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Toruń Military Reserve and Toruń Corps

The units constituting the garrison of the Toruń Fortress in the times of peace after mobilization set off for the Great War as part of the 17th Army Corps (hereinafter AC). According to the mobilization plans, they were to be replaced by secondary troops – Landwehr. For this reason, from 2 August to 8 August 1914, the 2nd Infantry Regiment (hereinafter IR) of the Polish Army was mobilized in Szczecin and Stralsund. Its staff arrived in Toruń on 6 August, while subunits

appeared on 9-10 August. They were accommodated north of the fortress with the staff located in Łysomice¹.

The destiny of the 9th Landwehr Infantry Regiment (hereinafter LIR) formed in Stargard and Kołobrzeg was similar. Officers and privates were mobilized from West Pomerania (including Szczecin), Mecklenburg and Westphalia. On 8-10 August, first the headquarters of the regiment were transported; next, its battalions were transferred to Toruń. Soldiers, however, were accommodated not in the city, but in the vicinity of Toruń². On 9-10 August the 19th LIR was also transported to Toruń³.

These forces were included in the Main Reserve of the Toruń Fortress (Hauptreserve Thorn). Upon arrival, the regiments prepared to participate in military actions and completed their equipment^{4,5}. On 11 August they went to practise in Łysomice⁶.

The demand for soldiers was so high that it was decided to send a replacement battalion of the 35th Field Artillery Regiment (hereinafter FAR) from Iława and the 81st FAR from Toruń. They were merged and later transformed into the 35th reserve (hereinafter res.) FAR⁷.

On 11 August 1914, the Main Reserve of the Toruń Fortress, commanded by Major⁸ General Max Philipp von Schmettau⁹, was concen-

¹ H. Herrfahrdt, E. Geißler, *Königlich Preußisches Landwehr-Infanterie-Regiment König Wilhelm II. von Preußen*, Oldenburg i. O. 1924, p. 11.

² Zinzow, *Königlich preussisches Landwehr-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 9*, Oldenburg i.O 1930, p. 13.

³ K. Denke, K.H. Erb, *Landwehr-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 19*, Oldenburg 1929, p. 16.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ H. Herrfahrdt, E. Geißler, op. cit., p. 11.

⁶ K. Denke, K. H. Erb, op. cit., p. 16.

⁷ G. Schramek, *Das Res.-Feldartillerie-Regiment Nr. 35 im Weltkrieg 1914-18*, Oldenburg i.O. 1925, p. 9-10.

⁸ On 26 August he had already acquired the rank of general lieutenant (see *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918*, vol. 2, Berlin 1925, p. 361).

⁹ In the history of the Toruń garrison (J. Centek, *Garnizon Torunia w latach 1815-1919. Organizacja, liczebność*, Rocznik Toruński, 2005, p. 208) Major Fritz von Unger was erroneously mentioned. In fact, he was the commander of the Main Reserve of Grudziądz (*Der Weltkrieg*, p. 361); during the campaign in East Prussia he commanded the units sent from Gdańsk, Toruń and Grudziądz to the region of Brodnica-Lidzbark-Działdowo-Nidzica-Mława (*Der Weltkrieg*, p. 60).

trated on the site of the ammunition depot in Łysomice. At that time it consisted of the 5th Landwehr Infantry Brigade (hereinafter LIB) (2 LIR and 9 LIR), the 20th LIB (19th LIR and the 107th LIR), two fortress subunits of heavy machine guns, a Witich's FAR (consisting of replacement battalions of the 35th and the 81st FAR) and a pioneer battalion. These forces were later joined by the 3rd Battalion of the 84th LIR and the 11th Foot Artillery Regiment (hereinafter Foot AR)¹⁰. In terms of numbers, it was quite a significant force, which numbered several thousand soldiers.

However, the situation changed a few days after the arrival of the Landwehr in Toruń. On the one hand, the city was not directly threatened by the Russian attack. On the other hand, there was a shortage of soldiers in East Prussia. For this reason, it was decided to send the main fortresses, including Toruń, to the reserve field. From 13 August 1914, these units began to leave the fortress and managed to take part in the campaign in East Prussia¹¹.

On 14 August 1914, an order came that the 19th LIR should send one battalion to Chełmża, from where the sub-unit set off to the Golub region to cover the border with Russia. The other was sent to Brodnica¹². On the other hand, on 17 August the 2nd LIR was transferred to Turzno, where it was to protect the border with Russia¹³, but on 18-20 August the entire regiment operated in the Włocławek area¹⁴. Then, due to the situation in East Prussia, the regiment was transported by train to Chełmża, and on 23 August to Brodnica to take part in the fights¹⁵ there. On the same day, the 9th LIR arrived there¹⁶.

