

Institute of National Remembrance

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Poles responded with arms to German terror – the Second Silesian Uprising

1920 was the time of shaping the borders of the second Republic of Poland. The Polish-Bolshevik war, the plebiscite in Warmia and Masuria and the Second Silesian Uprising (or The Silesian Civil War) had a significant impact on the shape of the Polish borders before the Second World War.

On 19–25 August 1920, Poles in Upper Silesia, responded with arms to the German terror. The Second Silesian Uprising broke out on the night of 19/20 August. The main postulate of those fighting under Alfons Zgrzebniok was to get rid of the hated German SIPO (Sicherheitpolizei) police and its replacement with a Polish-German formation. This postulate was fulfilled. According to various estimates, between 77 and 180 insurgents died during the week of fighting.

In the proclamation of the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat, signed by Wojciech Korfanty, we read: “You broke the German terror in Silesia with courage and solidarity. Your most important demands are fulfilled. The green Police is leaving Upper Silesia. The Civic Guard is established, which will perform its functions until the security service is taken over by the plebiscite Police. The Inter-alliance Commission in Opole agreed not only to remove the green Police, but also to remove those elements that came from inside Germany to disturb the Polish population and organize attacks and pogroms on Poles.”

The Second Silesian Uprising was one of the five victorious independence uprisings in the history of Poland (the others being the two Greater Poland Uprisings of 1806 and 1918-1919, the Sejny Uprising of 1919 and the Third Silesian Uprising of 1921.)

“Were it not for this willingness to risk one's own property, health and life, today's history would look completely different. Perhaps today, in this place, in Katowice, we would speak a completely different language,” said Andrzej Sznajder, director of the Katowice branch of the Institute of National Remembrance.

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