

Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

<https://greaterpolanduprising.eu/pwe/history/insurgent-troops/3237,The-Greater-Poland-Army.html>
25.04.2024, 21:15

The Greater Poland Army

Marek Rezler

Select Pages

[Under this term we understand the Polish armed \(...\)](#)

[The commander of the military district \(...\)](#)

[As a result of organisational work \(...\)](#)

Under this term we understand the Polish armed forces formed in the territory controlled by the insurgent armies at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919. Sometimes, they were called other names: the Greater Poland Army, the Greater Poland Armies, the Armed Forces in the Former Prussian Partition, the Armed Forces of the former Prussian Partition, the Armed Forces of the former Prussian Province, the armies of the former Prussian partition, and from August 1919: the Polish Armies of the former Prussian Partition.

The units of the Citizen's Guard, formed on 14 November 1918, were the organisational

foundation of the Polish armed forces. On 27 November, the Citizen's Guard was transformed into the People's Guard (PG) headed by Julian Bolesław Lange, and was politically subject to the temporary Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council. At the same time, from 23 November, the Worker and Soldier Council in Poznań began to form the parity-based Polish-German Guard and Security Service (GSS), in which the initiative was taken by members of the Polish Military Organisation of the former Prussian Partition and a group headed by Mieczysław Paluch. On 22 December 1918, the command of the newly formed 1st Poznań Garrison Battalion of the GSS was approved. The Polish composition of the People's Guard was ensured. The Guard and Security Service officially consisted of Poles and Germans, but it was quickly dominated by Poles as a result of manipulations related to the sound of soldiers' names during the recruitment procedure. However, in Bydgoszcz, Leszno, Krotoszyn and Ostrów Wlkp. the GSS still comprised mainly Germans. In some cities (including Środa, Kórnik, Wielichowo and Wilków Polski) Security Guard Units, whose composition was completely Polish, were formed independently of the PG and GSS.

In Ostrów Wlkp. action aimed at forming a Polish infantry regiment had already been taken on the night of 10-11 November 1918. The regiment consisted of 1500 soldiers (at this time, the so called Republic of Ostrów was established). This action, premature in relation to the political plans of the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council, was halted on 21 November. The unit

was dissolved; its soldiers were partly dispersed throughout the territory of the former Kingdom of Poland and another part joined the Border Battalion formed in Szczypiorno near Kalisz. In Kościan, in the period between 14 December and 20 December 1918, the Kościan Scouting Reserve, which consisted of 120 volunteers, was formed.

Even at that time, anticipating the formation of a future Polish army in this region, contacts were established with the Warsaw government and the General Staff; attempts were also made to appoint a supreme commander in Poznań. The Supreme Command for the territories of the Prussian partition was set up in Kalisz which became part of the 9th Military District. The main initiative in contacts between Warsaw and Poznań remained in the hands of Wojciech Korfanty.

The outbreak of the uprising on 27 December 1918 was a surprise for both parties to the conflict. As soon as it became obvious that the local riots had turned into a movement which covered almost the entire territory of the "German" Greater Poland, the need arose to appoint a supreme commander quickly, to put the spontaneously formed units in order and to draw up plans for further action. On 28 December 1918, the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council entrusted the post of Commander-in-Chief to Captain Stanisław Taczak, who, by accident, already happened to be in Poznań at that time. He was a former officer of the German army, who had already served in the General Staff of the Polish Army and who took this post with the consent of his superiors in Warsaw, being

aware that his mission was of a temporary nature - until the arrival of an officer experienced in operational work and with a rank corresponding to the tasks ahead. Also, the scope of the subordination of S. Taczak was determined. He maintained autonomy in his military operations, but politically he was subordinated to the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council. The newly appointed commander (promoted to the rank of major on 2 January 1919) started to work immediately in the "Royal" Hotel, whose two floors were provided to the General Staff as its headquarters. The hotel was located on Św. Marcin Street, in the direct vicinity of the offices of the Commissariat of the SPC.