At that time in Toruń, it was most likely that only replacement subunits of peace garrison and probably Landsturm formations that could not be used in the field were left.

¹⁰ G. Schramek, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² K. Denke, K.H. Erb, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹³ H. Herrfahrdt, E. Geißler, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Zinzow, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

The situation in East Prussia was still tense, and therefore the governor of the Toruń Fortress, Lieutenant General Gustaf von Dickhuth-Harrach, was ordered to strengthen German forces in the Działdowo region¹⁷. Finally, in November 1914 he became the head of the Toruń Corps (Korps Thorn)¹⁸. It consisted of staffs of three infantry brigades, and the whole was a mixture of replacement units with Landwehr and Landsturm forces. In total, it consisted of 20 infantry battalions, 7 cavalry squadrons and 12 artillery batteries¹⁹. Despite the fact that the corps exceeded the infantry divisions (12 battalions), it had much poorer artillery and less valuable human material. It was also not very well equipped. The Germans also sent forces from the fortresses of Grudziądz, Poznań or Wrocław²⁰.

Formation of new divisions in the spring of 1915

As the current organization of the division (two brigades of two infantry regiments each) did not work, and, on the other hand, there was a need for new large infantry units, it was decided to carry out far-reaching changes in their structure. One infantry regiment was separated from each of them and the staff of one brigade was taken away. New infantry units were formed in this way. From now on, the core of each of them was a three-infantry brigade²¹.

The Toruń Fortress played an important role in these activities as it was in the fortress's area where "numerous new divisions"²² were

¹⁷ *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918*, vol. 6, Berlin 1929, p. 102.

¹⁸ It was later transformed into *Korps Dickhuth* (see *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918*, vol. 7, Berlin 1931, p. 485), and finally converted into the 87th Infantry Division and the 89th Infantry Division (see *Histories of two hundred and fifty-one divisions of the German Army which participated in the war (1914-1918)*, Chaumont 1919, p. 564, 570).

¹⁹ *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918*, vol. 6, p. 459.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 459-460.

²¹ E. von Falkenhayn, *Die Oberste Heeresleitung 1914-1916 in ihren wichtigsten Entschlüssen*, Berlin 1920, p. 36-37; H. Cron, *Die Organisation des deutschen Heeres im Weltkriege*, Berlin 1923, p. 39.

²² O. von Moser, *Feldzugsaufzeichnungen. Als Brigade-Divisionskommandeur und als kommandierender General 1914-1918*, ed. 3, Stuttgart 1928, p. 41.

formed, armed and equipped. In practice, probably only two of them were organized then – the 105th Infantry Division (hereinafter ID) and the 107th ID.

On 11 and 12 May 1915 the 21st IR was withdrawn from the positions in the Bolimów region. The soldiers returned their rifles, bayonets and ammunition and headed for the quarters in the Łowicz area. On 15 May the unit (without the heavy machine gun company) was transported to Toruń²³. On the same day, the soldiers arrived and were accommodated in barracks at the artillery range. Along with the 129th IR and the 122nd IR they formed the 209th Infantry Brigade, which in turn became part of the 105 ID formed here.

During the stay of the 21st IR in Toruń the regiment was rearmed, equipped and uniformed. Its ranks were also supplemented with new soldiers. On 24-25 May the regiment was relocated to Podgórz and transported to Hungary²⁴. A similar approach was taken with the 129th IR, which also reached Toruń on 15 May²⁵, and the 122nd IR, transported there three days later²⁶.

As soon as the 105th ID was set up, which was to become part of the next large unit – the 107th ID, troops began to reach Toruń. Before noon, on 3 June the 52nd reserve IR arrived; its soldiers were accommodated in the artillery barracks (previously occupied by the 81 FAR)²⁷. The regiment had time to practice shooting at the artillery range, and on the morning of 5 June it received an order to load on rail transport in the evening²⁸. In turn, the 232nd IR was accommodated in barracks in the area of the artillery range. After supplementing the

²³ E. Hall, *Kriegsgeschichte des Königlich-Preußischen Infanterie-Regiments von Borcke (4. Pomm.) Nr 21*, Zeulenroda 1930, p. 168-169.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 173-174.

²⁵ J. Steuer, *Das Infanterie-Regiment Generalfeldmarschall von Mackensen (3. Westpreussisches) Nr. 129 im Weltkriege*, Oldenburg-Berlin 1925, p. 109.

