

# Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

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## Commanders of the Greater Poland Uprising – their actions and achievements

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For several decades, the Greater Poland Uprising in 1918-1919 was traditionally divided into two stages of insurgent fighting; this remained uncorrected practically until the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Uprising. The discussion on the chronology of events as part of the uprising started again in the early 1970s and was related to the formation of a research team in Kościan whose task was to organise national seminars for historians interested in the uprising. The Historical Committee of the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy, active in Kościan, was largely composed of former soldiers from the Home Army, officers of the Kościan District Command led by Klemens Kruszewski, the

headmaster of a secondary school in Kościan, Jan Witkowski, the director of a local sugar refinery, and Bolesław Mocek, a refinery employee. Guided by Professor Zdzisław Grot, who was a scout and Major Stanisław Taczak's runner in the 1918-1919 uprising, and with the cordial help of the veterans, we invited historians from Poznań, Warsaw, Bydgoszcz, Toruń, Gdańsk and local communities to come to Kościan on 2 February 1972. For the author of the present publication, for Marek Rezler and for Piotr Bauer it was an immense challenge in terms of organisation. Nearly all of the invited historians came, and the sessions held in the hall of the Kościan Culture Centre were attended by almost 300 (!) insurgents, secondary school pupils and other amateurs of Greater Poland's history. A number of postulates in terms of publication were put forward, which were successfully implemented through the years.

At the first seminar (in a couple of weeks we are meeting for the twentieth time!) I presented a new proposition regarding the chronology of the uprising, broken down into schemes. Its central assumption was to move the upper limit of insurgent actions (the signing of the truce in Trier on 16 February 1919) to the recovery of lands awarded to Poland in the Treaty of Versailles and the liquidation of the front in Greater Poland in the spring of 1920. Following the suggestion of Włodzimierz Lewandowski, Ph.D, I defined this period as the war between Greater Poland and Germany, waged between the forces of the regular Greater Poland Army and the German units. As shown in the schemes provided, the

division corresponded to the activity of both commanders of the uprising: Major Stanisław Taczak until 15 January 1919, and General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki from 16 January. Thanks to the help of my team colleagues, years later the term “war between Greater Poland and Germany” made it into the historiography of the uprising.



Fig. I. The Greater Poland Uprising.

Source: *Powstanie Wielkopolskie. Źródła - Stan badań - Postulaty badawcze. Materiały z Ogólnopolskiego Seminarium Historyków Powstania Wielkopolskiego - Kościan, 2.II.1972 r.*, scientific editor: Zdzisław Grot, Komisja Historyczna Zarządu Oddziału Powiatowego Związku Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację w Kościanie (Historical Committee of the Board of the Poviast Branch of the Association of Soldiers Fighting for Freedom and Democracy), Kościan 1973. Scheme 1-2.

There is an excellent question that several generations of historians and publicists have been posing: Was the uprising of 1918 well-prepared in military terms? It was not!

The outbreak of fighting in Poznań on 27 December 1918, the formation of the mixed Polish-German Poznań City Command with Commander Jan Maciaszek and the declaring of a state of emergency in the city were merely ad hoc measures or even half-measures. It became clear to the Polish leaders that it was necessary to

appoint an actual commander who would have control over the insurgent operations. There was no time to wait for a commander from Warsaw, although in mid-December 1918 Jan Maciaszek, authorised by the Commissariat of the SPC, tried to obtain consent from the Polish Army General Staff for General Eugeniusz de Henning Michaelis to come to Poznań. On the same day I. J. Paderewski arrived in Poznań and Captain Stanisław Nilski-Łapiński, General Staff Liaison Officer, came to Poznań from Warsaw.

Around 28 December, Captain Stanisław Taczak, who was also the General Staff Officer, arrived in Poznań as well, to visit his sister. The news of his arrival reached Wojciech Korfanty, who was staying at the "Bazar" Hotel. According to Stanisław Taczak's story, told in the 1930s to Lewandowski, as a result of talks with W. Korfanty, the Captain accepted the proposition to become temporary commander of the uprising, until the arrival of a general from Warsaw.

