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World War I and the Struggle for the Borders of the Second Polish Republic as Turning Points in the Lives of Stefania Zakrzewska and Janina Zakrzewska – Social and Patriotic Activists Based in Kalisz

Pierwsza wojna światowa i walki o granice II Rzeczypospolitej jako czas przełomu w życiu Stefanii i Janiny Zakrzewskich – kaliskich działaczek społecznych i patriotycznych

Abstract: Stefania Zakrzewska and Janina Zakrzewska, mother and daughter, were Polish social and patriotic activists working in Kalisz during the First World War and the interwar period. The outbreak of war and the destruction of Kalisz by the Germans prompted Stefania to become active in various aid and patriotic organisations. She became involved in the charitable Civic Committee and later in the Central Welfare Council. In addition, Stefania joined the Polish Women's League of War Emergency Service. Working in secrecy, she helped organise aid for Polish legionnaires interned in Szczypiorno. Her daughter, Janina, followed in her footsteps. After the end of the First World War, Stefania first ran the Polish Military Hospital in Kalisz and later organised soldiers' social centres. Janina assisted her mother but also continued

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her education. After passing her secondary school-leaving examinations (*matura*), she enrolled in the Warsaw School of Economics. In 1936, she published her diploma thesis, *Reconstruction of Kalisz after the Great War*. Both women remained socially active throughout the interwar period.

Keywords: Stefania Zakrzewska, Janina Zakrzewska, social activist, Kalisz, Polish Women's League of War Emergency Service.

Stefania and Janina Zakrzewska, a mother and daughter, were social activists during the First World War and the interwar period. Yet, despite their contributions, they remain little known and are rarely mentioned in historical studies. While Janina Zakrzewska, the author of the 1936 book *Odbudowa Kalisza po Wielkiej Wojnie*¹ (*The Reconstruction of Kalisz after the Great War*), is occasionally cited in publications on the city and its architecture,² none of the scholars who have referenced her work have undertaken a biographical study of her life. This chapter aims to rectify that omission by presenting the life stories of these two women, who participated in social and patriotic activism during the First World War and continued their efforts during Poland's fight for independence and in the years that followed. To uncover their stories, the research was conducted using historical archives, family records, and existing literature. The study employs methodological approaches common in pedagogical and historical research, specifically the monographic and biographical methods, with document analysis as the main technique.

1 J. Zakrzewska, *Odbudowa Kalisza po Wielkiej Wojnie*, Kalisz 1936.

2 For example: M. Drewicz, *Kalisz w czasach pożogi i nienawiści. Autorskie spojrzenie na sierpień 1914*, „Zeszyty Kaliskiego Towarzystwa Genealogicznego KALISIA”, 3 (2013/2014) pp. 44–47; A. Kadłuczka, *Wieś i miasteczko polskie w Niepodległej i po 100 latach*, „Wiadomości Konserwatorskie”, 56 (2018) p. 97; M. A. Woźniak, *Kalisz – Leuven. Pogrom miast w 1914 roku*, „Polonia Maior Orientalis”, 1 (2014) p. 31; S. Wróblewski, *Odbudowa zespołów staromiejskich – wybrane zagadnienia dotyczące współczesnych realizacji w Polsce*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Państwowej Szkoły Zawodowej im. Witelona w Legnicy”, 9 (2013) p. 90; T. Zadrożny, *Strategie propagandowych batalii. Ochrona zabytków w czasie działań wojennych w ujęciu Corneliusa Gurlitta w dobie konferencji w Brukseli w 1915 roku*, „Rocznik Historii Sztuki”, 40 (2015) p. 24.

Stefania Zakrzewska was born on 26 August 1874 in Zadworna Wieś, also known as Tuliszków,³ in the Russian Partition of Poland. The year 2024 thus marks the 150th anniversary of her birth. She came from a family with a strong patriotic tradition. Her father, Antoni Freytag (1840–1919), and his brother, Lucjan Freytag (1842–1916), were both insurgents in the January Uprising of 1863. Antoni, holding the rank of lieutenant, served in an intelligence unit under the command of Marian Langiewicz, and took part in the battles of Lubartów (22–23 January 1863) and Małogoszcz (24 February 1863). Wounded in the latter, he was captured by Russian forces and imprisoned in Lublin for four months. Initially sentenced to exile in Siberia, he ultimately avoided deportation thanks to the intervention of the Zamoyski family, for whom he had previously worked on the Kozłowiecki estate. Later, he was employed as a forester in the Tuliszków estate.⁴

Lucjan Freytag, who had been a land tenant before the uprising, fought in the unit of Michał Heydenreich, known as 'Kruk', or possibly under the command of Karol Krysiński. He participated in the battle of Żyrzyn on 8 August 1863, where he sustained a neck injury. Although he managed to evade capture, he was forced into hiding for a considerable time to avoid Russian persecution. Eventually, he settled in Trzebień and later in Częstochowa.⁵ Stefania's mother, Julianna

- 3 Military Historical Bureau in Warsaw (hereafter: WBH), Collection of Personal and Award Files (hereafter: KAPiO), Stefania Zakrzewska, ref. MN 16.03.1933, Questionnaire of the Committee for the Cross and Medal of Independence, 1933 [exact date unknown], n.p.
- 4 Antoni Freytag was the son of Karol Freytag (1815–1901) from Janów Podlaski and Marianna née Perkowska from Jeżewo. He married Julianna née Kłopotowska (1846–1922). See Kielakowie.com, <https://kielakowie.com/getperson.php?personID=I85310&tree=tree381>, accessed: 15.07.2023; MyHeritage, https://www.myheritage.pl/names/antoni_freytag, accessed: 15.07.2023; J. Durka, *Stefan Zakrzewski (1898–1934) – żołnierz Legionów Polskich i oficer zawodowy Wojska Polskiego*, „*Polonia Maior Orientalis*”, 10 (2023) pp. 385–396, DOI: 10.4467/27204006PMO.23.020.17793; H. Mościcki, *Pomniki bojowników o niepodległość 1794–1863*, Warszawa 1929, pp. 151, 300; M. Sobczak-Waliś, G. Waliś, *Miejsca pamięci powstania styczniowego na terenie powstańczego województwa kaliskiego*, Kalisz 2013, pp. 41–42.
- 5 M. Sobczak-Waliś, G. Waliś, *Miejsca pamięci powstania styczniowego*, p. 21; H. Mościcki, *Pomniki bojowników o niepodległość*, p. 195, 303; J. Durka, *Stefan Zakrzewski (1898–1934) – żołnierz Legionów Polskich*, p. 386; J. Maliszewski, *Postanie styczniowe. Notatki biograficzne uczestników*, Warszawa 1932, p. 25; J. Sętowski, *Cmentarz Kule w Częstochowie. Przewodnik biograficzny*, Częstochowa 2005, p. 79; idem, *Powstańcy*