The dynamics of the insurgent operations outside of Poznań were very similar to the development of the events in the capital city of the region. The organisational foundation of the Polish units were the People's Guard and the Guard and Security Service. In smaller towns, Polish soldiers released from the front and deserters spontaneously formed subunits over which command was taken by the highest-ranking persons from among them themselves or subordinates chosen by them. These were often groups formed to liberate a given town and the nearby vicinity, and then dissolved, dispersed - or combined with other similar units. The organisational structure typical for the German army was quickly adopted for them, but with names which often significantly exceeded the real manning of the regular army and its numerical strength - with the addition of a regional name. Insurgent platoons, companies and battalions composed of colleagues and

neighbours, the inhabitants of a given region, started to be formed. This spontaneous and “unorganised” period in the formation of the Greater Poland armed forces lasted about a week, until the end of the first ten days of January 1919; also respective towns joined the Uprising in different periods, sometimes only a few days after the outbreak of fighting in Poznań.

Throughout the period of the existence of the Greater Poland Army, for political reasons, to not make the situation of the region during the peace conference in Paris even more complicated, there were attempts at avoiding military nomenclature at higher levels, which would suggest the existence of any regular armed forces of an independent state. At that time, the administration of Greater Poland was also organised and named in a similar manner. At the highest level, i.e. the level of Central Command (CC), this rule was true too, CC was composed of officers who came from different armies; all three consecutive heads of Staff of the Central Command came from outside of Greater Poland. The assumption was also made in advance, in accordance with the line of action of the Commissariat of the SPC, that the current legal-political status of the region was temporary and that Greater Poland would be a part of the independent Polish state. No one took into account any form of autonomy, but rather the establishment of such administrative and military structures which would facilitate the simplest and most effective integration possible after the positive decisions taken at the peace conference. The outbreak of the Uprising before the signing of

the peace treaty forced an acceleration of these actions; on the one hand, the formal appearances of full independence were kept up, and on the other hand, contacts with the Warsaw government and General Staff of the Polish Army were continued. This situation was reflected in the process of the formation of the Greater Poland Army.

The major task of Major S. Taczak was to establish the Central Command Staff, to bring some form of order to the Polish units operating in the area covered by the Uprising and to determine operational plans. The Central Command Staff was initially managed by Captain Stanisław Nilski-Łapiński, and from 3 January 1919 - Lieutenant Colonel Julian Stachiewicz. Four divisions were established: the Operational Division (Ia), the Organisational Division (Ib), the Personnel Division (IIa) and the Weapons and Ammunitions Division (IIb). A central command system was implemented through the day orders of Central Command, sent via couriers.

At the same time the organisational and management activities were performed by the command of the Guard and Security Service, which initially masked the work of S. Taczak effectively, but as time passed by, after attempts at maintaining independence, it submitted itself to Central Command.

Central Command adopted the double organisational structure of a formed army: that is, a horizontal one, which covered all the units from a given area - from a poviát to a military district - and a vertical one - the formation of the army

based on staffing at the company, battalion and regiment levels. In its first printed day order of 5 January 1919, the CC took control of the insurgent troops in the entire area covered by the Uprising and also the units formed by the GSS. The insurgent armed forces included the People's Guard which, however, maintained its own organisational structure. During the first period, these were:

soldiers of voluntary units, who had, for the most part, already undergone military training; they were 19-40 years old,

soldiers of the People's Guard, consisting, for the most part, of volunteers who had not been trained so far and soldiers over the age of 30,

military policemen, mainly volunteers, however, especially those who had already served in this formation.

The unstable situation in the field and the fragile organisational structure made detailed operational planning difficult. Also the Commissariat of the SPC tried to limit the range of the activities undertaken so as to not make the situation of the region even more complicated during the peace conference. Initially, then, the Zbąszyń Lakes line was to be reached, and in the north, the Noteć River and Bydgoszcz Canal line.

Tactical instructions were sent and on 4 January 1919, central management of the respective companies, depending on the situation, began. The front lines were also established.

On 7 January 1919, the establishment of seven military districts (MD) was announced on the territory of the Poznań region.

