

„Franciszek Wielgut – military career in the years 1914–1945”

The research objective of this PhD thesis entitled "Franciszek Wielgut - military career in the years 1914-1945" is to show the extent to which education as well as military service both in wartime and peacetime shaped Franciszek Wielgut as Polish Army officer, and how they led him to the position of the Commander of the Cadet Corps No. 1 in Lviv (the most important function in his career), and what impact he had on this institution. School management for 5 years under the patronage of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, which was considered by many representatives of the authorities and the society to be the showpiece of Polish military education, predestines his career to be an extraordinary and, thus, proper to be presented in a research paper.

An equally important reason why this figure deserves to be presented in PhD dissertation are outstanding achievements of Franciszek Wielgut in the field of training and patriotic education of the Polish Army – noticed and awarded by Marshal Piłsudski (Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army, and later General Inspector of the Armed Forces and Minister of Military Affairs), as well as by many other highly-placed generals. The proof of his remarkable passion and commitment to pedagogical and educational work in the Polish Army is the fact that he prepared and published on his own cost the *Catechism of a Polish Soldier* (“*Katechizm żołnierza polskiego*”), which was recommended by the Ministry of Military Affairs for the official use in the Polish army.

For the above reasons, it has been decided to take up the subject of the military career of Franciszek Wielgut in the years 1914-1945, especially as it has not been studied by anyone else so far. An additional reason to present this topic is the fact that the author of this dissertation is related with Franciszek Wielgut.

The PhD dissertation "Franciszek Wielgut – military career in the years 1914-1945" consists of an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, annexes and bibliography.

The first chapter is entitled: "In the fight for the independence of Poland (1908-1918)". The first subsection of this chapter, entitled "Childhood and Youth", focuses on

the ancestors and the childhood of Franciszek Wielgut, his education and pro-independence activity at the Warsaw Pedagogical Courses. The aim of this subsection is to show whether the traditions passed down to Franciszek Wielgut by his family could have influenced his choice of life path, and to what extent he was engaged in underground activity in school participating in the independence movement in 1906-1918 in the Kingdom of Poland. The second subsection of the first chapter, entitled "In Polish Rifle Squads, Polish Military Organisation, Polish Legions and Polish Armed Forces" concerns the roots of Franciszek Wielgut's military activity in Polish Rifle Squads, Polish Military Organisation, Polish Legions and Polish Armed Forces. The purpose of this subsection is to show how had Franciszek Wielgut fulfilled the tasks entrusted to him during his independence activity and front service and whether he deserved promotion from the rank-and-file soldier to a second lieutenant and whether he was legitimately awarded with the *Virtuti Militari* Order for his attitude in the battles for Polish Legions.

The next chapter, entitled "Service in the Polish Army", is devoted to the service of Franciszek Wielgut in the Polish Army in the years 1918-1933, i.e. until he was appointed commander of the Cadet Corps no. 1 in Lviv. The aim of the first subsection entitled "Participation in fights for the borders of the Second Republic of Poland (since 11 November 1918)", is to demonstrate his commitment to combat in November 1918 in Warsaw and to fighting for the borders of Teschen lands and fights in the Eastern Lesser Poland in 1919.

The second subsection of the second chapter, entitled "Service in Military Units and Military Schools", deals with Franciszek Wielgut's service in the Officer Cadet School in Warsaw, Greater Poland Non-commissioned Infantry Officer School No. 2 in Grudziądz ("Wielkopolska Szkoła Podoficerów Piechoty nr 2 w Grudziądzu"), the 27th Infantry Regiment and Staff of the 7th Infantry Division in Częstochowa, Infantry Officer School for youngsters No. 2 in Grudziądz and the 77th Kaunas Rifle Regiment in Lida. The aim of this subsection is to show what has influenced his promotions in that period.

The third chapter, entitled "Commander of the Cadet Corps No. 1 in Lviv" covers Franciszek Wielgut activity as a Commander. It is a chapter that presents the most important stage of his service in the army. The purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate the impact of his previous military service on high professional position achieving and to determine whether the commander's decisions contributed to the development of the

Lviv Cadet school within five years of his management.

The fourth and final chapter, entitled "War and Captivity", discusses Franciszek Wielgut wartime experiences. In September 1939, as an officer at rest, he received an assignment to the Headquarters of Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły. On September 17, 1939 he had passed the Polish-Romanian border and was interned in Romania. From February 1941 to April 1945 he was a prisoner in German oflags.

The paper is supplemented by annexes presenting, among other things, archival documents and opinions of superiors on Franciszek Wielgut activity.

*Stawomir Biał*