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## Behind the maps and history: the life of Lt. Col. Mieczysław Szumański (1896–1973)

**Abstract.** This article presents a comprehensive account of the career of Lieutenant Colonel Mieczysław Szumański (1896–1973), emphasizing his multifaceted role as a soldier, topographer, cartographer, and resistance fighter. It highlights his contributions to Polish military geography, the clandestine cartographic service during World War II, and his scholarly activity in military history, while also providing insights into his private life. The study addresses the regrettable obscurity of Szumański's profile within both Polish and international geographical communities. The research draws upon a diverse array of primary and secondary sources, including Szumański's handwritten notes and unpublished manuscripts, memoirs of his son Jerzy Szumański, biographical works by Jacek Szumański, and historical studies by Balbus, Krassowski, Gałęzowski, Sobczyński, and others. The narrative is framed chronologically, with thematic deviations to separate military, underground, and public activities from personal life. The analysis combines historical reconstruction with evaluation of Szumański's motivations, decisions, and their broader consequences.

The study reveals Szumański's extraordinary achievements across multiple domains: distinguished service in the Polish Legions and during the Polish–Soviet War; leadership of the Officers' School of Topographers; command of the Home Army Geographic Service ("Schronisko") in occupied Poland, which successfully provided topographic support to resistance units; postwar clandestine work in Freedom and Independence (Wolność i Niezawisłość, WiN); as well as scholarly and cartographic contributions during his exile in France, including work at the French National Geographic Institute (IGN). His life exemplifies the intersection of military service, cartographic innovation, and patriotic commitment, often at the expense of personal and family life. Due to the fragmentary nature of some source materials, certain aspects of Szumański's activities require supplementation or verification. This applies particularly to the intelligence work conducted by "Schronisko" as well as his activities in the anti-communist underground and his escape from Poland. The study should also be expanded to include Szumański's involvement in the WiN structures in Paris and his work at the French IGN. The article offers a valuable resource for historians, geographers, and military cartographers by filling gaps in the understanding of the history of Polish military geography and underground cartographic operations. Special attention is given to the clandestine activities of the Military Geographical Institute (WIG). By integrating biographical, military, cartographic, and personal perspectives, the article constructs a multidimensional portrait of Lt. Col. Szumański, highlighting his overlooked legacy in Polish and international geographical scholarship. It contributes to a fuller appreciation of the role of geographers in national defense and clandestine operations during twentieth-century conflicts.

**Keywords:** Lt. Col. Mieczysław Szumański, Military Geographical Institute (WIG), "Schronisko", military cartography, twentieth-century Polish history

### 1. Introduction

History hides many remarkable enigmas, and one of them is the life of Lieutenant Colonel

Mieczysław Szumański – a man who, for much of his adult life, lived under assumed names, constantly changing identities and using numerous pseudonyms. In the history of Polish

military geography, it is difficult to find a figure as distinguished and yet so deeply intertwined with the complexities of twentieth-century history. A soldier of the Polish Legions, a topographer, a conspirator, an *émigré*, Szumański's life not only mirrored the turbulent fate of Poland but also stood as a testament to unwavering loyalty to its cause. From the perspective of military geography and cartography, his biography deserves special recognition – not only for his long service at the Military Geographical Institute (Wojskowy Instytut Geograficzny, WIG) and his organization of the clandestine cartographic service in occupied Poland, but also for his extensive scholarly work in military topography and modern history, along with his educational and popularizing efforts before the war and during his exile in Paris.

Szumański's extraordinary biography, inseparably linked to the dramatic events of the twentieth century, has become the subject of several academic, primarily historical, studies. Unfortunately, his profile – as a cartographer and topographer – remains little known among Polish geographers and almost entirely unknown within the international geographical community. The purpose of this article, in this context, is to present the life of Lt. Col. Mieczysław Szumański as comprehensively as possible, emphasizing his public activity within a given historical framework, while also providing relevant information from his private life.

This account is not limited to a simple time sequence of facts – names, events, and dates – placed solely within the general context of Poland's and Europe's geopolitical history. Rather, the goal is to construct a more multidimensional and insightful portrait that not only reconstructs the course of Szumański's life but also examines the motivations behind his choices within the historical circumstances in which he lived. Equally important is an analysis of the consequences of those decisions – both for his own life and for that of his immediate family. Some deviations from the chronological structure have been made in order to distinguish Szumański's military, underground, and public activities from his private life. In addition, given the journal's focus, a separate section has been included on the cartographic activities carried out by the clandestine Polish Geographic Service, code-named "Schronisko" under the command of Lt. Col. M. Szumański.

