

General Michal Gutowski

(1910-2006)

Army officer and equestrian



A remarkable individual who has contributed greatly both to his birth country Poland and his adopted country of Canada.

Rick Norlock, MP

Michal Gutowski graduated from a military high school and then studied at the Polish Cavalry Officers' School in Grudziadz, preparing for a military career that would make him one of the most distinguished Polish generals. A gifted rider, he won numerous trophies in national and international jumping competitions. In 1936, he was a member of the Polish national team at the Berlin Olympic Games.

He fought in the 1939 September campaign against the invading Germans, winning the Virtuti Militari Cross, the highest Polish military honour for valour, in the Battle at Bzura River, for commanding a squadron that recaptured the Walewice position. Escaping German and Soviet occupation of Poland, he made his way to Great Britain and eventually joined the Regiment of Mounted Rifles in General Maczek's 1st Panzer Division. Leading the Cromwell Tank Squadron, he encircled some German forces in the Battle of Falaise in France, and after the fall of Germany, was promoted to Second Commander of the Polish Panzer Regiment, stationed at the main German navy base in Wilhelmshaven. He was awarded French *Legion d'Honneur* and *Croix de Guerre* with Palm, American Legion of Merit, and Polish Cross of Valour (five times) and Commander's Cross of the Polonia Restituta.

Poland being left under Soviet domination behind the Iron Curtain, in 1948 Gutowski emigrated to Canada, where he began a long relationship with the Canadian Olympic Equestrian Team. Most notably, he was the team's trainer when it won the gold medal at the Olympic Games in Mexico in 1968.

After the fall of communism, he returned to his native Poland where he was promoted to general. In spite of his advanced age, he was instrumental in helping re-establish the Cavalry Parade Squadron, and was a member of the Capitular Chapter of the Virtuti Militari Cross. At the age of 92, the General led the charge show of a hundred-twenty uhlands at the airfield of the 25th Airborne Cavalry Brigade. In January 2004, he mounted a horse to jump a few obstacles a day before his backbone operation. General Gutowski was put to final rest in Warsaw with full military honours in a state funeral.



Photos from top left clockwise:
• Gen. Michal Gutowski / Photo – Fakty archives • Gen. Gutowski at the banquet of the Polish Combatants' Association in Toronto, 1978 / Photo by W. H. Leppke • M. Gutowski on the horse Warszawianka, winning equestrian competition in Warsaw, Poland, 1933 / Photo – Fakty archives • General Gutowski with Polish veterans Mieczyslaw Lutczyk, and Adam Kreutzer / Photo – A. Kreutzer's archives