(1846–1922), was the daughter of Bartłomiej Kłopotowski and Justyna Karolina Łancka. Through her grandfather's family, Stefania was related to Edmund Kłopotowski (1888–1936), a social and independence activist and vice-president of the Maritime and Colonial League. She was also connected to Stefan Jakub Kłopotowski (1886–1940), who was murdered in the Katyn Massacre.⁶

When discussing Stefania's family, we should mention that her aunt, Apolonia Freytag,⁷ the sister of Antoni and Lucjan, married Stanisław Ponikowski, an official of the Land Credit Society. Given that the Ponikowskis lived in Siedlce—where Stefania also studied—it is likely that she maintained a close relationship with her uncle and aunt. Apolonia and Stanisław are perhaps best known as the parents of Antoni Ponikowski (1878–1949), a civil engineer, independence activist, member of the National League, Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education, and later Poland's Prime Minister and Senator during the interwar period.⁸

styczniowi 1863–1864 na cmentarzach częstochowskich: Kule, św. Rocha i ewangelicko-augsburskim. Biogramy, „Rocznik Muzeum Częstochowskiego”, 2011/2012, p. 125–126;

- 6 Information from the entry concerning Maria Kluczyńska née Kłopotowska, sister of Justyna Karolina: MyHeritage, https://www.myheritage.pl/names/maria_k%C5%82opotowski, accessed: 15.07.2023; M. J. Minakowski, *Genealogia potomków Sejmu Wielkiego*, <http://www.sejm-wielki.pl/b/katyn.5634>, accessed: 15.07.2023.
- 7 Apolonia Ponikowska (1850–1931) was the daughter of Karol Freytag and his second wife, Maria née Kozłowska vel Kotowska. See kielakowie.com.
- 8 M. Faryś, *Pierwszy gabinet Antoniego Ponikowskiego, 19 września 1921 – 5 marca 1922*, in: *Od Moraczewskiego do Składkowskiego. Gabinety Polski Odrodzonej 1918–1939*, eds. idem, A. Wątor, H. Walczak, Szczecin 2011, pp. 91–100; M. Faryś, *Drugi gabinet Antoniego Ponikowskiego, 10 marca – 6 czerwca 1922*, in: *Od Moraczewskiego do Składkowskiego*, pp. 101–110; W. Piasek, *Antoni Ponikowski (1878–1949)*, in: *Premierzy i ministrowie Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1918–1939*, eds. Z. Girzyński, J. Kłaczek, W. Piasek, Warszawa 2023, pp. 493–495; S. Konarski, *Ponikowski Antoni (1878–1949)*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 27, eds. E. Rostworowski, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź 1983, pp. 498–501; S. Łoza, *Czy wiesz kto to jest?*, Warszawa 1938, vol. 1, p. 588. He had already served as a minister in the governments of the Regency Council and, from 27 February to 4 April 1918, as interim prime minister. See numerous documents in: *O niepodległą i granice. Protokoły posiedzeń rządów Rady Regencyjnej Królestwa Polskiego 1917–1918*, vol. 1–2, eds. M. Jabłonowski, M. Jabłonowski, W. Janowski, G. Sołtysiak, Warszawa 2019–2020; J. Durka, *Janusz Radziwiłł 1880–1967. Biografia polityczna*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 60–63.

Stefania is believed to have briefly attended Wanda Wierchlejska's school for girls in Konin⁹ before moving to Siedlce, where she completed her secondary education at what was most likely Konstancja Zembrzuska's Girls' Gymnasium. The decision to study there was almost certainly deliberate, but it remains unclear whether the Ponikowskis provided her with any support, and if so, to what extent. No records exist of her social or political activities in Siedlce, although student circles in the town were already engaged in underground patriotic movements before Stefania enrolled at the gymnasium. Given her later activism and her father's and uncle's history of resistance, it is possible that she had contact with these clandestine groups. However, she made no mention of such involvement when she applied for the Independence Medal in the 1930s, although this might have strengthened her case for the honour.¹⁰

In 1897, Stefania married Ludwik Zakrzewski.¹¹ Little is known about her life between school and marriage, but she most likely lived with her parents and may have taken on paid work. At the end of the 19th century, a young woman with a gymnasium education could enter careers such as a governess, nurse, or junior civil servant. Ludwik Zakrzewski initially worked as a commune clerk in Grodziec. He came from a noble family that had experienced financial decline—as indicated by his grandfather Hipolit Zakrzewski's 1831 marriage certificate, which describes him as 'nobly born' but employed as a cook. It is likely that Hipolit worked as an estate chef, much like his son, Józef, who later worked as a chef for Count Józef Skarbek in Osiećiny. Ludwik's mother, Rozalia Sławińska, was also employed at the estate as a housekeeper.

- 9 This is evidenced by an entry by Wanda Wierchlejska in the diary of Stefania Zakrzewska, undated but placed between entries from 1892 and 1894. Family collections are in the possession of Anna Majewska-Rau, *Pamiętnik Stefanii Zakrzewskiej*, b.p.
- 10 WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Stefania, sign. MN 16.03.1933, *Kwestionariusz Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości z 1933 r.*, b.p.
- 11 State Archive in Poznań, Konin Branch (Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu Oddział w Koninie), Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej Tuliszków, sign. 40, Akt małżeństwa Ludwika Zakrzewskiego, syna Józefa i Rozalii z domu Sławińskiej i Stefanii Freytag, córki Antoniego i Julianny Kłopotowskiej – wpis 52/1897.

