

MILENA KINDZIUK

Institut of Medial Education and Journalism
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

KAROL WOJTYŁA'S MILITARY CAREER IN LIGHT OF ARCHIVAL RECORDS

The given name and second name “Karol Wojtyła” are primarily commonly associated with Pope John Paul II. However, these were also the given name and surname of the father of the saint pope from Poland and this article is dedicated to him.

Karol Wojtyła Sr. (1879–1941) was a professional soldier whose career and life have not been adequately accounted for. Only his military personal records from the *Kriegsarchiv* in Vienna¹ help to map out his *curriculum vitae* and the major stages of his career in the army.

Service in the army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

Karol Wojtyła, son of Maciej and Anna, was born in 1879 in Lipnik, a town which at that time belonged to Austria-annexed Galicia² (today a district of Bielsko-Biała). He did not remember his mother as Anna Wojtyła died when Karol was merely two years old. After her death, Karol and his father moved to Biała, where Maciej Wojtyła married Anna Newald. Three years later she died, too. In 1889 Karol's father married the third time, his wife being Maria Zalewska. This means that Karol was brought up by his two stepmothers.

Between 1885 and 1890 he attended a five-grade folk school in Biała, and between 1890 and 1893 he was a student of the imperial and royal state high school in Bielsk. His transcript in German from the first semester of the school year 1892/1893, when he was a third-grade student, has survived. 14-year-old Karol terminated his education having completed grade three. The reason why he did not graduate from high school is unknown. Most probably forced by life's circumstances, he began work in his father's tailoring studio in Biała, where he learned the profession. As follows from later military files, when asked about his education background Karol Wojtyła invariably wrote: “five grades of folk school and three grades of high school”.

¹ The records were presented at that time to the Pope by the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish Unite Workers' Party (PZPR) Edward Gierek. Photocopies of the records can be found in the General Kazimierz Sosnkowski Military History Bureau (formerly Central Military Archives) in Warsaw.

² His father Maciej Wojtyła was born in 1852 in Czaniec, where the Wojtyła family comes from. Later he moved to Lipnik. Born into a farmers' family, he learned tailoring and ran a tailor's shop in Lipnik. He rented an apartment on the outskirts of the town, next to Biała. He formally belonged to the parish of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lipnik. Here he also baptized his son, Karol. In the parish there is now a commemorative plaque with an inscription in Latin and Polish: “Karol Wojtyła, the father of Pope John Paul II, son of Maciej and Anna nee Przeczek Wojtyła, was born and baptised in this parish”.

When in 1900 he completed 21 years, he was eligible for military service. As a resident of Galicia and a subject of the Emperor of Austria, as of that moment he was obliged to serve in the imperial and royal army. This was the obligation of all men over twenty-one years of age who did not study at university. Karol did not have a full secondary education and so he had to serve in the military; in the case of infantry this service took three years.

Each soldier was to serve in the regiment stationed closest to his place of residence. Therefore, Karol Wojtyła was subordinate to a draft board located in Wadowice, which during the Austrian partition was elevated to the rank of “a major city of Galicia”³. He was assigned to the 56th Infantry Regiment⁴, so-called Wadowice Regiment, whose troops were recruited from the counties of Wadowice, Żywiec and Oświęcim. The regiment was part of a district of the First Corps of the Austro-Hungarian Army, covering Western Galicia with Krakow, Cieszyn Silesia and part of Moravia. Incidentally, each regiment of the “imperial and royal army” had its own designated recruitment district. This was practical due to the multiple nationalities in the country. Galicia was a region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire with German as the official language. There was also the “regiment language” (one of the ten official languages of the monarchy, spoken by at least 20% of the soldiers), used for military training. Prior to 1914, Poles made up over 80% of the Wadowice Regiment.

The draft board convened in Wadowice on 21 March 1900 assigned Wojtyła to “three years of active military service and seven years of reserve service in the common army and two years in national defence in the 56th Infantry Regiment”⁵. Karol Wojtyła received his “permanent military file number – 158”⁶. On 1 October 1900, he moved to the Austrian barracks of the 56th Infantry Regiment in Wadowice and formally as of October 5 began his military service. As a private (*Infanterist*), he was a member of the 5th company of the 56th Infantry Regiment and received a monthly allowance of 6 crown.

