

Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

<https://greaterpolanduprising.eu/pwe/form/r867914212168,KLEMCZAK-Edmund.html>
2021-09-26, 05:46

KLEMCZAK Edmund

Person

KLEMCZAK Edmund

Born

1886

Died

1939

Description

Organiser and commander of the Opalenica Company. Born on 30 January 1884 in Miejska Górka (Rawicz powiat), to the family of a merchant - Mikołaj, and Rozalia née Szwarc. Upon graduation from the local primary school he continued his education in Rawicz. From 1901, he advanced his skills in the profession of a cook at Count Skórzewski's in Lubostronie, but in 1902 changed his workplace and became a cook's assistant, first in Paris, then in Brussels, Frankfurt am Main and Wrocław. He completed his military service in the 11th Grenadier Regiment in Wrocław in the years 1905-1907. At the beginning of 1909, he opened his own hotel in Wrocław. In April 1912 he moved to Opalenica, where he leased the "Wiktoria" hotel. During World War I, as he was fighting on the Western Front in France, he lost that lease. On his return, he formed the Opalenica company of the Guard and Security Service in November 1918. He was also a co-organiser of the armed forces in Buk and a member of the Worker and Soldier Council in Opalenica. He participated in the disarmaments of German transports passing through Opalenica. He took part in the seizure of Nowy Tomyśl on 2-3 January 1919. During fighting

for Zbąszyń on 4-5 January, he commanded a daring attack launched by Opalenica and Chobienica insurgents, which ended in failure because of the lack of support. During the following days, he made ineffective attempts at gathering forces to carry out an attack on Zbąszyń. On 8 January 1919, he returned to Opalenica with his company to reorganise the troops. Under his command the company launched the second battle for Zbąszyń (10/11 January 1919), however, it was halted near Strzyżów, and its commander was wounded. He acted as the commander of the Opalenica Company - the subsequent 5th Company of the 7th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment until 5 April 1919. In 1920 he joined the Volunteer Army from which he was dismissed at the beginning of the year 1921. After his return to Opalenica, he took over a restaurant at the railway station. He strove to consolidate the insurgents, among other things, he was an initiator of the construction of a monument in honour of fallen insurgents. From May 1922 he lived in Nowy Tomyśl, where he traded in wood. In 1924 his closest family moved away to Chojnice. As result of failure in running his business, he settled in Poznań without any means of subsistence. He just lived on a modest benefit paid to him for the Order of Virtuti Militari. In August 1939 he sought material aid from Marshal E. Rydz-Śmigły. He was killed in the defence of Warsaw in September 1939 and was buried (according to word of mouth) in a mass grave. The Germans did not believe in his death and fixed a price of several thousand German marks for him, dead or alive. The persecution also affected his closest family. He received the Order of Virtuti Militari of the 5th class, the Cross of Independence with Swords and the Silver Cross of Merit. He held the title of honorary citizen of Opalenica. From his marriage to Kazimiera née Gawłowicz he had two sons: Marian (1910) and Stanisław (1925) and one daughter Melania (1913). There are many myths and legends surrounding him, some of them are still around even to the present day. In literature, "warlord" Klemczak is often called private or second lieutenant, though in reality he had the rank of corporal. He was preparing a description of the history of his company for print. This work however, just like the version submitted at the Department of History of Corps District Command VII in Poznań got lost in the turmoil of war.

Bibliography

Z. Kościański, Klemczak Edmund (1886-1939) (in:) Powstańcy wielkopolscy. Biogramy uczestników powstania wielkopolskiego 1918-1919, v. IV, ed. B. Polak, Poznań 2008, p.77.

Author of the entry

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