Ludwik broke away from this family occupational tradition by becoming a civil servant and achieving considerable financial success through property investments in Kalisz.¹² At the turn of the 20th century, Kalisz was experiencing rapid economic growth. Despite being under Russian rule, its proximity to the German Empire made it a hub for commerce and industry. The city saw an increasing number of enterprises benefiting from the development of cross-border rail links, particularly the Warsaw-Kalisz railway.¹³ Alongside its Polish population, Kalisz was home to a thriving and enterprising Jewish community, an economically active German minority, and a growing Russian presence due to the imperial administration and military garrison. In this multicultural city, with strong economic prospects for further growth,¹⁴ property investment proved to be a highly lucrative venture.¹⁵

In 1910, Ludwik Zakrzewski, in partnership with a group of investors, purchased a property at 2 Poprzeczno-Dobrzecka Street (later 2 Poznańska Street). However, by December of that year, he had bought out most of the other investors, becoming the principal owner. Although Zakrzewski pursued several similar ventures, one particularly ambitious urban project was his involvement in an investment company with Edmund Sikorski. Together, they collaborated with W. Heiman's firm to construct a private street measuring approximately 12 metres in width and 660 metres in length. This plan included installing infrastructure such as storm drainage, paving, street lighting, and pavements, as well as rows of newly planted trees. Once the development was completed, the partners sold off prime building plots at a profit.

For the Zakrzewski family, however, the property at 2 Poprzeczno-Dobrzecka remained the most significant acquisition. Ownership of the estate was retained for many years, with Ludwik Zakrzewski and Szlama Gelb listed

12 J. Durka, *Stefan Zakrzewski (1898–1934) – żołnierz Legionów Polskich*, p. 386.

13 B. Jarosz, M. Płóciennik, *130 lat kolei w Ostrowie 1875–2005*, Ostrow Wielkopolski 2005, p. 31.

14 S. Przygodzki, *Kalisz wielokulturowy*, Kalisz 2012, pp. 14–16, 30–36, 70–77, 108–109.

15 For a broader discussion on the city's development in this regard, see: M. Górzyński, *Miasto, społeczeństwo, przyszłość: architektura i przestrzeń nowoczesności Kalisza przełomu XIX–XX wieku*, doctoral dissertation prepared under the supervision of B. Arciszewska, Instytut Historii Sztuki Wydziału Historycznego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2019 [mps], pp. 390–391, 496–500.

as proprietors,¹⁶ and later, following Ludwik's passing, his wife Stefania taking over his share. The estate, occupying a corner plot, had once been part of the historic Dobrzec Mały estate, before being absorbed into Kalisz in 1906,¹⁷ which had been owned by Józef Krajewski.¹⁸ The property comprised two factory buildings, a residential house, and an outbuilding.

After Ludwik Zakrzewski's death on 9 November 1923,¹⁹ Stefania took over management, working alongside Gelb. Though it is difficult to determine the precise nature of industrial activity conducted within these factory buildings before the 1920s, it is plausible they housed small-scale textile enterprises. During the early 20th century, Kalisz and its outskirts witnessed the establishment of embroidery and lace-making workshops. For instance, the locally published *Kalendarz na rok 1907* mentions an embroidery factory, Weyer Braendii 'Helvetia',²⁰ operating in Dobrzec Mały. The *Kalendarz Kaliski* for 1914 shows that embroidery and

- 16 State Archives in Kalisz (Archiwum Państwowe w Kaliszu, APKal), Akta miasta Kalisza, sign. 1951, Lista nabywców posesji, k. 1. Furthermore, on 24 March 1911, Ludwik Zakrzewski, in partnership with Stanisław Kubiczek, Wincenty Młynarski, Edmund Sikorski and Władysław Szyszczyński, purchased a property on Graniczna Street in order to sell it a year later at a profit. See *ibidem*, Akta miasta Kalisza, sign. 1074, Lista nabywców posesji, p. 2. On 23 November 1911, he also purchased an adjacent property near 2 Poznańska Street, but on 4 March 1913, both he and his partner sold it to Wanda and Emil Peikert. See *ibidem*, sign. 1953, Lista nabywców posesji, p. 2; For information regarding his partnership with Sikorski and the construction of a private street, see: M. Górzyński, *Miasto, społeczeństwo, przyszłość*, p. 565.
- 17 *XXV rys historyczny Towarzystwa Kredytowego miasta Kalisza. Wydanie jubileuszowe (1886–1911)*, eds. A. Parczewski, Kalisz b.d.w., p. 44.
- 18 APKal, Akta miasta Kalisza, sign. 1951, Pismo Prezydenta Miasta do Starostwa Kaliskiego, March 14, 1929, p. 58.
- 19 *Zgon*, „Gazeta Kaliska”, issue 258, November 11, 1923, p. 3.
- 20 *Na Szkołę Rzemiosł. Kalendarz na rok 1907*, Kalisz 1907, p. 85; *Na zgłiszczach Kalisza: ku wiecznej pamiętce pogromu teutońskiego dokonanego przez Prusaków w sierpniu 1914 r., opracował naoczny świadek W.Z. [Zawadzki W.]* – Warszawa: Druk. Bronisława Tomczyka, *Elektoralna 19, 1914*, in: R. Bieniecki, B. Celer, *Katastrofa kaliska 1914. Materiały źródłowe (wybór)*, Kalisz 1914, p. 346. The author noted that before the First World War, Kalisz had developed industrially, particularly in the production of embroidery and lace. Factory owners reportedly informed the Germans that the machinery in their factories had been imported from Germany and had not yet been paid off. This was intended to prevent the occupying forces from setting the factories ablaze, as doing so would have risked financial losses for German suppliers.

lace factories had become the driving force behind the city's burgeoning industrial movement, recording a total of 62 embroidery factories and 8 lace-making workshops at the time.²¹ These businesses were mainly located in Kalisz's suburbs, which remained largely unscathed during the destruction of 1914.

The outbreak of the First World War, however, dealt a severe blow to the industry—factories faced shortages of raw materials, machinery was dismantled and confiscated by German forces, and power shortages disrupted manufacturing. Many businesses remained shuttered until at least 1919.²² In the latter half of the 1920s, economic stagnation prompted the decision to repurpose one of Zakrzewska and Gelb's factory buildings into residential accommodation.²³ However, the site soon attracted new industrial tenants. In 1930, Fiszal Traube established a soap factory on the premises,²⁴ and in 1931, Jakób Ader set up a lace-making workshop.²⁵ Around the same time, the property also became home to the Wiśniewski, Markowski & Heber Embroidery Manufacturing Factory²⁶ and, by 1934, the newly founded Fortuna Lace Factory, owned by Bernard Weinberg and Nachman Flakowicz. These small enterprises rented production spaces from Zakrzewska and Gelb.²⁷ The estate evidently provided sufficient financial security, as Ludwik Zakrzewski had left his job as a civil servant and official documents from the time described his occupation as 'property owner' or 'urban citizen'.²⁸

21 *Kalendarz Kaliski na rok 1914*, Kalisz 1914, p. 54.

