

Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

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The signs and symbols of the Greater Poland Uprising in 1918-1919

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The world around us is full of signs and symbols. If we take the common sense approach that contemporary signs, i.e. objects that are materially characteristic for our era, events and activities are commonly recognisable and their meaning and symbolism are known because information about them is easily accessible, then, in the cases of signs and symbols from the past, e.g. from a hundred years back, the recognition and definition of their symbolic meaning is in fact a much more complex task.

As the terms “sign” and “symbol” are often used interchangeably, it should be emphasised here that in the scope of the subject of the present publication, a sign is an object - today it may be a monument, whose special value has led to it

becoming a symbol of the action taken to do away with the Prussian Partition. Not every sign is therefore a symbol and, consequently, not every sign has symbolic meaning. Thus, symbols are the signs that, through mutual relations, have distinguishable meanings.

Today, a broad set of exceptional signs and symbols is associated with the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918-1919 and with the Greater Poland Armies formed in that time. The pro-independence activities undertaken in Greater Poland at the time of the uprising were among many similar activities carried out by Poles in the partition era. For the purposes of the activities aimed at regaining independence, the insurgents drew inspiration from the long and rich tradition of Polish symbolism.

The sign of the greatest importance for the Poles was, and still is, the Polish emblem of a white eagle. The emblem, introduced in 1295 by King Przemysław II, has been the central sign of the Republic of Poland since that time. The emblem includes a white eagle with its head turned to the right, wearing a (closed or open) crown, with a red shield in the background. The eagle and the shield are in Poland's national colours. It is obvious that the shape of the eagle and the shades of colours in the emblem have changed throughout the more than 700 years of its history. But the emblem and the white-and-red colours have been the signs of the Poles from the moment of their creation, through successive historical eras.

The need to introduce a sign that would unite the

Poles was acknowledged by senators and deputies at the Parliament of the Kingdom of Poland, who, during the session of the chamber of deputies on 7 February 1831, established the red and white National Cockade, making a reference to the colours in the emblem of the Kingdom of Poland and the Great Duchy of Lithuania. The cockade was to be worn primarily by the soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces of that time.

After the failed November Uprising, the resolution was quoted during further activities aimed at regaining independence. It was this royal emblem and its colours that the participants of national uprisings, the Greater Poland uprising in 1848 and the Greater Poland uprising in 1918-1919 in particular, always referred to. The insurgents wore white-and-red cockades and fought under banners with the white eagle against a red background.

It was possible to start fighting for the Polish identity in the public space in the territory of the Prussian Partition only after the signing of the truce in Compiègne between the Entente countries and the German Empire, which marked the end of World War I, and after the abdication of the German King and Emperor of Prussia, William II, who had emigrated to the Netherlands on 10 November 1918, although this was only formally confirmed on 28 November 1918.

Although the regulations set up by the newly-established worker and soldier councils did away with all the signs that had applied so far, and introduced new ones (red flags and bands), they could not stop the Germans who wanted to

continue using the former signs, or the Poles, who finally had the opportunity to manifest that the lands taken by the Prussians were in fact Polish.

These were mostly banners with the white eagle and white-and-red flags. They were hung for the first time in the streets of Poznań during the march of the District Parliament participants on 3 December 1918. It was emphasised in press coverage and parliamentary publications that the session was held in the "Apollo" theatre decorated with these national signs.

The Polish national colours returned to the streets of Poznań on the occasion of Ignacy Paderewski and his companions' arrival in Poznań. The decorations included mostly flags in different shades of red with a white eagle in the centre, fastened to flagpoles or hung on crossbars, triangle-shaped and with decorative fringes at the end. Eagles in various shapes were painted directly onto fabric or embroidered or sewn to a sheet of fabric. Other signs, such as the much simpler to make red-and-white flags, were made of two strips of fabric.

One characteristic thing was that the children who, on 27 December morning, walked the main streets of the city in the parade organised to honour the guests staying at the "Bazar" Hotel, including Ignacy Paderewski, were holding previously prepared small paper flags stuck on sticks, reflecting the two signs described above. Some of the "miniflags" were rectangular, with the white eagle and red background, while others were took the form of white-and-red flags. Polish signs were also visible on stickers stuck on the

windows of Polish houses, and even on the lanterns carried by the children.