In preparing this article, the author drew upon a wide range of sources, including handwritten notes by Mieczysław Szumański created during his exile in France, as well as works by historians such as Bogusław Krassowski (1981), Tomasz Balbus (1999, 2003), Eugeniusz Sobczyński (2014, 2021), and Marek Gałęzowski (2002, 2005). Valuable information – especially regarding the Szumański family – was also provided by its biographer, Jacek Szumański. In addition, the memoirs of Jerzy Szumański (1924–2025), Mieczysław's son, proved to be an invaluable resource. Some of these memoirs were written down, while others were conveyed in extended conversations held in Paris and Warsaw. These recollections revealed the multifaceted image of Mieczysław Szumański – not only as a soldier and conspirator, but also as a father and husband.

## 2. Childhood and adolescence

Mieczysław Leon Ludwik Szumański was born on June 4, 1896, in Chomiakówka, a Galician village near Stanisławów (present-day Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine), located in the Polish Kresy – the eastern borderlands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, historically inhabited by Poles, Ruthenians, and other ethnic groups. His parents were Jan and Maria, née Lipsz. He was the grandson of Ludwik Szumański, one of four brothers who had taken part in the January Uprising of 1863 against Russia (J. [Jacek] Szumański, 2019).

Mieczysław Szumański began his education at a public school in Lviv. Even as a young boy, he became actively involved in patriotic and self-educational activities. In 1910, he joined the Training Units organized by the Polish Riflemen's Associations (Polskie Drużyny Strzeleckie) and also participated in the Organisation of Independent Youth (Organizacja Młodzieży Niepodległościowej). Since 1912, he belonged to the Fourth Scouting Troop. In 1913, Szumański joined the First Polish Riflemen's Troop in Lviv, serving in its intelligence section. At the same time, he began teaching Polish geography and topography in the underground Secret Polish School (Balbus, 1999; Gałęzowski, 2003). This early teaching activity reflects his pronounced interest in geography from a young age. In 1914, Szumański inter-

rupted his education and, at the beginning of August, left Lviv.

### **3. World War I and the 1920 Polish–Soviet War: battles for independence**

Three days later, he joined Piłsudski's Riflemen's units in Kraków. Initially, Szumański joined the Third Battalion commanded by Major Edward Rydz-Śmigły. On October 23, 1914, as a soldier of the First Brigade of the Polish Legions, he was wounded in a battle with Russian forces near Laski, on the outskirts of the Dęblin fortress. After convalescing in Kraków, in December 1914, he was assigned to Captain Mariusz Zaruski's ski company, which he helped organize and where he served as an instructor and squad leader (corporal). From March 1915, he served in the Third Infantry Regiment under Captain Józef Haller. On March 31, 1915, he was wounded again, this time near Toporowce. After his recovery, in June 1915, he joined the machine-gun platoon and participated in the Second Brigade's battles in Bukovina and Bessarabia. On August 15, 1915, he was wounded for the third time during the Battle of Rarańcza (Szumański, 1976; Gałęzowski, 2005, p. 709).

From November 1915 to October 1916, Szumański participated in the campaign in Volhynia. He was then assigned as an accounting officer in the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Second Brigade. On the night of February 15–16, 1918, he took part in the famous breakthrough of the Second Brigade of the Polish Legions, led by Colonel Józef Haller, across the Austrian front near Rarańcza, where he distinguished himself through exceptional bravery. In May 1918, he fought in the Battle of Kaniow, narrowly avoiding capture. During his movements through central Ukraine, he was arrested twice by local Ukrainians forces but escaped on both occasions. He eventually reached Kyiv and reported to the Polish Stage Command. In July, he joined the Recruitment and Agitation Organization of the Polish Corps in the East (Organizacja Werbunkowo-Agitacyjna Korpusów Polskich na Wschodzie, OWA). Under the assumed name Mieczysław Kozarzewski, he became deputy commander of its regional unit in Vinnytsia and also served as an intelligence officer. His duties included organizing anti-Austrian propaganda and helping Polish soldiers

in the Russian army transfer to Polish units in southern Russia. In January 1919, he was assigned to the 4th Rifle Division under General Lucjan Żeligowski. While traveling to his new post, he was briefly captured again by Ukrainian forces but escaped and reached Odessa, where he served as a liaison officer. In June 1919, he returned to Poland with the division via Romania.

