

RUFF Jan (1895-1941), pseudonym *Niezgła*, independence activist, soldier in the Polish Legions and the Polish-Bolshevik war, lawyer, author of legal books. He was born on 29th July (according to another source 29th June) 1895 in Warsaw, the son of → Maurycy and Maria née Zylber.

He spent his childhood and youth in Częstochowa and studied at the Russian Boys Gimnazjum. In 1905, he was expelled from school for taking part in a school strike. From 1906, he studied at the No.1 Polish Gimnazjum.

From 1906, he belonged to the Union of Progressive-Independent Youth (ZMPN). On 20th February 1912, he was one of the ZMPN members, in Częstochowa, who were arrested and was kept in custody in Częstochowa. He was soon released (after his family paid his bail) and left for Piotrków, where he continued his studies at a *gimnazjum*. Threatened with being arrested again, in December 1912, he moved to Lwów. There, he studied as a free student in the Philosophy Department of the Jan Kazimierz University.

He belonged to the Związek Strzelecki [Riflemen's Association]. The outbreak of war found him in Częstochowa. In September 1914, he joined the Polish Legions and, after completing the NCO course, as a corporal, he served in the 5th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Brigade. He fought at Krzywopłoty, Łowczówek and Konary. As a soldier in the 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, he was seriously wounded, near Klimontów, in mid-1915. After long treatment, he was released from the Legions.

He lived in Warsaw where, in 1916, he matriculated at the A. Mickiewicz Philological Gimnazjum in Warsaw and began legal studies at the University of Warsaw. At that time, he took part in the patriotic activities of the local youth, who were mainly Jewish. He edited the "Żagiew" ["The Torch"] magazine for Polish-Jewish youth.

In November 1918, he joined the 1st Heavy Artillery Regiment of the Polish Army in Kraków. Until March 1920, he served in the 2nd Battery of the 3rd Heavy Artillery Regiment. He then served in the Propaganda Department of the 2nd Department of the Ministry of Military Affairs. In 1918-1920, he took part in the fighting on the Ukrainian front and in the war with the Bolsheviks. He used his leave periods to continue his studies.

In 1922, he graduated from the University of Warsaw's Law Faculty. While a student, he was vice president of the "Zjednoczenie" Academic Union. He also belonged to the Union of Polish Jews, where he also served as vice-president.

He was published in the “Rozwaga” magazine, published by “Zjednoczenie”. In 1923, he published a brochure entitled *Żydzi – polityka – Polska [Jews – Politics – Poland]*. For a short period from 1922, he worked in the court. He later interned with lawyer Kazimierz Sterling. In 1927, in Warsaw, he was entered onto the roll of lawyers. He specialised as a defender in criminal cases, “gaining the position of an outstanding defender and an expert in criminal law”.

In addition to criminal law, he was interested in issues regarding the dignity of the lawyer and a lawyer’s moral responsibility for the proper performance of his professional duties. He was one of supporters of creating a universal code of lawyers’ ethics. He was the author of legal works:

- *Odpowiedzialność karna lekarza [The Criminal Responsibility of a Lawyer]* (Warsaw 1929),
- *Kodeks postępowania karnego w zarysie praktycznym [The Code of Criminal Procedure in Practical Outline]* (Warsaw 1929),
- *Dyscyplina adwokatury [The Discipline of Lawyers]* (Warsaw 1939)

He published articles in “Gazeta Sądowa Warszawska” and in “Palestrze”. He translated, into Polish and valuable to the legal profession, the work of Ferdynand Payen *O powołaniu adwokatury i sztuce obrończej [On the Establishment of the Bar and the Art of Defence]*.

From 1936, he was president of the Supreme Council of the State Bloc of Polish Jews. He belonged to the Union of Polish Legionnaires and to the headquarters of the *Koło Pięćtaków* in Warsaw.

He maintained contact with people in Częstochowa and, in the first half of the 1930, he was co-founder and, later, secretary of the Warsaw committee of former students of the Russian *gimnazjum* in Częstochowa. In September of that year, in Częstochowa, he co-organised the Congress of Participants in the Fight for Polish Schools and Staff of the No.1 Polish Gimnazjum. To mark the event, he published an article entitled *Garść wspomnień [A Handful of Memories]* (“Goniec Częstochowski”, dated 21st September 1930, No. 218).

During the German occupation, he lived in Warsaw. On 31st March 1941, he was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in Pawiak. Soon after, he was transported to the German concentration camp in Auschwitz (Oświęcim), where he remained until 6th April 1941. He perished in the camp on 5th November 1941.

He was decorated with the Cross of Independence (1931), the “Faithful Service” Badge, the “Orlęta” Badge of Honour, the Przemysł Star, the Latvian Commemorative Medal 1918-1928 and the Austrian Medal of Valour.

He married Maria née Butłow who, during the occupation, was sent to the German concentration camp in Ravensbrück. They had a son, Piotr, an architect who, during World War II, lived in France.

Adwokaci regionu częstochowskiego (J. Sętowski), pp. 204–206; M. Gałęzowski, *Na wzór Berka Joselewicza. Żołnierze i oficerowie pochodzenia żydowskiego w Legionach Polskich*, Warszawa 2010, p. 563 (photograph here), 564 (photograph here), 565; PSB, vol. XXXIII/1 (Zofia Wassong-Zakrzewska), pp. 64–65. – *Słownik adwokatów*, vol. II, z. 3–4 (Zofia Wassong-Zakrzewska), pp. 446–447. – *Księgi zgonów z Auschwitz*, vol. III, p. 1040 (date of birth here: 29th June 1895); *Lista strat Legionu Polskiego (from 1 V to 1 VII 1915)*, Piotrków 1915, p. 26. – “Express Częstochowski” 1930, No. 144, p. 3; “Goniec Częstochowski” 1918, No. 264, p. 3, 1930, No. 218, p. 2. – Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Prokurator Warszawskiej Izby Sądowej 7344, k. 1–2, 19, 23; Central Military Archives, Akta Krzyża i Medalu Niepodległości, vol. 115 (photograph here).

Juliusz Sętowski