The Polish national colours were also on soldiers' uniforms and on the civilian clothes of Poznań residents. These were red-and-white bands pinned to the outer clothing, sometimes tied in ribbons. In a more complex form, there were cockades made of red-and-white bands tied in a rosette or just white-and-red bands worn on sleeves. It was characteristic of the time that the similarity of some of these signs, visible in iconography, must lead to the conclusion that some of them were made in a larger amount, as part of a previous order.

Other signs worn by Polish men and women were metal; silver or silver-plated eagles or brooches, pins etc. with a white eagle on them, pinned to garments. These occurred in various shapes and were made in Poznań or brought from other manufacturing locations.

It should be noted here that it was the behaviour of the German soldiers and civilians who were dissatisfied with the "explosion of Polish attitudes" as a result of the arrival of Ignacy Paderewski and the British officers, and who started a march from Jeżyce towards the city centre, tearing down Polish and allied flags, that led to a visible growth of tension in the city causing outrage among the Poles in Poznań. This hostile behaviour towards the Polish signs and colours triggered the first clashes in the city streets.

Today, the most popular sign used by the

insurgents is the banner with the white eagle, which was supposedly hung out on the night of 27 to 28 December 1918 in Łęczyca near Puszczykowo, as the news of the events occurring in Poznań reached the town. The image presenting the banner was used for the first time on the website www.27grudnia.pl by the Marshal's Office of the Wielkopolskie province in Poznań in 2008, on the 90th anniversary of the uprising.

The banner, which is currently exhibited in the Museum of the 1918-1919 Greater Poland Uprising, is made of cotton, has a rectangular shape, which in its lower part tapers into a triangle. A white eagle without a crown is sewn against a red background. The image of the banner later appeared on the covers of many publications, souvenirs, websites, etc. After approving the opinion of those who claimed that only a small per cent of the patriotic banners featured an eagle without a crown, a crown was added.

There is, however, a banner, stored in the same museum, which was not used in the first hours and days of the uprising. It presents a white eagle against a red background. The shape of the eagle was similar to the one approved in December 1918 as the emblem of the highest authority of the uprising - the Supreme People's Council. On this banner, with the words "NACZELNA" "RADA LUDOWA" ("The Supreme People's Council") written in the outer circle, there was an eagle with an open crown and very characteristic, long feathers directed downwards. This banner is made of red cotton, rectangle-shaped in the upper

part and triangle-shaped in the lower part, with a white eagle sewn on it. At the end, decorative fringes were sewn, which additionally weighed the lower part of the banner down. However, this banner is the most characteristic sign of the 1918-1919 Greater Poland uprising, a symbol of the Polish lands being reborn.

Some banners made for voluntary insurgent units were also undoubtedly inspired by the stamp of the Supreme People's Council. An example of this is the banner made in Środa Wlkp., which was consecrated and given to the 1st Środa Company on 15 January 1919 in Poznań before its departure to the Western Front. On a sheet of amaranth fabric, eagles and the letters of an inscription were sewn. On one side, there was an eagle with an open crown on its head and feathers directed downwards, and the name of the unit: "1. KOMP. ŚREDZKA" ("the 1st Środa Company"). On the reverse, there was an eagle looking left, and the inscription "Boże błogosław nam" ("God bless us"). The banner was edged with silver fringes.

A similar solution was used for the banner of the Gołańcz Company, preserved until today. In the centre of a sheet made of red fabric, there is an eagle embroidered with silver and golden threads (the crown), much more similar to the one from the stamp of the SPC. Above the eagle in the upper part, there is an embroidered inscription reading "KOMPANIA Z GOŁAŃCZY" ("THE COMPANY FROM GOŁAŃCZ"), and under the eagle, in the lower part, there is the embroidered date "1919". On the white reverse, there is an embroidered inscription "NIECH ŻYJE / WOLA /

NIEPODLEGŁA / POLSKA!" ("Long live the free and independent Poland") inscribed into a wreath made of two laurel branches. The reverse is edged with silver galloon.