Karol Wojtyła was quickly promoted in the army. As early as on 26 May 1901, he was promoted to senior private (*Gefreiter*), and a few months later (September 15) to corporal (*Korporal*). In this rank, on 23 September 1901 he was reassigned to the Lviv Cadet School to perform “supervision service” (*Aufsichtcharge*). This means he was a tutor in a cadet school in charge of order in the barracks and drills. There, on 16 August 1902 he was promoted to the rank of a master corporal (*Zugsführer*) and was a commander of an infantry platoon. Ever since he was a non-commissioned officer. He was released from service in the Lviv Cadet School on 4 October 1903 when his three years of active service came to a close.

Karol Wojtyła remained in the imperial and royal army, however, but in a different capacity, as an office clerk. Due to his domicile, he returned to the regiment he originally served, i.e. the 56th Infantry Regiment, the Wadowice Regiment, stationed in two locations: the Third Battalion and the military replenishment council were headquartered in Wadowice, while three other battalions (Firsts, Second and Fourth) in Krakow (in the Emperor Francis

³ K. Meus, *Wadowice 1772-1914. Studium przypadku miasta galicyjskiego*, Kraków 2013, p. 453.

⁴ The 56th Infantry Regiment has a long tradition. Its origins hark back to the 17th c. and the time of Leopold I. In the 18th c. the regiment made a name for itself e.g. during the Spanish succession war. It fought in the Battle of Leipzig in 1813. See K. Meus, *Wadowice 1772-1914*, p. 53.

⁵ The documents provide also his description: dark blond hair, grey eyes, proportional nose and mouth, oval face, speaks and writes in Polish and German, height 1.71 m, shoe number 14.

⁶ Military History Bureau, Generals and Personages Collection, Karol Wojtyła, file no. AP 6051, *Hauptgrundbuchblatt*, chart 1, after: <http://caw.wp.mil.pl/pl/223.html>.

Joseph Barracks) as the defence of the main stronghold in West Galicia. Due to this location of his regiment, Karol Wojtyła lived in Krakow or in Wadowice.

He began work as a clerical non-commissioned officer in the County Replenishment Council (Polish PKU) in Wadowice on 1 February 1904, and then, on 1 January 1905, as a clerical non-commissioned officer in the Regiment Adjutant Office in Krakow (he will stay in this city for over eight years, until 28 February 1913). His place of work at the regiment headquarters indicates Karol Wojtyła's activities: drafting all kinds of instructions, managing the regiment budget, keeping personal files, accountancy books and records of submitted documents, being in charge of correspondence, etc. Very quickly, as early as 1 April 1905, he was once again promoted, this time to accountant non-commissioned officer (*Rechnungsunteroffizier*).

That time, also when living in Krakow, Karol Wojtyła made a major decision, of great significance for his life. On 10 February 1906 he married Emilia Kaczorowska (mother-to-be of the future pope)⁷. They got married in the then military church of St. St. Peter and Paul in Krakow. The groom's stepsister Stefania reminisced later: "Karol looked excellent as a groom in a military uniform. He looked great in his wedding photograph with Emilia, wearing a black uniform, three stars on either side of the collar, the token of the sergeant's rank. He is not tall, has a thin face with a black moustache and thick dark hair; as usual, he is very serious"⁸.

After his wedding, Wojtyła was forced to leave the Emperor Francis Joseph Barracks in Rajska Street in Krakow, where he had lived until then. He had to move as there were no family quarters in the barracks. The Wojtyłas moved to a rented flat in a different district in Krakow. That very year their son Edmund was born.

Karol Wojtyła already enjoyed a very good reputation in the army: his superiors described him as conscientious and hardworking, gentle and modest. He was also valued in the army for his fluent typing skills and careful handwriting, as well as his ability to communicate in German. The records preserved in the Vienna military archives read: "he speaks and writes Polish and German, superbly edits 'concepts', submits correct final drafts, types quickly, is righteous, serious, well-balanced, modest, honourable, with a strong sense of duty, extremely good-natured, and untiring"⁹. Another superior corroborated the above

