

Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

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TACZAK Stanisław

Person

TACZAK Stanisław

Born

1874

Died

1960

Description

Metallurgical engineer, commander of the Greater Poland Uprising and brigadier general in the Polish Army. Born on 8 April 1874 in the Mieszkowo village near Jarocin. He was the son of Andrzej (1840-1900) - the owner of an inn in Mieszkowo, and Balbina née Warasiecka (1843-1900). He studied at gymnasium in Ostrów, where, from 1885, he participated in the activities of the secret circle of the Tomasz Zan Society. After passing the secondary school leaving examination on 21 March 1893, he started his studies at the Mining Academy in Freiburg, Saxony; there he was an activist of the Polish Youth Association "ZET" and the "Sarmatia" Society. During that period, he joined the Polish Socialist Party. In 1897 he received his degree as a metallurgist engineer and in 1898, that of

graduate engineer. During the period from 1 April 1898 – 26 March 1899, he did his military service in the 155th Infantry Regiment in Ostrów, during which he completed the course for aspirant officers. He was made an infantry second lieutenant (15 November 1904) and then promoted to the rank of lieutenant (14 October 1913). He completed his professional practice in Westphalia, and was then employed as an assistant in the Experimental Institute - Königliche Technische Hochschule in Berlin. He worked there under the supervision of Professor Friedrich W. Hinrichsen, with whom he published the following work: *Die Chemie der Kohle* (Leipzig 1916, ed.3, Leipzig 1919). He was also an editor of a specialist magazine "Der Ingenieur", in which he published articles related to the mining industry. After the outbreak of World War I in 1914 he was drafted into the German army? he served in the 46th Infantry Regiment of the National Defence. He was promoted to the rank of captain. On 11 December 1916, at his own request, he was made the main instructor to the Second Battalion of the 6th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Polish Legions Brigade stationed in Nałęczów and then in Dęblin. In April 1917, he was sent to the Training Inspectorate of the Polish Armed Force (Polnische Wehrmacht) which was being formed at that time. In November 1918, he went to the Ministry of Military Affairs in Warsaw and on 15 November, he received his assignment to Department VII (Science) of the General Staff of the Polish Army. On 17 November 1918, he co-organised a demonstration of Poles in Warsaw with former soldiers of the German army. In the second half of December, he was on leave in Berlin, and while returning to Warsaw from that city, he stopped in Poznań on 28 December, where, on the same day, through his brother Teodor, he established contact with a member of the Commissariat of the

Supreme People's Council, W. Korfanty, and took the position of temporary commander-in-chief of the Greater Poland Uprising. After obtaining the approval of the General Staff and Józef Piłsudski on 2 January 1919, he was promoted to the rank of major and became the chief commander of the Polish armies in the Prussian partition. On 5 January 1919, all Polish formations in the Prussian partition were subordinated to him: the People's Guard and the Guard and Security Service, meanwhile the Polish-German command in Poznań was dissolved. Together with Captain Stanisław Łapiński, Rittmeister (Captain) Bronisław Wzacny and Lieutenant Colonel Julian Stachiewicz, he organised the departments of Central Command, to which he subordinated the powiat headquarters and formed the front commands as mobile operational commands. By laying the organisational foundations for the regular Greater Poland Army, he divided the territory of Greater Poland into nine military districts on 7-8 January? then on 13 January, thirteen complementary areas were designated and the draft into the army was prepared. By Taczak's command, Ławica airport was seized on 6 January 1919, the victorious Szubin battle (8-13 January) and the failed action near Zbąszyń were prepared. Taczak maintained contact with the General Staff in Warsaw, and as of 16 January, the insurgent forces which he commanded consisted of roughly 14 000 people. On 16 January 1919, he handed over the post of commander-in-chief of the Greater Poland Army to General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki, and took over the function of 2nd quartermaster of the Central Command. On 14 February 1919, he joined the General F. Dubiski Commission appointed by General Dowbor-Muśnicki, which established the rules for the promotion of officers coming from the different partitioning armies. On 5 May 1919, he became a member of the Court and Honorary

Council for staff officers. On 16 May he was appointed deputy staff commander of Central Command and on 3 June, was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. During the Polish-Soviet war, on 20 April 1920, he was appointed commander of the 69th Infantry Regiment which was part of the 34th Infantry Brigade (within the 17th Infantry Division). During the battle of Berezina, he took command of the entire Brigade (69th and 70th Infantry Regiment) on 21 May 1920, and the very next day was promoted to the rank of colonel. Later, during fighting withdrawals, he periodically commanded the 17th Infantry Division, which was part of the 1st Army. Both his subordinates and the commanders of neighbouring units (including General Aleksander Osiński) were of the opinion that he was a stout-hearted and brave person, distinguished by great skill in tactics and a particular sense of responsibility for the fate of the units subordinated to him. After the completion of military operations, on 22 January, he became commander of the 17th Infantry Division in Poznań (from Autumn 1921 in Gniezno). In the period from 15 November 1923-15 August 1924, he was a student of the 1st Centre Course of Higher Military Studies in Warsaw during which, on 31 March 1924 he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. During that period, he co-initiated the erection of the monument of King Bolesław I the Brave in Gniezno. At Poznań University he was a supporting member and then an honorary member of the student corporation "Lechia". In 1925, he became involved in the organisation of the Central Committee for Research on the History of the Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919. He was also the chairman of the Scientific-Financial Commission for that Committee. After the Committee was renamed in 1927 as the Society for Research on the History of the Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919, he

