

# Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

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## The Activities of the general Daniel Konarzewski's Group in the East

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, the government in Warsaw started to suggest with more emphasis that it would be possible to use the Greater Poland units on the Eastern front. After the Poznan-Lviv Volunteer Company was sent to Lviv, the decision was taken to dispatch bigger forces. In Poznań, for the time being, support was provided in the form of a single infantry regiment and four heavy and light cannon batteries. The dispatch of further reinforcements (even as many as two rifle divisions) depended on the possible declaration of Marshal Foch, which would guarantee a dynamic reaction from the Entente states if any military steps were taken by the Germans against Poland. Furthermore, the coalition was supposed to

deliver a certain number of cannons as well as artillery and machine gun ammunition. On 12-13 March 1919, the Greater Poland Group, commanded by Colonel Daniel Konarzewski, was put at the disposal of Gen. Iwaszkiewicz. As well as the commanding staff, it consisted of: the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Regiment, the 1st battalion of the 1st Greater Poland Light Field Artillery Regiment, the 1st Air Force Squadron and a signal platoon - about 5 officers and 3800 non-commissioned officers, three cannon batteries and seven aeroplanes.

Konarzewski's group, which was solemnly bid farewell by the citizens and the commander-in-chief - Gen. J. Dowbor-Muśnicki and his staff - set off from the Bolechowo railway station in three transports, through Poznań-Skalmierzyce-Kalisz-Koluszki-Częstochowa-Cracow and Przemyśl to the rally point in Sudova Vyshnia. From there, together with the 2nd battalion of the 10th Infantry Regiment from Dolgomostiska, which was assigned to it, the group was supposed to break through the siege ring around Lviv. The attack started on 17 March 1919 at 6.00 a.m. The soldiers from Greater Poland initially occupied such towns as Melniki, Bar, Milatin and then Vovchukhy, Putiatychi and Dobriany. During the first day of fighting, the assigned tasks were accomplished and the route for the further march towards Lviv was prepared despite the fact that they were significantly outnumbered by the enemy: about 7000 - 8000 soldiers with 30 cannons and 40 machine guns. During the fighting, which lasted two days, and whose aim was to end the blockade at Lviv, the

troops of the Greater Poland Group completely fulfilled the hopes placed in it by the Supreme Command of the Polish Armies in Warsaw. General Iwaszkiewicz, in his order dated 19 March, emphasised that the “Iron armies of the Greater Poland soldiers under the command of Colonel Konarzewski, by their resolute attack [...] contributed to the victory”. Also, Colonel Konarzewski issued a laudatory order to the troops who had been appointed to him. The losses of the Greater Poland Group on 18-19 March amounted to 17 dead and 178 wounded (including four officers) and 35 missing in action. Among other things, two cannons and five heavy machine guns were captured.

In the period between 20 March and 17 April the troops from Greater Poland switched to a holding formation, occupying a 20-kilometre section stretching from Horodok to Henryków. From 19 April, the group was subordinated to Gen. Iwaszkiewicz, who had just one month before becoming the army commander for Eastern Galicia (the “East” command) in lieu of the dismissed General Tadeusz Rozwadowski. In order to free Lviv from artillery fire from South-East, the “East” command proceeded with their “Jazda” [Cavalry] offensive operation, which was supposed to defeat the Ukrainian forces concentrated south of the Velykyi Liubin-Bartativ-Skniliv line and south of Lviv. The main task was assigned to the Greater Poland group. On 19 April, at the cost of many lives, Glinna and Navarya were taken, also a Ukrainian armoured train was damaged. The task was accomplished and the soldiers of Colonel Konarzewski, gained

the recognition of the command again. For the next three weeks Konarzewski's troops kept their positions along the Navarya-Valychkovytsi-Nagoriany-Pasiky-Zubrytski line.