MD I comprised the following poviats: The city of Poznań, Poznań East and Poznań West. The commander of the District was Rittmeister (Captain) Ryszard Koperski.

MD II. Poviats: Września, Środa, Witkowo and Gniezno; commander: Lieutenant Colonel Kazimierz Grudzielski

MD III. Poviats: Wyrzysk, Bydgoszcz, Szubin, Inowrocław, Strzelno, Mogilno, Żnin and Wągrowiec; commander: Major Napoleon Koczorowski.

MD IV. Poviats: Chodzież, Czarnków, Wieleń, Skwierzyna, Międzychód, Szamotuły and Oborniki; commander: Captain Zdzisław Orłowski.

MD V. Poviats: Międzyrzecz, Nowy Tomyśl, Grodzisk, Babimost, Śmigiel, Kościan, Wschowa and Leszno; commander: Second Lieutenant Kazimierz Zenkteler.

MD VI. Poviats: Śrem, Jarocin, Pleszew, Gostyń, Rawicz, Krotoszyn and Koźmin; commander: Second Lieutenant Zbigniew Ostroróg-Gorzeński.

MD VII. Poviats: Ostrów, Odolanów, Ostrzeszów

and Kępno; commander: Second Lieutenant Władysław Wawrzyniak.

After occupying Inowrocław and the controversies surrounding the role of Second Lieutenant Paweł Cymś, by the Central Command day order of 13 January 1919, two other districts were established:

MD VIII. Poviats: Inowrocław and Strzelno; commander: Second Lieutenant Paweł Cymś.

MD IX. Poviats: Kościan, Śmigiel, Leszno and Wschowa; commander: Second Lieutenant Józef Gomerski.

As well as this, the Krotoszyn Poviats was moved out of Military District VI and assigned to District VII.

The commander of the military district handled the military administration of the area under his control. His duties included the management of the district in general and the formation of an army from the pre-existing regional units, as well as the defence of the frontline section located within this area. The commanders of all the units located within his area were subordinated to him - so he was both the administrator and commander, which came about as a result of the Uprising's development stage. During the first period of the Uprising, responsibility for managing the fighting in the different regions of Greater Poland was on the shoulders of the commanders of the military districts.

Stanisław Taczak started his activities "from scratch"; he prepared the ground for further

organisational work which was then continued and developed by General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki. The last day order to be signed by S. Taczak was on 13 January 1919; two subsequent day orders were signed only by Lieutenant Colonel J. Stachiewicz. Order No. 11 dated 16 January bore the signature of the new commander-in-chief. A new period in the formation of the Greater Poland Army, aimed at the formation of a regular army, was started. The agreement signed on 11 January 1919 between the general and the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council (SPC) described, quite precisely, the competences of the new commander-in-chief, who was explicitly reminded of the CSPC's superiority over the army. Control over the army was exercised by the Military Division of the CSPC, which was successively led by: Jan Maciaszek, Captain Władysław Sczaniecki and Second Lieutenant General Kazimierz Raszewski. Major S. Taczak took the post of 2nd quartermaster of Central Command.

The competences of Central Command and of the Commissariat of the SPC had already been set apart on 17 January, when the CSPC issued a regulation on the conscription of young men born in 1897 and 1898. This was the starting point for the formation of a regular army. Conscription was announced two more times: on 4 March 1919 (year groups: 1895-1896 and 1900) and on 24 April 1919 (year groups: 1894 and 1901). From then on, those insurgents who had taken part in the first battles and then returned to their homes, had to re-join the army if they were able to carry weapons. On 21 January 1919, the Commissariat of the SPC formulated the text of the oath that all

the soldiers of the Greater Poland Armies were obliged to take: "Before the One and Triune Almighty God, I swear that I will serve Poland, my Mother Country and the entire Polish Nation always and everywhere, that I will defend my Home Country and the national good to the last drop of my blood, that I will obey the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council in Poznań and the commanders and superiors appointed by the Commissariat, that I will act as befits a brave and righteous Polish soldier and that when Poland is united, I will take a military oath approved by the Polish state authorities."