Another example of referring to the emblem of the SPC is the banner of the 1st Czarnków Battalion. On the left side of the banner, in the middle, there is an eagle with an open crown on its head, in a diagonal position (with the eagle's head oriented towards the top of the staff). The eagle, previously embroidered with silver threads in different shades on a thick base, was sewn onto red damask. The open crown was added above the eagle's head. Above that, the emblem of Czarnków was sewn on red silk. Under the eagle, a U-shaped inscription "I. BAON CZARNKOWSKI" ("The 1st Czarnków Battalion") was sewn, and the date "1919" was embroidered below in silver and golden threads. On the sides, floral decorations representing oak and laurel branches were embroidered with colourful cotton threads. In the centre of the reverse side which is made of white damask, there is sewn a colourful image of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, the lower part is decorated with branches of lily. Around the image, an inscription reading "KRÓLOWO KORONY POLSKIEJ" "MÓDL SIĘ ZA NAMI" ("Queen of the Polish Crown, pray for us") was embroidered. The banner was edged with golden fringes. The banner, originally made in 1919, was probably modified in 1923 by cutting out the embroidered parts and sewing them on again onto a new surface. The original banner would then have been made of a smooth silk fabric (red and white).

It is not known whether a specific design for these banners, made for the first voluntary units of insurgents, was developed, or if previously created signs were used. One should certainly appreciate the efforts taken in different places, frequently very distant from each other, aimed at introducing relatively unified signs to be used by the insurgents of Greater Poland. The banners of other units were made according to the above pattern or according to individual ideas. They also used white-and-red flags. Let us remember that apart from organising insurgent armed forces in extremely tough conditions and in dynamically changing circumstances, great efforts were also taken to provide the soldiers with the best uniforms possible and signs that would distinguish them.

The artists of the design of the first standard for the regular armies of Greater Poland, handed to the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Regiment in Poznań on 26 January 1919, also made a reference to the emblem of the Supreme People's Council. To the left, on the square-shaped fabric made of red damask and edged with galloon, an eagle with an open golden crown on its head was embroidered. Under the eagle, the year in which the regiment was formed: "19" "19. / 1." "19.", was embroidered. On the reverse, made of white damask, there is a Golden Virtuti Military War Order with the image of the eagle as above (on a smaller scale) on a red surface in the centre. In the corners of the banner, there is the abbreviated name of the regiment: "1." "P." "S." and "W.". The letters and numerals were sewn with golden thread. A third and identical image of

an eagle was placed on the ribbon, added after the regiment's return from Lviv, with an inscription reading: "1. / pułkowi / strzelców / wielko- / polskich" "Za / obronę / kresów / wscho- / dnich / 1919." ("To the Greater Poland Rifle Regiment / For defending the Eastern Borderlands"). The emblems of four cities: Warsaw, Krakow, Lviv and Vilnius were later added in the corners, and the emblem of Poznań was sewn above the eagle.

Soon afterwards, i.e. on 4 February 1919, the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Reserve Regiment was given a standard of an entirely different shape, presumably from one of the Gymnastic Societies - "Sokół", Central Command decided to introduce a new, unified design of standards, partly based on the standard of the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. The emblem of the Supreme People's Council was applied on new and statutory standards for the Greater Poland Armies. The design was approved in the daily orders of the Central Command of the Armed Forces of the Former Prussian Partition no. 89 and 90, of 3 and 4 April 1919. "Queen Hedwig's Eagles", as they were called in the orders, were placed not only in the centre of the sheet of the standard, but also on the central shield of the image of the Virtuti Militari Order.

Despite making the drawings of the standards available at the Scientific Division of Central Command, there were some deviations from the guidelines. Moreover, the standards were made by different tailors. The shape of the square was soon replaced by a rectangle but the galloon edging was kept, a Knight's Cross dividing the

main side of the standard into zones was introduced, and the standards of the cavalry were additionally decorated with the image of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa. It was also characteristic that the flagstaff was wrapped in fabric fastened with decorative nails and 4 rings (on cavalry standards). The method of embroidering the abbreviations of the names and dates of regiment formation (or other important events) and of embroidering inscriptions (regiment slogans) from the founders of the standards remained the same. Inscriptions and decorations were chosen freely.

The following inscriptions were placed on the standards made according to the adopted pattern. The 1st Greater Poland Rifle Division: on the standard of the 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Regiment (GPRR) there was an inscription reading: "Z Bogiem za Ojczyznę" ("With God, for our motherland"), on the standard of the 3rd GPRR - "ŻYCIE, TRUD I MIENIE, ZA PRAWO I WOLNOŚĆ OJCZYZNY." ("Life, hardship and property, for the right and freedom of our motherland"). The 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Division: on the standard of the 6th GPRR - "Mocą Bóg celem Ojczyzna" ("God is our power, the Motherland is our destination", of the 7th GPRR - "Ojczyznę, wolność zachowaj nam Panie" ("Lord, help us keep our freedom and our motherland") and of the 8th GPRR - "Nie rzucim ziemi skąd nasz ród" ("We will not forsake the land where our ancestors were born"). The 3rd Greater Poland Rifle Division: on the standard of the 9th GPRR - "Ku chwale ojczyzny" ("For the glory of our mother country"), of the 11th GPRR

“Za wiarę i ojczyznę” (“For faith and for our motherland”).