On 2 January 1919, Stanisław Taczak, promoted to the rank of major, received his military card on the SPC Commissariat's letter sheet, which read as follows: "Major Taczak is the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish armies in the Prussian Partition", signed by Wojciech Korfanty and Władysław Seyda.

Central Command's office was initially to be located in a house at 3 Zwierzyniecka Street. However, Leokadia Świtalska, née Smolińska, made floors 1 and 3 (22 rooms in total) of her "Royal" hotel, located at 38 Św. Marcin Street available to the leaders of the uprising. In formal

terms, the staff of Central Command had to deal with great difficulties, especially after the resumption of peace talks between the Commissariat of the SPC and representatives of the Berlin government on 30 and 31 December. Taczak was banned from publishing, be it in the press or in the form of notices or leaflets, any information concerning the activity of the CC, this included a ban on any possibility of issuing printed orders or instructions. This situation continued until 5 January 1919. Meanwhile, the publication of the orders of the Poznań-based Guard and Security Service was fully allowed.

The fact that the Polish formations in the Prussian Partition were, at least formally, subordinated to Major Taczak, was an expression of the Commissariat's specific policy, recognising the unity of all - open and secret - Polish forces under common command in Poznań.

In practice, S. Taczak started from scratch. He was burdened with a multitude of tasks, without the necessary group of officers, without any organised services, not knowing the people and not having become familiar with the area. The organisation of even the simplest form of staff was made even more difficult due to the fact that in Poznań there were several centres that gave orders: the Command of the Guard and Security Service, the City Command and the People's Guard Command. Each of the legal formations already had its command in Poznań, with the People's Guard's additional poviats commands. Until 8 January, the CC acted almost covertly, with its officers always wearing civilian clothes. Major Stanisław Taczak, having determined the

names of the commanding bodies, was careful to avoid using the same titles as those referring to central military authorities in Warsaw. The following titles were used from the beginning: "Commander-in-Chief", "Central Command", "Staff of Central Command" - although the order of words was sometimes changed. In the documents issued by the SPC and its Commissariat, not to mention the less significant institutions, titles were used freely, or even chaotically, for instance: "Chief Commander of the Polish armies in the Prussian Partition", "Supreme Command" etc.

One of Taczak's first tasks was to draw up the manning of Central Command (Figure 2). The project had to meet the current needs, the Commissariat's limited political capabilities, and the limited scope of affairs related to operations, organisation and mobilisation, with a minimum number of CC personnel. According to the project, the CC was directly subordinated to the SPC. On 3 January 1919, Lieutenant Colonel J. Stachiewicz replaced Captain S. Łapiński as Head of Staff. Four divisions were created: Operational (Ia) - led by Rittmeister B. Wzacny; Organisational (Ib) - Captain Stanisław Nilski-Łapiński; Human Resources (IIa) - Lieutenant Stefan Czarnecki of the Prus III coat of arms, Weapons and Ammunition (IIb) - Captain Władysław Jaworowicz, Ph.D in Philology. The manning project also provided for liaison officers ensuring contact with City Command (Lieutenant Bronisław Sikorski), the fortress commander (Second-Lieutenant Bohdan Hulewicz) and the Commissariat of the SPC. On 1 January, Major S.

Taczak presented the project to the Commissariat, which approved it on the next day.



Fig. 2. Organisation of the Central Command according to the manning project of 2 January 1919

Source: Bogusław Polak, *Generał Stanisław Taczak 1874-1960*, Koszalin 1998, p. 49.