On 19 January, Central Command's structure was changed by the establishment of two functions: the administrative function and the organisational/tactical function. On the same day, Central Command was moved from the "Royal" Hotel to a new location: to a building formerly occupied by the German command of the 5th Army Corps, in Działowy Square. Simultaneously, with the expansion of Central Command and the Staff, General Muśnicki started choosing the right collaborators, striving to get rid of officers associated with Józef Piłsudski. On 31 January, Lieutenant Colonel Władysław Anders, an officer of the 1st Polish Corps, was appointed Head of Staff in lieu of J. Stachiewicz. The third Head of Staff at Central Command was Colonel Jan Wroczyński, who held this position from 18 April to November 1919, when Central Command was finally dissolved.

Soon, other officers from the 1st Polish Corps came to Poznań. On General Muśnicki's order, they took a number of managerial positions in the

Greater Poland Armies. Particular roles in the Greater Poland Armed Forces were played by: Colonel Waclaw Przeździecki, Major Alfons Wojtkielewicz, Rittmeister (Captain) Bronisław Wzacny, Colonel (subsequently General) Daniel Konarzewski, Colonel Anatol Kędzierski, Colonel Jan Skoryna, Colonel Michał Milewski and Second Lieutenant General [brigade] Stanisław Dubiski. Following in the footsteps of their superiors, they quickly started to get on well with the Greater Poland residents and fitted in perfectly well among them. The higher command positions were gradually taken by officers who not only had the appropriate military rank, but who were also duly prepared to perform their functions, and who had extensive field experience.

On 18 January 1919, Central Command gave operational order no. 1, which divided the line that separated the insurgent side from the opponent into fronts:

- The Northern Front: from the border with the Kingdom of Poland near Inowrocław to the Białe Lake near Czarnków; commander: Lieutenant Colonel Kazimierz Grudzielski;
- The Western Front: from the Białe Lake to the Obra Canal near Wolsztyn; commander: Colonel Michał Milewski;
- The South-Western Front (also called the "Leszno Group"): from the Obra Channel to Poniec; commander: Second Lieutenant Bernard Śliwiński;
- The Southern Front: from Poniec along the

border with the Silesian province, to the border with the Kingdom of Poland, with Second Lieutenant Władysław Wawrzyniak as commander.

In operational terms, the group (front) commanders were directly subordinate to Central Command, while the supply and administration commanders were subordinate to the Military District commanders. The task of the 1st Military District (covering Poznań) was to form an operational reserve which was expected to fight in any sections, depending on necessity. Individual front and section commanders were ordered to immediately form riflemen regiments (infantry) in their subordinate areas.

In order to carry out the assigned tasks effectively, the number of military districts had to be reduced. Thus on 19 February 1919, the entire administrative and military structure of the area affected by the uprising was divided into three Military Districts, linked to specific fronts:

1. The Northern Front: poviats: Wieleń, Czarnków, Piła, Chodzież, Wyrzysk, Bydgoszcz, Wągrowiec, Gniezno, Witkowo, Żnin, Szubin, Inowrocław and Strzelno.
2. The Western Front: poviats: Poznań - East, Poznań - West, Oborniki, Szamotuły, Międzychód, Skwierzyna, Nowy Tomyśl, Międzyrzecz, Babimost, Kościan, Grodzisk, Śmigiel, Leszno and Wschowa.
3. The Southern Front: poviats: Gostyń, Rawicz, Koźmin, Krotoszyn, Śrem, Jarocin, Pleszew,

Września, Środa, Ostrów Wlkp., Odolanów, Kępno and Ostrzeszów.

At the same time, district commanders, who were also front commanders, were appointed: I

-Lieutenant Colonel Kazimierz Grudzielski, II - Colonel Michał Milewski and III - Colonel Adolf Jan Kuczewski. Thus, the same officer was responsible for the military activities in his frontline section, as well as for the provisioning and replenishing of the army under his command. To this end, a provisioning office was established in every district. The three headquarters were located in Gniezno, Poznań and Jarocin.