The Pomeranian Rifle Division, on the standards of the Toruń Rifle Regiment - “WSPÓLNA MOC TYLKO ZDOŁA NAS OCALIĆ” (“Only our joined forces can save us”), the Grudziądz Pomeranian Rifle Regiment - “ZA HONOR NARODU, ZA WIELKOŚĆ OJCZYZNY.” (“For the honour of the nation, for the might of our motherland”), the Starogard Pomeranian Rifle Regiment - “AŻ DO OSTATNIEJ KROPLI KRWI” (“Until the last drop of blood”), and the Kaszubian Pomeranian Rifle Regiment - “PONAD ŻYCIE, PONAD ŚMIERĆ, PONAD SIEBIE SAMYCH” (“Above life, above death, above ourselves”).

The Greater Poland Cavalry Brigade: on the standard of the 1st Greater Poland Uhlan Regiment (GPUR) - “KU CHWALE OJCZYZNY” (“For the glory of our mother country”), of the 2nd GPUR - “Biały sztandar wzniosłe czyny.” (“White standard, fine actions”) and of the 3rd GPUR “Pod Twoją obronę uciekamy się” (“We fly to Thy protection”).

Furthermore, on the standard of the Poznań Garrison Regiment there is an inscription reading “Z BOGIEM W SERCU, Z BRONIĄ W RĘKU WOBEC WROGA OJCZYZNY BEZ LĘKU” (“With God in heart, with gun in hand, against the enemy without fear”), and on the standard of the Greater Poland Voluntary Cavalry Regiment there is an inscription reading: “Pod Twoją obronę...” (“Under Thy protection...”), of the 7th Greater Poland Mounted Rifle Regiment - “Pod Twoją obronę uciekamy się” (“We fly to Thy

protection”), and of the 1st Greater Poland Sapper Battalion – “TAK NAM DOPOMÓŻ BÓG” (“So help us God”).

The standards of the Greater Polish Armies were decorated with ribbons and strings with fringes. In the upper part of the flagstaves, there were “Napoleonic eagles” - silver, full-bodied eagles sitting on spheres. Although the orders only described signs for 12 infantry (riflemen) and cavalry regiments, other formations received standards made according to the above pattern.

The concurrently organised units of the People’s Guard, the members of which were to include experienced soldiers (above 30 years of age) and persons who had not served in the army before, adopted their own design of the standard, characterised by different colours, galloons and white eagles referring to... the military eagles used on the stamp of Central Command. Due to the lack of time and the hasty introduction of the signs for all of the guards, it was impossible to unify them. The majority of guards received standards made according to their own patterns.

The Polish national signs and colours were also present on the insurgents’ uniforms. Most frequently these were uniforms of German origin. Silver eagles and red-and-white cockades were sewn on caps in different versions, sizes and materials. As well as the eagles, considered to be Polish patriotic jewellery, there were the eagles of; the Polish Armed Forces formed since 1917 by the German occupant armies on the Polish lands of the former Russian Partition, the Riflemen’s Association, the Polish Legions, etc. Red-and-

white national cockades or strings tied in ribbons were also pinned to uniform coats and jackets. Bands, also in national colours, were worn on the sleeves.

Major Stanisław Taczak, the first commander of the uprising, tried to unify the method of placing Polish signs on insurgents' uniforms. Central Command's day order no. 5 of 8 January 1919, stated that officers and privates from military units had to temporarily wear the following insignia: on caps - a small silver eagle made of any metal, sized 3.5 x 3.5 cm and [meaning "or" - J.Ł.] a red-and-white cockade. On both sides of the coat and shirt collars, a 1 cm wide vertical red-and-white stripe was to be sewn 1.5 cm away from the edge. The red part was to be closer to the buttons. Insignia representing officers' and non-commissioned officers' ranks were to be discussed in further orders, according to the regulations applicable in the Polish Armed Forces. In practice, cockades were not worn together with eagles, and soon they were no longer used, because the national colours were already worn on collars.

