

Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

[https://greaterpolanduprising.eu/pwe/history/behind-the-scenes-of-th/3261,The-Partition-Parliament-of-Poznan.h
tml](https://greaterpolanduprising.eu/pwe/history/behind-the-scenes-of-th/3261,The-Partition-Parliament-of-Poznan.html)
2023-06-05, 07:57

The Partition Parliament of Poznań

Marek Rezler

This was an assembly of representatives of the Polish population from the region of the Poznań province, Vistula Pomerania and Upper Silesia, which convened on 3-5 December 1918 in Poznań.

In the year 1916, the underground Inter-Party Committee (Central Citizen's Committee) was established with a predominance of representatives of the National-Democratic Party. The organisation maintained contacts with the National Polish Committee which operated from 15 August 1917 in Lausanne. On 11 November 1918, the Committee revealed itself and together with the members of the Polish Circle in the Berlin parliament adopted the name "People's Council", and three days later "Supreme People's Council". This body was managed by the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council, which consisted of three people: Priest Stanisław Adamski, Wojciech Korfanty and Adam

Poszwiński. Until August 1919, this was the main Polish authority for the Polish territories under German rule. Local People's Councils, which consisted of members of the previously underground Citizen's Committees, operated in the field. Similar councils were established by German and Jewish circles after the revolution in Germany. In parallel, Worker and Soldier Councils were established and this contributed to the occurrence of a temporary period of dual power in the region, independent of the official German administration. Each of these organisations had their own military formations at their disposal: the Supreme People's Council had the People's Guard, while the Worker and Soldier Councils had the Guard and Security Service.

As early as in November 1918, elections to local People's Councils were conducted. At the same time preparations were started for the organisation of the Partition Sejm of Poznań, whose traditions were to refer to the provincial parliaments present in the times of the partitions. During the negotiations, the Polish representatives made the most of the momentary disorder in the Berlin administration and the advantage of the role of Greater Poland as the "bread basket" for the whole German Reich. In the face of the threat of suspension of supplies to the hinterland, on 29 November 1918, the upper president of the Poznań province Hans von Eisenhardt-Rothe gave his consent to the assembly of this body. On the same day in Berlin, a meeting was held at the seat of the 2nd chairman of the Council of People's Deputies, Hugon Haase, with representatives of the

Executive Division of the Worker and Soldier Council in Poznań, the upper president of the Poznań Province, the commandant of the 5th Army Corps and representatives of the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council. It was officially acknowledged that the goal of the Partition Sejm of Poznań would be to discuss organisational issues and take decisions on Polish postulates and "other current matters". The Germans only expressed their reservation regarding the adoption of any resolutions which would suggest a separation of the territories annexed as a result of partitions from Germany.

Basic information about the Partition Sejm of Poznań, the agenda of the proceedings and the principles of election of delegates were all announced by the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council on 14 November 1918. During the pre-election meetings organised by the Provincial Election Committee for the Grand Duchy of Poznań, delegates were elected, one per 2500 people from the Polish population; all Poles aged 20 and more, regardless of their sex, had the right to vote. The details of the programme and the course of the actions taken were presented by the Executive Division of the People's Council for the City of Poznań on 29 November 1919. The whole electoral action was financed as a result of the suspension of the transfer of social money sent so far to Berlin for war-related purposes and voluntary self-taxation of the Polish population. In total, 1399 members of the Partition Sejm of Poznań were elected (including 129 women and 75 Catholic priests) from the respective poviats: the city of Poznań