The number of soldiers in a given army was determined on the basis of the region's mobilisation capacities and the needs of the fronts. Thus, the plan was to establish a rifle (infantry) division consisting of four regiments, one cavalry regiment and artillery units in each military district. In order to not hinder the process of the formation of the army, the organisational structure of the German army was adopted, to which the soldiers who had previously been familiar with service in the army were accustomed. As elements of divisions, two brigades were formed; each of these consisted of two regiments. In order to ensure the appropriate manning of the positions of command, after the experiences of the first battles in the early days of the Uprising, the process of promoting the most capable sergeants to officer ranks started, also accelerated courses for mid-level commanders were organised, and in June 1919 (i.e. in the period which directly preceded the signing of the peace treaty), officer, infantry and artillery

schools were established. Majors and colonels who had arrived from the Kingdom of Poland, most frequently former soldiers of the 1st Polish Corps, were assigned to the higher level posts. Non-commissioned officer courses in the respective regiments were organised in February 1919.

The first formation whose organisation into large units was initiated was the infantry. In May 1919, the Infantry Inspectorate was established at Central Command; it was headed by Second Lieutenant General Kazimierz Grudzielski. In reality the process of the formation had already lasted a long time; on 19 January, the formation of the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Regiment was commenced. One week later, on 26 January 1919, on Wolności Square in Poznań, the swearing-in ceremony for Central Command and the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Regiment, combined with the delivery of their banner took place. Then, a parade of the previously formed infantry, cavalry and artillery units took place - in the proper uniforms and insignia which had been introduced several days before. Still on the same day, an inspection of the People's Guard for the city of Poznań was performed in the same place. This was the first demonstration of the newly established Polish armed forces in the region. The second one took place on 3 May 1919, during a great parade of the Greater Poland Armed Forces in Ławica near Poznań, organised to honour the 128th anniversary of the Constitution of the 3 May.

The process of the formation of the infantry regiments of the Greater Poland Armed Forces

was similar everywhere. The military district commander set the rules for the establishment of the respective regiments and battalions based on the guidelines that Central Command had set on 11 January and 2 February 1919. Attempts were made to maintain the already existing regional units in full, only expanding companies and battalions according to the composition and established size of the German army. Old friends and colleagues as well as neighbours from the same town still remained part of the same unit - however, this no longer happened on a voluntary basis but as a result of a mobilisation decree. It was only after some time that the turnover of people and the natural transfers within the army led to a mixing of the personnel of the respective companies and battalions. At the same time, regional names ceased to be used and a suitable numeration of the respective units and subunits was introduced. Gradually, the operating procedures appropriate for the functioning of a regular army, based on regulations and orders, were introduced; annexes to day orders included the detailed manning of the respective formations, units and staff. In parallel to the formation of the line units, the process of the establishment of the field gendarmerie of the Greater Poland Armed Forces and the judiciary system was also launched. This made the process of introducing discipline in the insurgent army more efficient. Most frequently, the formed units occupied barrack buildings left behind by the German army.

The army was re-joined by soldiers of the First World War, who did not require any new training.

Also a system for the efficient supply of new recruits and training centres for them were organised. This was now an army which could be used almost immediately on the battlefield. This phenomenon, in combination with the sacrifices made by the general society and a well organised supply system, explains the rather uncommon speed with which armed forces with a high combat value, as presented by the Greater Poland Armies, were formed.

As a result of organisational work in the region, four (infantry) rifle divisions were formed, each consisting of four regiments organised into two-regiment brigades.

- The 1st Greater Poland Rifle Division was formed in January 1919 and consisted of regiments 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Greater Poland Riflemen. After unification with the Polish Army, this unit received the name of the 14th Greater Poland Infantry Division (GPolID).

- The 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Division: formed on 6th March 1919; regiments: 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the Greater Poland Riflemen. After its name was changed, this became the 15th Greater Poland Infantry Division.

- The 3rd Greater Poland Infantry Division: formed at the beginning of June 1919. It consisted of the following regiments: 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the Greater Poland Riflemen. After unification, this became the 17th Greater Poland Infantry Division.