After Poland regained its independence, Mieczysław Szumański served in the 48th Borderland Rifle Regiment of the 11th Infantry Division in the newly reconstituted Polish Army. His duties included those of quartermaster, paymaster, and intelligence officer. He took part in the incorporation of part of Pomerania into Poland and later in the Polish–Soviet War of 1920. He particularly distinguished himself in combat near the village of Halecze Pole, where, on July 4, 1920, he singlehandedly repelled an enemy assault with machine-gun fire, enabling the safe withdrawal of the 12th Company. He also participated in the siege of Fort Beniaminów near Zegrze and in the battle of Małoryta.

### **4. The interwar period: service in military geography and cartography**

For his bravery in various battles, Szumański was promoted to lieutenant in January 1921. After the war's conclusion, he remained in active service and, upon completing additional military training courses, advanced to the rank of captain in June 1922. Within his regiment, he commanded several subunits, earning a reputation for discipline and professionalism. In 1923, Szumański passed the high school exit examination (in Polish: *matura*) at the Gymnasium in Stanisławów. Later that year, following a competitive selection process, he was seconded to the Officers' School of Topographers at the WIG in Warsaw. Completing the program in September 1925, he graduated second in a class of thirty-four students and began work in the Institute's Topographical Department.

From 1928 until the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, Captain Szumański – promoted to major in 1930 and to lieutenant colonel in March 1939 – served as Commandant of the Officers' School of Topographers. His duties included, among others, supervising officer-trainees conducting topographical sur-

veys across regions such as Vilnius, Grodno, Pomerania, the Chornohora Mountains, and the Bielskie Tatras. Colonel Józef Kreutzinger, his superior at the WIG, described him with a singular praise: "A man of noble character, objective and fair, a soldier through and through – he belongs among the most distinguished officers of the Corps of Geographers." Throughout his career at the Institute, Szumański consistently received *very good* or *outstanding* evaluations, with superiors noting his diligence, intelligence, and exceptional aptitude in topography (Gałęzowski, 2005).

Elected chairman of the Geographical Section of the Society of Military Knowledge in 1931, Szumański was also active in veterans' and legionnaire organizations, particularly within the Association of Polish Legionnaires and the Circle of Soldiers of the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Polish Legions (Gałęzowski, 2005).

### 5. The September 1939 Campaign, internment in Hungary and escape from the camp

In the summer of 1939, Lt. Col. Mieczysław Szumański, together with officers and cadets of the Officers' School of Topographers, conducted field training in Jaworzyna. They returned to Warsaw on August 31, the day before the outbreak of the war. During the evacuation of the WIG to Lviv, Szumański commanded the First War Survey Unit, which on September 6 joined the Lublin Army under General Tadeusz Piskor. On September 17, they arrived in Kovel. The following day, his unit received orders to clear a path for the army staff. In Putotyry, near Brzeżany, they encountered Russian forces and were dispersed. According to Lt. Col. Szumański's account, the dramatic events of the night of September 18 unfolded as follows:

"General Piskor approached me and gave the order that the Survey Unit should clear the way for the army staff. The unit set out around midnight, was soon attacked, and subsequently dispersed by a Russian cavalry detachment. Among the fallen were Captains Jan Andrzejowski, Jan Chruściel, and Leopold Reiff, while Captain Bolesław Tuora was seriously wounded." (Sobczyński, 2021, p. 4)

The surviving officers and soldiers of the First War Survey Unit made their way by night toward the Hungarian border, which they crossed

at the turn of September and October 1939. In Hungary, they were likely interned at the Nagykánizsa penal camp.

In August 1941, Szumański escaped from the internment camp, and by the end of September, he had made his way back to Poland, guided by the courier S. Frączysty (Gałęzowski, 2005). During this period of German occupation, Szumański became actively involved in the establishment and operations of the Camp of Fighting Poland (Obóz Polski Walczącej, OPW). He joined its Supreme Council and assumed leadership of the organization's Technical Department, which he directed. The department oversaw, among other things, three printing houses. During this period, he used the pseudonyms "Biały" and "Dyrektor" (J. Szumański, 2019).

