

Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

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Military contact between Poznań and Warsaw before the outbreak of the Greater Poland Uprising.

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The problem concerning the future of the Polish lands of the Prussian Partition became the task of the Regency Council in September 1918. Soon, a department for affairs concerning the Prussian Partition, led by Second Lieutenant Henryk Bigoszt, was set up. The department's task was to maintain contact with Greater Poland and to act as intermediaries in the preparations for the armed uprising. On 28 October 1918, Major Włodzimierz Zagórski, as Deputy Head of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, established a dedicated command in Kalisz. At the same time, a department for affairs related to the

lands of the Prussian Partition was set up at the General Staff Headquarters. The command of the 9th Military District in Kalisz had a certain impact on the formation of the so-called 1st Ostrów Regiment. At the beginning of November 1918, a meeting between representatives of the local Citizens' Committee and Second Lieutenants H. Bigoszt, Stanisław Szczesny, Juliusz Ulrych and Zygmunt Wieliczka, was held in Ostrów Wlkp, however, the meeting did not bring any meaningful effects. On 17 November 1918, the Ostrów People's Council in its letter addressed to the Supreme Command in Kalisz renounced military cooperation, claiming that it only recognises the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council. Marian Modrzejewski, who was in Ostrów at that time, was arrested and escorted to the border as a proponent of collaboration with the Kalisz centre. By 26 November 1918, the Ostrów unit was dissolved, and its soldiers were sent to Kalisz. In early November 1918, the Central Citizens' Committee in Poznań delegated Doctor Celestyn Rydlewski to visit the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. He suggested initiating conscription of the Poles from the Prussian Partition to the units of the Polish Armed Forces formed in the territory of the former Prussian Partition. On 8 November 1918, the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces informed its subordinate military districts that over the next few days approximately 800 Greater Poland residents would come to their offices in Piotrków, Częstochowa, Kalisz, Łódź and Włocławek. They were to introduce themselves as former Legion soldiers, with the password "Celestyn". According to another order given by

the head of the General Staff on 4 December 1918, the volunteers from Greater Poland were to be accepted into infantry regiments no. 27, 29, 31, 32 and 33. The inflow of volunteers was not as large as the General Staff had expected. According to a report sent by the commander of the 9th Military District Kalisz, Colonel Jerzy Lewszecki, to the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, the 29th Infantry Regiment (Konin) and the 31st Infantry Regiment (Włocławek) were expanded with subunits of Greater Poland residents, composed of several dozen soldiers each. The Border Battalion, organised in Kalisz and later in Szczypiorno, was the largest one. Organisers of the military movements in the Prussian Partition, Mieczysław Paluch and Bronisław Sikorski, were against forming the so-called border battalions, claiming that doing so would weaken the local dynamics. Meanwhile, the leaders of the CCC (SPC) were seeking a candidate for commander-in-chief of the Polish armed forces in the Prussian Partition. On 13 November 1918, Wojciech Korfanty went to Warsaw to put forward his candidature. When he got there, he asked Lieutenant Colonel Wacław Przeździecki - Head of the 1st Division of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, for help in providing officers that would lead the formations organised in Greater Poland. Political leaders from Poznań (the Supreme People's Council) made two more attempts at bringing a senior rank officer to Poznań in order to appoint him commander and let him organise the units. On 15 December 1918, Jan Maciaszek, Head of the Military Division of the Supreme People's Council, discussed this with Lieutenant General

Eugeniusz de Michaelis Hennig, the former organiser and commander of the 3rd Polish Corps in Russia. The results of the talks were poor. Warsaw's concerns about being involved in a war with the Germans affected its relations with Poznań. On 18 December 1918, the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces established the Organisational Office for Military Men and Officials from Greater Poland, Silesia and Prussia, at 8 Warecki Square. The activity of the Office focused on intelligence-related actions in the Prussian Partition and on procuring guns and military equipment. The staff of the office included 6 officers, 1 non-commissioned officer and 5 privates. Temporary Chief of State, Józef Piłsudski, did not disregard the territories of the Prussian Partition in his plans for the reconstruction of Poland. He treated these lands as a historical part of Poland, but did not believe that attempts at winning it back with weapons would succeed. He thought that their fate depended on the Entente, and focused his greatest political and military effort on the east. However, as a result of German repression against the Poles in the Prussian Partition, on 15 December 1918 he broke off his relations with the Germans. He secretly supported military actions in the region of Poznań. From the first days of December 1918, Piłsudski's political emissaries, including Tadeusz Hołówko, Wacław Sieroszewski and Walery Sławek stayed in Poznań to hold secret talks. The talks mostly concerned the participation of Greater Poland residents in the government created by the Chief of State. Emissaries of the General Staff and the Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces were also

present in Poznań. From 9 December 1918, they sent regular reports on the military situation in Greater Poland (Ignacy Matuszewski, Stanisław Łapiński). From 12 December, the Polish Military Organisation of the Prussian Partition (PMOPP) also sent such reports, signed by Wincenty Wierzejewski, Mieczysław Paluch and Jerzy Hulewicz, to Warsaw. Most of the reports were carried by couriers from Poznań to Kościanki, i.e. via the estate of Jerzy Hulewicz, who passed them on to Second Lieutenant Jan Skobowski, the Commandant of the Polish Military Organisation branch (PMO) in Słupca. Available reports show that J. Piłsudski did not particularly like the recognition of commissionaire W. Korfanty, who was managing military affairs at the SPC. This is why envoys from Warsaw contacted the leaders of the PMOPP. It was also about the deliveries of armament and equipment from Poznań to the Polish Armed Forces (backpacks, uniforms, footwear, saddles). They were easily available and much cheaper in the Poznań region than in the former Kingdom. The available reports of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces state that, by the end of December 1918, Standard-Bearer Józef Wierzejewski organised and carried out four such transports from Poznań by car.

