

Greater Poland Uprising 1918-1919

<https://pw.ipn.gov.pl/pwe/history/insurgent-troops/3231,The-Peoples-Guard.html>
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The People's Guard

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A volunteer formation established in Greater Poland in autumn 1918, officially to maintain order in this region. Its foundation was the Civil Guard which had already been established in the respective towns of the region. On 17 October 1918, in Poznań, a secret meeting of the representatives of the Guard from Gniezno, Poznań, Inowrocław, Kościan, Oborniki and Szamotuły took place. During that meeting, a Temporary Command council of the Civil Guard, which consisted of 9 people, was appointed. Its leader was Julian Bolesław Lange, an activist from the Polish Gymnastic Society "Sokół". Round about the 20th of November, as was the case with other German organisations, the name "People's Guard" was adopted. Initially, the People's Guard established local structures in the respective towns, and, during the proceedings of the Partition Sejm of Poznań on 3-5 December 1918, a resolution was adopted to form the People's Guard as a body that was to ensure law and order as well as public security. Detailed "Guidelines for People's Guards", which established the

principles of the formation, training and functioning of the organisation, were published on 8 December. All volunteers aged 18-50, regardless of their social class and position, and above all, veterans, members of the Polish Gymnastic Society "Sokół", scouts and members of fowler brotherhoods were admitted to service in the People's Guard. Officially, the People's Guard was subordinated to the Supreme People's Council and in a given town, i.e. the Poviats People's Council. In each Poviats People's Council there was a commissar responsible for the respective People's Guard. At the same time, separate elements of the uniform (a round cap with a blue rim) and the insignia of the functions worn on the left arm were determined. The organisation and discipline in the People's Guard were based on military principles, but the guards were not barracked; they reported for service and emergency situations. Throughout the existence of the formation, the commandant of the People's Guard was J. B. Lange. The guards played a leading role in protecting I. J. Paderewski during his visit in Poznań on 26 December 1918. The first inspection of the Poznań People's Guard took place on 26 January 1919 on Wolności Square while the swearing in combined with the handing over of the standard took place on 23 February of the same year. At that time the People's Guard was treated as an executive body of the police and was subordinated in Poznań to the president of the police, and in the field - the starostes. On 6 February 1919, the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council introduced duty for all men aged 18-50, who were not conscripted into the army, to serve in the People's Guard, simultaneously

defining the Guard as a military formation. Also the principles of the financing of the formation were established: half of the annual state income tax and half of the procedural tax established by the state authorities - for all those subject to taxation. From March 1919, the soldiers of the People's Guard were sent for guard duty in garrisons in order to relieve the line troops. In spring 1919, the People's Guard consisted of 130000 soldiers. By decree of the Commissariat of the Supreme People's Council, on 30 May 1919, the People's Guard was transformed into the National Defence and subordinated to the Central Command of the Armed Forces of the Prussian Partition; the Supreme Command of the People's Guard was transformed into the National Defence Inspection; at the same time, the upper age limit for conscription was lowered to 45 years. The field National Defence troops were subordinated to the commanders of military districts. From then on, the National Defence became a paramilitary organisation which prepared the non-conscripts and those dismissed from military service for armed resistance, and it also maintained its patriotic sentiments. On 4 August 1919, a National Defence Army subordinated to the Central Command was established; also the system of ranks was reorganised. The respective National Defence companies were used to form battalions sent to the respective sections of the Greater Poland Front. From May 1919 till March 1920, a National Defence officer's school commanded by A. Biskupski was in operation.