and the Poznań poviats (east and west - 65),
Babimost: 16, Bydgoszcz: 25, Chodzież: 4,
Czarnków: 8, Gniezno:12, Gostyń: 15, Grodzisk:
11, Inowrocław: 17, Jarocin: 17, Kępın: 16,
Kościan: 17, Koźmin: 10, Krotoszyn: 11, Leszno:
6, Międzychód: 5, Międzyrzecz: 8, Mogilno: 14,
Nowy Tomyśl: 9, Oborniki: 14, Odolanów: 9,
Ostrów Wlkp. 18, Ostrzeszów: 11, Pleszew: 12,
Rawicz: 14, Skwierzyn: 2, Strzelin: 10, Szamotuły:
17, Szubin: 10, Śmigiel: 10, Środa: 20, Śrem: 19,
Wągrowiec: 16, Wieluń: 5, Witkowo: 10,
Września: 14, Wschowa: 5, Wyrzysk: 12, Żnin: 12
- Total 526. From Royal Prussia: Bytów: 2,
Chojnice: 20, Chełm: 12, Człuchów: 3, Gdańsk:
15, Grudziądz: 12, Kartusy: 13, Kościerzyna: 13,
Kwidzyń: 10, Lębork: 3, Lubawa: 17, Puck 1,
Starogard: 21, Sztum: 7, Tuchola: 5, Susz: 4,
Świecie: 19, Tczew: 6, Wałcz: 2, Wąbrzeźno: 10,
Wejherowo: 17, Toruń: 21, Złotów: 11 - Total 262.
From Ducal Prussia: Lec: 1, Morąg: 1, Nibork: 6,
Olsztyn: 18, Ostróda: 2, Reszel: 4, Szczytno: 14,
Węgorzewo: 1. In total 47. From Silesia: Byczyn:
2, Bytom: 44, Gliwice: 31, Gurów: 2, Katowice: 47,
Kluczbork: 15, Kozielsk: 21, Chorzów: 11,
Legnica: 2, Lubliniec: 17, Oleśno: 18, Opole: 38,
Namysłów: 4, Niemodlin: 4, Prudnik: 11, Pszczyn:
39, Racibórz: 7, Rybnik: 42, Strzelce: 21, Syców:
11, Tarnogóra: 9, Wrocław: 3, Zabrze: 31 - Total
431. From the Polish circles abroad: Berlin
(powiat): 70, Bremen: 3, Dresden: 2, Halle an der
Saale: 1, Hamburg: 7, Kiel: 3, Rattenberg: 1,
Westphalia and Rheinland: 46 - Total 99.
Ultimately, about 1100 delegates arrived.

The plenary sessions of the Partition Sejm of
Poznań were held in the J.A. Lambert room (now

non-existent) in the Piekary district and in the neighbouring Apollo room. The respective commissions (there were five of them) had different places of work designated in the city: the commission for political matters - a room in the "Bazar" Hotel, the organisational commission - the Mielżyński Family Museum at 26/27 Wiktorii Street [Seweryna Mielżyńskiego Street], the commission for urgent social and worker's matters - the room of the Supreme People's Council at 40 Św. Marcin Street, the commission for education and schooling in a room of Queen Jadwiga' House [Dom Królowej Jadwigi] at 1 Wilhelmowskie Avenue [Marcinkowskiego Street] and the commission for administration and public security in a room in the Mielżyński Family Museum. The secretariat and information office were located in the headquarters of the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council at 40 Św. Marcin Street.

On 29 November, the Executive Division of the People's Council for the City of Poznań issued a proclamation which regulated order in the city for the time of the Sejm's assembly. The atmosphere of the days from 3 till 5 December 1918 was that of a Polish celebration in Poznań. Red and white flags and red flags with the White Eagle emblem were common in the city, and the German administration began to get accustomed to them. The windows of Polish houses and shop windows were decorated with Polish symbols and images of Polish national heroes. Protection for the members of the Parliament and the places of their activity was ensured by scouts and about 2000 members of the People's Guard.

On 3 December 1918 at 10:00 a.m. a holy mass, celebrated by Archbishop Edmund Dalbor, began in the Poznań parish church, a long sermon was given by the priest, Prelate Antoni Stychel. After the mass, the participants of the Parliament assembly (Sejm) marched solemnly through the Jezuicka Street [Świętosławska Street], Old Market Square, Nowa Street [I. J. Paderewskiego Street], Wilhelmowskie Avenue [Marcinkowskiego Street], Św Marcin Street and Piekary to the Lambert Room, where the Sejm's assembly was inaugurated. It was inaugurated by the president of the Polish Circle in the Reich Parliament, Władysław Seyda; Stanisław Nowicki from Poznań became the marshal of the Sejm. Priest Stanisław Adamski submitted a report on the current activity of the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council, which, in reality was a presentation of the political programme of the leading Polish circles in the province, consisting of the gradual taking over of power, while at the same time waiting for the decisions of the peace conference. Another speaker, Adam Poszwiński, formulated the idea of the People's Council as an association which unites all Poles living within the current borders of the German Reich based on common elections, in order to create a uniform national representation. Furthermore, the structure and competences of the future People's Council were presented and the relationship between the People's Council and Worker and Soldier Councils, to be treated as temporary bodies, was established.