The fourth large unit at this level was the

Pomerania Rifle Division formed by order of the Supreme Command of the Polish Armies of 7 August 1919 (initially its name was supposed to be the 4th Greater Poland Rifle Division). This was an army which was intended for the occupation of the Pomeranian territories granted to Poland as a result of the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. Having completed its task, the unit was given the name of the 16th, Infantry Division in March 1920. The composition of the respective regiments was mixed.

- The Toruń Rifle Regiment consisted mostly of Pomeranian residents. After unification, it received the name of the 63rd Infantry Regiment.

- The Grudziądz Rifle Regiment consisted mainly of soldiers from Kuyavia as well as the regions of Oborniki and Czarnków. From March 1920, this was the 64th Grudziądz Infantry Regiment.

- The Starogard Rifle Regiment - formed as late as on 7 October 1919, mainly from soldiers from Vistula Pomerania. It then became the 65th Starogard Infantry Regiment.

- Kasubian Rifle Regiment - formed at the same time, but in Poznań. Though it consisted of soldiers from the Kasubian region, organisationally, it never went beyond the staff level. After unification, it was expanded and renamed as the 66th Kasubia Infantry Regiment.

The commander of the Divisions was Colonel Stanisław Skrzyński.

The involvement of the Greater Poland units in the battles on the Eastern Fronts led to the

necessity of merging garrison (i.e. complementary) battalions in Greater Poland. Thus, in October 1919, a Garrison Regiment consisting of four battalions was formed. After several restructuring and renaming operations in March 1921, it received the number and name of the 73rd Infantry Regiment.

Relatively speaking, the most permanent structure was that of the People's Guard, which fulfilled tasks related to territorial defence. The commandant of this formation was Colonel J. B. Lange, formally nominated by General J. Dowbór-Muśnicki in day order No. 36 of 9 February 1919. At the end of May and the beginning of June 1919, when the threat of the German offensive began to loom, it was necessary to increase the number of line troops. Thus, on 30 May 1919, the People's Guard was renamed as the National Defence Army with Colonel J. B. Lange as the National Defence Inspector. As time passed by, the National Defence became the base for the reserve regiments of the Greater Poland Armies. The People's Guard and the National Defence were infantry formations. Altogether, eight National Defence battalions were formed. They were the basis for the establishment of a reserve regiment in September 1919 and January 1920, which participated in the repossession of the territories granted to Poland - this subsequently became the 74th Infantry Regiment of the Polish Army. In January 1919, the Guard and Security Service was dissolved. Two garrison battalions subordinated to the commander of the 1st Military District were formed from it.

The cavalry of the Greater Poland Army was

organised into a cavalry brigade, consisting of four Greater Poland Uhlan Regiments; however, it never participated in any operations in the region as a combined single unit. During the first period of the Uprising, small cavalry units were formed along the respective front line sections. Their size and composition varied. They were used for reconnaissance, patrolling and covering operations. During the first period of the Uprising, small cavalry units were often established in the respective towns on a temporary basis. They patrolled the surrounding areas and fulfilled liaison functions. For instance, at the beginning of January 1919, the Nadgoplański Squadron was formed - then, it was apportioned among the respective uhlan regiments. There were many such units outside Poznań at that time, however, none of them ever transformed into a larger cavalry unit. In April 1919, the 1st Greater Poland Cavalry Brigade, led by Colonel Aleksander Pajewski, was formed from the first and third regiments. In 1919, the formation of the 4th Uhlan Regiment was commenced in Poznań and was finished in Grudziądz and Toruń. However, the 1st Greater Poland Uhlan Regiment, renamed as the 15th Poznań Uhlan Regiment on 7 January 1920, enjoyed the greatest recognition in the tradition of the Greater Poland Uprising.