²⁶ H. Gnam, *Das Füsilier-Regiment Kaiser Franz Joseph von Österreich, König von Ungarn (4. Württ.) Nr. 122 im Weltkrieg 1914-1918*, Stuttgart 1921, p. 66.

²⁷ H. Ulrich, *Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment 52 im Weltkrieg*, Oldenburg i.O.-Berlin 1925, p. 121.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

ranks with new recruits, this unit moved to Galicia on 6 June²⁹, the division staff, which had been formed in the fortress, left it in the evening of 5 June and headed for Galicia³⁰.

The artillery of both divisions consisted of new regiments, but they were set up by delegating subunits and officers³¹ from the existing units. Although they were soldiers with combat experience, they had to practise to cooperate.

The completed 107th ID had about 13,000 people of nutritional status (300 officers and 10,600 combat status) and had 2,700 horses³². The 105th ID, compared a few days earlier, probably had similar numbers. One can therefore imagine what effort for the replacement formations in Toruń it was to receive such a mass of people, to provide recruits to the front units and to distribute them in relatively similar numbers. In the fortress, the infantry also received new weapons; their uniforms were repaired or exchanged.

Permanent garrison in 1914-1918

From among the replacement units of the peace garrison units in the city, the 21st IR battalion³³ was stationed, as well as probably the 61st IR. In turn, the battalion of the 176th IR was for some time in Chojnice³⁴. In addition, there were subunits of this type in Toruń with the 5th Reserve Infantry Regiment (hereinafter RIR), the 21st RIR, the 49th

²⁹ E. von Bartenwerffer, A. Herrmann, *Das Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 232 in Ost und West*, vol. 1, Oldenburg i.O 1927, p. 75.

³⁰ O. von Moser, op. cit., p. 41-42.

³¹ For example, two batteries stationed before the war in Toruń the 81st FAR delegated one platoon each, which were then combined into the 4th battery of the new 209th FAR. Three officers joined the new unit, including one in the position of squadron commander (see A. Benary, *Das Thormer Feldartillerie-Regiment Nr 81*, Berlin 1938, p. 62).

³² O. von Moser, op. cit., p. 42.

³³ E. Hall, op. cit., p. 592.

³⁴ K. Albedyll, *Soldaten und Garnisonen in Pommern und im Bezirk des 2. Armee-Korps*, Stettin 1926, s. 90; J. Centek, *Wojsko niemieckie na Terenie Prus Zachodnich w latach 1918-1920*, [in:] *Pomorze Gdańskie i ziemia chełmińska w drodze do Niepodległej (1914-1920)*, ed. by Z. Girzyński, I. Hałagida, J. Kłaczko, Toruń 2019, p. 17.

RIR and the 49th LIR, 2 companies of Landwehr pioneers from the Guards Corps, the 1st battalion of the Reserve Guards Foot Artillery Regiment, the 11th Landwehr Foot Artillery Regiment and two battalions (the 9th and the 15th) of the Landwehr foot artillery³⁵.

The fortress infrastructure was still used. From 15 October 1916, the School of Foot Artillery Shooting (Fußartillerie Schieß-Schule)³⁶ operated in Toruń. On the other hand, at the airport of the fortress there operated the School of Aviation Observers in Toruń (Flieger-Beobachterschule Thorn), which was under the Prussian Command of Aviation Observer Schools existing from 6 January 1917³⁷.

Toruń Garrison after the November Revolution of 1918

In the evening on Saturday, 9 November 1918, a small “gathering of soldiers” appeared before the “Governorate in Łazienna Street”. However, they were “disarmed” and escorted “to a military prison” by the “field police”³⁸. “Gazeta Toruńska” reported the event slightly differently; according to the press, on the evening of 9 November “countless groups of soldiers gathered in front of the building of the military governorate” demanding the release of the arrested. “Shortly afterwards, swarms of soldiers went towards the military prison buildings to welcome comrades leaving the prison”³⁹.

However, “at night the governorate and headquarters’ office were occupied”. All the actions were bloodless, because “unit commanders received instructions from the governorate not to put up armed resistance”⁴⁰. This is how “Die Presse” wanted to present the event. In fact, however, it is doubtful whether issuing other orders would have changed the situation. With all the confusion there were cases of plun-

³⁵ K. Albedyll, op. cit., p. 101; J. Centek, *Garnizon Torunia*, p. 208.

³⁶ H. Cron, op. cit., p. 190; J. Centek, *Garnizon Torunia*, p. 208.

³⁷ H. Cron, op. cit., p. 194.

