



**Major General Stefan Mieczysław Sznuć, Eng.
(1896 – 1986)**

Born on 12 September 1896 in Warsaw, Poland, died on 6 May 1986, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; and was buried at Notre-Dame Cemetery in Ottawa. A pilot-observer and a colonel of the Polish Air Force. During WWI, he served in the Russian army. He was a member of the Polish Military Organization (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa (POW)*). Volunteered in the Polish Army, and participated in both the Polish-Russian war (1911 – 1920) and WWII. During the September campaign, he served in the Army “Kraków” as both the commander of the Air Force of the Army and the Army Staff officer. He escaped first to Romania, then to France, and later to Great Britain where he was the Chief of the Staff of the Inspector of the Polish Air Force during the Battle of England. After immigrating to Canada, he was the commander (Military Attaché) of the Polish Army and the Air Force Mission in Canada. Later, he also served in the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) as Brigadier-General. In 1964, he was promoted to the rank of Major General by the Polish Government in-Exile. In Canada, he worked as a public servant, and was a leader in the Polish-Canadian organizations.

Education

As of 1909, Sznuć attended the Gen. Paweł Chrzanowski High School in Warsaw, and later, the A. Jeżewski Private School of Commerce from which he graduated with his secondary school diploma in 1914. His studies at the Department of Chemistry of the Warsaw University of Technology were interrupted by the World War I. Before the end of the war, he studied at the

Department of Agriculture at the Warsaw University of Management Agriculture (*Szkoła Główna Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego (SGGW)*).

WWI

In 1915, during the German offensive, Sznuć enlisted into the Russian Army where he became a sapper. For building fortifications during the Battle of Lutsk (Łuck), he was promoted to the rank of the Ensign Warrant Officer and awarded the Saint George Cross, 4th Class. While attempting to join the Polish II Corps in the East (*II Korpus Polski na Wschodzie*), he was arrested and interned by the Austrians, but managed to escape to Lublin.

War for the Polish Borders 1918-20

Between 8 and 10 November 1918, Sznuć, along with the spontaneously forming Polish units, seized the Mokotów Airport (*Lotnisko Mokotowskie*). On 20 November 1918, he enlisted into the Polish Army where he was promoted to the Second Lieutenant rank and given the command of the air squadron that stationed at the airport. He received the Advanced Courses in Aviation for officers offered by the newly created Aviation Military College (*Wojskowa Szkoła Lotnicza*). In the winter of 1919, he was deployed to the Lithuanian-Belarusian front. During the offensive on Mińsk, he distinguished himself as a pilot-observer, and consequently, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Flying Officer; and served in the 1st squadron as a Tactical Officer. In November 1919, he became a pilot-observer in the 12th Reconnaissance Squadron. He fought in the Polish-Soviet war to its end in 1920.

Between the Wars

After the Polish-Soviet war, in 1922, he was promoted to the rank of captain. He completed the VII Upgrading Course at the Officers' Aeronautical School for Aviation Observers in Toruń (*Oficerska Szkoła Obserwatorów Lotniczych w Toruniu*). He was a commander of the 16th Squadron, and later, a quartermaster of the 1st Air Regiment. He continued receiving the higher military ranks and levels of command in the Polish Air Force as a pilot observer. During the period from 1924 to 1927, he served at the Department of Aviation of the Ministry of Military Affairs (*Ministerstwo Spraw Wojskowych*), and later, he moved to the Polish Military College (*Wyższa Szkoła Wojenna*) as a commander of the 4th Air Regiment. From 1938 to 1939, he was a commander of the Aviation Training Centre, and later, a commander of the Group of the Aviation Schools.

WWII

During the September 1939 campaign, he was the commander of the Army Air Force and Air Defense, and an Army Staff Officer in the Army "Kraków" that was under the command of General Antoni Szylling. Later he fought in the Army "Lublin" that was under the command of General Tadeusz Piskor. He avoided German capture by fleeing to Romania, and then to France where he was responsible for the Air Force at the Ministry of Military Affairs of the Polish Government in-Exile in Paris led by Gen. Władysław Sikorski. After the evacuation of the Polish Government to the Great Britain, Col. Sznuć became the Chief of Staff of the Polish Air Force

during in the famous Battle of England. Subsequently, he was delegated to Ottawa (Canada) as the last military and defence attaché of the Republic of Poland. After the allies withdrew their recognition for the Polish Government in London, he returned to England.

After the War

After his return to England, Sznuk remained under the command of the Polish Air Force in the Great Britain. Following the demobilization in Great Britain, he moved to Canada and settled in Ottawa.

Canada

In Canada, Sznuk joined the Canadian public service and worked at the Department of National Defence. He received the rank of Brigadier General of the Royal Canadian Air Force. He was an active member of Canadian Polonia, and also maintained close social contacts with the Canadian government's elite that included Lester B. Pearson, the Prime Minister of Canada. In 1964, Sznuk was promoted to the rank of Major General by the Polish Government in-Exile.

Military Medals, Awards, and Distinctions

Major General Stefan Mieczysław Sznuk has a significant list of military medals awarded by the military forces in which he served.

- Silver Cross – Class V – of the Order Virtuti Militari
- Commander's Cross III Class of the Order of Polonia Restituta
- Officer's Cross of Polonia Restituta III Class
- Knight's Cross IV Class IV of the Order of Polonia Restituta
- Cross of Valour (twice)
- Gold Cross of Merit with Swords (during the WWII)
- Air Force Medal (four times)
- Medal of Tenth Anniversary of Independence
- War Medal 1918-1921
- Medal for Long Service – Silver
- Most Excellent Order of the British Empire – Commander
- War Medal 1939-1945
- Defence Medal
- The Order of Canada – Companion
- Pilot Observer Badge (No 1830)
- Cross of St. George 4th Class – Russian war decoration (during WWI)

Publications

There are any known publications by Gen. Sznuk. However, since he was a pioneer of the observatory pilotage in Poland, it is possible that he published some articles or commentaries on this subject.



Cemetery Notre-Dame in Ottawa-Vanier (photo by L. Bąkowska)

Tombstones:

Major General Stefan Sznuć, Polish Air-Force Commander in Army „Kraków,” and Staff Officer at the Polish Air Force in Great Britain during the Battle of England in 1940; and his family.

Adam Żurowski, former President of the Canadian Polish Congress, Ottawa Region, Representative of the Government of the Republic of Poland in-Exile (Canada); and his family.

Family

General Stefan Sznuć was married to Stanisława Borowska. They had one daughter Krystyna (born in 1922 and died in 2005) married Sparks.

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Photo (author unknown) General Sznuć in the uniform of the colonel of the Polish Air Force.

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