

Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

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The Infantry of the Greater Poland Army

Marek Rezler

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In autumn 1918, there were many soldiers of Polish nationality in the German army in the Greater Poland region, with the majority of those serving in the infantry. The only formations which preserved a structure that approximated that of the regular army included the People's Guard and the Guard and Security Service; the members of scouting organisations and “Sokół” [Falcon] did not form units which in any way resembled military units, but after the outbreak of the Uprising, those who had received military training, strove to form sub-units and units whose structure would be as close as possible to the

organisation of the German Army after the year 1917. The basic training, carried out in the underground in these organisations also prepared them for service in the infantry.

At the moment of the outbreak of the Uprising, the People's Guard and the Guard and Security Service took part in fighting on the Polish side while at the same time spontaneously forming regional units which consisted of soldiers living and staying in the given area. They were led by people with the highest military rank or those who enjoyed the respect of their colleagues.

Insurgent groups, platoons, companies and battalions bearing regional names were formed; their internal organisation was based on the structure of the German army, but their number and rules were usually much lower than the normal established size, the name was rather an expression of the ambitions of the commanders and soldiers than the true mobilisation capacities of the given area. The number of those units has never been fully established, it may be estimated at a level of about two hundred. Initially, the spontaneously formed platoons and groups were short-lived; often after a given task was carried out, they would automatically dissolve themselves, and later, other units were formed. They were then combined into bigger units with platoons and companies established in the neighbourhood. No lists of soldiers were drawn up, and the number of people in the units would often change; on top of this, sometimes, insurgents from different towns served in a given company, and the regional name did not always mean uniformity of personnel. This situation

stabilised about one week after the outbreak of the Uprising and the disclosure of Central Command. During the integration of regional sub-units and units, attempts were made to make adaptations to the organisational structure of the German army, which was best known to the soldiers. The organisational process was often disrupted by the needs of the insurgent fronts and sections and the necessity to send already formed and ready-to-fight sub-units and units to battles - after which they did not always return to their original formation on completion of their task. During the first period of insurgent fighting, there were also the so called "flying" companies and battalions sent, if required, to the front-line sections put at risk.

The first concept of the creation of the regular armies was presented by Central Command in day order No. 6 dated 11 January 1919. The Military District Commands were initially obliged to form battalions, batteries, squadrons and staff for special armies and, in the next stage, to form regiments, brigades and divisions. Attempts were made to take advantage of the existing post-German military infrastructure, barracks and public buildings. In a given town, a unit no lower than a company, consisting of about 160 experienced soldiers, was supposed to be formed; for volunteers, who had never served in the army before, the establishment of recruit depots (training centres and reserve centres) was planned.

The organisational structure was the same as in the German army: a battalion which comprised 3-6 companies and a machine gun company. Each

company should contain 3 platoons with 2 machine guns each. In reality, it was necessary to modify these plans, but with the obligation to take into account the completeness of the platoons. The basic unit on the fronts was the battalion; the people's guard, was often incorporated into reserve companies. By operational order No.1 dated 18 January 1919, General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki ordered the organisation of the existing battalions into rifle regiments. This was an advance order, as Central Command in the day order No. 29 dated 2 February 1919 ordered the formation of companies and battalions from the units which had been formed in the poviats. At the same time, the introduction of ordinal numbering was mandated; regional names were honoured until the merging of battalions into a regiment. As the process of the formation of regiments progressed (including specialist subunits and services), the regional uniformity of a given unit was gradually diminished. By day order No. 17 of Central Command dated 22 January 1919, the formation of the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Division was initiated (including the announcement of the establishment of staff). This process ended as late as September-October 1919. The next four-regiment divisions (2-3) were formed on the basis of subsequent orders from Central Command until June 1919, based on the regiments operating on the respective fronts - the Military Districts. On 7 August 1919, the 4th Greater Poland Rifle Division was formed and on 16 August, it was renamed as the Pomerania Rifle Division.

On 24 January 1919, Infantry Command was

liquidated, on 21 May 1919, the position of Infantry Inspector at the Chief Commander of Armed Forces in the former Prussian Partition was established, with Second Lieutenant General K. Grudzielski appointed. On 26 June, each division was divided into 2 brigades with 2 regiments per each brigade. Originally, there were plans to form corps, but ultimately that intention was abandoned. In the end, the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Division was fully formed by August 1919, and the formation of others was in progress.