### 6. Home army geographic service, code-named "Schronisko"

Beginning in February 1942, Lt. Col. M. Szumański began his service in the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK). In November of that year, he was appointed head of the Geographic Service, code-named "Schronisko" (in English: Shelter), which operated within the IV Quartermaster Section of the Home Army High Command (IV Oddział Kwatermistrzowski Komendy Głównej AK). The beginnings of Szumański's service were recalled by Edward Rühle, pseudonym "Gozdawa," later "Zawrat":

"In February 1943, I received orders to make contact with an officer from the [prewar] Military Geographical Institute (WIG) who had arrived in Warsaw. The officer, who introduced himself as "Bury," proved to be an outstanding expert in topographic and cartographic matters. Later, I realized that my interlocutor was Lt. Col. Mieczysław Szumański, who before the war had served as commander of the Officers' School of Topographers of the WIG." (Sobczyński, 2014, p. 12)

As head of the clandestine Geographic Service, Lt. Col. Szumański adopted the surname Kozarzewski – which he had previously used in 1918 in Vinnytsia, Ukraine – and the pseudonym "Bury". Fully aware of the challenges before him, he requested four months to assess the situation, declaring: "After four months, I will ask to be relieved and transferred elsewhere if I fail in the department entrusted to me"

(Szumański, 1955, p. 6). In its initial phase, "Schronisko" continued the work previously carried out by a small cartographic unit that had operated within the structures of the Service for Poland's Victory (Służba Zwycięstwu Polski, SZP) and the Union of Armed Struggle (Związek Walki Zbrojnej, ZWZ), led by Edward Rühle (Nakielski, 1985; Rühle & Tyski, 1989). The organization gradually expanded both its scope and scale. Alongside ongoing underground operations, Szumański focused on developing a detailed organizational structure for the service and establishing principles to guide its activities under occupation. During this period, he concentrated on collecting maps and maintaining clandestine printing houses where maps were reproduced. By July 1944, three such workshops and eight map depots were operating. At that time, the command of the Geographic Service included seven permanent staff members and three others working in the central map depot (Krassowski, 1981). Altogether, Szumański's records listed twenty-five officer-geographers and approximately 150 cartographers, draftsmen, chemigraphers, printers – most of them former WIG personnel. He also secured the cooperation of specialists from the prewar Polish Geological Institute (Państwowy Instytut Geologiczny, PIG) and the Ministry of Communications (Ministerstwo Komunikacji, MK, Krassowski, 1981). Detailed information on "Schronisko's" internal organization and personnel structure is provided by Sobczyński (2014) and Krassowski (1981), who list its sections, assigned staff, and describe their respective responsibilities.

In summary, as head of "Schronisko", Lt. Col. Szumański oversaw the topographic and cartographic support of military operations, including direct assistance to combat units in the field. His responsibilities encompassed training personnel for field geodetic, mathematical, and cartographic work; producing maps required for military operations; establishing printing workshops for map reproduction; and organizing an underground network based on the former WIG personnel (Krassowski, 1981; cited in Gałęzowski, 2005, p. 713).

In addition to these tasks, "Schronisko" also conducted topographic intelligence on German military facilities, including railway junctions, airfields, bridges, training grounds, and military camps, as well as their security arrangements

(Gałęzowski, 2005). Particular attention was devoted to bridges. Three groups carried out this work: the first, led by E. Rühle, focused on bridges over the Dnieper, Dniester, Bug, Niemen, upper Vistula, San, and Pilica rivers; the second, directed by S.Z. Różycki, monitored military facilities along the Warta, Noteć, and northern Vistula rivers; and the third, composed of former WIG officers – Maj. S. Berberysz and Capts. J. Darek and F. Nowicki – was responsible for bridges over the Vistula in Warsaw and Modlin (Butowski, 2018).

Regarding Lt. Col. Mieczysław Szumański's service as head of "Schronisko", it should be emphasized that throughout the existence of its extensive network – including printing houses and map depots – there was not a single instance of compromise. This remarkable record attests to his exceptional preparation for clandestine operations. Szumański had mastered the principles of secrecy and gained valuable experience during his earlier work with the OWA and later the OPW. According to his son Jerzy (Butowski, 2018), he considered this achievement one of his greatest successes and took great pride in it.

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out on August 1, 1944, the staff of "Schronisko" assembled at their office at 20 Chłodna Street in Warsaw. The command was divided into two groups: a larger one led by Szumański and a smaller one under Rühle. Their mission was to supply fighting units with maps and, after the insurgents captured the WIG building, to secure the technical equipment and cartographic materials stored there. Lt. Col. Szumański's group initially remained at the Chłodna Street office before relocating to other sites. In September 1944, the group was disbanded as a separate unit, and its members were reassigned to various Home Army formations in central Warsaw (Krassowski, 1981). During the fighting, Szumański was wounded by the explosion of a German glass mine. His son Jerzy later recalled that shortly after the war, while in France, doctors removed fifty-three small fragments from his father's body (J. [Jerzy] Szumański, n.d.). After the fall of the uprising, Szumański was sent to Oflag II C Woldenberg (now Dobiegniew, Poland), from which he was evacuated with the so-called "East" column and liberated by the Red Army on January 30, 1945.

