles."

It didn't serve its purpose, though. Poles knew well what 2nd Lieutenant Kaszubski died for. When the Russians were driven out of the area, the inhabitants of Pilzno found the grave of the hero. The ceremonial burial of 2nd Lieutenant Stanisław Król-Kaszubski, with the military ritual, took place on November 2, 1915 at the cemetery in Pilzno. The funeral was attended by representatives of the Supreme National Committee, its president Leopold Jaworski and vice-president Ignacy Daszyński, and a delegation of legionaries led by Marian Kukiel and Alojzy Wir-Konas. The coffin, escorted by the honor-guard company of the First Brigade, was placed in the grave by members of the local fire brigade. Kaszubski was the only officer of the Polish Legions who died in this way during the Great War. Already in independent Poland, he was posthumously decorated with the Silver Cross of the Order of Virtuti Militari on May 17, 1922.

"Herwin" and "Król" – two extremely talented officers liked by their subordinates – were killed at the beginning of the path to independence set by Commander Piłsudski. Both of them were filled with ideals found in the verses of the bards and memories of insurgents. ■

Piotr Korczyński

Historian, publicist, journalist of *Polska Zbrojna. Historia* quarterly, author of books, e.g. *Dla ojczyzny ratowania: szubienica, pal i kula* (2019).

would be the first decoration of the Second Republic, after the Military Order of Virtuti Militari. Or should it be treated as a commemorative badge? Officially, in the 1920s and 1930s, the Cross of Polish Soldiers from America did not appear on any list of seniority of Polish orders and medals. What is more, it was omitted by the regulations on wearing orders and medals, as well as the 1931 decision on the sequence of wearing medals. Officially, it appears on the list only in 1939 in the Order Code.

There is no doubt, however, that the cross had the features of a decoration, which is supported by irrefutable facts. It was established personally by the Head of State Józef Pił-

sudski. It was awarded on behalf of the Republic of Poland, and signed personally by Józef Piłsudski as the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief. The diploma confirming the award was stamped with a seal reading: Republic of Poland – Head of State.

The very idea of decorating soldiers from America was born at the beginning of 1920, probably at the turn of February and March. This is supported by the fact that on March 14, 1920, a contract was signed to produce the badges of the cross. And the first diplomas were signed by Józef Piłsudski four days later – on March 18, 1920.

Polish Volunteers from America

The cross honored the heroism and war effort of volunteers of Polish origin from North America who joined the ranks of General Józef Haller's army as part of the recruitment campaign. The Polish Army in France needed recruits to strengthen its ranks. Originally, the campaign was to be carried out mainly in the United States, but the recruitment effort also fell on the Polish community in Canada. In total, about 26,000-27,000 volunteers joined the Polish Army led by General Józef Haller. In 1918, they took part in the fights on the French front, and after the army's arrival in Poland in 1919 on the Polish fronts.

The volunteers' war route led through training camps in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Camp Borden, and Toronto in Canada, to the Champagne battlefields in France. After the

end of the warfare, they were transferred to Poland in compact units from April 1919. They fought in Volhynia and in Eastern Little Poland against the Ukrainians, and later started regular fights in the Polish-Bolshevik war. Some of the volunteers found themselves together with their troops in Pomerania, creating a front against the Germans.

The demobilization of the majority of American volunteers started soon after that, i.e. at the beginning of 1920. They returned to the United States of America, Canada, a few of them also to the South American countries. Therefore, the idea of honoring their war effort for the benefit of independent Poland was born.

Design and Construction of the Cross

The author of the cross design is unknown. Perhaps it was designed by Stanisław Łoza, who had already designed various variants of orders in 1919/1920, such as the unrealized order of St. Stanislaus, the order of Benemerenti, etc. The cross for the volunteers from America was to be embossed in bronze sheet metal and had to be made quickly and in large quantities.

The design assumed that it would be a cross with fillings in the form of rays between the arms. This gave it an oval shape with a diameter of 55 mm. In the centre of the cross is the eagle of the state according to the 1919 model. The arms of the cross were inscribed with the →

Haller's Swords, a commemorative decoration awarded to soldiers of the Polish Army by the Association of Haller's Soldiers, and later by the Polish Army Veterans' Association in America – for service under the command of General Józef Haller between 1918-1920

Chaplains of the Polish Legions – Józef Panaś (on the left) and Henryk Ciepichall (1916)



Lieutenant Colonel
Józef Panaś:

“One can learn to pray well not only at sea, but also at the close rattle of an enemy machine gun, which is more annoying than an explosion of heavy grenades.”