At 5:00 a.m., the work of the respective commissions commenced: political and

organisational work, and the regulations of the Partition Sejm of Poznań were approved. On the second day, the Sejm met for a plenary session. An analysis of the political situation of the Polish territories was carried out and presentations regarding the work of the political commission, the organisational commission and the commission for social and worker's matters were delivered. A resolution was adopted with regards to the unification of those territories annexed by Prussia during the partitions; also a number of resolutions regarding the democratic nature of the united Polish state was passed. The national tax imposed by the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council was approved and the establishment of peasants' councils in the countryside was recommended. The issues of improvement of the status of workers and protection against unemployment for soldiers returning from the front were considered separately. The issues of the different varieties of insurances, pensions and benefits were discussed. Another subject was the problem of land ownership and the possibility of its acquisition based on terms determined by the Central Economic Society. The necessity to regulate the issue of the possible return of emigrants was emphasised, taking into account the possibility of their employment.

In the evening, at the request of the Parliament members, a performance of "Wesele" [The Wedding] was repeated in the Polish Theatre. Work in the commissions was started at 9:00. In the organisational commission, particular attention was paid to the Poles in exile. In the

commission dealing with the issues of education and schooling, matters related to the education of Polish children were analysed. On that day (4 December 1918), the Parliament members participated in the performance of "Wesele" by Stanisław Wyspiański in the Polish Theatre. The Association of Female Landowners organised a party for the delegates to the Sejm in the "Bazar" Hotel.

The third day, 5 December, started with a plenary session in the J. Lambert hall. Presentations related to the work of the administration, food supply, education and electoral commissions were the main focus. The rules for the introduction of the administration of Polish officials as well as the issue of their shortage in relation to the needs were presented; out of sheer necessity, it was necessary to keep Germans in some cases, however with the assignment of Polish inspectors. A resolution was adopted on the establishment of a People's Council in every town. There were no postulates to suspend the dispatch of food to the German Reich, under the condition of not assuming an unfavourable or hostile attitude towards the Polish population. The education commission which held its meetings on the second and third day of the work, supported the issue of religious schools with religion as the most important school subject. A different opinion was expressed by W. Korfanty, who thought that Polish pupils of different denominations should not be marginalised. The schools should be of a common nature and the teachers should preserve the right to a privileged position in education. The lack of Polish qualified teachers who could

commence work in all the schools after the incorporation of Greater Poland into the unified state, was emphasised.

The composition of the Supreme People's Council was determined, with parity for Parliament members from the respective territories: Duchy of Poznań: 27, Royal Prussia: 13, Warmia: 2, Prussian Masovia: 3, exiles on the left bank of the Elbe River: 4, exiles on the right bank of the Elbe River: 3, Silesia: 29 - Total - 80. A resolution was adopted on the immediate establishment of a university in Poznań. Finally, at 2.00 p.m. the work of the Partition Sejm of Poznań was postponed. On the same day, a preliminary meeting of the Supreme People's Council took place, under the leadership of Priest Wolszlegier, the president of the Central Electoral Committee. A Commissariat consisting of six people, which included representatives of the respective districts, was elected: S. Adamski and Władysław Seyda (Poznań), W. Korfanty and Józef Rymer (Silesia), A. Poszwiński (Kuyavia) and Stefan Łaszewski (Pomerania). Also the sub-commissariats of the Supreme People's Council were established with J. Rymer, and then Kazimierz Czapla as the leaders in Bytom and Stefan Łaszewski as the leader in Gdańsk. Executive power remained in the hands of Priest S. Adamski. Despite the fact that the sessions of the Partition Sejm of Poznań were only suspended, it was not convened again and the same referred to the Supreme People's Council (officially dissolved on 19 August); the real Polish authority in the region was held by the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council,

which announced the taking-over of the entire political and military power in the areas occupied as a result of the Greater Poland Uprising on 8 January 1919.

