



**Major General Orlik-Rüeckemann, Eng.
(1894 – 1986)**

Born on 1 August 1894 in Lwów; died on 18 October 1986 in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, and was buried at Notre-Dame Cemetery in Ottawa. Studied highway engineering at the University of Technology in Lwów. He was an officer in the Polish Legions (*Polskie Legiony*), and a member of the Polish Military Organization (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa (POW)*) in Ukraine. Combatant in the World War I, the Polish Russian war 1919 – 1920, and the September campaign of the World War II. He fled to Lithuania, and from there to Sweden and to Great Britain, where he settled. He grew up in an educated family with Jewish roots; he was raised in spirit of love for the fatherland, and fellow human beings.

Education

He attended schools in Lwów. As a member of *Zarzewie* at the I Gimnazjum Realne organized a group of scouts during the period from 1910 to 1911. studies at the Department 1912, he began Highway Engineering studies at the University of Technology in Lwów which were interrupted by the World War I outbreak.

He served in the Polish Legions in August 1914 where he moved through the ranks as commander of platoon, company, and battalion of the 1st and 6th Regiments. After the Oath Crisis, he had to enlist into the Austrian army. He fled and was transferred to work in the Polish Military Organization in Ukraine.

War for the Polish Borders 1918-1921

From 1918 to 1921, he was actively involved in the efforts aiming to revive the Polish Armed Forces, but eventually was captured by the Ukrainians. During the Polish-Russian war, he commanded the 6th Regiment of the Polish Legions in the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel

Between the Wars

From 1921 to 1922, he was a tank inspector in the Department of Infantry at the Ministry of the Military Affairs. From 1924, he was moved to command the 1st armored regiment. During the period from 1924 to 1925, he was a commanding officer of the Border Protection Corp (*Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza (KOP)*); from 1928 to 1932, commanded the infantry regiment of the 23rd Infantry Division (*23 Dywizja Piechoty (DP)*); and from 1932 – 1938, he commanded the 9th Infantry Division. In 1933, he was Major General of the Border Protection Corp.

WWII

During the September Campaign, he was the last commanding officer of the Border Protection Corps (*Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza (KOP)*). He fought against both aggressors. His stout resistance against the Red Army during the Soviet invasion in September 1939 earned him fame and recognition. Under his command, KOP protected 450 kilometers of the eastern border. The heaviest battles with much the prevailing force of the Bolsheviks, took place first around the city of Szack on the 28th of September, and the next one was near a small town Wytyczno.

After the War

After the war, Gen. Orlik-Rueckemann was moved to the General Staff of the Polish Resettlement Corps (*Sztabu Genralnego Polskiego Korpusu Przysposobienia i Rozmieszczenia (PKPR)*) in Great Britain. The Polish soldiers were now separated and relocated to various camps in Great Britain. Although unwelcomed by the British, they adjusted to life in a new society. Only some of them decided to return to their families in Poland despite the uncertainties caused by the new Bolshevik occupation of their country. Most of the officers, including Gen. Orlik-Rueckeman, decided not to go back. After the demobilization, he settled in London for over twenty years, where he was with his family who joined him from Sweden.

Canada

In 1972, Gen. Orlik-Rueckemann moved in with the family of his son Kazimierz, who is a known aviation specialist working at the National Research Council in Ottawa. In Canada, he was an active member of the 8th Chapter of the Polish Combatants' Association in Canada.

Family

Gen. Orlik-Rückemann was married to Róża Fajans. Her father was the owner of Żegluga Wiślana.

Medals

- Silver Cross – Class V – of the Order Virtuti Militari
- Commander's Cross III Class of the Order of Polonia Restituta
- Cross of Independence
- Officer's Cross (II Class) of the Order of Polonia Restituta
- Cross of Valour (four times; the first and second in 1921)
- Gold Cross of Merit with Swords (during the WWII)
- Gold Cross of Merit
- Medal of Tenth Anniversary of Independence
- Commemorative Badge Znak Pancerny No. 243
- Decoration of Honour for Officers and Other Ranks for Wounds and Injuries
- Chevalier of the Legion of Honour - V class
National Order of the Legion of Honour (French: *Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur*) (France, 1921)

Publications

There are not known publications by Gen. Orlik- Rüeckemann



Headstone of Gen. Wilhelm Orlik- Rückemann (1894-1986), the last Commander of Border Protection Corps (KOP) in September, 1939. Notre-Dame Cemetery in Ottawa-Vanier (Photo: L. Bąkowska).

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English translation /SH/

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