22 A. Pakentreger, *Żydzi w Kaliszu w latach 1918–1919*, Warszawa 1988, p. 24–25.

23 APKaI, Akta miasta Kalisza, sygn. 1951; Pismo Stefanii Zakrzewskiej i Szlamy Gelba do Wydziału Inspekcyjno-Budowlanego przy Magistracie miasta Kalisza z dnia 18 lutego 1926, p. 28; ibidem, Plan posesji z dnia 10 grudnia 1929, p. 64.

24 Ibidem, Plan fabryki mydła toaletowego z dnia 12 maja 1930, p. 69–70; ibidem, Protokół oględzin fabryki mydła toaletowego z dnia 21 maja 1930, p. 72.

25 Ibidem, Protokół Komisji lotnej z dnia 5 lutego 1932, p. 114.

26 Ibidem, Plan budynku, p. 112.

27 Ibidem, Pismo Prezydenta miasta Kalisza do Starostwa Powiatowego w Kaliszu z dnia 5 listopada 1934, p. 162.

28 Archives of the Warsaw School of Economics (Archiwum Szkoły Głównej Handlowej w Warszawie, ASGH), Zakrzewska Janina –teczka osobowa, album 1621/WSH, Album Janiny Zakrzewskiej w Wyższej Szkole Handlowej w Warszawie, p. 4; WBH, KAPio, Zakrzewski Stefan, sign. AP 6118, Lista personalna z dnia 15 października 1919, b.p.; ibidem, Stan służby Stefana Zakrzewskiego, b.p.

Ludwik and Stefania Zakrzewski had two children: Stefan, born on 14 September 1898, and Janina, born on 24 August 1901.²⁹ Both were born in Grodziec, but at some point the family moved to Kalisz, most likely after purchasing their new property. However, the exact date of their relocation remains uncertain. After starting a family, Stefania appears to have dedicated herself entirely to domestic life, managing the household and raising their children. By the outbreak of the First World War, both Stefan and Janina were of school age. It was probably only the scale of the crisis and the devastating impact the conflict had on the city's residents that drew Stefania into public life as she sought to assist those who had suddenly found themselves in desperate circumstances. The destruction of Kalisz by German forces in August 1914, leaving its inhabitants in dire straits, was nothing short of catastrophic. One eyewitness captured the extent of the devastation:

The city, which according to a one-day census in 1887 had a population of 23,000 and had grown over the last decades to more than 75,000,³⁰ is now a place of emptiness and ruin. A once- populous, thriving, and bustling city has been turned by the Teutonic fist of the 20th century into a graveyard, where the remnants of its past stand as shattered ruins and desolate, silent houses. Their dreadful stillness, filled with mute sorrow, will bear witness to this historical tragedy for years to come. The mournful silence that emanates from them will cry out and weep over the terrible horror that has befallen them, tearing apart the hearts of all who, now exiled from this graveyard, may one day return to stand among its ruins—like the legendary prophet Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem.³¹

29 J. Durka, *Stefan Zakrzewski (1898–1934) – żołnierz Legionów Polskich*, pp. 385, 391.

30 These figures are somewhat inflated, but there was indeed a significant population increase over several decades. A monograph on the city states that Kalisz had a total population of 19,520 in 1885, 21,632 in 1890, and 65,400 in 1913; J. Janczak, *Stosunki ludnościowe*, in: *Dzieje Kalisza*, ed. W. Rusiński, Poznań 1977, p. 332. However, it should be noted that in 1906, the city expanded considerably, increasing its area from 170 hectares to 605 hectares. According to Janina Zakrzewska, the population of Kalisz in 1913 stood at 60,550; J. Zakrzewska, *Odbudowa Kalisza po Wielkiej Wojnie*, p. 13.

31 *Na zgłiszczach Kalisza*, p. 349.

Such scenes must have had a powerful effect on Stefania Zakrzewska. From that moment on, archival records and memoirs confirm her increasing involvement in social initiatives providing relief to those left destitute by the war.

The war also brought disruption to everyday life, including the education system. Stefan and Janina had to remain at home, and it was only in the following year that their parents found a way for them to continue their education—Stefan enrolled in a grammar school in Wieluń, while Janina attended a boarding school in Kalisz, which had managed to reopen. After the destruction of Kalisz, the need for social relief was overwhelming. The residents were no strangers to charitable work: before the war, the Kalisz Charitable Society and other organisations had been vigorously providing aid.³² Now, under German occupation, new relief efforts were emerging. According to her memoirs, Stefania Zakrzewska began her charitable work in January 1915, initially with the Relief Council.³³ Historical records show that in that year, the Citizens' Committee was operating in Kalisz as a branch of the Poznań Central Committee. The Relief Council itself was officially established in January 1916, after the creation of the Central Relief Council (RGO). It worked closely with the Citizens' Committee to support the city's struggling population. Together, they established three public kitchens that provided up to 7,000 meals per day, as well as shelters that cared for around 1,000 children. They also distributed clothing and medicine to those in need.³⁴ Over time, the institutions of the Central

32 A. Tomaszewicz, *Kaliskie Towarzystwo Dobroczynności (1979–1914)*, „Przegląd Nauk Historycznych”, 5 (2006) issue 2, pp. 105–142; ibidem, *Dobroczynność w guberni kaliskiej 1864–1914*, Łódź 2010, pp. 101–224; M. Król, *Towarzystwa oszczędnościowo-pożyczkowe w guberni kaliskiej do 1914 roku*, Łódź 2016, pp. 356–368.

33 WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Stefania, sign. MN 16.03.1933, Kwestionariusz Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości z 1933 r., b.p.; ibidem, Kwestionariusz Biura Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości dla otrzymania legitymacji, upoważniającej do zniżki kolejowej z dnia 24 marca 1934, b.p.

34 W. Rusiński, *Kalisz. Zarys dziejów*, Poznań 1983, p. 82; H. Wrotkowski, *Kalisz w latach I wojny światowej 1914–1918*, in: *Dzieje Kalisza*, ed. W. Rusiński, Poznań 1977, p. 530; H. Wrotkowski, *Spółeczeństwo Kalisza w latach pierwszej wojny światowej i dniach wyzwolenia*, „Rocznik Kaliski”, 3 (1970) pp. 165–215; *Kalisz 1914–1918 – rys historyczny*, in: *Inwentarz Zespołu Akt Naczelnik Powiatu Kaliskiego [Deutscher Kreischef in Kalisch] 1914–1918 [1919]*, ed. E. Pietrzak, Kalisz 2014, p. 20.