Under Central Command's day order of 11 January 1919, the formation of a regular army started. It was decided that, in the Grand Duchy of Poznań, the Polish Army for the Prussian Partition would be formed, composed of infantry units, machine guns, heavy and field artillery, cavalry, pioneers, wagon forts, telephone units and gendarmerie. The Commands of individual Military Districts were responsible for their organisation. At the first stage, "lower" military units, such as battalions, batteries, units,

squadrons and cadres for special armies, were to be formed. At the second stage, "higher" (tactical) units: regiments, brigades and divisions were to be set up.

When on 16 January 1919 the command of the Polish Armed Forces of the former Prussian Partition was taken over by Lieutenant General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, the formation of regular armed forces started, initially based on the Poles who were born in 1897, 1898 and 1899, who were obliged to join the army under a resolution of the Supreme People's Council published by the Commissariat of the SPC on 17 January 1919. Older men stayed in the units fighting on particular fronts. The oldest ones, able to carry weapons, were taken to People's Guards formed in Poznań and in many other towns as part of mass mobilisation.

In his order of 18 January 1919, the new Commander-in-Chief stated that the look of uniforms would be determined by the Supreme People's Council, that appropriate steps had been taken to this end, and that the soldiers should continue wearing their old uniforms "with the eagle on the cap".

In day order no. 14 of 19 January 1919, General Dowbor-Muśnicki wrote that all the men recruited in the former Prussian Partition were a part of the "armed forces of the former Prussian Partition". He reminded that giving honours, by means of saluting by raising the hand and touching the centre of the visor with the index and middle finger, with the remaining fingers bent, was obligatory to all military men, and that it was not

an insult, but rather an expression of military politeness and a sign of being a member of the armed forces. According to the Commander-in-Chief, "touching the national emblem on the visor with two fingers shows who and for what purposes the soldiers serve."

The day order no. 17 of 21 January 1919, included the following information: "With the consent of the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council, I hereby determine, as annexed, what the uniforms of the armed forces in the former Prussian Partition should look like." It was added in the commentary that the design choice was affected by the will to use all existing stocks of uniforms and to promptly adjust the uniforms. The Head of Supplies was obliged to provide the adjusted uniforms to the 1st Rifle Regiment, the 1st Uhlan Regiment, the technical battalion and the artillery battalion as soon as possible.

According to the order, the new four-cornered ["rogatywka"] caps should be worn on duty, outside the barracks and in the field. Older caps were to remain in daily usage and to be worn during "front activities". Only a small eagle fastened to the brim was allowed to be worn on them. At the same, it was forbidden to wear any other badges on the caps. It was also announced that the description of the uniforms for the uhlans and technical units would be provided "very soon".

According to the "Description of uniforms for riflemen (infantry)", shirts [jackets - J.Ł.], coats and trousers were to be made of grey fabric, while the shirt and coat collars were to be of

grey-and-green fabric. Buttons were also to be covered in fabric. Blouses and coats were to be single-breasted. Other details to be complied with included buttons on top of shirts and double-breasted officer's coats, dark red creases or stripes (also on trousers), and sleeves with profiled cuffs. Boots were supposed to have long uppers or leather calf guards.

The four-cornered ["Rogatywka"] caps, which were the most characteristic element of the Greater Polish soldiers' uniforms, were to be made of grey fabric edged with a dark red band along the stitches. The strap [liner - J.Ł.] and visor were to be in camouflage colours. The rosette [in the shape of a vertical club - J.Ł.] was to be made of string, in camouflage colours, and with "an eagle without a gorget" on the joint of the brim with the cover.

The collars were to be decorated with 1.5cm wide red and white ribbons 1cm from the edge. Next to this, the number of the regiment should be located - silver or another metal, written in Arabic numerals "across the collar". Grenadiers, telephone operators and musicians had to wear proper insignia.

Rank insignia, as described in the section entitled "Rank insignia on uniforms and coats", were placed, not on the epaulettes which were on the shirts and coats, but on their sleeves. The rank of lance corporals and non-commissioned officers was to be signalled by 1-1.5cm wide grey bands sewn 1cm away from the cuff. For lance corporal - one band, for corporal - two, for master corporal - one band with a rosette [a single loop -

J.Ł.], for sergeant - one band with a (upper) rosette and a (upper) straight band, for staff sergeant - one band with a rosette and two straight bands. The distance between the patches should be 0.5 cm.