⁷ While *The Marriage Book* of the then military parish has not been recovered, a precious equivalent document is extant: an excerpt from this *Book* made in the "Krakow pastoral centre of the Military Diocese", confirming the conclusion of the marriage between Emilia and Karol. This primary source indicates the place and date of the marriage of John Paul II's parents. The document is made up in German. It is not too legible and reads as follows: "Karol Wojtyła, an accounting non-commissioned officer, son of tailor Maciej Wojtyła and Anna nee Przeczek, born in the town of Lipnik – Biała in Galicia and Emilia, daughter of Feliks Kaczorowski and Maria nee Szolz, were joined by holy matrimony on 10 February 1906 in the Church of St. Peter in Krakow, Galicia; their marriage was blessed by military chaplain Kazimierz Plachedko. The witnesses were: Józef Kuczmierczyk – salesman and Feliks Kaczorowski. Notice of the marriage was announced on January 28 and on February 2 and 4". A note indicates that the documents of concluding this marriage are stored in the military archives in Krakow from 1906, in volume III, in a section dedicated to the 56th imperial and royal Infantry Regiment. See *Księga małżeństw, Wyciąg z metryki ślubu z 27 września 1906 roku*, in: M. Kindziuk, *Matka Papieża*, p. 34.

⁸ See M. Procyk, *Lipnickie ślady Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, the website of the Parish of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Bielsko-Biała (Lipnik).

⁹ Military History Bureau, Generals and Personages Collection, Karol Wojtyła, file no. AP 6051, personal file, p. 1.

description: “adequate in every respect, completely trustworthy, a non-commissioned officer performing excellent clerical work, deserving of all distinction”¹⁰.

His attitude had an impact on his further military career: in 1908 Karol Wojtyła was again promoted: first, on 1 January 1908, to the first class of married non-commissioned officers and then, on 2 December 1908, he received the Jubilee Cross, established by Emperor Francis Joseph to mark the 60th anniversary of his reign (*Militär-Jubiläumskreuz*)¹¹.

In 1913, Karol Wojtyła applied for a reassignment of his status from a professional soldier to a clerk. The superiors agreed and he concluded service at the Adjutant Office of the 56th Infantry Regiment in Krakow. He began work in the Military Replenishment Command as a junior military clerk. As a result, with his wife Emilia and son Edmund he moved for good to Wadowice. The town was the headquarters of a military replenishment precinct of the regiment and the location of the draft board, or military replenishment committee. The 56th Infantry Regiment, called Wadowice Regiment for a reason, conscripted its troops mainly from the vicinity of the town and the neighbouring counties of Żywiec and Oświęcim.

Karol Wojtyła during the First World War

What did Karol Wojtyła Sr. do during the First World War? At the moment of its outbreak, there was a common belief among Poles, especially in Galicia where Karol Wojtyła lived, that there was a real chance for Poland to regain its independence. The emerging conflict of the partitioning countries contributed to this, as did the formation of two warring camps: the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy (so-called Central Powers) and the Triple Entente of France, England and Russia¹². Karol Wojtyła was perfectly aware of this.

Importantly, in the military documents in the “direct combat experience” section, the father of the future pope wrote “none”. This meant he did not directly take part in armed struggle, a logical outcome of his being an office clerk.

When the war broke out in 1914, at the very beginning Wojtyła was employed as a military registrar at the Replenishment Command in Wadowice. However, when on July 31, 1914 the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I announced the general mobilization, posters appeared on the walls of post offices and buildings of Galician county towns' authorities, informing about the draft of all units of the Austro-Hungarian army. The mobilized soldiers were obliged to appear within twenty-four hours in their replenishment commands, which assigned them to their respective regiments. Many reservists and volunteers applied. Young men went to their replenishment commands, where they received a field grey-blue uniform. Adequately equipped, they filed the ranks of their regiments. In mid-August 1914, the regiments from

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ Such a distinction, although awarded by the Austrian emperor, was a source of joy. Franz Joseph I was respected throughout the empire. When, for the 50th anniversary of his reign he asked his subjects to send him postcards with views of their hometowns as gifts, he received about ten million postcards. To mark the 60th anniversary of his reign, he awarded special medals to all civil servants and military officials. He was the longest reigning monarch in Europe, because he died after sixty-eight years of rule, in November 1916. He was succeeded by Archduke Charles I, who reigned for two years and was the last ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. When, the creation of the German-Austrian Republic was announced in Vienna after the First World War, in November 1918, he and his wife Zita and children had to leave the country and go into exile to Switzerland. He died in 1922 (was beatified in 2004), while his wife Zita lived until 1989.

¹² More on this see W. Roszkowski, *Historia Polski 1914-1990*, Warszawa 1992, pp. 7-14.