The CC was formed by four officers: S. Taczak, S. Łapiński, B. Wzacny and J. Stachiewicz. At the beginning of January, more officers applied, and on 15 January, 18 officers occupied the positions of leaders. Lieutenant Colonel J. Stachiewicz and Captain S. Łapiński came from the Legions, Rittmeister B. Wzacny was from the Austrian army, while 15 officers, including S. Taczak, used to serve in the German army. Only one officer - Rittmeister Wzacny - was a graduate of a military academy. Lieutenant Colonel Stachiewicz and Captain Łapiński had received incomplete military education. Seven officers had complete university education, and six officers had not completed their graduation.

On 3 January 1919, Lieutenant Colonel Stachiewicz, to be appointed Head of Staff at the CC, appeared at Central Command. A telephone network was used to effectively communicate with the field. It made it possible to give orders to units located in remote areas, and to receive

reports on the battles going on within the province. Joint briefings of commanders from Poznań and the province became part of Central Command's activity. The briefings were held at the "Royal" Hotel. With these means, Major S. Taczak was able to affect the course of events taking place on the newly-established Polish-German front.

Neither would the thoroughly formulated assumptions of the staff, nor the most devoted work of the Commander-in-Chief or the officers of individual divisions do any good, if several centres giving orders were maintained.

Lieutenant Colonel M. Paluch was removed from his position as Commander of the Guard and Security Service in Poznań. On 9 January, by order of Central Command, the Poznań City Command was dissolved, and its agendas were handed over to the Command of Military District 1 and the Command of the Square in Poznań.

Another step towards putting field commanding matters in order was Major Taczak's intervention at the Commissariat of the SPC, which resulted in the Political Department of Division 3 (Politics and the Military) of the SPC Commissariat issuing an address "To all Poviats People's Councils", which read as follows:

"We hereby wish to inform the Poviats People's Councils that Central Command has been established in Poznań. The CC is responsible for leading all military forces, appointing commanders, managing weapons and ammunition etc. We would like Poviats People's Councils not to get involved in military affairs, not to be in



possession of any military forces, weapons or ammunition nor to make any changes to military commands.”

The fundamental task of the CC was to create, as Major Taczak put it “an organisational base for the uprising.” A double organisational structure was adopted: horizontal, territorial – from poviats with commanders, through military districts, the commanders of which exercised supervisory power over all the insurgent units in a specific area, to front commanders; and vertical – covering regular companies and battalions formed of loose insurgent units.

Initially, on 7 January, the staff of Central Command, commanded by Major Taczak, divided the area of Greater Poland (or the Duchy of Poznań) into seven military districts:

District 1 – composed of the poviats of: Poznań-Wschód, Poznań-Zachód and units of the Poznań Fortress garrison; Commander - Rittmeister Ryszard Koperski;

District 2 – poviats of: Września, Środa, Witkowo and Gniezno; Commander - Lieutenant Colonel Kazimierz Grudzielski, staying in Września;

District 3 – poviats of: Wyrzysk, Bydgoszcz, Szubin, Inowrocław, Strzelno, Mogilno, Żnin and Wągrowiec; Commander - Major Napoleon Koczorowski in Inowrocław;

District 4 – poviats of: Chodzież, Czarnków, Wieleń, Skwierzyna, Międzychód, Szamotuły and Oborniki; Commander - Second-Lieutenant Zdzisław Orłowski in Czarnków;

District 5 – poviats of: Międzyrzecz, Nowy Tomyśl, Grodzisk, Babimost, Śmigiel, Kościan, Wschowa and Leszno; Commander - Second-Lieutenant Kazimierz Zenkteler in Buk;

District 6 – poviats of: Śrem, Jarocin, Pleszew, Gostyń, Rawicz, Krotoszyn and Koźmin; Commander - Second-Lieutenant Zbigniew Ostroróg-Gorzeński in Tarce;

District 7 – poviats of: Ostrów, Odolanów, Ostrzeszów and Kępno; Commander - Lieutenant Władysław Wawrzyniak in Ostrów.

