

## Summary

Stefan Kirtiklis was an extremely colorful character of the so-called "Breakthrough generation". This term was introduced by Roman Wapiński, who used this phrase in his book "Generations of the breakthrough" to describe those years that began their public activity during the revolution of 1905 - 1907 and played a large role during the First World War. Life under the partitions and World War I left a mark on these people, which influenced their later existence and activity in the era of the Second Polish Republic. Stefan Kirtiklis was such a figure - an independence activist associated with the Polish Socialist Party, a military man, and after the May Coup became a state official, representing the government in several provinces as a voivode. Kirtiklis survived World War II, and after its end, he was looking for a new place in the reality of the People's Republic of Poland.

Stefan Kirtiklis was born on January 8 in Kolno (today's Podlaskie Province) in 1890. His father Andrzej came from Kaunas, was a teacher, then an official, while his mother Franciszka came from the Prusiński family. Between 1904 - 1905, as a student of a male gymnasium in Łomża, Stefan Kirtiklis actively participated in political and independence activities. At that time, he joined the PPS and belonged to its Combat Organization. In December 1905, he was arrested in Łomża by the Russian authorities for taking part in a school strike. Interned in an investigative prison, he was held in the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel. In June 1907, he stood trial but was released from punishment because he was too young. Then he went to Warsaw, where he attended the Gymnasium of Jan Kreczmar. Because of the risk of being arrested again, thanks to his father's help, he went to Brussels. Here, in 1911, he began studies at the University of Nouvelle at the Faculty of Economics - socio-economic sciences. In 1913, he graduated with the title of a candidate.

During his studies in Brussels, he took part in the International Congress of Socialists in Basel (1912) as a representative of the PPS - Left. Then he joined the PPS - the Revolutionary Faction. At the beginning of 1914, he returned to the Kingdom, settled down in Sosnowiec and worked as a PPS activist in Zagłębie Górnice. After the outbreak of World War I, at the end of 1914, he returned to Warsaw and joined the Polish Military Organization (POW). He managed its work in Łomża, Piotrków and Kielce. Then being a member of the District Workers' Committee of the PPS Fraction, he became the commander of the POW in Radom. In 1917, he joined the Supreme Command of the Polish Army, where he became the commander of a school company. He also headed the work of the Central Commission of Class Trade Unions, after creating its secretariat for the Austrian occupation. In the spring of 1918, he was briefly arrested by the Austrians. Fearing new restrictions, he went to Warsaw. In November of that year, he returned to Radom and took part in disarming the occupiers. Then (as a lieutenant), together with Edward Rydz Śmigły, he went to Lublin, and after the creation of the Provisional Government, he became the Commander of the People's Militia in the area of the former Austrian occupation. As an officer with the army of Rydz Śmigły, he went to Vilnius in 1919 and acted as a liaison to the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories. In April 1919, he took an active part in the march to Vilnius and the battles near Vilnius.

After the occupation of Vilnius by Żeligowski in October 1920 and the creation of Central Lithuania, he was appointed as the head of the security service, organized and commanded a militia battalion in that city. Then he remained in the army, serving in the field gendarmerie in Vilnius, Minsk and other cities in eastern Poland. In April 1921, he was nominated commander of the 1st military police squadron. In the years 1922 - 1926 he served in the military police, taking part in organizing the action of taking over the part of the neutral zone assigned to Poland. The border line between Central Lithuania and Kaunas Lithuania consisted of a neutral buffer, in which the military could not operate, and a cordon-demarkation line and a cordon zone, which was patrolled by the Polish army. The makeshift situation that arose as a result of the creation of the neutral buffer zone created many problems, especially related to maintaining safety in this area. The formal annexation of Central Lithuania to the Republic of Poland became an impulse to settle the temporary solution which was the neutral buffer. The action of seizing the neutral belt took place on February 15-17, 1923.

In the period from October 20, 1924 to March 31, 1925, Kirtiklis contacted with the Pomeranian region, completing an officer course in Grudziądz. In the spring of 1926, he was appointed the commander of the staff of the 3rd Military Gendarmerie Squadron in Grodno, where he remained until the end of that year. At the end of 1926, he was sent (in the rank of a gendarmerie major) by the Ministry of the Interior to the Provincial Office in Vilnius, where he was the head of the security department, and from 1929 - deputy voivode. When Władysław Raczkiewicz was elected as Marshal of the Senate, Kirtiklis took the position of the Vilnius voivode (December 5, 1930). He was the chairman of the Federation of Polish Unions of the Fatherland Defenders in Vilnius and the chairman of the Legionnaires' Union and the Peowiaków Association. Kirtiklis proved to be a zealous opponent of the opposition and a propagator of state ideology. Kirtiklis entrusted administrative positions to BBWR supporters. He left the office of the Vilnius voivode in connection with the financial scandal in which his wife Janina was involved. From July 24 to November 18, 1931, he was transferred to the position of the Łódź voivode. This period was to constitute a kind of quarantine, after which Kirtiklis was appointed the Pomeranian voivode.

Stefan Kirtiklis was the longest-serving Pomeranian voivode in the Second Polish Republic. He held this position from November 1931 to July 1936. On July 22, 1936, he assumed a similar function in the Białystok Province. However, the lawsuits of his former subordinates meant that he was in office there for only one year, until September 11 1937. In mid-1938, he retired. He lived in Vilnius, staying in touch with the group of Walery Sławek. After Vilnius was occupied by the Soviet army, in October 1940, he was sent to the prison in Łukiszki (the oldest prison in Lithuania, located in the center of Vilnius). Before the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, he was transported to the Soviet Union and imprisoned in a penal camp at the mouth of northern Pechora, where he stayed until March 1942. Then, together with Władysław Anders' army, he went to the Middle East and settled in Palestine as a civil refugee. At the turn of February and March 1944, the Union of Polish Patriots in the Middle East associated with the ZPP in the USSR was established. Kirtiklis was a member of the union's board of directors and was initially created to be its leading figure. At

the end of 1944, he was summoned to the country through the Soviet Embassy in Syria. After a longer period of waiting for a British entry visa, on April 20, 1945, he went to Moscow. Three days later, he attended a conference at the Polish embassy in Moscow. He returned to Warsaw on April 30, taking the position of an official for special orders in the Ministry of Public Administration, then deputy director in the Ministry of Supply and Trade, and then he worked in the Ministry of Recovered Territories. After he was dismissed from work, he moved to Magdalenka near Warsaw in 1950, where he died on June 24, 1951.

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