³⁸ *Die Entwicklung der Dinge in Thorn*, Die Presse. Ostmärkische Tageszeitung. Anzeiger für Stadt und Land (Thorner Presse) [hereinafter Die Presse], 12 Nov 1918, p. 2.

³⁹ *Ruchy rewolucyjne w Toruniu*, Gazeta Toruńska, 12 Nov 1918, p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Die Entwicklung der Dinge in Thorn*, Die Presse, 12 Nov 1918, p. 2.

der – mainly of food supplies from the Provision Office, the slaughterhouse or the canned foods factory. Cigarette sellers were also robbed⁴¹.

On the morning of Sunday, 10 November 1918, information appeared in Toruń that the city had been taken over by the Workers ‘and Soldiers’ Council, which would try to maintain order. Individual troops delegated their representatives to the Council, which met in the building of Artus Court⁴².

“In consultation with the soldiers’ council” a vigilance committee was created to support the council’s posts in maintaining order in the city. Members of the council had red armbands with a seal, and members of the vigilance committee “cockades in white and red colours”. Individual districts appointed trustees⁴³. Workers were also called to select 1-2 people from individual factories⁴⁴.

As “Gazeta Toruńska” wrote, the Council of Workers and Soldiers “deployed strong military posts throughout the city” and ordered a curfew from 06:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. In this way, peace was restored in Toruń⁴⁵.

On Monday, 11 November, a joint announcement of the Governorate and the Council of Soldiers appeared that they would cooperate, “and the current military order and subordination” would continue to exist “on duty but not off duty”⁴⁶.

It was also ordered that “arms can only be carried by the sentry”⁴⁷. This was the right move, because again groups of soldiers tried to plunder the canned foods factory and the distillery, but they were “fought off by” sentries “using machine guns”⁴⁸.

Nationalist sentiments quickly arose among the Germans. On 10 November 1918, in Toruń, “some unreliable instigators” spread rumors “among German soldiers” that “Poles from Toruń on Sunday night

⁴¹ Ibid., *Ruchy rewolucyjne w Toruniu*, Gazeta Toruńska, 12 Nov 1918, p. 2.

⁴² *Die Entwicklung der Dinge in Thorn*, Die Presse, 12 Nov 1918, p. 2.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *Aufruf an die werktägige Bevölkerung Thorns*, Die Presse, 14 Nov 1918, p. 4.

⁴⁵ *Ruchy rewolucyjne w Toruniu*, Gazeta Toruńska, 12 Nov 1918, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Die Entwicklung der Dinge in Thorn*, Die Presse, 12 Nov 1918, p. 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

were going to protest against the Council of Workers and Soldiers”. At the same time, appeals were made to remain calm; it was reported that as a result, “on Monday, there were 15,000 soldiers on alert; even artillery soldiers and airmen were on reconnaissance duty”⁴⁹. The numbers given had probably been exaggerated to make a greater impression on readers. Such quantities of military forces ready to fight were hard to find in Toruń and the immediate vicinity of the city.

The reaction to the news about the creation of the party founded by Poles was the statement that it must be destroyed, because “here are only Germans and only [they] can be here”⁵⁰. Poles were also determined to manifest their presence. However, this only took a few days. On 17 November they organized a festive rally in Toruń, in which the song *Boże coś Polskę*, which by “Gazeta Toruńska” was referred to as “the national anthem”, was sung⁵¹.

Wacław Hulewicz, who was in a military hospital in Toruń at the time (simulating knee inflammation), recalled years later: “one day an unusual murmur came from the corridor and yard. I looked out of the window. I noticed “sick” soldiers quickly running towards the hospital gate, and numerous abandoned crutches and prostheses on the pavement of the yard. It happened on 11 November. Second Lieutenant Leon Bogusławski, who shared the room with me (he was as sick as I was), happily [...] explained: Capitulation – revolution in Berlin – the end of the war”⁵².

“But what to do? – Officers shouldn’t run out of their own accord, even from the hospital. There were five of us, all Poles. We decided that we would wait for the doctor [...] and asked him to formally discharge us and release from the hospital. The doctor was very nervous and did not want to accept our suggestion”⁵³.

“At the hospital gate – despite the revolution – a sentry was still on duty. He even saluted the officer as prescribed, but told me that as

⁴⁹ *Polacy w Toruniu*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 12 Nov 1918, p. 1-2.

⁵⁰ *Die Entwicklung der Dinge in Thorn*, *Die Presse*, 12 Nov 1918, p. 3.

⁵¹ *Olbrzymi wiec polski w Toruniu*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 12 Nov 1918, p. 1.