## 7. Postwar anti-communist conspiracy

After returning to Poland in July 1945, Lt. Col. Szumański participated in a briefing of senior Home Army officers. Subsequently, by order of Colonel Jan Rzepecki, the clandestine Delegate of the Armed Forces in Poland, he was sent to Wrocław to organize the local anti-communist underground structures of the Armed Forces Delegation for Poland (*Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych*, DSZ, Gałęzowski, 2005). Szumański's son, Jerzy, who accompanied him, later recalled his father's decision to engage in postwar underground activity and their relocation to Wrocław as follows:

"When my father returned to Warsaw, he told us that he was returning to clandestine work. At that time, my mother remained in Brwinów (near Warsaw) because my father did not want to put her at risk, while he and I went to Wrocław. He conducted his clandestine activities there, and I was studying at the Wrocław University of Technology. I had no intention of leaving Poland, but unfortunately, the UB [Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, the communist secret political police] infiltrated the clandestine organization *Freedom and Independence* (Wolność i Niezawisłość, WiN), and my father received orders to go abroad." (Archiwum Historii Mówionej, n.d.)

After the establishment of WiN – the largest Polish postwar civic-military clandestine anti-communist organization – Lt. Col. Mieczysław Szumański assumed the position of head of the Wrocław "East" District. At that time, he used the pseudonyms "Bystrzyc" or "Bystrzec" and "Wolski," as well as the name Mieczysław Kozarzewski. In his work, Szumański "took great care to adhere to the fundamental rules of clandestinity and, it seems, wished to remain well concealed even from some members of the district leadership" (Balbus, 2003, as cited in Gałęzowski, 2005, p. 714). After the Jelenia Góra District of WiN was dismantled by the UB in July 1946, and facing the threat of arrest, Lt. Col. Szumański disbanded the structures under his command, obtaining approval for this decision from WiN president Colonel Niepokulczycki. According to Balbus, Szumański's decision was influenced by the impossibility of achieving WiN's objectives; as a result, "he at least wished to protect the people under his command and himself from severe communist

repression, which was in fact largely achieved" (as cited in Gałęzowski, 2005, p. 715). His true identity was never discovered by the security services, nor was it revealed during the trials of WiN activists. Lt. Col. Szumański likely left Wrocław on September 8, 1946, and subsequently, together with his son, crossed the green border – through Slovakia, Czechia, and Austria – into the English occupation zone in Germany.

## 8. Emigration to France

At the beginning of 1947, the leadership of WiN considered sending the Szumańskis (father and son) to either England or France. Ultimately, it was decided that they would go to France, where they arrived in May 1947 and settled in the Paris region. Upon arrival, Lt. Col. Szumański established contacts with the Foreign Delegation of WiN. According to his own account (1970), he soon withdrew from it and ceased political activity (Gałęzowski, 2005). However, this claim is not fully corroborated by the accounts of his son Jerzy, who recalled that his father maintained contacts for many years with the leadership of the WiN Delegation in Paris – including Colonel Janusz Bokszczanin and Lt. Col. Zbigniew Solski – as well as in London (J. [Jerzy] Szumański, n.d.).

The atmosphere of uncertainty and the sense of threat from Soviet agents that accompanied Szumański during his first years in France is reflected in his frequent changes of residence (many documents in the family archive attest to his registration at various addresses in Paris and in nearby towns). He was also concerned for the safety of his wife and sister, who remained in Poland. Fortunately, thanks to a staged divorce, his wife was able to avoid more serious threats, aside from the confiscation of her passport and the loss of her British citizenship (J. [Jerzy] Szumański, n.d.).

Mieczysław Szumański's living situation stabilized somewhat in 1949, when he began working at the French National Geographic Institute (Institut Géographique National, IGN), a position made possible by prewar contacts between the Polish WIG and the IGN. The decisive factor in obtaining the position, however, was Szumański's exceptional knowledge of Polish geography – particularly the prewar eastern borderlands – combined with outstanding cartographic skills. Consequently, he

primarily worked on maps of Eastern Europe, making corrections and additions, and independently prepared maps of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939) as well as the Polish People's Republic (1944–1989). It is also quite likely that French intelligence made use of his cartographic work. Szumański remained at the IGN until 1965. According to the recollections of his son Jerzy, despite this apparent stability, Szumański and a group of his closest collaborators from WiN continued to harbor thoughts of returning to Poland. Ultimately, they abandoned these hopes in the 1950s.