Citizens' Committee and its local branches were gradually replaced by those of the RGO.³⁵ In all likelihood, when Zakrzewska wrote about her involvement in this period, she grouped these organisations under the name of the one that had functioned the longest—until the very end of the war.

The scale of the humanitarian crisis in Kalisz was enormous. According to historian Małgorzata Przeniosło, in 1918 alone, two city-run soup kitchens distributed 164,845 free meals. That same year, the Relief Council in Kalisz provided financial aid to 1,385 people, amounting to a total of 29,962 marks. The highly successful 'Save the Children' RGO campaign raised funds for child-care centres and nurseries, which continued to operate even during the Polish-Soviet War. By 1 March 1920, the Kalisz district had 22 childcare centres, assisting 1,260 children daily, along with two residential shelters for 50 children.³⁶ In June 1916, Stefania Zakrzewska joined the Polish Women's League of the War Emergency Service. Founded in Warsaw in 1913,³⁷ this organisation provided both moral and material support in the fight for Polish independence. It opposed Russian rule and was closely linked to the Provisional Commission of the United Independence Parties, as well as the Polish Military Organisation.³⁸ In Kalisz, Stefania rose to the position of vice-chairwoman of the League.³⁹

In 1917, with Polish Legionnaires interned in Szczypiorno, Zakrzewska began working clandestinely with the Committee for the Care of Prisoners.

35 E. Kołodziej, *Gospodarka wojenna w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1914–1918*, Warszawa 2018, pp. 109, 124; S. Dzierzbicki, *Pamiętnik lat wojny 1915–1918*, Warszawa 1983, p. 114; Ł. Faszczka, *Okoliczności powołania Rady Głównej Opiekuńczej*, „Białostockie Teki Historyczne”, 15 (2017) pp. 141–158, DOI: 10.15290/bth.2017.15.07. For a broader discussion of the activities of the Rada Główna Opiekuńcza (RGO), see: M. Przeniosło, *M. Przeniosło, Rada Główna Opiekuńcza w latach I wojny światowej*, Kielce 2018; M. Przeniosło, *Pomoc dzieciom w działalności Rady Głównej Opiekuńczej w latach 1915–1921*, Kielce 2017.

36 Ibidem, pp. 205, 234, 248, 277.

37 J. Dufrat, *Kobiety w kręgu lewicy niepodległościowej. Od Ligi Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego do Ochotniczej Legii Kobiet (1908–1918/1919)*, Toruń 2001, pp. 82–83.

38 Ibidem, pp. 137, 150.

39 WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Stefania, sign. MN 16.03.1933, Kwestionariusz Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości z 1933 r., b.p.

Operating under the alias 'Stella', she and her fellow members of the Women's League smuggled food, books, and writing supplies to the internees, as well as assisted them with correspondence.⁴⁰ Alicja Maruszewska and Zofia Janiszewska, fellow activists, later described their work:

The women engaged in this operation displayed extraordinary zeal and devoted all their spare time to the cause. Those without professional obligations laboured tirelessly from morning till late at night for months on end. They worked diligently and persistently. In addition to the well-known 'Baśka' Świdnicka, 'Mila' Laskowska, 'Maryna' Sulecińska, and 'Stella' Zakrzewska, others who sacrificed themselves for the cause included M. Kulawiakówna, J. Szutkówna, W. Guranowska, M. and R. Chrabąszczewskie, J. Kinklówna, and many more.⁴¹

Years later, Captain Jan Eugeniusz Łepkowski ('Smulski'), commander of the VIII District of the Polish Military Organisation (POW), wrote:

Stefania Zakrzewska, during the internment of former Legionnaires in Szczypiorno, organised aid for them indefatigably and wholeheartedly.

40 Ibidem; A. Tabaka, *Podziękowania legionistów dla kaliskiej Ligi Kobiet. List Mieczysława Naramowskiego (1889–1954) na tle pamiątek jeńców ze Szczypiorna*, „Zeszyty Kaliskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk”, 20 (2020) pp. 100–116; H. Wrotkowski, *Społeczeństwo Kalisza w latach pierwszej wojny światowej*, pp. 171–174; *Obóz w Szczypiornie – Albumik Stelli*, in: *Szczypiorno. Historia i współczesność*, <https://szczypiorno.info/oboz-w-szczypiornie-galeria-zdjec/nggallery/oboz-w-szczypiornie/albumik-stelli-takze-wpisy-wierszowane-legionistow-i-grafiki-jurka-krukowskiego-pazdziernik-grudzien-1917-r>, accessed: 15.07.2023. Due to the immense need for aid, branches of the Liga Kobiet (Women's League) in other cities also became involved in providing material assistance; *Sprawozdanie Sekcji Opieki nad Żołnierzami za lata 1917–1918*, in: *Liga Kobiet Pogotowia Wojennego w Piotrkowie. Sprawozdania z działalności w latach walk o niepodległość i granice 1914–1921*, eds. T. Matuszak, A. Piasta, M. Hubka, Piotrków Trybunalski 2021, p. 101.

41 A. Maruszewska „Hanka”, Z. Janiszewska „Boruta”, *Opieka kaliskiej Ligi Kobiet nad Szczypiornem*, in: *Wierna służba. Wspomnienia uczestniczek walk o niepodległość 1910–1915. Służba ojczyźnie. Wspomnienia uczestniczek walk o niepodległość 1915–1918*, Warszawa 2021, p. 354.

Acting as both their guardian and, in a sense, their mother, she not only facilitated escapes from the camp but also repeatedly put herself at risk with the German authorities. Her work was selfless and incredibly difficult in those conditions, and she is fully deserving of the highest recognition.⁴²

During this time, the Women's League of the Polish War Emergency Service collaborated closely with the RGO, whose Kalisz branch facilitated contact between prisoners and their families.⁴³ Following the German retreat from Kalisz, on 14 November 1918, Zakrzewska was instructed by the leadership of the Women's League of the War Emergency Service to take charge of a military hospital, a position she held until 1919.⁴⁴ It was a time of upheaval. On 27 December 1918, the Greater Poland Uprising erupted. Although Kalisz itself did not see combat, its residents ardently supported the uprising. Situated in the so-called Greater Poland Beyond the Prosna, the city became a crucial logistical hub, where volunteers were recruited, and material aid mobilised for the insurgent forces.⁴⁵ The end of the uprising in February 1919 was not the final chapter in Poland's struggle to define its independent borders. The issue of the incorporation of Upper Silesia into the Polish state became a pressing matter, and by 1920, Poland's very survival hung in the balance during the Polish-Soviet War. That summer, the Red Army advanced into central Poland, which culminated in the decisive Battle of Warsaw in August.