P. Cymys owed Central Command's decision of 13 January 1919 on establishing, under his command, a new district no. 8, to the emotional reactions of his subordinates. The new district covered the poviats of Inowrocław and Strzelin.

In accordance with earlier directives, every district was subordinate to a commander, who was responsible for the units within his district and who organised regular armies out of the formations that already existed. The commander was also responsible for defending the district and the adjacent section of the front. All of the local units and commands - rural, municipal and poviat-based - were subordinate to him.

The establishment of the structures necessary to carry out the recruitment procedures was also hindered by a number of difficulties. Due to the considerable share of German population, Major Taczak found that the rule of common conscription should be rejected at the initial stage until the Polish field administration was

reinforced. The Commander-in-Chief's intention was to conscript men born in 1900 and 1901, in mid-January. Making General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki the Commander invalidated the intention, as the new Commander-in-Chief had his own idea for the recruitment of new soldiers in Greater Poland.

Major S. Taczak, despite not having graduated from a military academy, turned out to be a skilled commander. His decisions were well-balanced and very specific. He was respected for his humility and tactfulness. All of his tasks were completed above his qualifications as a front officer with the rank of captain.

The most important stage of the Greater Poland Uprising was the period of the 16 days between 28 December 1918 and 12 January 1919. Let us remember that Captain S. Taczak was appointed temporary Commander-in-Chief until J. Piłsudski chose a new candidate with the rank of general.

But the effects of his actions went beyond all expectations. Although the results of the uprising were influenced by a lack of time, which was not Central Command's fault, by the end of the first ten days of January the insurgents had managed to maintain the achievements they had made so far and created a strong anti-German front, making it possible to develop offensive operations within the actual limits set by their own capacities. S. Taczak and J. Stachiewicz also set out the operational goals of the uprising and formed the foundations for their pursuit.

It can be stated that the activities of Major S. Taczak, to a certain degree, limited the excessive

initiative of commanders. Through his decisions, he got them to act in a coordinated manner according to an operational plan set out before. The creation of front groups, military districts, a conscription infrastructure, initial forms of infantry and cavalry regiments, technical units, an air force and procurement services (food, uniforms, armaments, transport, sanitary and medical service) was of crucial significance in the process of forming a regular army in Greater Poland.

Major Taczak understood the specific nature of voluntary units based on territorial structure. Thus, he did not interfere with those issues concerning the method of appointing officers and never – at least not in any official orders given by the CC – criticised the meetings of soldiers where political matters were often discussed.

The creation of the front gave Central Command the freedom of organisational action in the process of forming an insurgent army. One must also be aware that in the first days of the uprising, up until 5-6 January, activities proceeded spontaneously, along their own course, with Central Command having hardly any influence.

By approving the success of the insurgents, Central Command generally stuck to the directives of Polish political authorities. At the same time, it took every opportunity to liberate areas located outside the range of the uprising. Due to the lack of officers, organised units – which should be at the CC's disposal – or the scarcity of war material seized in Poznań, more

complex operational plans, however, did not stand any chance to succeed. The plan of expanding the uprising to the region of Pomerania may be a good example. The Commander-in-Chief and his staff's methods of work were adapted to the current needs: from organisational action and training, to the planning of operational activities.

Major S. Taczak was also in contact with the General Staff and the Supreme Command of the Polish Army, as well as with the Ministry of Military Affairs. Whenever possible, he tried to supply the units of the Polish Army with weapons and ammunition, which does not mean that he depleted the inventory of the uprising.

Always claiming to be "impartial in political affairs", he was against any disputes and arguments related to personal affairs or competences. Taczak and the members of his staff were loyal to the authorities in Poznań. The results of their activities strengthened the political authority of the Commissariat of the SPC, providing it with such an important attribute as an army, especially in relation to the Prussian authorities and the German population in Greater Poland, not to mention their allies and Warsaw.

