

Mirosław Surdej. The National Military Organization/National Military Union District Rzeszów, 1944-1947. Summary.

The subject of this dissertation concerns the history of the National Military Union (NZW) in the Rzeszów region. The National Military Union was the military arm of the National Party (SN), which was the main prewar Polish political party. The Union was in existence from 1944-48. During the German occupation of Poland, National Party activists were active in structures of the Polish Underground State. Efforts to build the underground structures of this paramilitary organization were initiated by members of the National Party shortly after the defeat of the Polish army in 1939. As a result of this work, the National Military Organization (NOW) was created. In addition, a few years later, in September 1942, the National Armed Forces (NSZ) was created as a result of a split in the National Military Organization. Prior to 1944, the majority of the National Party's military formations were incorporated into the Home Army (AK).

In 1944, more than half of Poland was occupied by the Soviet Red Army. The Home Army, which was the most important force of the Polish underground and was a source of great authority in Polish society, became a target of ruthless attacks by Soviet security forces. After the capitulation of the Warsaw Uprising in October 1944, the Home Army had been significantly weakened.

Therefore, in November 1944, members of the National Party established a new organization, the National Military Union, in order to merge the military effort of the National Military Organization and the National Armed Forces. The National Military Union's organizational process lasted until the beginning of 1945.

The National Military Union in the Rzeszów District was built primarily on the foundations of the National Military Organization. In 1944, the National Military Organization COP District (Central Industrial District) counted approximately 6,000 soldiers. It also included a women's auxiliary formation – the Women's National Military Organization (NOWK) – whose number is estimated at 1,000-1,500 female members. After merging the National Military Organization COP District with the Home Army, the District formally ceased to exist. In practice, the National Military Organization COP District preserved a skeleton structure and some partisan units. This enabled the restoration of the military force of the National Party after the Red Army entered, which took place at the end of July 1944.

In the second half of 1944, the commander of the National Military Organization in the Rzeszów region, Kazimierz Mirecki "Zmuda", decided to extract the remaining structures of the National Military Organization from the Home Army and to begin independent activity. He was able to create a structure of the underground organization, which was part of the National Military Union since February 1945.

A few words about territorial control and designation. The structure of the National Military Union District Rzeszów was part of Lublin Area (No. 2), as District No. 5. According to estimates of the General Headquarters of the National Military Union, the Rzeszów District was the second largest (after the Białystok District) in Poland. It was divided into Inspectorates and Circuits (*powiaty*). In April of 1946, there were four Inspectorates, codenamed "Janina", "Hanka", "Maria" and "Sophia" (all female names). Inspectorate "Janina" included the following Circuits: Jarosław (codename "Jadwiga"), Lubaczów ("Lucy" or "Lena") and Przemyśl ("Pola"). Inspectorate "Hanka" or "Halina": Przeworsk ("Paulina"), Łańcut ("Lucy"), Nisko ("Nina") and a part of the Biłgoraj region that included Janów Lubelski ("Justin"). Inspectorate "Maria" or "Rose": Tarnobrzeg ("Teresa"), Dębica ("Zenon") and Mielec ("Sophia"). From April of 1946, the Rzeszów District also included Inspectorate "Sophia", covering the southeast area of Kielce province. However, by the end of the month it was destroyed by the political police of the Communist regime – the

Office of Public Safety (UBP). Inspectorate "Sophia" included Sandomierz district ("Stasia") and also the Staszów region ("Stefania"), Opatów region ("Olenka") and Ostrowiec region ("Olga").

In 1945, the commander of the National Military Union had a number of partisan units subordinated to a special headquarters called the Forest Troops Command (KOL), in turn under the command of Francis Przysiężniak "Marek". These partisan units fought not only against the Soviets and their collaborators (regardless of their nationality), but also against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which was carrying out the ethnic cleansing of Poles.

Among the partisan commanders, the following should be mentioned: Joseph Zadziński "Wołyniak", Bronisław Gliniak "Radwan", Tadeusz Gajda "Tarzan" and Stanisław Pelczar "Majka".

After May 1945, the new commander of the National Military Union District Rzeszów, Joseph Sałabun "Grom", changed tactics. In the summer of 1945, most of the National Military Union partisan units had been dismantled. Only a few of them continued to operate. In autumn 1945, the District was in crisis. In January 1946, the new commander of the District, Piotr Woźniak "Wir", started the process of reorganizing the District structures. He created the Special Actions Alert (PAS), a department for fighting against the Communist regime, using special methods like sabotage and diversionary tactics. The reorganization included the issue of establishing intelligence and counterintelligence networks, which, since 1946, functioned much better than previously.

The soldiers of National Military Union printed their own secret newspaper, *The Voice of Polish Unity*. There was also a newspaper published by members of the National Party, *The Nation in Fight*.

What was the ultimate fate of the National Military Union? Its activity – in the Rzeszów region as in all other parts of the country – was interrupted in 1947, mainly as a result of so-called amnesty announced by the Communists in February 1947.

As a result of repressions carried out by the Communist political police prior to 1947, many soldiers and activists of the National movement were placed under arrest in Communist prisons. But a major attack against soldiers of the National Military Union took place after the so-called amnesty. In the period from August to October 1948, 142 people were arrested.

The court hearing of the last command staff of the National Military Union District Rzeszów, Capt. Piotr Woźniak and others, was held on May 15-30, 1949 at the Communist Military District Court in Rzeszów. The trial had the character of a show trial. The investigative officers of the Office of Public Security applied torture in order to extract from prisoners the desired statements, whose testimony was often far from the truth. Piotr Woźniak, Louis Więclaw, Edward Garbacki and Jan Skóra all received death sentences. On August 2, 1949, the sentence of Piotr Woźniak, the last commander of the National Military Union, was commuted to 10 years in prison by the Supreme Military Court. Więclaw and Garbacki were executed on the evening of September 5, 1949.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Communists of the Rzeszów region took actions to destroy the remaining underground of the National Party, which was already inactive. The exception was a partisan unit commanded by Adam Kusz, who assumed command following the suicide of its previous leader, Joseph Zadziński "Wołyniak", at the end of 1946. The greater part of the partisans revealed themselves in 1947. Several of them, however, fought until August 19, 1950, when the Kusz group was destroyed by the Communist Internal Security Corps (KBW) and the Office of Public Security. Yet not all soldiers of the Kusz unit were killed, as a few managed to go into hiding and continued to fight, with its last member arrested in 1961.

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