42 WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Stefania, sign. MN 16.03.1933, Opinia komendanta VIII Okręgu POW, kpt. Jana Eugeniusza Łepkowskiego „Smulskiego” z dnia 13 marca 1933, b.p.

43 M. Przeniosło, M. Przeniosło, *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza w latach I wojny światowej*, p. 291.

44 WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Stefania, sign. MN 16.03.1933, Kwestionariusz Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości z 1933, b.p.; ibidem, Kwestionariusz Biura Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości dla otrzymania legitymacji, upoważniającej do zniżki kolejowej z dnia 24 marca 1934, b.p.

45 J. Pietrzak, *Powstańcy Ostrów w powstańczej Wielkopolsce 1918–1919*, Ostrów Wielkopolski 2019, pp. 80–86, 140–149; H. Wrotkowski, *Na granicy dwóch zaborów – związku Kalisza z Powstaniem Wielkopolskim*, in: *Udział społeczeństwa ziemi kaliskiej w Powstaniu Wielkopolskim*, ed. A. Czubiński, Kalisz 1978, pp. 65–72.

The support provided to soldiers behind the front lines proved invaluable in securing Poland's independence.⁴⁶

In 1919, Stefania Zakrzewska became a member of the Society of Friends of the Polish Soldier and was appointed chair of soldiers' social centres. These establishments played an important role in soldiers' daily lives, as they provided them with a place to rest and enjoy a hot meal. Canteens like these, established in numerous cities and run by the Polish White Cross in cooperation with other charitable organisations, were highly popular among troops.⁴⁷ In early 1919, Zakrzewska set up one such centre, supplying frontline units with food, at the 29th Kaniowski Rifle Regiment. She managed it until 1920. In February 1919, she organised another at the 2nd Uhlan Regiment and later for the 17th Greater Poland Uhlan Regiment. In running these facilities, Zakrzewska coordinated the efforts of several aid organisations. That same year, she also began working with the Polish Red Cross, and later became a lifelong member. The logistical challenges of operating these centres were significant, as they necessitated close cooperation with various institutions.

In 1920, Zakrzewska founded the Women's Circle in Kalisz, which supported the well-being of healthy soldiers. She became a well-recognised and respected social activist, and her contributions did not go unnoticed after the war. During the 1930s, she served on the board of the Civic Work Association of Women in Kalisz and the Society for the Assistance of the Unemployed. She was also a member of the Executive Committee for the construction of the Legionnaires' Monument in Szczypiorno. Additionally, she was made an honorary member of the Women's Rowing Society and the Academic Circle of Kalisz Resi-

46 H. Lisiak, *Spółeczeństwo województwa łódzkiego wobec zagrożenia Państwa w roku 1920*, „Zeszyty Naukowe” [Wyższej Szkoły Handlu i Usług w Poznaniu], 24 (2012) pp. 129–143. For references to the assistance provided by the residents of Kalisz to the Upper Silesians, see: M. Cygański, K. Przesmycki, *Udział Łodzi w walce o przyłączenie Górnego Śląska do Polski w latach plebiscytu i powstań śląskich*, in: *Udział ziem dorzecza górnej Prosnicy w plebiscycie i powstaniach śląskich*, Opole-Wieluń 1971, p. 100.

47 E. J. Kryńska, *Polski Biały Krzyż (1918–1961)*, Białystok 2012, pp. 82–83; W. Jarno, *Zaciąg do armii ochotniczej w Okręgu Generalnym Wojska Polskiego nr IV Łódź latem 1920 roku*, „Roczniki Humanistyczne”, 68 (2020) issue 2, p. 167, DOI:10.18290/rh20682-9.

dents. Her dedication to social and national causes earned her high honours. On 28 May 1929, she was awarded the Cross of the Polish Legions, followed by the Independence Medal on 16 March 1933.⁴⁸ By 1936, she became involved in the Military Family Association, where she contributed to defence training initiatives.⁴⁹ Zakrzewska's ideals and activism influenced her children. Her son, Stefan Zakrzewski, joined the Polish Legions before enlisting in the Polish Army. He fought in the Polish-Soviet War and later became a career soldier, which must have filled his mother with pride, as he stood for the values that their family had upheld for generations.⁵⁰

In 1909, her daughter, Janina Zakrzewska was admitted to the preparatory class at the Kalisz Commercial School. From her third year onwards, she continued her education at Wanda Motylewska's seven-class boarding school in Kalisz.⁵¹ On 24 February 1912, her mother inscribed a dedication in her diary—a quote that had once been gifted to her by Wanda Wierzchlejska:

The art of living consists in accepting the place where fate has set us and striving to be as useful as possible within it.⁵²

48 WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Stefania, sign. MN 16.03.1933, Kwestionariusz Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości z 1933, b.p.; ibidem, Kwestionariusz Biura Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości dla otrzymania legitymacji, upoważniającej doniżki kolejowej z dnia 24 marca 1934, b.p.; 1927 czerwiec 26, *Kalisz – Akt erekcyjny pomnika legionistów w Szczypiornie*, in: *Materiały źródłowe do dziejów legionistów internowanych w Szczypiornie w 1917 roku*, ed. G. Waliś, Kalisz 2017, pp. 248–249; 1927 sierpień 9, *Kalisz – „Gazeta Kaliska”: relacja z odsłonięcia pomnika legionistów w Szczypiornie*, in: *Materiały źródłowe do dziejów legionistów internowanych*, p. 356; *Poznajmy obywateli zasłużonych*, „Świat Zasłużonych”, 2 (1934) p. 29; P. Dobrowolski, *Świetlice żołnierskie – rola i zadania w systemie wychowawczym żołnierzy (1918–1939)*, „Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica”, 10 (2018) pp. 147–157, DOI: 10.18778/0208-6050.101.10.

49 *Z walnego zebrania R. W.*, „Echo Kaliskie Ilustrowane”, 97 (1936) p. 8.

50 For a detailed account of his life, see: J. Durka, *Stefan Zakrzewski (1898–1934) – żołnierz Legionów Polskich*, pp. 385–396.

51 ASGH, Zakrzewska Janina –teczka osobowa, album 1621/WSH, *Życiorys z dnia 15 września 1921*, p. 3. Od 1908 r. Szkoła Handlowa była szkołą koedukacyjną; W. Rusiński, *Kalisz. Zarys dziejów*, p. 70.