In a short time, Major Taczak gained authority among his closest collaborators and those who initially treated him as an intruder and were reluctant or even hostile to him. He impressed them with his decisiveness, his sense of discipline, his tact in his contact with people, his impeccable manners, as well as his devoted and tireless work. He gave his all, expecting the same from the others. A great number of his initiatives,

later developed as part of General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki's work, contributed to the growth of the insurgent military forces. At the same time, he respected his opponents' views and analysed opinions contrary to his own. The most important and crucial period in the Greater Poland Uprising was the three weeks from 28 December.

I agree with Marek Rezler's opinion that Major Stanisław Taczak "did immense work, far beyond the scope of his formal competences as an officer of his rank and with his military education. Owing to his work, in January 1919 his successor only had to develop and expand what Taczak had done.". General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki never said a word of respect about his predecessor.

The position of Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army in Greater Poland was formally taken by General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki on 15 January 1919. Major Taczak's successor was designated by J. Piłsudski in agreement with the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council. On 8 January, General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki arrived in Poznań to get acquainted with the situation in Greater Poland.

He held talks with Commissioners S. Adamski, W. Korfanty and A. Poszwiński. As a result of these talks, an agreement setting out the terms and conditions of cooperation between Dowbor-Muśnicki and the Commissariat of the SPC was signed on 11 January. The General was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in the entire Prussian Partition. According to the agreement, the Commissariat of the SPC, recognising the unity of the Polish Army, for

political and international reasons temporarily wanted the armed forces in the former Prussian Partition to remain separate and independent. Appointing officers and military clerks required SPC approval, while the commander-in-chief was supposed to present the words of the military oath to the Commissariat for approval. The Commissariat of the SPC was also to appoint a Head of Military Affairs, whose competences were subject to a separate agreement between the Commissariat and the Commander-in-Chief. W. Korfanty remained responsible for the military and political affairs handled by the Commissariat. All plans concerning army formation or military operations had to be agreed with him. For these reasons, a political division with a Public Safety and Army section was established at the CSPC.

On 14 January, General Dowbor-Muśnicki met with J. Piłsudski to report on the results of his arrival to Poznań. On the next day, he returned to Poznań and on 16 January he officially became Commander-in-Chief. Greater Poland welcomed him with honours, as well as with caution. Even later, he had difficulties with his relations with subordinates. His long-term service in the Tzar's army had impacted his views, behaviours and even his Polish-speaking skills. On the other hand, however, he was an excellently educated staff officer with broad experience, a great organiser and an advocate of a regular army with iron discipline. He paid particular attention to the proper organisation of the army, emphasising in his "Military Thoughts" that "the key to victories lies in the knowledge of the complex issue of organisation", and that "in the battlefield, only

regular armies are of any value” as the “spiritual union of the individual units of the army connected to each other with a common ideology.” According to Muśnicki, a commander-in-chief is “the army’s brain and soul”, while the staff is its “nervous system”.

General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki's view on the role of commander-in-chief and his staff was inspired by the examples he drew from the Tzar's army. Contrary to the German army, however, he claimed that the role of the staff was merely auxiliary - it was to be a tool which executed the commander-in-chief’s directives. The model was applied in Greater Poland, where the commander-in-chief was appointed by the CSPC and was directly subordinate to it. It was an indirect link in performing commanding functions towards subordinate armies.

What characterised the order of battle of the Greater Poland Army was the combination of two organisational patterns: Russian and German. The structure of the army roughly resembled the order of battle applied by the 1st Polish Corps in Russia. The resemblance resulted from the fact that General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki wanted to form three four-regiment divisions. Such organisation was also adopted by the Polish Army. Cavalry was composed of three uhlan regiments forming a mounted brigade, while artillery comprised six regiments divided into three brigades, one per each infantry division. In his long-term perspective, the general wanted to form corps, but he did not manage to implement the plan. As far as the organisation of regiments, brigades and divisions was concerned, the German structure,



which Greater Poland residents knew well from the period when they had served in the German army, was adopted. It also referred to training regulations, which were frequently translated from German with small modifications to provide for the specific nature, training and tactics of the Greater Poland Army.