⁵² W. Hulewicz, *Czy zawsze wspomnieć miło?*, Szczecin 1971, p. 112, the author’s private archive.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

a result of the order of the Council of Soldiers – the current authority – the officers should remove their rank distinctions from the uniforms. I know that a German officer resisted this order and took his own life in defense of his honour. I willingly agreed to do it. After a while my uniform was deprived of the epaulettes with the help of the sentry, and the hat was deprived of the Prussian cockade”⁵⁴.

On 12 November 1918, “Gazeta Toruńska” published an announcement in which it read that as of 10 November 1918, the “Governorate recognized the Council of Soldiers formed in Toruń along with its department, giving appropriate instructions to the fortress’s authorities and the army’s commanders. The Council of Soldiers acknowledges for its part a military organization which, in the interest of the general public – the army and the civilian population – continues to exist under the control of the Council of Soldiers in accordance with the ordinance of Chancellor Ebert of 9 November, the authorities and officials of the homeland. To assure this, a narrower department consisting of 3 soldiers from the Council of Soldiers is constantly co-working with the governorate. The governorate’s official activities will be jointly signed by the department. The Council of Soldiers and its department issue their ordinances in cooperation with the governorate. All announcements shall be jointly issued. The army will set up military councils that are active in joint work with the current military organization”⁵⁵. It was probably signed by the three-man department of the Council of Soldiers, but on the governor’s side it was only signed by one of the officers – First Lieutenant Starck⁵⁶.

The end of the war meant masses of demobilized men who were unemployed. Workers from pre-war Russia were dismissed from the west of Germany; they, often with their entire families, passed through Toruń to their homes⁵⁷. The city’s residents also suffered from unemployment, and the local Council of Soldiers received so many requests

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *Ogłoszenie*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 12 Nov 1918, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *Odezwa!*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 29 Nov 1918, p. 2.

for help to find employment that it decided to announce that those who sought e should refer to “the municipal work list”,⁵⁸.

It was very hard to restore discipline completely even at the end of 1918. “Die Presse” wrote that “soldiers” recently conducted “house searches and seizures of food and weapons” without the “permission to do so”. In order to prevent this, a security unit (Sicherheitskompanie) was set up; its members had red badges with numbers and documents issued by the police with the correct number. Soldiers who would carry out seizures without the badges and documents were put on par with those who plundered. No searches were allowed at night⁵⁹.

The tense situation continued to prevail in the city. In the light of the announcement of January 1919, an obligation to show one’s identity card was introduced for everyone arriving at the railway station or moving on the bridge. Special permits to stay in the fortress were issued for a period of 3 days; “a longer permit may be granted by the police head”. Those with no permanent residence and the unemployed were ordered to leave Toruń immediately⁶⁰.

Return of the peace garrison units from the front

On 23 November 1918, the 21st IR withdrawing from the Western Front in the Hindershausen area crossed the German-Belgian border⁶¹. The road to the mother garrison was, however, still far away. Even before the return, when on 14 December Oberste Heeresleitung called for the formation of the Grenzschutz-Ost units, “almost the entire regiment was available”⁶². On 18 December, due to the “threatening situation in the east”, the Germans intended to transfer the 21st IR. to their mother garrison as soon as possible. At noon the staff of the regiment, the 1st battalion, the 6th company and the 2nd machine gun company were put on the train. The rest of the regiment was transported in the

⁵⁸ *Obwieszczenie*, Gazeta Toruńska, 29 Nov 1918, p. 2.

⁵⁹ *Bekanntmachung*, Die Presse, 21 Dec 1918, p. 3.

⁶⁰ *Obwieszczenie*, Gazeta Toruńska, 21 Jan 1919, p. 9.

⁶¹ E. Hall, op. cit., p. 589.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 591.

evening. Both groups went on the Marburg – Berlin – Piła – Toruń railway line. The second of them was detained by Poles in Nakło, but it was eventually released⁶³.

Finally, the first transport of the 21st IR did not reach Toruń until 21 December before 12:00. The second was expected at 10:00 p.m.⁶⁴. In the chronicle of the 21 IR there is a description of the situation in Toruń at the end of December 1918: “[...] wild figures with unbuckled coats, rifles with an outlet downwards, with red armbands and cockades on hats, wandering around the city say that they care for peace and order”⁶⁵. The unit refused to lay down their arms, which was demanded by the local soldiers’ council. After the parade in front of the Copernicus monument, the regiment was greeted by the mayor Hasse⁶⁶.