CHAPLAIN WITH A DEVILISH SOUL

About Lieutenant Colonel
– Józef Panaś

Piotr Korczyński

Legions is one of the key words in the history of Poland, still holding a huge emotional charge. The Polish Legions, from the period of the Great War, formed the military and political elite of the re-emerging state. Heroic deeds were accomplished in their ranks, but also ideological and political conflicts were born, influencing the history of the entire Second Polish Republic. These two poles – of soldierly sacrifice and of the unruly legionary – were in constant conflict in the soul of Father Józef Panaś, a chaplain of the Polish Legions.

A small episode linked to separate uniform traditions in the First and Second Bri-

gade of the Legions shows well what kind of man Father Panaś was. Soldiers of the First Brigade wore the “maciejówka” soft cap, while those of the Second Brigade wore the “rogatywka” cap [a four-pointed cap], which often led to various “political” disputes and humorous digs. Father Panaś came from the Second Brigade, so he wore a rogatywka on his head. One day, as the chaplain recollected, “when I was busy cleaning up cemeteries in the former positions of the 2nd Infantry Regiment, some soldier of the 1st Infantry Regiment came up to me and, admiring my rogatywka, he said [pretending not to see that he was dealing with a priest], »Say, why does the devil have only two horns and you have four?« »It is very simple,« I said.

→

words: SWOIM/ŻOŁNIERZOM/Z/AMERYKI [TO/HER/SOLDIERS/FROM/AMERICA] (vertically) and OSWOBODZONA POLSKA [FREED POLAND] (horizontally). On the rays in the four corners of the cross and around: SZAMPANIA/LWÓW/POMORZE/WOŁYŃ [CHAMPAGNE/LVIV/POMERANIA/VOLHYNIA] (vertically). Of course, the names were connected with the combat route of the American volunteers.

The cross was to be hung on a white and red ribbon. The novelty was to thread the ribbon (25 mm) parallel through two clearances in the places where the cross is joined and then through the hole in the vertical part of the cross. It was not the best arrangement, and the ribbon quickly got destroyed. Over the years, the white and red ribbon was simply threaded through the hole in the upper part of the cross.

Thanks to the preserved contract, we know the contractor and the details related to the production of the Cross of Polish Volunteers from America. The production of the crosses was entrusted to the medalist and the owner of the famous Warsaw plant, Józef Chyliński. He ran a medal-making plant, founded by his father, Zygmunt, and was known for producing many patriotic medals. The contract for the execution of the crosses was concluded on March 14, 1920 between the head of the executive office of the Ministry of Military Affairs, acting on behalf of the

State Treasury, and Józef Chyliński, residing at 25 Ogrodowa Street. The contract was very precise and detailed, which is surprising given the war conditions. Chyliński undertook to make 12,000 crosses, which was subject to certain restrictions. The medalist was to prepare a matrix according to the description provided by the military authorities, as well as one model of the cross for the approval of the Presidential Bureau of the Ministry of Military Affairs. If the military authorities did not accept the design, the ministry had the right to terminate the contract without any financial obligations. The crosses were to be made exactly according to the delivered design. After the order was completed, the die for the cross was to be returned to the army without charge. Moreover, Chyliński was obliged not to make any more similar crosses.

The first batch of as many as 3,000 crosses was to be made by April 1, 1920 at the latest. The next and last batch, 9,000 pieces, was to be delivered within the next two weeks! The deadline set for the producer was April 14, 1920. This proves that the military authorities wanted to decorate the American volunteers as quickly as possible.

Each batch was to be accepted by the military office. Defective crosses were to be exchanged, the payment for the work was to be made after the transaction was completed. The total cost was set at 144,000 Polish marks, a single cross was valued at 12 marks. The payment was divided into installments: 36,000 marks in the first tranche and the rest in

the second tranche after the delivery of the crosses and the matrix. The medal ribbons were ordered separately. Another well-known engraving plant of Józef Michrowski from Warsaw competed with Józef Chyliński's company. However, his offer was rejected due to higher prices.

It soon turned out that the ordered batch of crosses was not enough. The first order from Chyliński was enough for only 40% of demobilized soldiers and the general number of volunteers from America. Therefore, in the autumn of 1920, another batch of 7,000 Crosses of Polish Soldiers from America was ordered with another wave of demobilization. The decoration was also to be awarded posthumously, and the crosses were to be sent to the families.

Thanks to archival records, we know that a total of 19,000 crosses were made upon the order of the military authorities. However, not all of them were given, due to the death of volunteers and lack of information about the family. The remaining crosses, including 980 unfinished copies, were handed over to the newly created Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw, to its director, Colonel Bronisław Gembarzewski. Together with the crosses, the matrix created by Józef Chyliński was also handed over.