Under a decree issued by the SPC, on 17 January 1919 General Dowbor-Muśnicki announced the conscription of men born in 1897-1899. In his address to the insurgent armies, annexed to Central Command's day order of 18 January, General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki declared that he would not favour officers from "individual Polish formations commanded by Dowbor-Muśnicki, Piłsudski, Haller etc.", but he warned the soldiers against "taking part in the life of any political parties. The army should be apolitical and serve the country's unity instead of strengthening individual parties." The principle of electing commanders was done away with. According to the rule assuming the apoliticism of the army, General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki later resigned to show his disapproval of the participation of soldiers from Greater Poland in elections to the Legislative Parliament.

One factor that influenced the army's aesthetics, and at the same time discipline, was the introduction of consistent uniforms. They were made of German uniform fabric. The design of the uniforms was undoubtedly the best in the entire Polish Army shortly before the Second Polish Republic, and the "rogatywka" cap with its triple rosette immediately gained the army's and society's recognition.

The organisational tasks set before General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki by the CSPC required expansion of the staff of the CC and the forming of regiment and division staff, commands and services (inspectors) etc. The notorious shortage of officers was a significant obstacle in this case. In the German army, approximately 140 Greater Poland residents were ranked as officers. In other invaders' armies, it was much easier for the Poles to be awarded the rank of an officer. Whereas the number of younger officers grew by way of promoting deputy officers and the most skilled non-commissioned officers, senior officers were only available in Warsaw. As a result of the efforts taken by General Dowbor-Muśnicki, within a couple of weeks from January to May 1919, 181 of his former subordinates from the 1st Polish Corps and the Russian army, 18 from the Austrian army and 12 former soldiers from the Legions came to Greater Poland.

The process of transforming the staff of Central Command had several stages. The first one, which lasted until the end of the first weeks of February, solidified the division into two functions: one focused on tactics and organisation (as the 1st Quartermaster Function) on the one hand, and the other focused on administration (the 2nd Quartermaster Function). There was also the so-called "Unit 3" as the adjutant's office. The functions retained their structure of departments and offices according to the CC manning structure approved on 2 January.

On 19 January 1919, the Commander-in-Chief said to the army that "all men conscripted in the former Prussian region are a part of the Armed

Forces of the former Prussian region”, and that the Staff of the Supreme Command of Polish Armed Forces in the former Prussian region and Head of Provisions were the bodies responsible for the execution of his regulations.

Central Command’s operational order no. 1 of 18 January approved the division of the front in Greater Poland into four groups: north, west, south-west and south, which had been functioning since the middle of January. In tactical terms, group commanders were directly subordinated to the CC, and in administrative terms, to the commanders of the respective military districts. Units formed in MD I / in the city of Poznań were a reserve that Central Command had at its exclusive disposal. According to the order, MD II (Września - Gniezno) organised the reserves for the northern group. Group commanders were ordered to immediately start transforming infantry units into rifle regiments. The process of transforming front units into regular regiments at the end of January and the beginning of February was disrupted by German offensives and was finalised at the end of February, or even, in certain cases, in mid-March 1919.

On 26 January, Central Command and the units formed in the 1st Military District were sworn in on William’s (Wolności) Square, while the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Regiment received a standard funded by the women of the region. The last part of the event was a 20-minute military parade, participated in by infantry, artillery and cavalry units. Several days later, on 28, 29 and 31 January, two Poznań-based garrison battalions were sworn in in the former Bernardine church,

while in the first half of February, the formation of a few infantry regiments was completed.

