

General Ludomił Rayski 1892-1977. A military biography. Summary

The Polish general, pilot and engineer Ludomil Rayski is one of the most controversial figures in the history of Polish aviation. He is considered to have been the creator of modern Polish aviation based on aircraft constructed and produced in Poland, co-originator of Polish aviation industry, supporter of statism. He was born in Czaśław near Cracow, son of a January Uprising veteran who had emigrated to Turkey, due to which L. Rayski held Turkish citizenship. He was member of Józef Piłsudski's Legions. In 1915 he was called up to the Turkish Army and served in Turkish aviation until 1918. In 1919 he returned to Poland with Gen. Lucjan Żeligowski's Division. Rayski created the first Polish bomber squadron. In the years 1922-1924 he worked in the Department of Aeronautics. He was deputy to the head of the Department, General F. L. Leveque. In the May Coup d'État in Poland in 1926 he actively supported J. Piłsudski. Between 1926 and 1939 he was commander of the Polish Air Force. Though faced with difficult professional relations, he was able to develop aviation, which he would systematically re-arm, using Polish aircraft. In March 1939 he handed in his resignation. He was head of the Polish mission to the UK to purchase British planes. After the September Campaign in France and then the UK Rayski remained in conflict with the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces Gen. Władysław Sikorski. That was why he enlisted in the French Foreign Legion and then in the RAF. He was a FERRY pilot. In 1943 he was made an inspector of the Polish Air Forces for the Middle East. He made sorties in the 1586 Polish Special Duty Flight and 318 Polish Fighter-Reconnaissance Squadron. He lost his daughter in the Warsaw Uprising. After the war he remained in the UK and died in London in 1977.

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