chaired its Main Board. He wrote prefaces for the following publications "Problem ujęcia historii Powstania Wielkopolskiego 1918-1919" (P. 1926) [The problem of the approach to the history of the Greater Poland Uprising] and "Towarzystwo badań nad Historią Powstania Wielkopolskiego..." [Society for research on the History of the Greater Poland Uprising...].(P. 1928). During the May Coup in 1926 he supported the government and arrived in Warsaw with his division on 14 May 1926? however it did not take part in any fighting and returned to its garrisons on 18-19 May. In September 1927, he temporarily commanded the Corps District VII in Poznań. On 19 October 1928, he terminated his command of the 17th Infantry Division and took command of the Corps District II in Lublin. On 28 February 1927, Taczak retired. He became self-employed as a technical inspector in the National Insurance Company in Gdynia, but after six months returned to Poznań and in 1930 became the president of the Greater Poland Association of Fire Brigades. In 1934 he became the deputy president of the Main Board of the Polish Association of Fire Brigades, at the same time resigning from being the president of the Society for Research on the History of the Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919. In 1935 he resigned from being the president of the Polish Society of Veterans of National Uprisings 1914-1919, justifying his decision with illness, however the true cause was the lack of response of the authorities to the difficult living conditions of former insurgents and the ignoring of them in the distribution of honours and posts. He maintained contact with the veteran circles, among other things, participating in insurgent ceremonies in many towns of the Greater Poland region. After the outbreak of World War II, during the search for the command of the "Poznań" Army, on 9 September 1939, he was taken into German

captivity in Łowicz. On 13 September 1939 he was imprisoned in Oflag II A in Prenzlau. Then he was taken to Oflag IV C Colditz, the Konigstein fortress, the Hohenstein fortress, Oflag VIII E Johannisbrunn and Oflag VII A Murnau, where from, on 29 April 1945, he was freed by American forces. On 10 May 1945, he joined the Polish Armed Forces in Paris and was then sent to Nice for convalescence. In May 1947, he returned to Poland and lived with his wife in Janikowo in the Kuyavia region, at his daughter Aleksandra's place (from the year 1948, he lived only with his wife, after his daughter moved out to Sztum with her family). In 1947 he participated in the organisation of the Gdansk-Śródmieście Club of the Association of Greater Poland Insurgents. He was surveilled by the military counter-intelligence service. It was only after a political breakthrough in the year 1956 that the minister of national defence granted him a special pension on 14 February 1959. In 1959, Taczak, who was present in Poznań, was not allowed to attend the main ceremonies related to the 40th anniversary of the Greater Poland Uprising? however, at the invitation of veterans, he participated in local ceremonies in Janikowo, Inowrocław and Gostyń. From 1959 he lived in Malbork, with his daughter. At that time he recorded his recollections for the Polish Radio. He died on 2 March 1960 in Malbork and was buried on 6 March in the cemetery in Malbork-Kałdowo? the state authorities refused him a military burial in the Cemetery for Distinguished Citizens in Poznań. In 1988 he was exhumed and buried solemnly on 30 November 1988 at the Cemetery for Distinguished Citizens of Greater Poland on St. Adalbert's Hill in Poznań. He was awarded, among other things, the Cross of the Order of Virtuti Militari (5th class) (1921), the Cross of Independence, the Cross of Valour (twice), the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia

Restituta (1928), the Greater Poland Insurgent Cross (1957), the French Knight's Cross of the Order of the Legion of Honour and the German Iron Cross of the first and second class. To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Greater Poland Uprising, he was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta posthumously in 1998. On 27 December 2018- on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the victorious uprising, he was posthumously honoured with the Order of the White Eagle by Andrzej Duda - the President of the Republic of Poland. The order was handed over to his grandson - Jerzy Gogońkiewicz. Through his marriage, on 22 September 1904 to Ewa née Wichmann (died in 1953), a graduate of art studies, he had a son - Stanisław Kazimierz, and a daughter - Aleksandra, married to Czesław Gogońkiewicz. On 16 January 2009 a monument of S. Taczak designed by Rafał Nowak and a commemorative plaque were unveiled in Mieszkowo. A division of the Greater Poland Association of Polish Volunteer Fire Brigades from the Greater Poland province in Poznań (since 2005), the 16th Battalion of the Airport Renovation from Jarocin (since 25 April 2010), as well as primary schools in Mieszkowo, Poznań and Wąsowo and streets in Bydgoszcz, Gorzów Wlkp., Mogilno, Ostrów Wlkp., Poznań, Zbąszyń and Szczecin, to name a few, are all named after him. His name is presented on a commemorative plaque devoted to corporation members-Greater Poland insurgents, it was unveiled on 25 January 2009 on the building of the St. Adalbert Bookshop.in Poznań. The Polish Union of Fowler Brotherhoods organises the Memorial of General Stanisław Taczak.

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