At the same time, people who needed to be distinguished were still being found, or the families of fallen soldiers asked for posthumous decoration. This situation lasted for a few more years. The Association of Haller's Soldiers took the initiative in this respect in 1925, acting on behalf of the Pol-

»I have nothing to do with the devil, and I do not want to look like a donkey that has no horns at all, just like you.«»

The future chaplain of the legionaries was born on November 23, 1887 in Odrzykoń near Krosno, into a farmer family of Szymon and Tekla nee Guzek. Despite the fact that they were one of the poorer farmers in the village, and the father had to additionally work as a lumberjack in the forest to earn a living, they spared no money for the education of their son. In 1907, Józef graduated with honors from the k. k. secondary school in Przemyśl. Then he entered the local Higher Seminary, and he was ordained a priest in 1911. In the following years, he worked as a vicar in Dublany and as a catechist in Dobromil. At that time, he became interested in the People's Movement and joined the Polish People's Party. Simultaneously, he was active in the "Sokół" Polish Gymnastic Society and in Bartosz Teams.

Eastern Legion

When the First World War broke out, he was in Germany, where he led a pastoral ministry among Polish workers. After many troubles, he was arrested by the German police on suspicion of espionage, and later returned to Poland and joined the Eastern Legion of Major General Adam Pietraszkiewicz on August 30, 1914, with a group of peasants from the Bartosz Team. In the unit, however, it turned out that they already had a chaplain employed – Father Damian Węgiel. However, Panaś did not give up. "I declared that I did not care so much about my position as a chaplain, and I was healthy and not yet old, so I would be happy to perform every assigned service." In this way, Fr. Panaś began his service in the Legions as a victualing officer of the 4th Battalion under Lieutenant Józef Szczepan. "Every priest," recalled Fr. Panaś, "has some qualifications as a collector, and since we were in my homeland, where I knew all the parish priests and many manors, my boys did not do so badly." Legionaries long remembered the "priest feasts," especially when they fought hungry and cold in the Carpathian passes.

In September 1914, the Eastern Legion was divided into two infantry regiments and

two cavalry squadrons. It was also then that Father Panaś was appointed chaplain of the 2nd Infantry Regiment. However, he did not enjoy this position for long, because due to the refusal of some soldiers to swear an oath of allegiance to the Austrian Emperor, on September 21 the Legion was dissolved. Father Panaś was in the group of about 800 legionaries who decided to take the oath. He was even one of the speakers at the soldiers' rally in Rabka, emphasizing the need for Polish troops to exist at all costs.

Second Brigade of the Legions

After taking the oath, the 3rd Infantry Regiment was formed, in which Father Panaś became a chaplain. Thus, the fate of the priest from Odrzykoń was then tied, for a long time to come, with the 2nd Brigade of the Polish Legions, which later also included the 3rd Regiment. Father Panaś accompanied his soldiers throughout the whole extremely hard campaign in the Carpathians, Bukovina and Bessarabia. He especially remembered the heroic, but in his opinion pointless charge at Rokitna on June 13, 1915. "The Uhlans," he noted in his diary, "rode calmly along the valley through a field of golden, lush wheat, reaching as high as the horses' backs. The air was completely still. The squadron (...) reached the edge of the village. There was a hill on top of which there were three windmills. Suddenly, the squadron started up from the foot of the hill, like a herd of frightened birds, and rushed at full speed towards the windmills." The chaplain stared at the hell that suddenly unleashed on the hill, as if he were enchanted. "It was a beautiful sight of raging riders and horses, but at the same time a terrible storm of artillery, machine guns and handguns broke out. A hail of fire and iron fell on the wretched squadron, not only from Russian but also from Austrian artillery, which was notified too late about the charge." Panaś concludes the description of the hecatomb of the Uhlans led by Cavalry Captain Zbigniew Dunin-Wąsowicz as follows: "This charge was a beautiful and heroic, but in any case unnecessary mistake, because the same task could have been performed better and

with less risk by infantry after proper artillery preparation."

After the battle, a ceremonial funeral was held in the cemetery in Barańcza for the fallen lancers on June 15. Coffins were placed in a row, and the coffin with the body of Cavalry Captain Dunin-Wąsowicz, wrapped in a Polish flag, was placed at the front. Father Panaś celebrated the funeral mass, after which he gave a short speech to the legionaries: "Let us pray for the souls

The priest's greatest enemies, including Marshal Piłsudski, always stressed his impeccable honesty and civil courage.

of our brothers and sisters, who proved that a Polish soldier can carry out any order, even if he has to face certain death, and let us ask God not to let their blood be shed for nothing."