The 1st Greater Poland Rifle Division: formed on the basis of the day order of Central Command, No. 17 dated 22 January 1919. Its commander was Lieutenant General Filip Dubiski. From January 1920 - it was the 14th Greater Poland Infantry Division. The 1st Greater Poland Rifle Regiment: formed on the basis of day order No. 14 issued by Central Command, dated 19 January 1919. Commanders: Colonel/General Daniel Konarzewski (19 January - March 1919), Lieutenant Colonel Gustaw Paszkiewicz (from March 1919). It became part of the Greater Poland Rifle Division on 22 January 1919. The 1st Company was originally formed from Wincenty Wierzejewski's scout company which consisted of 200 people. The remaining companies and the machine gun company - were established from a recruit battalion. On 26 January 1919, the regiment was sworn in and received a standard on Wolności Square in Poznań. From 30 January 1919, it was stationed in Biedrusko, where the formation process was completed. On 14 March 1919, it was sent to Lviv as part of Colonel D.

Konarzewski's group. Then the unit was sent to the Southern and Eastern Fronts. In January 1920, it was renamed as the 55th Poznań Infantry Regiment. The 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. This was formed from insurgent units which operated in the area of the Western Group (three battalions), based on the order issued on 6 March 1919 by the Group's commander, Colonel Michał Milewski. Commanders: Second Lieutenant Antoni Nieborak (6 March - 1 May 1919), Captain Zygmunt Łęgowski - from 1 May 1919. On 16 March of the same year, 3 machine gun companies were formed. On 9 April 1919, by order No. 50 of the Western Front commander, the formation of a reserve battalion was commenced. On 2 March of that year, a machine gun company was formed alongside the regiment staff, and also a signal platoon. On 11 April 1919, the regiment occupied positions on the front, along the section from Kopanica to Wronki, and in June it became part of the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Division. On 4-5 September 1919, it was sent to the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front. On 7 January 1920, it was renamed as the 56th Greater Poland Infantry Regiment. The 3rd Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. This was formed in Biedrusko by day order No. 44 of Central Command, dated 7 February 1919. Commander: Lieutenant Colonel Arnold Szyling. From the very beginning, this regiment was supposed to be a part of the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Division. 2 officers and about 100 privates in the 1st Rifle Regiment were the foundation of the unit. On 20 February 1919, the regiment's commander issued an order to form Battalion I, the formation of Battalion II started on 25 February 1919, and Battalion III - on 21

March of the same year. The three first machine gun companies were assigned to a heavy machine gun unit in Poznań, a fourth one was formed in Biedrusko. At the end of March 1919, a platoon of radio-telephonists was formed. The regiment achieved a full regular line-up by the end of May. On 29 May 1919, the 3rd Greater Poland Rifle Regiment was sworn in and received a banner. It was put at the disposal of the commander of the Southern Front on 6 June and then sent to the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front on 29 July as part of the group commanded by Gen. D. Konarzewski. The reserve battalion of the regiment was formed on 14 April 1919 by abolishing recruit depots. In January 1920, the unit was renamed as the 57th Greater Poland Infantry Regiment. The 4th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. Formed by day order No. 61 of Central Command, dated 6 March 1919, from insurgent troops which operated in the vicinity of Wągrowiec, Gniezno and Września. Commander: Major Oskar Brezany. The first regiment battalion was the former Wągrowiec Battalion and the Powidz Company, the second battalion was formed on the basis of the former Budzyń battalion, the third battalion consisted of insurgent troops which fought in the vicinity of Gniezno. Battalion III was formed up on the front, battalions I and II - in April 1919 in Gniezno. The completely formed 4th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment participated in border fighting on the Northern Front from 5 May 1919, along the section from Kowalewo to Dąbrówka. For the first time the entire regiment was grouped together on 6 June 1919 near Ninin. From 27 May till 20 June 1919, the troop was a reserve of the 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Division, sent to the group

commanded by Gen. D. Konarzewski on 1 August. On 7 January 1920, it was renamed as the 58th Greater Poland Infantry Regiment.

The 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Division. This unit was formed in Biedrusko by day order No. 61 of Central Command, dated 6 March 1919.