Officers; and generals' patches were to be made of a 1.0cm wide silver galloon with a zig-zag and a 0.3cm wide silver band. For second lieutenant - one galloon, for lieutenant - one galloon and one band, for captain - one galloon and two bands, for major - one galloon with a rosette, for lieutenant colonel - one galloon with a rosette and one band, for colonel - one galloon with a rosette and two bands, for general second lieutenant - one galloon with a triple rosette, for lieutenant general - one galloon with a triple rosette and one band, for general of the branch - one galloon with a triple rosette and two bands.

A similarly complex method was described in the section "Rank insignia on 'rogatywka' caps." These were circles made of white or red woollen or silk string, placed on the lower part of the club-shaped rosette, above the button. For lance corporals, non-commissioned officers and senior officers - red and white were used. For staff officers - silver, for generals - gold. For lance corporal - one red circle, for corporal - two red circles, for master corporal - one white circle, for sergeant - one white and one red circle, for senior sergeant - one white and two red circles. For second lieutenant - one red circle, for lieutenant - two red circles, for captain - three red circles, for major - one silver circle, for lieutenant colonel - two silver circles, for colonel - three silver circles, for second lieutenant general - one golden circle,

for lieutenant general- two golden circles and for general of the branch - three golden circles.

The uniforms of the artillery soldiers were to be similar. The only differences were a different colour of creases (black instead of dark red) and edging epaulettes with a modified stripe. In the section concerning insignia on collars, "two crossed metal cannons [only the barrels - J.Ł.] - silver, 2 centimetres each" were added under the regiment's number.

The "Description of uniforms, continued", enclosed in the daily order no. 23, of 27 January 1919, stated that the same uniforms as for infantry applied to pioneers [sappers - J.Ł.], telegraphers and radio-telegraphers, with the only difference that the epaulettes of privates and officers were to be edged with a red crease in the shade of scarlet. Officers' trousers were to be the same as in the infantry, but with additional black lampasses on both sides of the external stitches, width 2.5 cm, with a red crease in the centre. Black creases around the brim of "rogatywka", and a metal silver pioneer's sign: a shovel, a pickaxe and a hatchet, and a bomb on the crossing point, on the collar, under the silver number of the regiment. Telegraphers' insignia was different - it was a metal, silver sign of telegraphers, and for radio-telegraphers - the radiotelegraphic sign.

The soon published "Description of uniforms for the 1st Greater Poland Uhlan Regiment" introduced an uhlan-type jacket similar to the one used by privates and officers, with crimson creases (only on the right side of the chest),

double-breasted, with eagle-shaped buttons. The jacket had standing collars and uhlan-style epaulettes. The pocket flaps were edged with a crimson crease (stripe). The side pockets were sewn diagonally. Single-breasted coats were for the uhlans and double-breasted coats for officers. The coats were to be made of a grey fabric, with convertible collars. Epaulettes were to be without protrusions, with a buttoned flap in the back and two pockets on the sides. The sleeves and back flaps were to be edged with a crimson crease (stripe). Trousers, matching the long boots, were to have crimson lampasses and a crease. The "Rogatywka" cap, made of grey fabric, was to be edged with a white crease along the stitches, and with the strap and the visor - as in the infantry - in camouflage colours. To the left, a rosette made of string in camouflage colours and an eagle without a gorget on the joint of the brim with the cover. There was to be a crimson lampass [brim - J.Ł.] around the "rogatywka" cap and a white crease along its top edge. For officers, a rosette made of silver string and silver loops was on the strap [liner - J.Ł.]. Pennants, with white top and crimson bottom, were sewn on the collars of the uhlan jackets and coats. Boots were to be high [long - J.Ł.], with spurs fastened with straps of the same colour as the boots.

Subsequent "Descriptions of uniforms" were published soon afterwards. An annex to Central Command's day order no. 43 of 16 February 1919, described an exemplary uniform for a field gendarmerie unit at the staff of the Central Command of the Polish Army in the former Prussian Partition, an annex to the Central

Command's day order no. 46 of 19 February 1919, provided a description of an exemplary uniform for the health services, while an annex to the CC's day order no. 47 of 19 February, described an exemplary uniform for the judiciary services, etc.

