



Eugeniusz Lokajski in the Polish national team during the athlete match against Belgium, in Brussels. July, 1935. Photo from the collection of the National Digital Archives

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The Uprising's photographer. Eugeniusz Lokajski

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How to describe the Warsaw Uprising? Not many people who remember these events are still alive today. There aren't even that many places which resemble the capital from 1944. All that remains are the photographs, which are the testimony of these days.

One of the greatest photographers of the uprising was Eugeniusz Lokajski. His pictures include some of the most famous and recognisable participants of the uprising. He documented the events between August 1 and September 25 (when he died). He took more than 800 pictures (all on display in the digital library of the

Warsaw Rising Museum).

Lokajski's photographs are an invaluable source of information on the people and events of that time; they are also often the only evidence of these persons' presence in Warsaw during the uprising. The photograph of Lokajski himself with a kitten, taken with his own camera; the picture of Różyczka Goździejewska, the youngest nurse, and many other materials are an important historical source.



Second Lieutenant Eugeniusz Lokajski "Brok" standing with a kitten in front of the old Insurance Association "Russia", on Marszałkowska 124/128 (fragment), public domain

Another important document and, at the same time, a source of inspiration for the soldiers themselves was a film showing Polish troops from the "Kiliński" battalion capturing the PAST building (Polish Telephone Joint-stock Company) on Zielna 37/39 Street. The film premiered on August 21, 1944, at the Palladium cinema and caused a huge euphoria among the audiences.

The collection of photographs and films included pictures from weddings, funerals, street fights, basements and abandoned, ruined shelters. Many participants of the uprising later recalled the PE teacher who took pictures of the fighting and everyday life of Warsaw at that time. In his photographs, he captured such people as: Jan Łompierz "Matejko" (photographed at the hospital on Moniszki 11 Street); Bożena Pawłowska "Magda" (the girl with a mirror); Zbigniew Olszewski "Sęp" (photographed with other soldiers in the first days of the uprising).

Olympic athlete with a camera

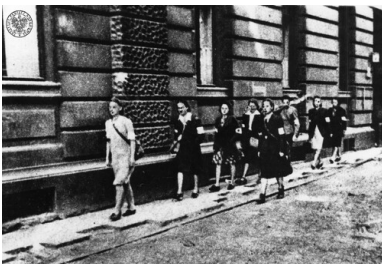
Eugeniusz Lokajski was a sportsman prior to the war. He achieved various successes as a versatile athlete. At first, he competed in the pentathlon and decathlon. In 1935, he won the silver medal in the pentathlon at the world championship in Budapest. He tried his hand at everything, until he finally landed at the one discipline he was best at. In 1936, he set the Polish national record in javelin throw and competed in this discipline at the Berlin Olympics. He got 73.27 metres in a training session, which was the third best result in the world. Unfortunately, an injury prevented Lokajski from grabbing a medal then.



Eugeniusz Lokajski during the pre-Olympic athlete competition in Warsaw. June, 1936. Photo from the collection of the National Digital Archives

In September, 1939, he was captured by the Soviets near Brześć; but, luckily he managed to escape. After various adventures, he managed to come back to Warsaw, where he set up a photography shop at his mother's apartment on Łucka 2 Street. He also taught the youth as a sports instructor. He trained with his group at the Skaryszewski Park.

Since 1943, Lokajski served in the Home Army. In the Warsaw Uprising, he fought in the ranks of staff company "Koszta", at the northern part of the Central District. But his biggest contribution was the documenting of events which he witnessed.



Nurse patrol with Zofia Lejmbach,
codename "Róża." Photo from
the archives of the Institute of
National Remembrance,
Eugeniusz Lokajski, codename
"Brok"



Field kitchen of the uprising's
soldiers. Photo from the archives
of the Institute of National
Remembrance, Eugeniusz
Lokajski, codename "Brok"

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Eugeniusz Lokajski died like many other soldiers of the uprising — he got buried under the rubble. On September 25, he went to the photography shop on Marszałkowska 129 Street to take film for his camera. The uprising's command, foreseeing an end to the fighting, ordered Lokajski to take pictures of the soldiers to make false ID cards. Bombs fell on the building a minute after he went inside. Jan Gozdawa-Gołębiowski "Dziryt", who saw the entire event, described what happened. He was supposed to enter the building with Lokajski, but he was too tired and stayed outside.

Lokajski's sister, Zofia Lokajska-Domańska "Zocha", who was a messenger in the uprising, buried her brother months later, in May, 1945, when the body was recovered from the ruins and laid to final rest at Warsaw's Powązki Cemetery. It is thanks to her that we can view Eugeniusz's photographs today. Shortly before he died, he gave Zofia the box with camera film and asked her to keep them safe.

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