### 9. Contributions to modern military history

While in exile, Mieczysław Szumański was active in numerous veterans' and Polish émigré organizations, including the Polish Historical and Literary Society in Paris, the Polish Scientific Society, and the Józef Piłsudski Institute in London. He was also the author of numerous works on modern military history. Even before the war, he had contributed to the collective monograph *Rarańcza* (1933) with a section titled *Rozwój ruchu niepodległościowego pod wpływem czynu II Brygady* (*The Development of the Independence Movement under the Influence of the Actions of the Second Brigade*). Together with Tadeusz Malinowski, he also co-authored volume 2. *Pułk Piechoty Legionów Polskich. Część I: Karpaty* (*The History of the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Polish Legions. Volume I: Carpathians*, 1939), which included a volume of maps and sketches. Manuscripts of Mieczysław Szumański's works are preserved at the Józef Piłsudski Institute in London (Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego). These include *Professor Eugeniusz Romer. Założyciel Polskiej Szkoły Geograficznej* (*Professor Eugeniusz Romer The Founder of the Polish Geographical School*), *Garść wspomnień z lat 1910–1914* (*A Handful of Memories from the Years 1910–1914*), *POW Komenda Naczelną* (*Polish Military Organization, POW: The Supreme Command*), and *Sprostowanie historyczne o ostatnich latach Rydza-Śmigłego* (*A Historical Correction Regarding the Last Years of Rydz-Śmigły*; see Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego w Londynie, n.d.). He was also the author of *Wspomnienia z zaczątków skautingu we Lwowie z lat 1910–1914* (*Memoirs from the Beginnings of Scouting in*

*Lwów, 1910–1914*), written between 1963 and 1967 and published posthumously in the émigré journal *Niepodległość* in 1976.

### 10. Mieczysław Szumański's private life

The private and family life of Mieczysław Szumański was inseparably intertwined with – and largely subordinated to – his military service and clandestine activities, to which he devoted himself entirely. In October 1923, he married Maria Robinson, who came from a Polish–Scottish family that had settled in the south-eastern borderlands (Kresy) of Poland before the World War I. The wedding took place in Stanisławów, where Captain Szumański was then serving with the 48th Infantry Regiment. A year later, on August 4, 1924, their only son, Jerzy, was born. He would later become a member of the Polish resistance during World War II, a participant in the Warsaw Uprising, and, after the war, a member of the WiN.

Soon afterward, Mieczysław Szumański, together with his wife and son, moved to Warsaw, where he took a position at the WIG. The family initially lived in officers' quarters located in a former Tsarist cavalry barracks on Agrykola Street – today 7a Szwoleżerów Street. In the early 1930s, they moved to a modern and comfortable apartment in the newly constructed Officers' House of the Military Housing Fund (Dom Oficerski Funduszu Kwaterunku Wojskowego) at 79a Koszykowa Street. Both buildings survived the turmoil of World War II and continue to serve as a residential property to this day.

According to the memoirs of Jerzy Szumański (Archiwum Historii Mówionej, n.d.), during the interwar period the family lived in prosperity, despite the fact that Maria Szumańska did not work professionally. Mieczysław's officer's salary ensured not only financial stability but also a degree of comfort – it allowed the family to take vacations and to employ a housemaid. Jerzy, meanwhile, attended a prestigious secondary school, which educated the children of Polish military officers.

During this period, in addition to his literary activity and involvement in veteran organizations associated with the Legions, Mieczysław Szumański pursued painting as an amateur passion. Several of his oil paintings and sketches – some dating from his “Wrocław period” – have survived to the present day and

are held in the suburban Paris residence of Agnieszka Szumańska, the wife of Jerzy, Mieczysław's son.

Everything changed with the outbreak of the war. After escaping from the internment camp in Hungary and returning to Warsaw in 1942, Mieczysław Szumański became involved in underground resistance activities. For the safety of his wife and son – who was also active in the resistance – he limited contact with them to an absolute minimum. Years later, his son Jerzy recalled that between 1942 and 1944, he saw his father only two or three times.

After the war, fate and a sense of duty to his homeland prevented the family from reuniting. Due to Szumański's involvement in the structures of WiN, his wife, Maria, remained in Warsaw, while he and his son continued their underground activities in Wrocław. In the autumn of 1946, however, the threat of exposure forced them to flee Poland. A year later, Mieczysław Szumański settled in France, unaware that he would remain there for the rest of his life. He was never able to return to his homeland. Szumański passed away on April 29, 1973, in Lailly-en-Val and was buried in the cemetery in Triguères.