The Greater Poland artillery was formed ad hoc, as the armament, ammunition and other necessary equipment were obtained. Despite its small size, it played a significant role on the insurgent fronts, especially the northern one, near Szubin. Cannons under Polish command

were used for the first time in military action during the seizure of the air base in Ławica, on the night of 5-6 January 1919. The Artillery Command, led by Second Lieutenant Zygmunt Łakiński, was appointed within Central Command on 9 January 1919. Finally, over 50 cannons of eighteen different types were found in different German depots. More often than not, they were rather obsolete; any modern cannons in good technical order were still being used by German line units at that time. Also, fully functional aiming and communication devices and artillery maps were deficient and this necessitated the organisation of repair workshops. The manufacture of artillery ammunition was launched in the H. Cegielski factory. The captured artillery equipment sufficed to provide two field (light) artillery regiments and two heavy artillery batteries. The cannons were used in combat for the direct support of attacking infantry or in defence, for firing straight at the enemy. Fire from covered positions or as a preparatory attack could not be taken into consideration because of the shortage of ammunition. However, the presence of the Polish cannons on the front also played a great psychological role.

On 12 January 1919, the scope of activity of Artillery Command was agreed. On 19 January, it received the name of Artillery Inspectorate. On 14 January, the formation of the 1st Light Artillery Regiment (LAR) was announced. Its commander was Colonel Lieutenant Anatol Kędzierski; one week later, that officer took the post of Artillery Inspector. As well as the 1st LAR, the 1st Heavy

Artillery Battalion started to be formed in the barracks in the Sołacz district in Poznań. Soon the Polish artillerymen were located in the post-German barracks at Magazynowa Street (Solna Street), and then at Prittwitz-Gaffron Fort. The 2nd Field Artillery Regiment was established there.

The formation of the horse artillery began on 16 March 1919; this was a battalion established on the basis of the 1st Field Artillery Regiment. Two heavy artillery regiments consisting of three battalions were formed in May 1919. After consecutive reorganisations, in June 1919, the Greater Poland Army artillery consisted of three field (light) artillery regiments, two heavy artillery regiments, one horse artillery battalion, two reserve battalions and a non-commissioned officer school. The great deficiencies in staff were eliminated by the organisation of training and the inflow of officers from outside of Greater Poland.

In October 1919, the Greater Poland artillery was reorganised in accordance with the requirements of the Polish Army. These were three artillery brigades (each of these consisted of a field artillery regiment and a heavy artillery regiment), which, upon incorporation into the Polish Army, received consecutive numbers - the 15th, 16th and 17th Artillery Brigades. On 25 November 1919, the Artillery Inspectorate was transformed into the Artillery Inspectorate of the Greater Poland Front. Until that time, the respective artillery battalions were still used based on the needs of the given front or front sections; this type of combat arm had not previously occurred in combat in its full structure.

After the seizure of the air base in Ławica, the Greater Poland Air Forces consisted of four squadrons, which subsequently participated in the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1920. Aeroplanes did not really play any significant role on the insurgent fronts. By order of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 20 July 1921, the 3rd Air Regiment, which existed until the outbreak of World War II, was formed in Poznań-Ławica.

On 21 January 1919, the Technical Army Inspection was established with Colonel Jan Skoryna as its leader. This army included: motorised units, communication service, sappers, armoured trains and railway units. The communication units were of utmost importance. They were formed in the Winiary Fort in Poznań, i.e. at the Citadel, with a strong radio-station and convenient conditions for the training of soldiers. On 21 January, units of telephone operators were incorporated into the Greater Poland Telegrapher Battalion.

In January 1919, the 1st Sapper Battalion was formed. It had its seat in the barracks in the Wilda district in Poznań; the commander of this unit was Captain Witold Butler. If needed, the Greater Poland sappers were used on the respective fronts. On 17 January 1919, they participated in fighting for a German armoured train near Rynarzewo, and then they built field fortifications on the Northern Front. They stayed there until the repossession action.

There were three armoured trains in the Greater Poland Army ("Danuta", "Goplana" and "Rzepicha") and a Railway Army Battalion,

formed from the 2nd Sapper Battalion from 2 June 1919.