Allegedly, the 21st IR attracted “volunteers in large numbers”, but rather not in the number that the regimental history would like to present it. To increase the number of soldiers it was also necessary to incorporate volunteer companies from Gdańsk, which in total increased the personnel of the unit to “nearly 3,000 people”. The 21st IR, strengthened by volunteers, manned the southern section of the Toruń Fortress and “successfully defended it against all attacks by Poles. The commander of the section and the regiment was Colonel Lüdecke”⁶⁷. It is worth emphasizing that Poles did not intend to attack Toruń, realizing that they lacked heavy artillery, without which it was impossible to conquer even outdated forts. Admittedly, on 5 January 1919, an exchange of fire took place between the Polish forces and soldiers of the 21st IR in the Opoczek area (then Klein Opok), but it certainly was not an attempt to conquer the fortress.

On 13 March 1919, the 21st IR was dissolved and transformed into the 21st Volunteer Regiment of von Borcke (Freiwilligen-Regiment von Borcke No. 21)⁶⁸. In October 1919, the 3rd battalion of this regiment was directed to the front in Livonia, and the rest of the sub-units,

⁶³ Ibid., p. 591-592.

⁶⁴ *Lokalnachrichten*, Die Presse, 22 Dec 1918, p. 2.

⁶⁵ E. Hall, op. cit., p. 592.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ E. Hall, op. cit., p. 592-593.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

having withdrawn from Toruń, took positions on the new border of the Reich in the region of Biały Bór (near Szczecinek) – Człuchów⁶⁹.

Other infantry regiments of the Toruń garrison did not return to it after the ceasefire. On 26 November in Cologne, the 61st IR was loaded for rail transport. The soldiers travelled east through Düsseldorf – Bremen – Hamburg – Szczecin for 3 days. If you believe the regiment's history, the soldiers sat in unlit and unheated cars and did not know their destination until the end. It turned out to be Wąbrzeźno, where they arrived on the morning of 29 November 1918. The section covered by the 61st IR stretched from the area supervised by the governor of Toruń to the Brodnica area. The regiment entered Toruń in April 1919, being enthusiastically received by local Germans. After the parade and welcome by the mayor, the unit returned to the Wąbrzeźno territory⁷⁰. The replenishment of the ranks of the 61st IR by recruits took place "above all" in the so called Further Pomerania. In the summer of 1919, it was transformed into the 73rd Reichswehr Infantry Regiment (Reichswehr-Infanterie-Regiment No. 73), which was dissolved in February 1920⁷¹.

In turn, the 176th IR did not cross the German border south of Aachen until 22 November⁷². On 28 November the regiment was loaded on the train in Cologne and transported by rail not to its home garrison in Toruń, but to Brodnica, where it arrived 1 on December 1918⁷³.

Field artillery regiments did not return directly to Toruń, either. On 21 November 1918, the 81st FAR crossed the German border in the Trier area and it was only in January 1919 that it was transferred to West Prussia⁷⁴. In the village of Mareza near Kwidzyn in early February 1919, the Germans managed to form a volunteer artillery battalion that was moved to the area north of Toruń⁷⁵. It was not until the end of

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 657.

⁷⁰ von Keiser, *Geschichte des Inf.-Regts. v. d. Marwitz (8. Pomm.) Nr. 61 im Weltkriege 1914-1918*, Berlin 1928, p. 358-359.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 360.

⁷² W. Preusser, *9. Westpreußische Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 176 im Weltkrieg*, Berlin 1931, p. 305.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ A. Benary, op. cit., p. 168.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

May 1919 that a volunteer battalion established on the basis of the 81st FAR was accommodated in the barracks of the home regiment in the city. However, as there were no clashes with Poles, in August it was withdrawn to Pomerania⁷⁶.

The 35th res. FAR did not return to Toruń, either. This unit had to hand over their weapons on 15 November. It was only at the beginning of January 1919 that it was loaded on the train and in three turns it was transported to Iława, where it was dissolved⁷⁷.

In turn, the Landwehr regiments, envisaged by a mobilization plan as the war garrison of the Toruń Fortress and constituting its Main Reserve, ended their existence after returning to Germany. The exception was the 9th LIR, which in the spring of 1918 was transferred to the western front. Shortly after reaching the place, the unit was dissolved and its soldiers supplemented the ranks of other regiments⁷⁸. On the other hand, after the end of the military actions the 19th LIR was transported to Bolesławiec, where from mid-December 1918 to the beginning of February 1919 its demobilization took place⁷⁹. Also the 2nd LIR, which was active in Ukraine at the end of the war and even formed a volunteer unit there, was not in the vicinity of Toruń. Having withdrawn from Ukraine through Brest (Lithuania) – Białystok, Osowiec the soldiers reached East Prussia, from where they eventually went to Szczecin, where their unit was dissolved⁸⁰.