In August 1915, Panaś became the head of the pastoral affairs department of the Legions' Headquarters. There, with the consent of Commander Józef Piłsudski, he ordered, i.e., the records of the fallen legionaries, and created regulations for military chaplains. Throughout his service in the Legions, he tirelessly conducted, often still during front fights, exhumations of fallen legionaries from temporary cemeteries, and made sure that they rested in specially prepared war cemeteries. At the same time, he served as chaplain to the 4th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Brigade of the Polish Legions, with which he found himself in Vol-

hynia during the Russian offensive and took part in the bloody battle of Kukle on October 21, 1915. This is what he wrote about it in his diary: "The battlefield in Kukle looks terrible, for the first time in my life I have seen such a lot of corpses (...). The whole field was covered with Prussian pickelhaubes (...). There were also many fallen legionaries, about one hundred. Burying the dead was difficult. There was no one to dig graves, so I had to put the stole in my pocket, and instead take a spade in my hand and imitate the biblical Tobias."

During one of the Russian attacks near Polska Góra, on November 10, 1915, he was lightly wounded. The funeral of several fallen legionaries was taking place when Russian fire started, so the chaplain had to jump into the grave every now and then to find shelter from shrapnel under the bodies of the dead. Finally, one of the shrapnel fragments wounded him slightly on the side, which, as he admitted, made him happy, because he thought: "Yes, I'll finally get to go on vacation." After his return from the leave at the beginning of December, the front in Volhynia stood still until June 1916, that is until the time of a new Russian offensive. After the fighting resumed, Father Panaś became a substitute chaplain for the 5th Infantry Regiment and took part in the battle of Kostiuchnówka. Here, the chaplain, under the murderous fire of Russian artillery, noted in his diary, "Fountains of mud, earth and sand created during grenade explosions reach a huge height of several dozen meters. In the face of the power and horror of these envoys of death, not only a man seems to be tiny, but even mighty hundred-year-old pine trees, dozens of which burst into splinters." However, he would not be himself if he had not found a positive side of this difficult situation. "One can learn to pray well not only at sea, but also at the close rattle of an enemy machine gun, which is more annoying than an explosion of heavy grenades."

On December 1, 1916, Father Panaś was in the ranks of the Legions' troops that solemnly entered Warsaw. Here, due to his efforts, the Polish Legions regained the former garrison church at Długa ➔

ish community in America. This was in line with the initiative of the Association, which at the Second General Assembly in February 1924 established its veteran decoration, "Haller's Swords," which was in part an extended continuation of the Cross of Polish Soldiers from America.

The Ministry of Military Affairs informed the Association that the crosses were at the disposal of the Branch Office of the Polish Army Veterans' Association in America. The interested parties were thus sent to Lieutenant J. Roskosz, who was then holding an office at the "Pod Blachą" palace, where the seat of the Polish branch of the association was located.

The crosses were awarded together with a decorative diploma with an image of the cross surrounded by Polish flags and a decorative plant panoply. In the upper part, it read: "Republic of Poland," there was an image of the cross and a frame with the inscription: "The Cross of Polish Soldiers from America Diploma for..." spread in three lines, space for data entry, and below: "Warsaw, on the day of ... 1920". Below that, it said: "Head of State and Com-



The Cross of the Polish Soldiers from America (1920)

mandar-in-Chief" in two verses. The state seal was placed in the lower left corner. Diplomas sized 330 x 200 mm were numbered in the upper left corner.

Status of the Award

For many years, the cross was treated in the Polish Army as a commemorative badge. Its status was not very clear. It was chiefly worn by Polish soldiers, most of whom returned to the American continent. Few remained in the Polish Army for a short time. Even the official name did not break through in the military consciousness. In fact, in 1927, the head of the cabinet of the Minister of Military Affairs, Colonel Józef Beck, in a letter to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, wrote: "Badge No. 11 "Volunteer from America," issued in 1919, when Poland did not yet have any decorations. It was awarded in the amount of over

25,000." The conclusion of the future Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Second Republic of Poland was also interesting: "I believe that due to the importance these badges enjoy, they should absolutely be maintained and recognized as official."

These suggestions were taken into account in 1938, when the hierarchy in the Polish system of medals and decorations was determined again. The Cross of Polish Soldiers from America was officially recognized and placed in the hierarchy right below the Cross on the Silesian Ribbon of Valor and Merit, and above the Medal for Saving the Dying. This was the official interpretation approved by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Military Affairs in 1939. ■

Krzysztof Filipow

Historian, Ph.D., professor at the University of Białystok, doctor honoris causa of the National Technical University in Kropivnicky (Ukraine). Author of publications on phaleristics, numismatics, heraldry, knowledge of medals and military history. He publishes works in this field in Slovakia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Romania.