Commander: Lieutenant Colonel Kazimierz Grudzielski. From January 1920 - it was the 15th Greater Poland Infantry Division. The 5th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. The foundation for the regiment was a company formed around 30 December 1918, commanded by Second Lieutenant Paweł Cyms. It consisted of insurgents from Gniezno, Września, Miłosław and Witkowo. The unit participated in the march on Inowrocław and in fighting in the city. After Inowrocław was captured, two Kuyavian Grenadier Regiments and the Nadgoplański Battalion were formed.

However, the centre for the formation of the future regiment of the Greater Poland Armies was to be just the 1st Kuyavian Grenadier Regiment. On 16 January 1919, by order of the commander of Military District VIII, the 2nd Grenadier Regiment was incorporated into the first regiment as its second battalion. Both of these battalions and the Nadgoplański Squadron were sworn in in Inowrocław on 16 January 1919, and on 22 January - the Nadgoplański Battalion in Kruszwica. On 1 February 1919, by order of the commander of Military District VIII, the Nadgoplański Battalion became part of the 1st Grenadier Regiment as its third battalion. On 7 February 1919, the 1st Kuyavian Grenadier Regiment was renamed as the 5th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment by order of Central Command, at

the same time joining the troops fighting on the Northern Front. From 6 March 1919, the regiment was incorporated into the 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Division. Consecutive commanders of the 5th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment were as follows: Lieutenant Paweł Cymś - until 6 March 1919, Colonel Wacław Przeździecki - 6-23 March 1919 and Major Stanisław Wrzaliński - from 23 March 1919. On 18 December 1919, the regiment was reinforced on the front-line by the 6th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. In January of the next year, the troop participated in occupying the Pomerania territories granted to Poland by the Treaty of Versailles. On 17 January 1920, it was renamed as the 59th Greater Poland Infantry Regiment. The 6th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. Formed from the insurgent units of the South-Western Front - poviats: Gostyń, Kościan and Śmigiel. Commander: Lieutenant Bernard Śliwiński. The troops which were part of the "Leszno" Group were combined into the 6th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment by day order No. 61 of Central Command, dated 6 March 1919. On 9 August 1919, in Kościan, the regiment received its own banner. From July till the end of August 1919, the 6th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment remained in reserve, then on 27 August it reinforced the 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Regiment on the front-line. From the beginning of October till 18 December 1919, it was stationed in the region of Żnin. Then a return to the front-line took place, and on 20 January 1920, the regiment entered Bydgoszcz as a result of the Pomerania repossession action. On 17 January 1920, it was renamed as the 60th Greater Poland Infantry Regiment. The 7th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment.

This unit was formed from insurgents including groups from: Pniewy, Duszniki, Podrzewie, Kwilcz, Sieraków, Wronki, Lwówek and Opalenica, which subsequently became part of units of the Western group. On 12 February 1919, by order L.dz.232/19 of the Command of Military District I, the 2nd Garrison Battalion was sent from Poznań to the section near Wolsztyn. It was commanded by Second Lieutenant Paweł Hądzlik. In March 1919, the units were used to form the Reserve Regiment of the Western Group. On 15 March 1919, by day order No. 76, Central Command mandated the commander of the Western Group to form the 7th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment; Colonel Michał Milewski gave this name to the existing Reserve Regiment of the Group. Consecutive commanders of the regiment were: Second Lieutenant Kazimierz Szcześniak – from 15 March 1919 and Colonel Gołeckie – from 2 June 1919. Until the end of July 1919, the unit fought on the Western Front and on 27 August 1919, it was sent to the Northern Front. By an order of Central Command, dated 10 August 1919, the 7th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment became part of the 1st Greater Poland Rifle Division. At the end of that month, the unit was transferred to form part of the 2nd Division. In January 1920, the unit participated in the Pomerania repossession action. On 17 January 1920, it was renamed as the 61st Greater Poland Infantry Regiment. The 8th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. The starting unit for the formation of the 8th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment was the Pleszew Battalion commanded by Second Lieutenant Ludwik Bociański. The second regiment battalion originated from the Śrem

Battalion. The regiment was established by day order No. 70 issued by Central Command on 15 March 1919. Consecutive commanders: Second Lieutenant Ludwik Bociański and Captain Mieczysław Paluch – until 24 October 1919 and Captain Jan Namysł – from 24 October 1919. While being part of the 2nd Greater Poland Rifle Division, the unit participated in the Pomerania repossession action. On 17 January 1920, it was renamed as the 62nd Greater Poland Infantry Regiment.