From among the units previously forming the Toruń Corps, the 87th ID finished their military activities on the Western Front, but its regiments did not return to Toruń. They were dissolved in January 1919 in Kościan (the 345th IR), Bolesławiec (the 346th IR) and Kołobrzeg (the 347th IR)⁸¹. In turn, the 89th ID in November 1918 was in Romania,

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 169.

⁷⁷ G. Schramek, op. cit., p. 208.

⁷⁸ Zinzow, op. cit., p. 137.

⁷⁹ K. Denke, K.H. Erb, op. cit., p. 291-291.

⁸⁰ H. Herrfahrdt, E. Geißler, op. cit., p. 109-110.

⁸¹ *Ruhmestahle unserer alten Armee*, Leipzig 1925, p. 153; J. Kraus, *Handbuch der Verbände und Truppen des deutschen Heeres 1914-1918*, part VI, vol. 1, Wien 2007, p. 308-310.

from where it returned to Germany through Hungary⁸². Of its troops, on 31 December 1918, the remains of the 375th IR reached Toruń, as soldiers from other parts of the Reich had been released along the way⁸³. Unfortunately, the fate of the remaining military units could not be established.

In January 1919, Major General Wilhelm von Groddeck was the governor of the fortress⁸⁴. At the outbreak of the war, he was the commander of the 36th FAR in Gdańsk. When the war was over, he was already the commander of the 208th ID in the rank of major general⁸⁵. Therefore, he had to get to Toruń not earlier than in autumn 1918. Unfortunately, at this stage of the research it was not possible to establish the identity of the war governors of the fortress who would hold this position in the period of time from the departure of General Dickhuth-Harrach to the front in November 1914 to the appointment of von Groddeck, probably 4 years later.

The Versailles Treaty signed by the Germans handed over Toruń along with the majority of the 17th AC district to Poland. In this situation, when forming the new German Reichsheer⁸⁶, units from the 17th AC district were combined with those from the 9th AC district⁸⁷. The traditions of all regular units of 1914 were cultivated by individual companies, batteries and squadrons.

German volunteer forces in the Toruń region

Of the volunteer units created by Grenzschutz-Ost, it is often difficult to indicate clearly which of them went to West Prussia⁸⁸, let alone link them with the garrison of Toruń. Nevertheless, the fortress was associated with the Fortress Volunteer Corps Toruń (Festungs-Frei-

⁸² *Ruhmeshalle*, p. 154.

⁸³ [A. Huth], *Regiments Geschichte I.R. 375*, vol. 2, s.l., s.a., p. Z.15

⁸⁴ *Obwieszczenie*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 21 Jan 1919, p. 9.

⁸⁵ *Ehren-Rangliste des ehemaligen Deutschen Heeres*, Berlin 1926, p. 497.

⁸⁶ See more: J. Centek, *Reichsheer ery Seeckta (1921-1926)*, Warszawa 2010.

⁸⁷ E. Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 657.

⁸⁸ German volunteer units that operated in the province of West Prussia, see J. Centek, *Wojsko niemieckie*, p. 24-26.

korps-Thorn), formed in March 1919⁸⁹, along with the Volunteer 11th Regiment of Foot Artillery (Freiwilligen Fußartillerie Regiment 11)⁹⁰.

However, the key unit of the Grenzschutz in the Province, which was not stationed directly in Toruń, but could be used to defend the city if necessary, was the Roßbach Volunteer Corps (Freikorps Roßbach) also known as the Roßbach Assault Unit (Sturmabteilung Roßbach). It was created on 21 November 1918 and at the turn of 1918 and 1919 it remained in West Prussia before it was sent to Livonia⁹¹.

As “Gazeta Toruńska” wrote in Grenzschutz there occurred disciplinary problems such as insulting superiors⁹² or robbing local people⁹³, which was sometimes carried out under the pretext of seeking weapons⁹⁴. It was probably this formation that requisitioned 300 horses, some of which were “recovered”⁹⁵. “Gazeta Toruńska” also wrote that “Grencszuc [Grenzschutz] is hated most by those German soldiers who made the revolution and hence consider themselves saviours of the German people from the former subjugation and militarism; the created Grencszuc troops are considered to be the elite and restorers of the former military power in Germany, which is to the detriment of the republican liberties. Workers and people, both Polish and German, are embittered by the fact that with the advent of Grencszuc, food, flour, coffee and other food products began to be exported in large quantities”⁹⁶.