Galicia were dispatched to the Austro-Russian border. The 56th Wadowice Infantry Regiment, where Karol Wojtyła was a soldier, went to the front, too.

What did the father of the future pope do? As a military clerk assigned to a supplementary battalion, non-commissioned officer Karol Wojtyła remained in Wadowice. The regulation of the Austro-Hungarian army clearly laid out that during the war a supplementary battalion “remains in the permanent location of the regiment”. Wojtyła began to work then also as an accountant of the stage station command in Wadowice¹³.

However, when the Russian army entered Galicia and the frontline shifted towards Krakow, a stage station command was established in Wadowice. It served as a local army base with food warehouses, bakeries, rolling stock and uniform warehouses, a field hospital, cattle collection centres, warehouses, and other facilities. Karol Wojtyła Sr. was part of this commission.

In mid-November 1914, the supplementary battalion of the Wadowice Regiment was evacuated to Moravia. Karol Wojtyła, too, had to evacuate to the farthest areas commanded by the First Corps of the imperial and royal Austro-Hungarian army. The corps precinct was very wide and included Western Galicia with Krakow and Wadowice as well as Cieszyn Silesia and northern Moravia, with headquarters in Hranice¹⁴. Wojtyła was evacuated there with his wife and son Edmund, who attended school there¹⁵.

When Karol Wojtyła accounted for his military service, he made a note which reflects his signature love of precision: “as of 19 November 1914 until 20 August 1915 evacuated from the Wadowice County Draft Board to Drahotuš and Hranice, Moravia”¹⁶. Interestingly, he mentions two towns where he stayed in Moravia. Both were located next to each other and today Drahotuš is a district of Hranice. This means that Karol Wojtyła’s unit may have stationed for a time in Drahotuš (or Drahotuše), but Hranice was the main location.

At a time when Europe fought a bloody war, news from the battlefields reached Hranice. Wojtyła focused in particular on news about the battalions from the 56th Wadowice Regiment, which fought on the Austrian-Russian front, e.g. at the watershed and bloody Battle of Gorlice in the early 1915. Legend has it, that Karol Wojtyła, Sr. himself fought in this battle. Moreover, he is said to have made a promise concerning his son. During the most atrocious moment of the battle, Wojtyła was in the trenches near Gorlice with his friend. The Russians advanced on the Austro-Hungarian army and shelled the Austrian trenches. Danger was imminent and the soldiers feared for their lives. They realised they might get killed so they asked God for help and made a solemn pledge. Karol Wojtyła’s friend Corporal Koszyk promised that should he survive the war and have a son, he would want him to become a priest. Karol Wojtyła (allegedly) saw this pledge as too inadequate and made a following one: “God, if I

¹³ Military History Bureau, Generals and Personages Collection, Karol Wojtyła, file no. AP 6051, personal file, p. 2.

¹⁴ Austrian maps used the German name of the town: Mährisch Weißkirchen, but the Czech term was more prevalent: Hranice (Moravia). There were large infantry and cavalry barracks here as well as a higher real military school and a big military hospital.

¹⁵ The oft-repeated information that Edmund attended the higher military school in Hranice (*Militär Oberrealschule*) or the Austrian cadet school is not true. This was impossible. In 1914 Mundeck was barely eight years of age and had just begun attending the third grade of common school. In his handwritten *curriculum vitae* I came across when working on this text, Edmund observes: “I started attending common school in 1912 in Krakow, then in Wadowice and Hranice (Moravia)”. Definitely, then, Emilia’s elder son attended common school in Hranice. It was a four-grade school and only then its graduates could continue education in a real high school or a cadet academy.

¹⁶ Karol Wojtyła’s personal file. Karol Wojtyła’s portfolio in the Military History Bureau in Warsaw.

get back home unharmed after this war, my son will not only become a priest, but a bishop, a cardinal, and a pope!”

Undoubtedly, this is only a legend, which was really written down by Corporal Koszyk¹⁷. It is therefore quite popular in Gorlice and is mentioned in many biographies of John Paul II. Even a description of the Wadowice military barracks of the 56th Infantry Regiment features the following information: “During the First World War, the 56th imperial and royal Infantry Regiment was engaged in battle near Gorlice. One of the soldiers was Karol Wojtyła Sr. He is said to have pledged that should he survive, one of his sons would become a priest”¹⁸.