## 11. Honoring and commemoration

Lieutenant Colonel Mieczysław Szumański was decorated throughout his life with numerous orders and medals, including the Silver Cross of the War Order of Virtuti Militari (Krzyż Srebrny Orderu Wojennego Virtuti Militari), the Cross of Independence (Krzyż Niepodległości), the Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta (Krzyż Oficerski Orderu Odrodzenia Polski), the Cross of Valour (Krzyż Walecznych), awarded four times, the Gold Cross of Merit (Złoty Krzyż Zasługi), the Commemorative Medal for the War of 1918–1921 (Medal Pamiątkowy za Wojnę 1918–1921), the Medal of the Tenth Anniversary of Regained Independence (Medal Dziesięciolecia Odzyskanej Niepodległości), and the French Commemorative Medal of the War of 1914–1918 (*Médaille commémorative de la guerre 1914–1918*).

Lieutenant Colonel Mieczysław Szumański, buried in exile, remained for decades a figure known almost exclusively within relatively narrow academic circles of historians – and even among geographers. Only recently has

his legacy been rediscovered and honored. In 2023, Lt. Col. Szumański was named the patron of the 22nd Military Cartographic Center in Komorów, in recognition of his contributions to military cartography and his efforts in the struggle for Poland's independence. A street in the town was also named in his honor. At the same time, an initiative was launched to repatriate Colonel Szumański's remains, so that he could be laid to rest in the officers' section in Komorów.

## 12. Cartographic activities of “Schronisko”

Given the specialist focus of this journal on cartographic studies, this section is devoted specifically to the mapping activities of “*Schronisko*”. In response to the growing needs of partisan units, “Schronisko” initiated its own map production. These maps were prepared at three scales: 1:25,000, 1:100,000, and 1:300,000 (Krassowski, 1981). Because of the diversity of source materials, various reproduction techniques were employed. For maps at the scale of 1:25,000, four principal methods were used:

- Updating (in Polish: *unacześnianie*): this process incorporated intelligence gathered through cartographic reconnaissance. One such result was a map of Warsaw showing 179 German-occupied sites (Figure 1). It bore the acronym BOM, derived from the pseudonyms of its creators: “Bury” (Lt. Col. M. Szumański), “Ogończyk” (Lt. Eng. S. Twardowski), and “Maks” (printer C. Śmieciński).
- Photo-offset reproduction: this technique was applied to produce twelve map sheets.
- Montage: used in preparing city plans of Bydgoszcz, Poznań, and Lviv.
- Photochemical enlargement: employed where prewar 1:25,000 maps were unavailable for fifteen cities designated for participation in Operation Burza (Tempest).

Maps at the scale of 1:100,000 covered five major areas: Vilnius Region (21 sheets), Podlasie (14), Volhynia (25), the Vistula River corridor from Warsaw to Starogard (22), and the central area including Łódź, Radom, Oświęcim, and Sandomierz (33). Additionally, owing to the location of the prisoner-of-war camp in Woldenberg (Dobiegiew), two sheets depicting regions of Germany – around Wałcz and Strzelce – were produced. The 1:300,000-scale