When recruiting to Grenzschutz, it was emphasized that volunteers would receive food as if they were at war, which was “far better than the alimentionation of the Republican army”. In such hard times both German and Polish workers with a hateful eye looked at those who

⁸⁹ R. Thoms, S. Pochanke, *Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Freikorps*, München 2001, p. 77.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86; J. Centek, *Skład garnizonu Grudziądza 1773-1920*, Rocznik Grudziądzki 2005, vol. 16, p. 44.

⁹² *O karność w Grencszucu*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 23 March 1919, p. 1.

⁹³ *Polska*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 22 March 1919, p. 3.

⁹⁴ *Położenie w Prusach Zachodnich*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 21 Feb 1919, p. 1.

⁹⁵ *[Rekwizycji koni]*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 1 July 1919, p. 1.

⁹⁶ *Czemu Grencszuc tak znienawidzony?*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 21 Feb 1919, p. 2.

had joined Grenzschutz⁹⁷ attracted by better nutrition when food is rationed for them more and more rigorously". For many soldiers better food along with a pay of 4 marks a day, constituted a serious incentive to join the ranks of this formation. At the same time, which even the Germans admit in their regiment's stories, it also attracted volunteers who were not guided by any patriotic motives⁹⁸.

According to the accounts of "Gazeta Toruńska", when First Lieutenant Roßbach's military unit arrived in Chełmża in February 1919, the city authorities had been informed by a telegram that the Grenzschutz branch would arrive three days. In this situation, the mayor organized a council of the Magistrate and the Workers' Council; however, during the meeting First Lieutenant Roßbach arrived announcing that "he is standing with his unit at the entrance to the city with the intention of entering it". Members of the meeting protested and sent telegrams to the "main headquarters to Gdańsk [probably the command of the 17th Corps District – JC] and to the Main Government to Berlin. Mr. Roßbach was asked to give up the idea of entering the city until the reply from Gdańsk or Berlin arrived [...] Mr Roßbach's response to this was that he had the order to enter Chełmża and that he would not wait for the telegraph answer"⁹⁹.

Meanwhile, the crowd disarmed the soldiers waiting in the car at the town hall, putting them in custody along with Roßbach. According to "Gazeta Toruńska", the Germans were to shoot in the city with 3 artillery shells, killing 3 children. The Germans also demanded the release of all weapons, but still as they entered the city, they were to shoot "rifles and shotguns straight into the streets to passers-by", killing 8 and injuring 15 people. A state of emergency was introduced and arrests of Poles began¹⁰⁰. This ordinance was probably issued by the 35th ID staff, which in the second decade of February 1919 also extended it to neighbouring localities¹⁰¹.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ J. Centek, *Kawaleria niemiecka w latach 1918-1921*, [in:] *Do szarży marsz, marsz...* *Studia z dziejów kawalerii*, ed. By A. Smoliński, vol. 1, Toruń 2010, p. 501

⁹⁹ *Straszne zabójstwo w Chełmży*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 26 Feb 1919, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 2-3.

¹⁰¹ *Położenie w Prusach Zachodnich*, *Gazeta Toruńska*, 13 Feb 1919, p. 1.

The anti-Polish attitude of the soldiers of German volunteer units is perfectly demonstrated by the event described in the pages of “Gazeta Toruńska”. On 1 January 1920, the 21st IR soldiers rushed into the room where the performance was taking place, shouting three times “away with Poles, away with dogs”¹⁰².

Conclusion

During the war, Toruń was deprived even of the units that were to constitute its war garrison if the fortress was to be threatened by Russian troops. Not all replacement battalions of the peace garrison regiments remained in the city. Nevertheless, the fortress infrastructure played an important role in forming new units during the war. It was also used to train artillerymen and airmen.

After the end of military actions, the garrison became demoralized, which is best demonstrated by the cases of plundering or illegal requisitions by soldiers. For this reason, it did not constitute too much combat value, especially as it was possible to bear weapons only when on guard. What is more, most of the regiments that had set off for the war from Toruń did not return to the city.

The decrease in the size of the garrison and its low combat value did not mean, however, that the fortress could be easily taken over in the event of a Polish attack. It seems that such a threat would motivate even demoralized soldiers to fight. On the other hand, the Roßbach Volunteer Corps forces were stationed nearby – they could quickly come to the rescue. In addition, even obsolete forts constituted a virtually insurmountable obstacle for Poles, who failed to have modern heavy artillery.

Translation Agnieszka Chabros

¹⁰² *Napaść żołnierzy na Polaków*, Gazeta Toruńska, 6 Jan 1920, p. 1.