However, as archival records unambiguously indicate, Emilia’s husband did not take part in the Battle of Gorlice. Furthermore, he never took part in combat and did not fight on the frontline with his regiment. Long before the war broke out, he became an office clerk in the regiment and continued his work during the war, managing regiment ledgers, keeping financial records and dispatching supplies. Beyond a shadow of doubt, then, at the time of the Battle of Gorlice Karol Wojtyła was stationed in Moravia. These are the facts¹⁹.

It is likely, however, that when in Hranice the father of the future pope met Edith Stein, who stayed there at exactly that time. From March to August 1915 she was a Red Cross volunteer and worked as a nurse in a military hospital in the imperial and royal Cavalry Cadets School (*Kavalleriekadettenschule*)²⁰.

The Wojtyłas stayed in Moravia for eleven months, “from 19 November 1914 until 20 August 1915”²¹. When later Karol Wojtyła returned with his family to Wadowice, he continued his work as a clerk in the 56th Infantry Regiment. The atmosphere was completely different, though. First of all, hopes for independence increased. Not only did the frontline move eastwards, but Józef Piłsudski, with the approval of the Austrian authorities, ordered the mobilisation of Polish Rifle Teams from Galicia²². At stake was further recruitment of men who were reserve soldiers in the Austrian army, “first of all single, with the exception of officers, who are in high demand”²³. According to historical sources, “the mobilization

¹⁷ More about the “legend of Corporal Koszyk” see A. Bogunia-Paczyński, “Emilia i Karol Wojtyłowie”, *Małopolska*, 12/2011, pp. 88-91.

¹⁸ See the official website of Wadowice Municipality: description of the *Papal Route*: <http://www.wadowice.pl/Wadowicki-Szlak-Karola-Wojtyly-71.html> (access: 15.08.2013).

¹⁹ However, this unusual account has become truly symbolic. The father of Pope John Paul II actually prayed for his vocation, while not in the Gorlice trenches during the great battle in May 1915, but surely later, in Wadowice and Krakow. It was probably Wojtyła Senior’s profound piety that inspired this apocryphal story. It is also a fact that while working in Hranice, Sergeant Wojtyła cooperated in the organization of facilities for soldiers fighting near Gorlice. And the battle itself was indeed a breakthrough in the war, a watershed in the military situation. It was the beginning of the Austro-German offensive, which led to the recovery of Przemyśl and Lviv. The Russians had to retreat to the east, giving up most of the territory of Eastern Galicia.

²⁰ Edith Stein applied to the Red Cross as early as the autumn of 1914, immediately after the outbreak of the war, when university lectures and classes were suspended and her male mates were drafted to the army and sent to the frontline. She then returned to her native Wrocław, where she completed a course for nurses and for a few weeks worked in a local hospital. Then she was assigned to work in Hranice, Moravia, where she was a volunteer in military hospitals.

²¹ Karol Wojtyła’s personal file. Karol Wojtyła’s portfolio in the Military History Bureau in Warsaw. Military History Bureau, Generals and Personages Collection, Karol Wojtyła, file no. AP 6051, personal file, p. 2.

²² “According to Piłsudski, the rifle societies had at least two major goals: to prepare the troops for the prospective national armed forces and to promote the rebirth of the liberation movement”, See M. Wiśniewska, *Związek strzelecki (1910-1939)*, Warszawa 2010, p. 37.

²³ M. Wiśniewska, *Związek strzelecki (1910-1939)*, p. 55.

plan assumed the deployment of the riflemen in Wadowice, from where they were to be directed after crossing the border of the Russian partition to Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, where they were to foment an uprising that would spread across the entire Kingdom of Poland”²⁴.

Karol Wojtyła was not conscripted as a married man and an army clerk.