52 Family archives in the possession of Anna Majewska-Rau. *Pamiętnik Janiny Zakrzewskiej*, 1912, b.p.

These words would stay with Janina for years to come.

In 1914, she moved up to the fifth year, but her education was interrupted when the devastation of Kalisz forced all schools in the city to close for the 1914/1915 academic year. When classes resumed in 1915/1916, she returned to Motylewska's boarding school, where she took her first steps into social and patriotic activism. In October 1915, she joined the Polish Scouting Organisation⁵³ and became a member of the first girls' scouting patrol in Kalisz, which was established by Anna Kolska, Eugenia Sztarkówna, and Irena Tomaszewska. The Kalisz schoolgirls worked closely with Lieutenant Jan Opieliński, known by his pseudonyms 'Wojsznar' and 'Zdanowicz', who served as an instructor for the Polish Military Organisation in the Kalisz District. He organised clandestine meetings, which Janina also attended. The girls made up the cadre of the newly created 1st Emilia Plater Female Scout Troop in Kalisz, initially led by Alicja Michalska.⁵⁴ By early 1916, Janina had risen to the rank of patrol leader and later platoon leader.⁵⁵

She worked in the underground postal network to deliver correspondence to the families of Polish legionnaires and raise patriotic awareness among her classmates.⁵⁶ To protect her identity, she operated under the alias 'Zdanowiczówna', so she was presented as a relative of Jan Opieliński 'Zdanowicz.' In 1916, her direct superiors were first Stanisław Wróblewski and later Feliks Matawowski.⁵⁷ In November 1916, the Polish Scouting Organisation merged with the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP). By 1917, following in her mother's foot-

53 ASGH, Zakrzewska Janina –teczka osobowa, album 1621/WSH, Życiorys z dnia 15 września 1921, p. 3; WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Janina, Odrzuc. 25 czerwca 1938, Wniosek do Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości [1937–1938], b.p.

54 J. Maciejewski, *Z dziejów harcerstwa kaliskiego (1911/12–1939)*, Kalisz 1998, p. 23; I. Bożyk, „Wzór żołnierza i obywatela” – Jan Opieliński, „Wojsznar”, „Zdanowicz” (1892–1918), „Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy”, 18 (2017) issue 3, pp. 125–140.

55 WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Janina, Odrzuc. 25 czerwca 1938, Zeznanie dotyczące służby w POS z dnia 18 grudnia 1937, b.p.

56 M. Rychterówna, *Pocztą listów prywatnych (wrzesień 1915 – sierpień 1916)*, in: *Wierna służba. Wspomnienia uczestniczek walk o niepodległość 1910–1915. Służba ojczyźnie. Wspomnienia uczestniczek walk o niepodległość 1915–1918*, Warszawa 2021, p. 373.

57 WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Janina, Odrzuc. 25 czerwca 1938, Zeznanie dotyczące służby w POS z dnia 18 grudnia 1937, b.p.

steps, Janina participated in the work of the Committee for the Aid of Legionnaires in Szczypiorno and the Women's League for National Defence.⁵⁸

Janina Zakrzewska became fully immersed in social and patriotic activities, which had a marked impact on her education and may have led her to pause her studies for a time. Surviving records lack exact dates or details on this matter, but in 1918, she was due to complete the seventh year at Wanda Motylewska's boarding school in Kalisz. Instead, she travelled to Warsaw to take her matriculation exams. After passing the entrance assessment, she resumed her schooling in the seventh year of the Queen Jadwiga State Girls' Grammar School, where she finally completed her secondary education on 25 May 1920. That summer, she returned to Kalisz, where from August to October, she worked as a trainee at the Military Hospital and at soldiers' community centres run by the Polish White Cross, assisting her mother.⁵⁹

When considering her future, she chose to pursue higher education. At the start of the 1920/1921 academic year, she was admitted to the Faculty of Civil Engineering at the Warsaw University of Technology. She successfully completed the first semester, but early in the second, she was forced to withdraw due to an eye condition.⁶⁰ On 13 May 1921, she formally resigned from her studies.⁶¹ That October, she enrolled at the Warsaw School of Economics, where she completed six semesters between 1921 and 1924. She passed the general exam on 29 September 1923 and the diploma exam on 28 June 1924. However, she still needed to submit a dissertation, secure favourable reviews and obtain Senate approval to receive her diploma.⁶² Her thesis, *The Reconstruction of Kalisz after the War*, took several years to complete. She began working on it under the supervision of Professor Konstanty Krzeczkowski, a distinguished expert in social policy.

58 Ibidem, Wniosek do Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości [1937–1938], b.p.

59 ASGH, Zakrzewska Janina –teczka osobowa, album 1621/WSH, Życiorys z dnia 15 września 1921, p. 3; WBH, KAPiO, Zakrzewska Janina, Odrzuc. 25 czerwca 1938, Wniosek do Komitetu Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości [1937–1938], b.p.; ibidem, Zaświadczenie dr. Mieczysława Trzeciaka z dnia 22 grudnia 1937, b.p.

60 ASGH, Zakrzewska Janina –teczka osobowa, album 1621/WSH, Życiorys z dnia 15 września 1921, p. 3.

61 Ibidem, Album Wyższej Szkoły Handlowej w Warszawie, p. 4.

62 Ibidem, Świadcstwo Wyższej Szkoły Handlowej w Warszawie z dnia 29 listopada 1928, p. 16.

By 1925, she was already employed as a bookkeeping controller in the Municipal Administration of Kalisz. Her professional work likely helped her gather source material for her dissertation but also slowed her progress. She only submitted the final version for assessment in 1932. Professor Krzeczkowski praised her independent and thorough research and her ability to access original sources. However, he criticised the dissertation for focusing too much on description rather than analysis and for lacking a sufficiently critical approach to the data. His final recommendation read: 'The diploma should be granted. I believe the work is even suitable for publication.'⁶³ Despite this endorsement, he did not see a future for Janina in academia, because of her fragile health.⁶⁴ While one reviewer rated her dissertation as weak and another deemed it satisfactory, both agreed that she should receive her diploma.⁶⁵ On 24 January 1933, the Senate of the Warsaw School of Economics formally awarded Janina Zakrzewska her professional diploma.⁶⁶