The signing of the armistice gave the Commander-in-Chief and the CC Staff the possibility of reorganising the front in Greater Poland and the military districts and, above all, to form large infantry, artillery and cavalry units. As the fighting on the first front lines became less intense, it was possible to withdraw a number of units to allow them to regain their strength and to train them, or to organise them into regiments as part of the organisational scheme adopted by the Greater Poland Army.

Under a decree of the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council of 19 March 1919, Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki was appointed General of the Branch. On 26 April, Colonel (soon-to-be General) Jan Wroczyński became Head of Staff at Central Command.

For the purposes of the expanded army, detailed manning projects were drawn up, which showed that Greater Poland had a deficit of 800 officers. At the end of June, there were 1759 officers in total, including 872 from the former German army, 45 from the Russian army, 16 from the Austrian army, 112 from the 1st Polish Corps in Russia, 10 from the 2nd Corps, 6 from the Polish Legions, 2 from the "Polnische Wehrmacht" and 4 from the Polish Army. There were 688 officers whose origin was impossible to determine. The Supreme Command of the Polish Army was unable to send more officers to Poznań, because they were also needed in the newly established units of the Polish Army. An Officer's Infantry

School was therefore founded.

## Conclusions

The course of the fighting in Poznań showed the effects of the absence of any central headquarters. The commander-in-chief was appointed only as a result of the events of 27 December for which the highest Polish military authorities are to blame. The staff of Central Command, composed of officers from Warsaw, could have acted covertly, keeping its intentions and activities confidential. It was only the decisions made by Major Stanisław Taczak and his staff that laid the foundations in terms of organisation, materials and operations on which the insurgent armies were based. By mid-January 1919, Central Command had established 9 lower commands at the level of military districts, commands for the four front groups and an intendant's office. The work of Major Taczak's staff was characterised by a professionalism and methodology which made it easier to take organisational control over the insurgent units. The next stage was to be the formation of a regular army. After 16 January 1919, General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki continued to pursue this organisational concept with several modifications. A serious challenge he had to face was to develop an operational action plan, as there had not been any before 27 December. Due to political reasons, the goal of any armed activities had not been specified either. Central Command received some general ideas no sooner than in the first two weeks of January. During that time, the

Commissariat of the SPC reminded everyone that the liberated territory had to be treated as a front within the Polish area of aspirations - as a political and military demonstration of the endeavours of the Poles.

It was only General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki who was allowed to form a regular army based on mandatory service and discipline. Relying on organisational patterns he knew from the German and the Russian army, as well as on the structure of the 1st Polish Corps in Russia, the Commander-in-Chief established a three-division army with a cavalry brigade, three artillery brigades and an air force, covering technical units and services. This was possible thanks to the number of soldiers conscripted and the involvement of the appropriate cadres. The regional units lost their mostly homogenous territorial composition, which made it possible to transform the army into an organisation based on regiments and divisions. The commanding staff included senior officers from Poznań. Younger officers were soldiers who had undergone accelerated training, either that or deputy officers and the most talented non-commissioned officers were promoted. Poznań also welcomed younger officers from the 1st Polish Corps and other formations.

The front and the military districts were organised, inspectorates for infantry, artillery, technical forces, air forces, National Defence, district military mobilisation commands and sanitary issues, subordinated to the Commander-in-Chief, were created or expanded. For the purposes of an army of 100000 soldiers, both of the quartermaster departments of Central

Command, the general division and the Field Commissariat were expanded. Thus, the Greater Poland Army was a continuation of Major S. Taczak's and his collaborators' ideas.

The absence of a detailed plan for the uprising before 27 December 1918 and - despite the formation of several groups of younger officers - of any central headquarters and a commander-in-chief had to take its toll on the courses of action taken by the insurgent units. Under a conscious policy of the invaders, only a few Poles serving in the German army had been promoted to the rank of officer. Privates and non-commissioned officers, however, the vast majority of whom were soldiers experienced in war and soldiers who had received a patriotic upbringing from their family, Catholic Church and Polish organisations, did not passively wait for events to proceed. Organised in the units of the People's Guard, the Guard and Security Service, or sometimes the Border Guard, they awaited the outbreak of the uprising. The less experienced youth, the members of the Polish Military Organisation in particular, were ready for the uprising back in November, neglecting any real chances for success. The fact that in Poznań and the province there were numerous German military warehouses that were relatively easy to occupy made it possible to duly equip the units.