A question arises whether Karol Wojtyła was a member of the Polish legions? This is because an extant photograph of him from probably 1915 shows him in a legionnaire’s uniform. Little is known, however, of the reason and circumstances of taking his picture in this uniform. It is also true that on 23 January 1915, when Józef Piłsudski arrived in Wadowice to recruit legionnaires, Karol Wojtyła was still in Moravia. Wadowice long remembered the events, though. As the historian of this region M. Siwiec-Cielebon observes, the march of the First Brigade of the Polish Legions through Wadowice in January 1915 was a red-letter day for the residents of the town. “On January 23 that year Józef Piłsudski presided over a parade of his troops in the town square in Wadowice (now John Paul II Square) and reviewed his units”²⁵. Residents of the town filled the streets and enthusiastically greeted the legendary commander and the First Brigade, marching through the town. The celebrations attracted the entire population, including school students. “The students wrote in a school bulletin: Glory to him! The brigadier raised his hand to the hat and greeted the crowds. The ranks marched on, one by one, until finally the last one passed and disappeared; the delighted crowd remained silent. Suddenly, a great uncontrollable enthusiasm welled up in all those present and a mighty cry rose up: Long live Piłsudski! Long live, and the distant echo reiterated the cry a hundred times”²⁶.

Piłsudski visited the Wadowice Office Casino, “where he was hosted during the banquet thrown in his honour; he raised a toast and signed a commemorative book. This event was recognised as one of the major moments in the history of independence of Wadowice”²⁷. Shortly after the Wojtyłas returned to Wadowice, in July 1916 a daughter Olga was born to them, only to die 16 hours later²⁸ (now we know that Pope John Paul II never learned when his sister was born and when she died. He did not even get to know her given name²⁹).

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ M. Siwiec-Cielebon, *Hej, hej Komendancie! Uwagi o niektórych elementach kultu Józefa Piłsudskiego w Wadowicach w okresie międzywojennym*, <http://wadoviana.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/10.-Hej-hej-Komendancie.pdf>.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 2. M. Siwiec-Cielebon quotes in the article a periodical for school students *Nasz Lan* of 7 November 1915. The article there was written by seventh-grade student Henryk Koppel, later an officer of the Polish Army.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 2.

²⁸ The Divine Providence Parish in Bielsko-Biała (the church is located in the district of Biała, once a town by that name) is in possession of a document that daughter Olga was born to Karol Wojtyła w Biała (where Karol Wojtyła’s wife was spending time with her family). The girl died 16 hours later. *The Funeral Book* from the years 1914/1916 bears a Latin text: “Olga Maria Wojtyła, daughter of Karol, military clerk, and Emilia, born in Biała”, died 7 July 1916, buried on July 9; lived “16 hours (*16 horas*)”. The cause of death is provided as follows: “aspiration of amniotic fluid” (the record, previously unnoticed, is in German: *Aspiration von Fruchtwasser*). The document contains a note about the “religion” of the deceased: Catholic. Olga must have been christened, then, since her religion is mentioned. In fact, there is an illegible signature of a priest: Father Władysław Mączyński, who performed the sprinkling with blessed water (the abbreviation *asp.*, Latin *asperxit*, or: “sprinkled” precedes the priest’s name). The child’s death was noted moreover in Karol Wojtyła’s military file: “his daughter Olga Maria” was born on 7 July 1916, died on 7 July 1916. This was confirmed, as the note said, by the “birth certificate from a Catholic parish office”.

²⁹ The name was written in documents which were not known during the lifetime of John Paul II. However, the pope mentioned his sister in his testament: “As the end of my earthly life draws close, I think back to its beginning, to my Parents, my Brother and my Sister (whom I never knew, for she died before I was born)...”. See Jan Paweł II, *Testament*, Warszawa 2005, p. 7.

Karol Wojtyła served at that time in the County Supplementary Command. But no longer as a junior sergeant but as a military registry assistant. He served in this capacity until the end of his service in the Imperial and Royal Austrian Army, i.e. until October 31, 1918. This means that Karol Wojtyła Sr. served a total of 18 years in the Austrian Army.

In the Polish Army

This was the path taken by Karol Wojtyła Sr. towards the reborn and united Polish Army, when overnight he became a Polish army soldier. In late October and early November 1918, in light of the new international situation, i.e. the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the imminent defeat of Germany, Poles were increasingly aware that the reconstruction of an independent Polish state and the creation of the Polish army is at hand. All the more so that immediately after the appeal to the Polish nation of 7 October 1918 proclaiming the establishment of an independent Polish state, on October 12 the Regency Council issued a decree on assuming command over the military and recommended immediate swearing-in. "In the decree, the Council decided to introduce a new text of the military pledge to be made by soldiers to the Polish State and the Regency Council as a temporary substitute of the future supreme authorities of the Polish State"³⁰. Being sworn-in, the military was to be commanded by the Regency Council, which reserved the right to nominate officers³¹.