→ Street – later the field cathedral of the Polish Army. On December 18, he was ordered by the German authorities to send two chaplains to POW camps in Germany, where soldiers of Polish nationality were held. Having chosen Father Władysław Antosz as his companion, he went to bring consolation to the imprisoned compatriots in Russian uniforms. Already in Germany, on December 20, he learned that he had been appointed field superintendent of the Polish Legions, which meant that he had become the superior of all chaplains and clergy in all legionary brigades.

During the oath crisis in July 1917, just like at the beginning of his service in the Eastern Legion, he advocated that the 2nd Brigade of the Legions should remain attached to the central states. In mid-September, he became the superintendent of the Polish Auxiliary Corps. However, the provisions of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk quickly verified his attitude. In February 1918, he was among the officers who decided to break through with the Polish Corps to the other side of the front and join the First Polish Corps in Russia. Interned by the Austrians, he became one of the main accused of betraying the monarchy. Due to the intervention with emperor Charles I undertaken by Father Achilles Ratti, the papal nuncio and the future Pope Pius XI, Father Panaś was pardoned on September 30, 1918 and released together with other Polish officers. Already in November he organized the defense of Przemyśl against the Ukrainians, and then he left for Lviv, in whose defense he took part until May 1919. For his combat actions he was decorated with the Class-V Order of Virtuti Militari and four times with the Cross of Valor.

In Free Poland

In 1919, as lieutenant colonel, he was appointed dean of the military pastoral ministry at the Polish Army Command in Little Poland. From September of the same year, he was Dean of the VI Lviv Corps District, and from November 1921 he was Dean of the X Przemyśl Corps District. In 1926 there was another turning point in the life



Redeployment of the 2nd Brigade of the Polish Legions from Bukowina to Volhynia

of Father Panaś. On May 17, during a mass for the victims of the May Coup, concelebrated by field bishop Stanisław Gall at the field cathedral, he publicly tore off from his uniform the medals awarded to him by Marshal Józef Piłsudski, saying: "They burn my breasts and bring me shame. I cannot continue to wear them, as I see the same ones on the breasts of those who have been stained by shedding blood of their brothers..." For this speech he was retired, and the Piłsudski camp gained one of the most famous political opponents in the unruly chaplain. However, the priest's greatest enemies, in-

cluding Marshal Piłsudski, always stressed his impeccable honesty and civil courage. Apart from his political activity in the people's movement, Father Panaś was one of the closest collaborators of Wincenty Witos, and he devoted himself to the creation of the cooperative movement in the Polish countryside.

New War and Death

After the outbreak of World War II, Father Panaś stayed in Lviv. From 1939 he co-organized the underground of the Union of Armed Struggle under Soviet

occupation. As a representative of the peasants, he became a member of the Social and Political Committee at the Command of the Area of the Union of Armed Struggle in Lviv, he was also the head of the Fiscal Commission, which had custody over the so-called "treasure of Poznań," intended for the purposes of the independence struggle. At the turn of March and April 1940, Panaś was arrested by the NKVD in Kozin near Halicz, and detained first in the prison in Halicz, and then in Lviv at Pełczyński Street. After three days of heavy investigation, tortures, on April 4 he jumped out of the window onto the courtyard while he was being led to another interrogation, and died on the spot. Perhaps he wanted to avoid giving away to the Russians the place where the treasure was kept. It is also possible that after he had been tortured to death, he was simply thrown out of that window...

Until the end of his days, in spite of the conflict with Piłsudski's camp, Father Józef Panaś did not forget that he was an old "legionary." At the end of his diary he described one of his visits at the military hospital in Sucha in 1917, where Polish legionaries were also treated. Seeing the priest's legionary uniform, the head of the ward emphasized that he had less trouble with ten Austrian soldiers than with one legionary. "And so," wrote Father Panaś, quoting the doctor's report, "last winter there were two of our boys in the institution, with only one and a half legs and three arms altogether. Nevertheless, they were able to get to the attic of the neighboring tenement house, from where they took a sports sled, and went on a trip that would have ended well if it hadn't been for the fact that they drank a little alcohol at some inn, and during their return they drove their sled into a ditch. This is where the misfortune happened, because all four artificial limbs were strained. Not being able to cope with them, they had to wait in the ditch for merciful help. This is the »legionary« nature." Lieutenant Colonel Józef Panaś understood this nature like no one else, because he had courage and bravery in his blood. ■

THE MOST PRECIOUS CROSS

"For a Soldier, the Cross of Virtuti Militari is a pearl made of blood shed from a loving heart. It is not only the red of metal, but also the red of spirit and the heart that burns." These words were delivered by Primate Stefan Wyszyński on May 3, 1976, when the generals of the Independent Poland placed their Orders of Virtuti Militari as a vote before the Black Madonna of Częstochowa.