The 3rd Greater Poland Rifle Division. Formed by 6 June 1919. Commander: General Second Lieutenant Wincenty Odyniec. From January 1920 - the 17th Greater Poland Infantry Division. The 9th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. The regiment included the soldiers of small insurgent troops in the area of Northern Greater Poland. On 27 April 1919, consisting of three insurgent battalions temporarily formed in Poznań, Gniezno and Wągrowiec, the 9th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment was established and initially it became part of the 2nd Rifle Division. Commander: Lieutenant Colonel Juliusz Skorupka-Padlewski. In September of that year, the Poznań-Lviv volunteer company was incorporated. At that time, the regiment was excluded from the 2nd Division and went to the south of Greater Poland to form the 3rd Greater Poland Rifle Division. In January and February 1920, the 9th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment participated in the repossession action regarding Leszno and Rawicz. In that period, the unit was renamed as the 67th Greater Poland Infantry Regiment. The 10th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. The unit was

formed gradually and was made up of different insurgent formations. The Guard and Security Service was used to form the 1st Kościuski Poznań Regiment. In parallel, from other loose units which operated during the first days of the Uprising in the capital city of Greater Poland, the 2nd Dąbowski Poznań Regiment was formed. Even before the outbreak of fighting in the Poznań-West powiat, a People's Guard unit which consisted of 450 people was formed. It was commanded by Second Lieutenant Andrzej Kopa. Out of the last two units, a foundation for the future regiment was established. On 8 January 1919, the Command of the 2nd Poznań Regiment was transformed into the Infantry Command for the Poznań City Fortress, which, in turn, after Lieutenant Kopa had received an order on 21 January of that year to form the 1st Greater Poland reserve regiment, became the command of the future rifle regiment. On 4 February 1919, the unit, which at that point in time consisted of two battalions (the third one was still being formed) was sworn in to the banner of the parent unit of A. Kopa. On 17 February, the 1st battalion reached Zbąszyń and the 2nd battalion fought on the Northern Front in the period between 7 February and 11 April 1919. On 15 March 1919, by order No. 70 of Central Command, the 1st Reserve Regiment was renamed as the 10th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. Commander: Lieutenant Andrzej Kopa. On 5 May 1919 the fully formed unit set off to the Northern Front and then returned to Poznań where it was incorporated into the group commanded by Gen. D. Konarzewski. In September it returned to Greater Poland, becoming part of the 3rd Greater

Poland Rifle Division. On 1 February 1920, the unit was renamed as the 68th Greater Poland Infantry Regiment. The 11th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. The circumstances of its formation were similar to those related to the formation of the 10th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. The regiment's commander: Colonel Adolf Jan Kuczewski then from 31 March 1919 - Colonel Leon Billewicz. On 5 February 1920, the unit was renamed as the 69th infantry regiment. The 12th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. This unit originated directly from the Ostrów battalion (which existed from 12 to 21 November 1919) and the Border Battalion in Szczypiorno. By day order of Central Command No. 33, dated 6 February 1919, the military formations of District VII were merged into the 12th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment. Commander: Second Lieutenant Władysław Wawrzyniak. The regiment became part of the 3rd Greater Poland Rifle Division. In January 1920, the regiment participated in the repossession of the territories granted to Poland as a result of the Treaty of Versailles. On 1 February 1919, it was renamed as the 70th Greater Poland Infantry Regiment.