For the People's Guard, round caps with an eagle and a blue brim were introduced. Rank insignia were separate, sewn on jacket and coat sleeves above the elbow. From February 1919, the officers of the People's Guard wore the uniforms and insignia of the Greater Poland Armed Forces. In June 1919, uniforms for the Greater Poland infantry and for the National Defence ("Obrona Krajowa"), organised on the basis of the People's Guard, were introduced. They were characterised by the metal letters "O.K." placed directly on the collar, without patches.

For unknown reasons, the characteristic eagle from the Supreme People's Council's stamp was not on the stamps of the Central Command of the uprising. Central Command's day order of 10 January 1919 stated that Central Command would use the following stamps: an oblong stamp reading "Dowództwo Główne / W. P. zab. Prusk." ("Central Command / Polish Army of the Prussian Partition") and a round stamp with a narrow eagle without a crown, with its wings directed upwards, with an inscription reading "DOWÓDZTWO GŁÓWNE" "W.P. zab. Prusk." ("Central Command" "Polish Army of the Prussian Partition"), additionally they would be pressing original seals in red ink directly on the order. An open crown on the eagle's head was added later to introduce a new version of the stamp with the

eagle inspired by the Eagle of the Greater Poland Armed Forces and with a modified inscription reading "DOWÓDZTWO GŁÓWNE" "SIŁ ZBROJNYCH" ("Central Command" "of the Armed Forces"), and, below the eagle, horizontally, "w b. zab. prusk." ("in the former Prussian Partition").

The eagle of the Greater Poland Armed Forces had probably been inspired by General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, who wanted to unify the signs. As a result, an eagle referring to the eagles used in Polish military units in the East was introduced. It was, to the greatest extent, inspired by the eagles used in the 1st Krykhivtsi Uhlan Regiment.

Another sign which is very characteristic for the 1918-1919 Greater Poland Uprising is a badge called the "Wielkopolska Matkom Poległych" ("Greater Poland for the Mothers of the Victims") memorial sign. The purpose of the badge, introduced at the request of General of the Branch Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki and by the Supreme People's Council's decree of 22 April 1919, was to honour the mothers of the insurgents who had lost their lives during the uprising. It was forged of silver coins used in the occupants' countries, donated by Greater Poland residents for the needs of the Polish Army now being reborn.

The badge was in the shape of a knight's cross with round endings (as inspired by the Virtuti Militari Order), connected with a golden laurel wreath. In the centre, there was a small silver eagle with an open crown on its head, against a red enamelled background. On the arms,

decorated along their edges with black stripes, there was an inscription reading "WIELKO" "POLSKA" "MATKOM" "POLE-/GŁYCH" ("Greater Poland for the mothers of the victims"). On the reverse, there was a pin, and on some of the badges there were subsequent award numbers. People honoured with the badge were also awarded decorative award documents. It is thought that about 1500 of them were awarded, which seems to be proven by the "List of losses resulting from the 1918/1919 Greater Poland Uprising", issued in 1936, which includes 1714 entries.

The only badge awarded in the Greater Poland Armies was the badge of the Greater Poland Infantry Non-Commissioned Officers' Training School introduced as the "school badge" by Central Command's order no. 116 of 30 April 1919. It was worn by lecturers and graduates of the school on the left side of the uniform jacket. The badge was made of silver-plated brass. It was in the shape of an eagle against a background of crossed guns, with an open crown on its head and an epaulette with a monogram of letters "WSP" [Greater Poland Non-Commissioned Officers' Training School] Lower, on the ribbon, there was the date "9 MARCA 1919" ("9 March 1919"). On the reverse, there was a pin. The award of the badge was acknowledged in an annotation on the course completion diploma.

Central Command's daily order no. 1 of 5 January 1919, in item IIa. 1) included a characteristic directive: "Soldiers are forbidden to carry a weapon with the stock upwards", which was inspired by a habit introduced by rebelling

soldiers in Germany.

Central Command's order no. 16 of 20 January 1919, obliged soldiers to collect and send back to Poznań all guns of foreign systems (Russian, French etc.), and leave only the 98 and 88 system guns. Each District and each section was told to use weapons as part of one system, to facilitate the supplies of ammunition. The system 71 guns were to be kept by non-combat organisations (such as Security Guards, People's Guards etc.). Thus, by looking at the type of weapon, it was possible to distinguish the regular army from other formations.