Piotr Korczyński

The history of the Order of Virtuti Militari is as turbulent as the history of the Republic of Poland. Established by King Stanisław August Poniatowski on June 22, 1792, a few days after the victorious battle with the Russian Army near Zieleńce, it became the highest award granted to Polish soldiers for their merits on the battlefield. Among the first decorated were General Tadeusz Kościuszko and Prince Józef Poniatowski. They opened the array of heroes who were honored with this order for fighting with the invading armies. The first woman, Joanna Żubrowa, was among the Order's bachelors already in 1809. She defended Zamość against the Austrians in the ranks of the army of the Duchy of Warsaw.

After the fall of the November Uprising, Tsar Nicholas I, in order to additionally humiliate the Poles, degraded the Order of Virtuti Militari to the rank of a Russian badge, which was awarded to... over one hundred thousand tsarist soldiers who suppressed the "Polish rebellion." However,

the Tsar's decrees were of no use – the Crosses of Virtuti Militari awarded in the battles for the independence of the Homeland were worn with pride by their veterans in the subsequent uprisings, or handed over to their children as "an eternal memento and indication of the life duty of a Pole."

Heroes of the Second Republic of Poland

After regaining independence in 1918, the Legislative Sejm of the Republic of Poland, by the Act of August 1, 1919, restored the order established 127 years earlier, giving it the name of the Military Order of Virtuti Militari. The former significance of the order was also restored as a distinction for "acts of outstanding bravery and courage, performed in battle and combined with dedication to the good of the Homeland." The restored order preserved the former division into five classes, as well as their names. The basic parameters of the order, the rules of wearing it, the qualification of actions for which soldiers could receive particular classes of the order, and the rights and privileges for his bachelors, were defined. The feast of the order was to be celebrated on May 3. However, the new law of March 25, 1933 postponed it to November 11, 1933, also changing its name to the War Order of Virtuti Militari. The pantheon of the Order's bachelors was joined by many soldiers who became famous in the struggles for independence during the Great War, in the struggles for the borders of the reborn homeland, and in the groundbreaking for the history of Europe Polish-Soviet

PIŁSUDSKI'S UNFAILING SOLDIER

Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer (1889–1936)

When General Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer took off from the airfield in Grudziądz at 1:50 PM on July 16, 1936, taking a course for Gdynia, he did not know that it would be his last flight. The recently appointed Inspector of State Air Defense flew with the RWD-9 aircraft. The disaster occurred in the vicinity of Orłowo Morskie; the aircraft crashed into the Baltic Sea after half an hour from take-off. This is the story of the death of one of the most talented and popular generals of the Second Republic of Poland.

Piotr Kardela

In 1903, at the age of 14, he was admitted to the secret national youth organization "Przyszłość" [Future] in Częstochowa. Two years later he actively took part in the famous strike for the Polish school in the Russian partition, as an intransigent enemy of the revolution inspired by the left-wing parties and modeled on Russia. In 1908, when he was a student of law at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv, he was admitted to the secret Zet, i.e. to the independent Polish Youth Union, active underground in the three partitions of Poland. Mobilized on August 1, 1914 as a Russian reserve officer of the 3rd Cavalry Squadron of the Russian Hussars Regiment, he was in the Kielce region already two days later. On August 14, just before the Russian attack on the city, he deserted, getting

through to Polish soldiers fighting at the side of Austrians.

Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer was admitted to the cavalry unit of Władysław Belina-Prażmowski, and later he fought in the 1st Cavalry Regiment of the Legions. He was soon promoted, becoming one of Piłsudski's most reliable soldiers. He was a role model for many. His war achievements were permanently embedded in the canon of legionnaires' stories. During the Oath Crisis in 1917, as a cavalry captain, he voluntarily went to the camp in Szczypiorno near Kalisz where his sixteen-month prisoner-of-war journey began. Released from the camp in mid-October 1918, he headed initially to Chełm near Lublin, where, as the commander of the local Polish Military Organization, he led the action of disarming the Austrians. →



For his courage, devotion and effectiveness as commander he was awarded four times with the Cross of Valor and the Virtuti Militari.

The Crosses of the Order of Virtuti Militari in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw



War of 1920. Among them was the youngest bachelor of the order, a 13-year-old defender of Lviv of 1919, Antos Petrykiewicz. By the decision of the Head of State Józef Piłsudski, he was posthumously awarded the Silver Cross of the Order of Virtuti Militari.