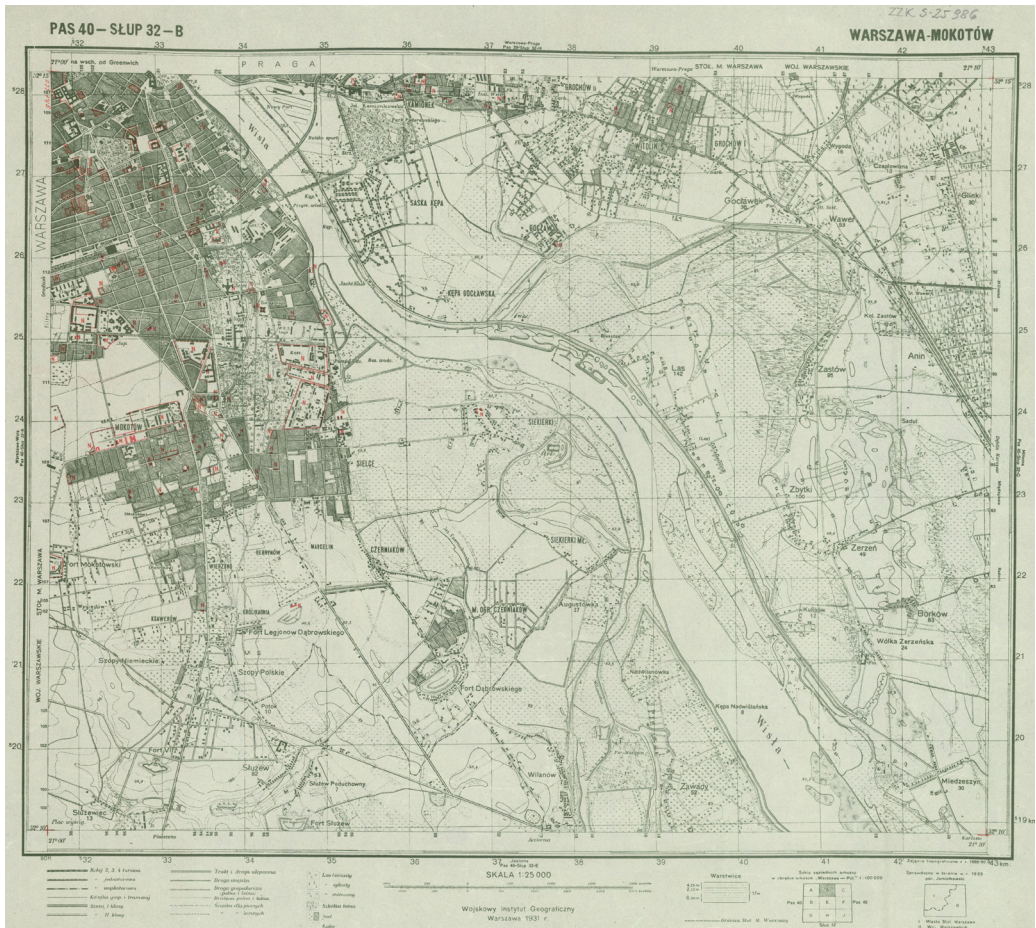


Figure 1. Warsaw–Mokotów Map. Row 40, Column 32–B, wartime underground edition produced by the Map Service of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa), code-named “Schronisko” (“Shelter”), bearing the clandestine signature BOM. Edition of 1943 (National Library, ZZK S-25 986)

maps included both domestic and selected foreign areas. Within Poland, they depicted the regions of Lublin, Nowy Sącz, Łomża, and Suwałki–Kaunas. Although a Białystok sheet was prepared, it was likely never issued. All map series were printed in editions of approximately 1,000 copies. “Schronisko” also produced 1:100,000-scale maps of territories in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary where prisoner-of-war camps were located.

Summarizing “Schronisko’s” publishing output, Krassowski (1981) reports that between 1943 and the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising

in 1944, four graphic workshops issued a total of 174 map sheets: 34 detailed maps and city plans at the scale of 1:25,000, 117 tactical maps at 1:100,000, and 23 operational maps at 1:300,000.

In light of the above findings, it is worth citing Szumański’s own account regarding the supply of maps to Home Army units – both in the vicinity of Warsaw and across a broader area, including the Vilnius Region, Volhynia, Eastern Lesser Poland, Greater Poland, and even parts of Germany. The results of the Geographic Service’s operations in this respect were highly satis-

factory. In his 1955 typescript *Wojskowe Prace Geograficzne Armii Krajowej (Military Geographic Work of the Home Army)*, Szumański (1955) wrote:

“When in July 1943 I submitted the first report on the team’s work to Colonel Denhoff [Szumański’s superior in the Home Army High Command], our depots already contained reproduced maps that filled the most critical gaps, and maps were being sent into the field after several redistribution operations, covering the Home Army units’ requirements not by 20% or 50% as before, but by 100%, and in some cases by 200%.” (p. 12)

### 13. In lieu of a summary

In conclusion, the life of Mieczysław Szumański – officer, cartographer, resistance fighter, and devoted patriot – was marked by extraordinary events that could fill multiple biographies. From the recollections of his son Jerzy, he sometimes appears as a stern, even authoritarian father, yet one who rigorously adhered

to the principles he imposed upon himself – principles that, in many cases, may have saved the lives of those closest to him. Fully devoted to the service of his homeland, Szumański sacrificed personal and family life in pursuit of duty, courageously navigating the shadows and lights that defined his existence, as aptly captured in the title of Jerzy’s memoir (J. [Jerzy] Szumański, n.d.), *Ombres et lumières (Shadows and Lights)*. As a cartographer, he transformed maps into instruments of both struggle and service, demonstrating professionalism, humility, and unwavering loyalty to the highest values. For contemporary military and civilian cartographers, he remains a model of excellence. For geographers, he serves as a reminder that some individuals not only studied space but actively shaped it – often against the tide of history, yet always with an eye toward the future. Despite his extraordinary achievements, Szumański remains relatively unknown, not only outside historical circles but also among Polish and foreign geographers. It is precisely to address this gap and bring wider recognition to his legacy that this article has been written.

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