The "Polonisation" of German weapons became characteristic. An example of this is a Prussian infantry officer's broadsword, the 1899 model, currently exhibited in the Military Museum of Greater Poland, with the monogram of Emperor William II as the Prussian King removed from the handle, and the Prussian eagle sanded down from the crossguard. The inscription on the blade said: "Dnia 27go stycznia 1919 r. składało na tę szpadę 1600 powstańców wielkopolskich w Pawłowicach, Osiecznie i Kościanie przysięgę wierności Polsce" ("On 27 January 1919, 1600 insurgents fighting in the Greater Poland Uprising made a vow in Pawłowice, Osieczna and Kościan, on this sword, to remain faithful to Poland."). The broadsword used to belong to the Commander of the Leszno Group, Bernard Śliwiński from Poniec. Another example is the Prussian cavalry broadsword, 1899 model, of the 1st Royal Mounted Rifle Regiment who stayed in the barracks on Grunwaldzka Street in Poznań, where the Mounted Rifle unit of the Poznań Guard was formed (later: the 1st

Greater Poland Uhlan Regiment). The crossguard shields were removed and the Polish eagle was soldered over the Prussian signs.

It may be stated in conclusion that the most characteristic signs of the 1918-1919 Greater Poland uprising were the red-and-white colours. They had been used before the outbreak of the uprising to emphasise that the lands under Prussian occupation were Polish. They appeared in public spaces in the form of red flags with a white eagle, and red-and-white flags hung out on city streets and in places where meetings were held. They also appeared on uniforms and civilian garments in the form of red-and-white ribbons and cockades worn on the chest, or bands worn on the sleeves. After placing red-and-white ribbons on uniform collars under the order of 8 January 1919, the ribbons became a distinguishable sign of the Armed Forces of the Prussian Partition.

There were other signs that were characteristic for the 1918-1919 Greater Poland uprising: an eagle with an open crown on its head with its feathers directed downwards, introduced on the stamps of the Supreme People's Council, and - without the crown - on the stamps of the People's Guard in Poznań. They were used as a template for the sewing of the banners of voluntary insurgent units, and a basis for making the banner of the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Regiment in January 1919. In April 1919, the eagle called "Queen Hedwig's Eagle" appeared on the standards of the Greater Poland Armies and on patches (on the collars) of uniforms belonging to officers and soldiers of Central Command's Staff.

In January 1919, the Central Command of the uprising adopted a slimmer Polish eagle without a crown on its stamps, with a circular inscription reading "DOWÓDZTWO GŁÓWNE" "W.P. zab. Prusk." ("Central Command of the Polish Armies in the Prussian Partition"). When command was taken by General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, a crown on the eagle's head was added and the inscription was changed to "DOWÓDZTWO GŁÓWNE" "Sił Zbrojnych" "w b. zab. Prusk." ("Central Command of the Armed Forces in the former Prussian Partition"). It occasionally happened that some of the eagles did not have crowns - it depended on the ordering entity or the manufacturer of seals. When the so-called "Eagle of the Greater Poland Armies", made of metal and pinned to headgear, was introduced, the image of the eagle also started to appear on stamps.

As well as the eagles on caps and the red-and-white stripes on collars, another element that was most visible to observers was the colour of the uniforms, described in the orders as grey and greyish-green, based on the "feldgrau" and "steingrau" colours of the German military uniforms and the stocks which (uniforms and fabric) were stored in military units and institutions. Uniforms taken from German warehouses were adjusted and delivered to the newly-formed units of Greater Poland Armies. The uniforms used during service in the German army were gradually withdrawn. As some of the officers kept wearing their old uniforms, General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki in his order of 18 April 1919 commanded the soldiers to have them adjusted and to wear only uniforms that comply with the

regulations. The most characteristic elements of the uniforms worn by the Greater Polish soldiers included a relatively high “rogatywka” cap with a rosette and military rank insignia on its side, the design of the uniforms themselves and the rank insignia sewn on the sleeves.

The military formations from Greater Poland were also characterised by cold steel weapons, individual rifles, machine guns, artillery and military equipment. For obvious reasons, the vast majority of the weapons had been made in Germany.

After the incorporation of the Greater Poland Armies into the Polish Armed Forces of the reborn Poland (from May 1919), the differences were gradually evened out. Some of them, such as weapons and equipment, survived until the September campaign in 1939.

The signs described in this publication, i.e. banners and standards, insignia and other historical objects, included and will continue to include specific symbolism defining the activities taken in Greater Poland in 1918-1919, the purpose of which was to regain independence.





