

Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

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THE ATTACK ON NOWE KRAMSKO 2-3 February 1919

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Upon news of the German occupation of Nowe Kramsko, the Polish command decided to attack Nowe Kramsko from Babimost and to retake the village. The data regarding the action, though very general, give a sufficient indication of the tactics used by the insurgents. Above all, the names of the Polish commanders are not known and not much is known about the objectives of the action - except for satisfaction of the desire to take revenge and respond to the offensive operations of the Germans.

On 2 February 1919, 152 insurgents with three light machine guns gathered in the market square in Babimost. The unit was divided into three groups, each of them composed of people residing in a particular area, from Nowe Kramsko and its vicinity. The first group (28 insurgents and a light machine gun) marched along the railway track

from Babimost to Sulechów and took positions along a dirt road one kilometre north of Nowe Kramsko. This group's task was to cut off the retreat of any Germans who tried to move along the roads north of the village. The second group (89 insurgents) marched from Babimost to Kuligowo, and then along forest paths through the woods of Wojnowo. They planned to form a line near the cemetery located south of Nowe Kramsko, occupy the parish church and clear the village of enemy soldiers. The third group (27 insurgents, mostly volunteers) initially marched with the second group then walked on through the frozen Wojnowskie Lake and took positions at the edge of the forest, north of Stare Kramsko. This group's task was to seize a German battery of cannons located at the edge of the forest, south of Kolesin.

At that time, a company of German infantry, approximately 150 soldiers, commanded by Rittmeister von Kleist, were staying in Nowe Kramsko; they were mostly uhlans from the 10th Sulechów regiment. The forces had occupied the church, the school and a homestead, which was additionally secured with barbed wire entanglements. A four-cannon battery, barely protected, was located south of Kolesin.

At 4:00 a.m., all three Polish groups took their positions. The third column, which had not found the cannons it was supposed to seize, moved forward towards Kolesin. Although it was fired at from village buildings, it managed to get through between Kolesin and the Wojnowskie Lake to Nowe Kramsko. The second group's attack was also a success. The surprised Germans defended

themselves only in the church and, for a very short time, in the school. Most of the soldiers, taking advantage of the darkness and of the first group's weakness, got out towards the north.

The Polish losses were 6 dead and 17 wounded. The German army ended up with 4 officers and 32 privates dead, 30 soldiers wounded and 25 taken into captivity. The insurgents successfully seized; 7 medium and 2 light machine guns, more than 40 hand guns, 15 thousand rounds of ammunition, 6 horses, a field kitchen and a HMG ammunition cart.

The village was recovered by the insurgents. Not for long, however, because soon the Germans counter-attacked and re-occupied it. It must be concluded that the previously identified advantages and disadvantages had been confirmed in combat, however, in situations which required determination and courage, the insurgents had a clear advantage over the Germans. The quick and effective action and the use of surprise usually ended in success. The attack on Nowe Kramsko, though not really justified by tactical necessity, was a testimony to the operability and initiative of the Polish command. It became a rule that the respective towns were not attacked frontally, but rather in groups, through a siege, severing the German lines of retreat. However, there were discrepancies between the plan, which in itself could work, and its actual implementation. When coordination failed, the technical advantage and training of the Germans came to the fore and prevented the insurgents from the completion of an entrusted task.