In the May offensive in Eastern Galicia, commanded by Gen. Józef Haller, an attack on Stryi was planned. The soldiers of Greater Poland attacked from the direction of Horodok towards the south east, liberating Buchyna, Uhry, Neuhof, Hodvyshnia, Sosnyna farm, Zavidovichi, Hoshany and Rudky. On the night of 15-16 May the Greater Poland troops were concentrated in Koropuzh and Zavidovichi, from which they attacked Komarno. Two days later, Mykolaiv, Budnyky and Pesochnoe, where military depots were located, were also in Polish hands. 800 prisoners-of-war were taken and seven cannons and twenty machine guns were captured.

After conquering Stryi and taking about one thousand prisoners of war, the Greater Poland soldiers were sent to Lviv for a rest. At the same time, preparations for the protection of their homeland region moved into the culmination phase, as a German invasion was expected. In turn, the situation in Lviv became clearer and the departure of Konarzewski's group to Greater Poland would not leave the capital city of the Eastern Lesser Poland region under the threat of reoccupation by the Ukrainians. Thus, on 5 June 1919, a farewell ceremony to General Konarzewski's troops (since 1 June) took place on Lviv's Citadel square. It ended with a military parade in front of the municipal authorities and

members of the coalition mission. On 8 and 9 June, the Greater Poland troops reached Poznań. In recognition of their services, the Supreme People's Council awarded them a band in the national colours with the inscription "For the Defence of the Eastern Borderlands" to go on the banner of the 1st. Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. The aeroplanes and cannons which participated in the Lviv expedition also received additional insignia: metal eagles with plates carrying the same inscription. On 14 June, Gen. J. Haller officially thanked the chief commander of the Greater Poland Army for his attitude during the May offensive.

On 3 April 1919, a field hospital was sent to Lviv under the command of Major Doctor Emanuel Twórz, and a wagon of beds and dressings were also delivered there. The departure of the National Defence Battalion (former People's Guard) was also planned, but implementation of this decision was suspended due to the German threat.

After the signing of the Versailles Treaty (28 June 1919), another period of fighting in Eastern Galicia began for the soldiers from Greater Poland. On 25 June 1919, the Entente states agreed to the military occupation of these areas by Poland. After obtaining guarantees from the Allied command in the face of the upcoming German invasion, as early as between 22 and 26 June, General Konarzewski's group was sent to Eastern Lesser Poland, though it was at that point composed of slightly different units: the 10th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment, the 1st battalion of the 1st Greater Poland Field Artillery

Regiment, the 9th battery of the 1st Greater Poland Heavy Artillery Regiment, the 3rd Air Force Squadron, a sanitary company and signal troops and also ammunition columns (light and heavy) - in total 89 officers, 4353 privates, 1091 horses and 14 cannons. Konarzewski's troops were concentrated in the lower course of the Hnyla-Lypa River, from which, on the night of 27-28 June, they initiated an attack with the task of breaking through the Ukrainian Front and occupying Narayovychi-Mesto and Berezhany. After 2 hours of fighting, Belka, Kostenev and Yanchin were seized, and then Narayovychi-Mesto. Now on the offensive, on 3 July, the Greater Poland infantry seized Vyshnivchyk, Budaniv and Kopychyntsi on the Strypa River, almost without any fighting. On 15 July, with the support of artillery, the Greater Poland Group, drove out the Ukrainians on the other side of the Siret River and chased after them, managing to take Budaniv on the same day, and then on 16 July - Kopychyntsi. The last day of the Polish offensive was 17 July 1919. Konarzewski's group, with the support of five Greater Poland batteries, took Husiatyn in a daring attack. The group stayed in this region until 6 August when its command was taken over by Colonel Leon Billewicz. On 7 August, the Greater Poland Group was assigned to the Volhynian Front and assigned to the command of the 3rd Rifle Division from the former army of Gen. J. Haller. In marches through Khorostkiv, Skalat and Zbarazh, the Greater Poland soldiers reached Teofipol and Moskalevka.

On 25 June, the third Greater Poland Air Squadron, under the command of Second

Lieutenant Pilot Józef Mańczak, was also sent to Eastern Galicia. It carried out reconnaissance and bombardments of railway stations, e.g. the Tzhmelivka railway station was attacked and destroyed from the Berezhnytsia airport near Ternopil. On 19 August, the squadron returned to Greater Poland.