For many years, Janina Zakrzewska lived with her mother and did not start a family for a long time. In 1934, both women suffered a personal tragedy when Stefania's son and Janina's brother, Stefan Zakrzewski, succumbed to cancer.⁶⁷ In 1936, the Kalisz Branch of the Polish Sightseeing Society published Janina Zakrzewska's diploma thesis under the slightly modified title *The Reconstruction of Kalisz after the Great War*. This book, which documented the city's reconstruction efforts up to 1931, became the third volume in the *Kalisz Library* book series.⁶⁸ The next year, Janina became a member of the Executive Committee for the 25th Anniversary Celebrations of Kalisz Scouting.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, little information is available about the lives of Janina and her mother

63 Ibidem, Ocena pracy z dnia 2 grudnia 1932 r., k. 7–8.

64 Ibidem, Dodatkowy kwestionariusz przy ocenie pracy dyplomowej z dnia 9 grudnia 1932, k. 9.

65 Ibidem, Oceny pracy dyplomowej (nazwiska recenzentów nieczytelne) z dni 12 grudnia 1932 i 5 stycznia 1933, pp. 10–13.

66 Ibidem, Odpis dyplomu Janiny Zakrzewskiej, p. 18.

67 J. Durka, *Stefan Zakrzewski (1898–1934) – żołnierz Legionów Polskich*, p. 391.

68 *Sprawozdanie z działalności Polskiego Towarzystwa Krajoznawczego w 1935 r.*, p. 10; H. Rabięga, *60 lat krajoznawstwa w Kaliszu 1908–1968*, Kalisz 1968, p. 90.

69 J. Maciejewski, *Z dziejów harcerstwa kaliskiego*, p. 154.

in the years that followed. No records exist regarding their experiences during the Second World War.

However, family accounts confirm that it was only after the war that Janina married Jan Wojciszewski, who was born on 24 May 1899 and trained as a teacher at a teacher training college. The two had known each other for many years. Their paths had first crossed in 1917, when Wojciszewski was overseeing postal operations for the Polish Military Organisation in Kalisz. At the same time, Janina worked as a clandestine courier, delivering correspondence to the families of interned legionnaires in Szczypiorno. Surviving documents indicate that Wojciszewski's superiors held his work in high regard. He was described as energetic, helpful, devoted to the organisation, and even personally took on courier duties when there was a shortage of messengers. In 1918, he took part in a sabotage operation to sever German telephone lines in Szczypiorno—an especially dangerous mission given the reinforced security at the internment camp. He was also involved in disarming German forces in November 1918. After the end of the First World War, he worked as a teacher. Family tradition suggests that he fought in the Polish-Bolshevik War, though no military records confirm this.

During the interwar period, Wojciszewski was active in the Riflemen's Association. In the 1930s, he worked both as a bank clerk and as a teacher at the municipal vocational school. Later, he moved to Kutno, where he taught at the Horticultural School before becoming the director of a Dairy Cooperative. In 1948, he returned to Kalisz and worked as a municipal official.⁷⁰ Letters from Jan to Janina, written while she was staying in a sanatorium in 1967, reveal his deep care and attentiveness to his wife during her illness.⁷¹ Stefania Zakrzewska died on 16 September 1964, followed by her daughter Janina on 12 July 1973. Janina's husband, Jan Wojciszewski, lived only a few months longer. He died on 10 October 1973. All three now rest in the family tomb at the Municipal

70 WBH, KAPiO, Wojciszewski Jan, sign. KN 30.06.1931, Wniosek o odznaczenie Jana Wojciszewskiego [1931], b.p.; Wywiad z Anną Majewską-Rau i fragment historii rodziny napisany przez Grażynę z Kinów Rzymkowską (1 voto Majewską) (1934–2021), przysłanego przez Annę Majewską-Rau.

71 Family archives in the possession of Anna Majewska-Rau, Listy Jana Wojciszewskiego do Janiny Wojciszewskiej z 27 lutego 1967 i 5 marca 1967, b.p.

Cemetery in Kalisz.⁷² Both Stefania and Janina, residents of Kalisz, were passionately involved in humanitarian and patriotic campaigns during the First World War and Poland's struggles to secure its borders. Their commitment began with aiding the legionnaires interned in Szczypiorno and continued with supporting troops fighting in the Polish-Soviet War. In the ensuing years, they remained active in social initiatives in the newly independent Poland.

The lives of these two women exemplify the practical workings of Polish relief organisations at the time. Even as circumstances shifted and institutions underwent structural changes, people like Stefania and Janina remained constant and continued their service to the community. Janina, in particular, was a woman who never neglected her personal and intellectual growth. Her university education and the publication of her diploma thesis positioned her among the intellectual elite of interwar Kalisz. Yet, the hopes they had for an independent Poland were ultimately overshadowed by the outbreak of the Second World War and the harsh realities of the post-war era.

Streszczenie: Stefania i Janina Zakrzewskie, matka i córka, były polskimi działaczkami społecznymi i patriotycznymi podczas pierwszej wojny światowej i w okresie dwudziestolecia międzywojennego w Kaliszu. Wybuch wojny i zniszczenie Kalisza przez Niemców spowodowały, że Stefania zaczęła działać w różnych organizacjach o charakterze pomocowym, oraz w polskich organizacjach patriotycznych. Zaangażowała się w prace dobroczynnego Komitetu Obywatelskiego, a później Rady Głównej Opiekuńczej. Zakrzewska wstąpiła też do Ligi Kobiet Polskich Pogotowia Wojennego. W warunkach konspiracji brała udział w organizowaniu pomocy dla internowanych w Szczypiornie polskich legionistów. W jej ślady poszła córka, Janina. Po zakończeniu I wojny światowej Stefania najpierw kierowała polskim Szpitalem Wojkowym w Kaliszu, a następnie organizowała świetlice żołnierskie. Janina pomagała matce, ale też kształciła się. Po zdaniu matury studiowała w Wyższej Szkole Handlowej w Warszawie. W 1936 r. opublikowała swoją pracę dyplomową pt. „Odbudowa Kalisza po Wielkiej Wojnie”. Obie kobiety w okresie międzywojennym były aktywne społecznie.

Słowa kluczowe: Stefania Zakrzewska, Janina Zakrzewska, działaczka społeczna, Kalisz, Liga Kobiet Polskich Pogotowia Wojennego.

72 S. Małyшко, *Zabytkowe cmentarze przy Rogatce w Kaliszu*, Kalisz 2012, p. 172.

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Photo 1. Stefania Zakrzewska
(WBH, KAPiO, sign. MN 16.03.1933).



Photo 2. Janina Zakrzewska
(ASGH, album 1621/WSH).



Photo 3. Janina Zakrzewska w otoczeniu koleżanek
(Archive Anna Majewska-Rau).