The appeals of the Regency Council were very well received throughout Galicia. In Wadowice, where Karol Wojtyła served in the army, rallies were held and a meeting organised under the auspices of the City Council. "As we read in the relevant report of the authorities of Wadowice, the meeting gathered most of the local intelligentsia and the town was adorned with national flags"³². On 28 October 1918 the Polish deputies to Austrian Parliament gathered in Krakow set up the Polish Liquidation Committee³³, which was to take over power from the Austrian administration after the collapse of the empire³⁴.

At the same time, in early November 1918, structures emerged in some areas, usurping the right to take over power in different counties. They were called county liquidation commissions. Such a commission was set up in Wadowice rather late, only on 7 November 1918³⁵ yet, importantly, it was established. "After Poland regained independence, it was natural for the new authorities in Warsaw to leave the seat of the district and the military garrison in Wadowice, to which Karol Wojtyła Sr., father of the later Pope John Paul II, was assigned"³⁶. As in the Austrian army, in the Polish one Wojtyła quickly climbed the career

³⁰ W. Milewska, J.T. Nowak, M. Zientara, *Legiony Polskie 1914-1918*, p. 268.

³¹ See *ibidem*, p. 268-269.

³² M. Przeniosło, *Polska Komisja Likwidacyjna 1918-1919*, Kielce 2010, p. 13.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 11-32.

³⁴ See J. Cisek, *Józef Piłsudski w Krakowie*, Kraków 2003, pp. 72- 73.

³⁵ "The reasons for its rather late organisation may be seen in the takeover of the initiative in the district by the local starost, Antoni Pogłódowski, who announced shortly after the Polish Liquidation Committee in Krakow had started its activities that, according to the Commission's recommendations, the starost of Wadowice became the administrative Polish authority. In order to inform the local community about the new situation after the establishment of the Polish Liquidation Committee, the starost issued in print a special appeal dated 2 November 1918" M. Przeniosło, *Polska Komisja Likwidacyjna 1918-1919*, p. 50.

³⁶ K. Meus, *Wadowice 1772-1914. Studium przypadku miasta galicyjskiego*, Kraków 2013, p. 453.

ladder. On 2 February 1919, he was appointed head of the office of the Country Replacement Command in Wadowice.

In 1920, on May 18, his son Karol, the future Pope John Paul II, was born to him. In January 1922, Karol Wojtyła filed a request to remain in the military profession. He received consent and his request was found to be of immense benefit for the army. Then he was appointed a commissioned officer of the conscript service.

Later on, however, due to the difficult family situation and his wife Emilia's grave illness, in 1927 Karol Wojtyła took an early retirement. In 1928, when the army held celebrations of the 10th anniversary of Poland's independence and Krakow celebrated Marshal Piłsudski's visit to the city, Wojtyła's name was listed as a retired officer.

Karol Wojtyła Senior's military file from the *Kriegsarchiv* in Vienna precisely indicates the stages of his military career. These documents show that for 18 years he served in the Austrian army. There he completed compulsory military service of three years and remained as a military clerk, first in Krakow and then in Wadowice. Later on, when Poland regained independence in 1918, he served in the Polish Army.

Karol Wojtyła's Military Career in Light of Archival Records Summary

Little is known and studied of the military personal records of Karol Wojtyła from the *Kriegsarchiv* in Vienna, which would allow an accurate account of his curriculum vitae and map out the main steps in the course of his military service. Analysis of the above records leads to the conclusion that Karol Wojtyła Sr., John Paul II's father, was for 18 years a professional soldier in the service in the Austro-Hungarian Army, in the 56th Infantry Regiment called the Wadowice Regiment. Later he became an officer in the Polish Army in the reborn Republic of Poland. Throughout his military service he enjoyed a very good reputation and his superiors described him as diligent and honest, valued for his ability to communicate in German.

Keywords: Karol Wojtyła senior, 56th Infantry Regiment, army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Polish Army in 1918

About the Author: Milena Kindziuk – doctor of history, author of books, e.g. a biography of Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko *Świadek prawdy* [Witness to Truth], Cardinal Józef Glemp *Ostatni taki Prymas* [The Last Such Primate]; Emilia Wojtyłowa *Matka Papieża* [Mother of a Pope], Marianna Popiełuszko – *Matka świętego* [Mother of a Saint]. Assistant professor at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University Institute of Media Education and Journalism.

Translated by Marcin Turski