Less than twenty years of independent Poland passed, when in 1939 two totalitarian powers – Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia – attacked it. Those days were full of tragedy, but also glory of the Polish nation. Many Orders of Virtuti Militari were awarded during September '39 and subsequent campaigns. Heroic Warsaw was also honored with it. It is impossible to mention here even some of the bachelors of this award who made the Polish Army famous on all fronts of World War II by their heroism. One of them was Colonel Łukasz Ciepliński. In September 1939, as a commander of an anti-tank company in the rank of second lieutenant, he fought in the battle of the Bzura River and in the Kampinos

Forest. He destroyed six tanks and two staff cars with his 37-mm caliber anti-tank cannon in the battle near Witkowiec. For this deed he received a special distinction. General Tadeusz Kutrzeba decorated 2nd Lieutenant Ciepliński with the Class-V Order of Virtuti Militari, removing it from his own chest. Colonel Ciepliński later proved that he was worthy of this honor, fighting in conspiracy and becoming a steadfast soldier. The Virtuti Militari bachelors were obliged to wear the order even on a field uniform, and so did also Major Henryk Dobrzański, the famous "Hubal," who, having not accepted the defeat in 1939, still fought with the Germans in the Kielce forests. This is how Melchior Wańkowicz described in his book *Hubalczyzy* [Hubal's Soldiers] the night preceding the day of the Major's heroic death: "[Dobrzański] smiled thinking about the past. The small lamp started giving smoke. Hubal leaned over the table to take off the black glass. An element at the cross burst, the silver Virtuti fell onto the chest with a hollow sound, as if it were the lid of a coffin. »Yes, this is it... a sign.«"

It was a sign that yet another hero had gone immortal.

A Sign of Glory Forever

Like the Russian tsars, the communists also wanted to destroy the Order of Virtuti Militari, awarding it generously to Soviet generals. The last straw was when the Secretary-General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,

Leonid Brezhnev, received the order. It was then that the generals of the Polish Army, who had fought for Poland's independence, and served in the army of the Second Polish Republic and in exile during the Second World War, decided to hand over their Crosses of Virtuti Militari to Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland, in Jasna Góra. Before the formal Holy Mass, as the oldest general practitioner, Mieczysław Boruta-Spiechowicz submitted an officer report to Primate Stefan Wyszyński: "Your Eminence, Cardinal Primate of Poland! As a mandate to Poland on behalf of the head of the Chapter of Virtuti Militari and the Commander-in-Chief in times of War, the late General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, and also on behalf of generals of the Polish Army gathered here, I kindly ask for your permission to offer Our Lady, Queen of Poland, a vote of gratitude in the form of our Crosses of Virtuti Militari, for six hundred years of help in defending our Nation and State." Twelve Virtuti Militari Crosses were solemnly laid before the miraculous painting of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa. Six months after the ceremony, on November 11, 1976, the then President of Poland in exile, Stanisław Ostrowski, awarded the Order of Virtuti Militari to the Polish soldiers murdered by the NKVD in Katyn and other unknown places of execution, in memory of the sacrifice of their lives in the name of independent Poland. The cross was hung at the Katyn Monument in London. ■



The Poniatowski Bridge in Warsaw on May 12, 1926, at the beginning of a military coup d'état led by Józef Piłsudski. The Marshal of Poland is on his way to meet President Stanisław Wojciechowski – from the left: LtCol Kazimierz Stamirowski, Lt Marian Żebrowski, Gen Orlicz-Dreszer, Piłsudski, Maj Tadeusz Jaroszewicz, Lt Michał Galiński.

During the fights with Ukrainians and Bolshevik Russia, Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer became famous as an outstanding cavalry commander. His bravura entry into Vilnius at the head of the cavalry through the Gate of Dawn, victorious battles with the army of Budyonny, the cavalry corps of Gaya Gai, or the bold victorious drive on Korosten, the largest cavalry drive of the 20th century, are only his most famous front actions. For his courage, dedication and effectiveness as commander, he was four times awarded with the Cross of Valor, as well as the Virtuti Militari.

After May 1926, he was sent to the Chief Inspectorate of the Armed Forces. Associated with fratricidal fights in the capital, but also disappointed with the development of the socio-political situation in Poland, in January 1928 he resigned from his post in order not to be a "burden for the army and its leader." The Marshal did not accept the resignation because he highly valued his usefulness to the army.