Analysis of the individual stages of battles allows for the drawing of some general conclusions. The way the battles were fought by the insurgent units, and later by the regular army, depended on how they were organised and commanded. In the first ten days of the uprising, the actions in

Greater Poland resembled guerilla warfare. The units were led by commanders who were full of patriotic zest, but who lacked qualifications, which was demonstrated in the battlefield. They often committed elementary mistakes that duly trained and experienced officers would never commit. The mistakes sometimes led to tragedies, including the deaths of inexperienced officers. W. Wiewiórkowski, E. Krauze or K. Mann were among the commanders that paid the highest price for their errors. The initiator of the "liberation rally" in Kuyavia, Second Lieutenant P. Cyms, committed a number of elementary mistakes during street fighting in Inowrocław.

The lack of formal qualifications and experience in commanding frequently revealed the commanders' ineptitude. Only a few commanders were down to earth and proficient on the battlefield. Ineptitude was often made up for with foolhardiness and belligerence, which resulted in commanders committing fundamental mistakes that, in a regular army, would lead them before a field court. In the insurgent units, only a few commanders were burdened with any actual responsibility for their decisions. P. Cyms was put on trial, but was acquitted, while A. Breza was dismissed as the commander of the Rawicz section. Central Command was aware that tasks entrusted to certain commanders were far beyond their capabilities. Although they served well as privates, they were unable to become good commanders.

An example of incompetence among older officers is the allegation addressed to Lieutenant Colonel K. Grudzielski, who, in the first fight for Szubin (8



January), did not assume personal command of the action, nor prepare its plan, nor control the course of events or organise reserves, which could have saved the failed attempt at occupying Szubin.

As the fighting proceeded, however, there was a group of commanders who managed to complete the tasks they had been entrusted with. In the northern section of the Greater Poland Front these were, among others: I. Mielżyński, K. Dratwiński, J. Tomaszewski, K. Golniewicz, E. Rogalski, Skotarczak brothers, T. Fenrych, Z. Orłowski, W. Kowalski, W. Wlekliński; in the western section: K. Zenkteler, K. Szcześniak, S. Siuda, S. Tomiak, D. Vogel, W. Eckert; in the south-western section: B. Śliwiński, S. Sikora, S. May, M. Talarczak, F. Szyszka, J. Namysł; in the southern section: W. Wawrzyniak, S. Thiel, B. Kirchner, M. Szulc; from the units of the Poznań garrisons: W. Pniewski, A. Kopa, B. Hulewicz, F. Maryński, E. Materne, W. Rossa. In 1921, most of them were awarded with the V Class Virtuti Militari War Order and the Cross of Valour.

In the later stages of the uprising, there were hardly any cases of commander incompetence. Military discipline was also stricter, which became visible during the persistent defence battles at the end of January and in mid-February, particularly in the south-western section, and to a lesser degree in the southern section (the battles for Rawicz). It should be borne in mind that the experience drawn from the uprising, and the commanding staff from Greater Poland to a large degree contributed to the victory in the third Silesian uprising in 1921.

There were, undoubtedly, many factors that influenced the success of the 1918-1919 uprising. It was a result of the joint endeavours of commanders, their subordinates, politicians and their French ally, as well as the effect of the organic work done by several generations of Greater Poland residents. Favourable circumstances on the international scene were another success factor. No other region of the Republic of Poland was able to reach for independence and defend it in the war of 1919-1920 in such an effective way and after such a long period of occupation.