The medical-sanitary service of the Greater Poland Armies was organised efficiently. Organisationally, its personnel came mostly from the circles of the Department of Medicine at the Society of the Friends of Arts and Sciences in Poznań. The organisational base included sanitary groups of the Polish Red Cross as well as girls and young women trained within the structures of the "Sokół" Gymnastic Society and the scouts. Those groups commenced their activity immediately after the outbreak of fighting in Poznań at the end of December 1918. During the period of peace and quiet, physicians trained their own personnel and later on, after the outbreak of the uprising, they would provide aid to the injured soldiers. However outside Poznań, most of the Polish units had to cope on their own, providing medical aid to the injured, until 7 January 1919.

After the establishment of Central Command, the Sanitary Inspectorate with a titular General Second Lieutenant Ireneusz Wierzejewski as its Head was established. The first fully successful test of the efficiency of the functioning of the medical-sanitary service was its involvement in the seizure of the airport in Ławica on the night of 5-6 January 1919. After that, sanitary trucks with professional personnel accompanied every important operation of the Polish units. Within the structure of the Greater Poland Army, this structure was managed by the Sanitary Office (I. Wierzejewski) and the Sanitary Department which closely cooperated with it (headed by Józef

Grobelny,MD). In the respective divisions, regiments and battalions, there were physicians responsible for the conducting of their profession at a given level. In the ranks of the companies, there were sanitary non-commissioned officers and porters. The division included a sanitary company consisting of 160 people, on top of this, the Greater Poland Armies had six field hospitals at their disposal. The largest permanent military hospital was located in Poznań, in the building which preserved its function from the middle of the 19th century until the year 1945. In total, there were 219 medical doctors, 23 dentists and 25 pharmacists serving in the structures of the Greater Poland Army; the sanitary units included 1300 privates, excluding nurses and porters. Thus, the armed forces of the entire region were well secured in this respect.

During the peak period of the development of the Greater Poland Armies, in the summer of 1919, the Armed Forces of the Former Prussian Partition consisted of 120000 soldiers (including the People's Guard), of which 72000 were ready for an immediate march to the front. This constituted 16% of the entire population of the region - the greatest number of people on the then Polish territories. This figure represented approximately one fifth of the armed forces of the entire Republic of Poland. This target was successfully achieved owing to the high awareness of the inhabitants of the region, their willingness to make sacrifices and their sense of duty as well as the determination of the political-administrative leadership, (the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council) and the military

command consisting of officers from three different armies, in all the organisational work. It must actually be mentioned that the highest authorities of Greater Poland Armies also included people who had served in the Austrian army and Polish Legions.

In June 1919, the Front Group Commands were liquidated, transforming them into Greater Poland Rifle Division Commands. The temporary composition of the divisions was established by the day order of Central Command, dated 10 July 1919. Each of the newly established three divisions consisted of two brigades, while those, in turn, were each composed of two regiments.

The 1st Greater Poland Rifle Division (the former Western Front); commanded by General Lieutenant Filip Dubiski: the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 7th Greater Poland Rifle Regiments.

The 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Division (the former Northern Front); commanded by Colonel Albin Jasiński: the 4th, 5th, 9th and 10th Greater Poland Rifle Regiments.

The 3rd Greater Poland Rifle Division (the former Southern Front); commanded by General Wincenty Odyniec: the 6th, 8th, 11th, and 12th Greater Poland Rifle Regiments.

By a declaration of the Supreme People's Council in Poznań, dated 25 May 1919, and later by a decree dated 15 August 1919, the Greater Poland Army was subordinated to the Supreme Command of Polish Armies, while still maintaining its separate organisation (Day Order

No. 213 of Central Command, dated 21 August 1919). Ultimately, this formality was fulfilled by a decree of the Commander-in-Chief on 20 August 1919. The official incorporation of the Greater Poland Army into the Polish Armed Forces took place on 28 August 1919, but the formal order of the Ministry of Military Affairs regarding this matter was issued as late as 10 December that year. As soon as the Greater Poland Army became part of the Polish Armed Forces all units and independent subunits changed their names and numbers.

At the same time, 13 November marked the date of the establishment of the Command of the Greater Poland Front, whose task was to recover the territories granted to Poland by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, and of the Command of the Poznań General District - the subsequent Corps District Command VII. The Greater Poland Front was dissolved on 8 March 1920.

Select Pages

1

2

3