The 4th Greater Poland Rifle Division and the Pomerania Rifle Division. This was a tactical union established in 1919 whose aim was to participate in the repossession of the Vistula Pomerania territories granted to Poland by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. On 7 August 1919, by order No. 2536/III, the Supreme Command of the Polish Armies ordered Central Command in Poznań to form a division intended for operations in Pomerania. Initially, the name of

the union was to be the 4th Greater Poland Rifle Division. Commander: Colonel Stanisław Skrzyński, and head of staff: Captain Władysław Zakrzewski. On 16 August 1919, the name of the Pomerania Rifle Division was introduced. The Toruń Rifle Regiment was formed completely, the Grudziądz Rifle Regiment was half-formed, and the formation of two others: the Starogard and Kasubia Rifle Regiments was initiated. Also the formation of a division of artillery and cavalry was commenced. From 17 January 1920, the troops of the Division participated in the repossession of Pomerania. On 5 March 1920, by virtue of command No. 1401 of the Ministry of Military Affairs, the Pomerania Rifle Division was renamed as the 16th Infantry Division. The Toruń Rifle Regiment. This unit was formed mainly from Pomerania's inhabitants. Its foundation was the 1st Western-Prussian Company, which was part of the 5th Greater Poland Rifle Regiment stationed in Inowrocław. On 30 May 1919, Central Command issued the order to form the Toruń Rifle Regiment. On 18 July 1919, the regiment already had 2 battalions and 2 machine gun companies; three months later it was formed completely. On 7 August 1919, the regiment received its own banner and on 3 September the formation of the reserve battalion was commenced. In January 1920, the regiment participated in the repossession of Pomerania and soon a staff battalion was formed. On 5 March 1920, the unit was renamed as the 63rd Infantry Regiment. Battalion commanders: I - Lieutenant Włodzimierz Kowalski, Lieutenant Eigner, II - Captain Meissner, Second Lieutenant Blockus, III - Second Lieutenant Wandtke, and the reserve

battalion – Captain W. Hulewicz. The Grudziądz Rifle Regiment. The foundation of the regiment was established by insurgents who were part of the Oborniki Company and the Czarnków Battalion, which were incorporated into the Toruń Rifle Regiment on 11 June 1919. On 17 July 1919, the formation of the Grudziądz Rifle Regiment, as a second division regiment, commenced. The former Oborniki Company (about 100 people) was separated from the Toruń regiment and played the role of instruction team for the future unit. On 24 August 1919, the Regiment's staff, the 1st Battalion's staff, the 1st Company staff and the non-commissioned officer unit were formed in Inowrocław (in total 2 officers and 266 privates). By 13 September, the forming up of the 2nd company using volunteers was possible. On 24 September, the regiment was transferred to Poznań. At the beginning of October, the first battalion was completely formed. In November the formation of a second battalion commenced. In January 1920, the sub-units of the regiment participated in the repossession of Pomerania. On 5 March 1920, the regiment was renamed as the 64th Grudziądz Infantry Regiment. Regiment commanders: Lieutenant Ludwik Bociański. Battalion commanders: I – Lieutenant Roman Hawranke, II – Second Lieutenant Edward Senk. The Starogard Rifle Regiment. Its formation was commenced on 7 October 1919. The unit was supposed to be composed of soldiers who came from such poviats as: Złotów, Starogard, Tczew, Kwidzyń, Tuchola and Chojnice, selected from the Toruń and Grudziądz Rifle Regiments. The place where the regiment's command was to be stationed was Pakość. Initially, one rifle company

and one machine gun company were formed. On 10 November 1919, the regiment's personnel was transferred to Mogilno. By December of the same year, the 1st Battalion, which started to participate in the operation of repossession of Pomerania from 18 January 1920, had been formed. On 5 March 1920, it was renamed as the 65th Starogard Infantry Regiment. Regiment commander: Captain Stefan Meissner. The Kasubia Rifle Regiment. The formation of this unit commenced on 7 October 1919. It was supposed to be composed of soldiers from such poviats as: Puck, Wejherowo, Kartuzy, Kościerzyn and Czluchów. The location of the formation was Poznań. On 15 October 1919, the 1st Cadre Company was formed and on 21 October - four cadre companies were already created. In February 1920, a radio-telephone platoon was formed, in March 1920 - non-commissioned officer and staff companies, in May 1920 - the 4th Machine Gun Company. Also three army service columns and an orchestra were formed. The regiment did not participate in the repossession of Pomerania. On 5 March 1920, it was renamed as the 66th Kasubia Infantry Regiment. Regiment commanders: Lieutenant Leon Kowalski. Battalion commanders: I - Lieutenant Otton Zieliński, II - Second Lieutenant Marcin Kamiński, III - Second Lieutenant Roman Woyke.

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