Orlicz could afford to criticize what he did not like in Poland after May 1926. Although he constantly adored the Marshal, this was not how he imagined the restoration of Poland. For example, he openly spoke about his dislike for Colonel Waław Kostek-Biernacki, commander of the Brest Fortress, when opposition leaders from the "Centrolew" movement were imprisoned there. On November 11, 1930, on the 12th anniversary of regaining independence, he was promoted to division general, and a month later he was appointed army inspector. His then subordinate Colonel Zygmunt Szysz-

Dreszer, being "a cavalryman to the core, having a temperament and fantasy, liked to drink and have fun, but knew how to work steadfastly and honestly when necessary, and most importantly, had a bright and very lucid mind."

ko-Bohusz recalled that Dreszer, being "a cavalryman to the core, having a temperament and fantasy, liked to drink and have fun, but knew how to work steadfastly and honestly when necessary, and most importantly, had a bright and very lucid mind."

Parallel to military matters, the general was very active in the work of the Sea and Colonial League, whose president he was elected in November 1930 at a convention in Gdynia. He wished for powerful Poland with a strong position in the world, and treated the League's actions as a propaganda maneuver against Germany. Orlicz openly proclaimed the view that "the western and northern lands, i.e. East Prussia, Gdańsk, Central and Western Pomerania, Lubusz Land, Lower Silesia, Opole and the rest of the Upper Silesia, should be included in Poland, perceiving (...) the whole thing in terms of historical justice, i.e. the return to the Motherland of the lands once separated, but also in the context of Polish population expansion and the strengthening of Poland's economic potential." (Przemysław Olstows-

ki). It was Dreszer who wrote the introduction to the once famous book *Śląsk* [Silesia] by Gustaw Morcinek.

When Józef Piłsudski died on May 12, 1935, General Orlicz-Dreszer lost a close person. It was him who was the commander of the military part of the Marshal's funeral ceremonies in Warsaw, Krakow, and Vilnius. He had a negative opinion on the evolution of the program implemented by the camp that ruled after Józef Piłsudski's death, which attracted the interest of the representatives of the National-Radical Camp with whom he held talks. ■

Piotr Kardela

Historian, graduate of UMCS in Lublin (1992), PhD of humanities, professor of the Police Academy in Szczecino, director of the Białystok office of the Institute of National Remembrance, specializes in the history of Poland and Polish communities in the 20th century.



At the grave of Orlicz-Dreszer. On the left, the General's second wife Olga Elwira, on the right, his mother Emilia. The funeral took place on July 27 at the cemetery in Gdynia Okrywie.

THE "ZWIASTUN" PROGRAM

For over two years now, the Polish National Foundation (PNF) has been implementing the "Zwiastun" ("Herald") educational program for NATO soldiers stationing in Poland. "The program is to present Poland as a modern, safe country which is developing all the time, but which also remembers its history," assures Cezary Andrzej Jurkiewicz, member of the Board of the PNF. Within the program, the Foundation organised numerous lectures and educational trips. A few thousand soldiers participated in them, and they all emphasise that it helped them to know Poland from various perspectives. "This is a valuable opinion, because after they return to their homes, they will be natural ambassadors of Poland," he adds.

The PNF continues to develop the program. In the following months, the Foundation plans to organize the Moniuszko concert, give lectures devoted to General Ryszard Kukliński and the indomitable soldiers. There are also plans to engage soldiers from other garrisons, not only in Orzysz.

**POLSKA
ZBROJNA**

**HISTORIA
POLSKA
ZERONA**

Project supervised by: Anna Putkiewicz
English translations by: Barbara Wierczyńska (LONDONER Translation Services Warsaw)
English translations revised, edited and proofread by: Dorota Aszoff
Supervising editor (Polish version): Jacek Żurek
Editing and proofreading (Polish version): January Szustakowski
Cooperation: Piotr Korczyński
Graphic design: Paweł Kępka
Photographs: Cezary Pomykała (cover photo), *Ilustrowana kronika Legionów Polskich*, Warsaw: Wojskowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2019 [reprint], Krzysztof Filipow's collection, National Digital Archives [NAC], Polish Army Museum [MWP]

Print: Wojskowe Zakłady Kartograficzne sp. z o.o., ul. Fort Wola 22, 01-258 Warszawa

wiww

Wojskowy Instytut Wydawniczy
[Military Publishing Institute]
Aleje Jerozolimskie 97, 00-909 Warszawa
Director: Maciej Podczaski
Polska Zbrojna (military monthly)
Editor-in-Chief: Izabela Borańska-Chmielewska
polska-zbrojna.pl (military news website)
Polska Zbrojna. Historia (historical quarterly)
Editor-in-Chief: Anna Putkiewicz

Polska Zbrojna is a military magazine published under the supervision of Polish Ministry of National Defense since 1921
SKLEP.POLSKA-ZBROJNA.PL

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