

### 3. RECONSTRUCTING, ORGANISING, AND DEVELOPING THE HEADQUARTERS OF MILITARY TRANSPORT IN THE YEARS 1944–1962

The army's transition to peacetime operations upon the end of warfare coincided with the re-organisation of the Headquarters of Military Transport and complete liquidation of the railway troops. Once the decision to disband the railway troops was made, the Headquarters of Military Transport was severely reduced, its competencies limited to military transports, reconstruction as well as the operation of sidings and military railways in military areas. The tasks assigned to military transport authorities also included the drafting of military opinions concerning the design of transport facilities and supervision of the efficient railway mobilisation and militarisation during warfare.

In the first quarter of 1945, a process of establishing military transport departments commenced at the chief of staff level of the newly formed military districts (Military District Commands) at the following locations: Warsaw, Łódź, Poznań, Lublin, and Kraków.<sup>139</sup> The tasks of the new organisational district staff units included the co-operation with the respective Regional State Railway Management, securing military transport on railway lines within the given district, organising maintenance and reconstruction works on railway lines and facilities with the infrastructure departments of the respective Management standing in as intermediaries, and organising security services for major lines and railway facilities in co-operation with railway authorities. The organisational structure of the military transport departments included a department for military transport, as well as a department for railway maintenance and construction. Notwithstanding the above, the military transport departments were not prepared to deliver tasks under wartime mobilisation conditions, as they owned no line railway units. In practice, their work was basically limited to planning and documentary functions. In co-operation with the infrastructure departments of the Regional State Railway Managements they made records of the lines, bridges and other railway facilities for record purposes. Only under exceptional circumstances – and assisted by military engineering units – they

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139 Order of the GC of the PA, No. 23/org. of February 1st 1945, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 93.

repaired or constructed small sections of railway lines and sidings for military purposes.<sup>140</sup>

On July 18th 1945<sup>141</sup> the General Staff was reformed as General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. The Military Transports Board of the Chief Quartermaster of the Polish Armed Forces was dissolved. All tasks and competences of the liquidated quartermaster unit were taken over by the newly created Branch IV of Military Transport of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. The purpose of separating the Military Transports bodies from the quartermaster structure and making them subordinate to the General Staff was to set up a closer operational and co-ordination format for transport bodies and operational units of the Staff in terms of planning and handling of all military operational transports.

Colonel Mikołaj Suprynowicz, M.Sc. Eng., the former head of the Military Transports Board of the Polish Armed Forces, was appointed the head of the Branch IV of Military Transport of the General Staff. He was replaced as head of the service by Colonel Michał Terlecki on December 31st 1945.<sup>142</sup>

The Branch IV of Military Transport of the General Staff included the following departments: management, department of military transport, water transport section, technical department, department of combat training, financial and control section, and secret registry. The scope of Branch IV activities also included issues of using inland waterways for military transport purposes. Branch IV employed 54 full-time soldiers, its management staff composed of the following officers seconded by the Soviet army: head of the Branch Colonel Mikołaj Suprowicz, deputy head of the Branch Colonel Grzegorz Kuźmienko, head of transport department Colonel Anatol Gaponiuk and head of the combat training department, Colonel Sergiusz Osokin.<sup>143</sup>

The main tasks of Branch IV included the following: collection and preparation of data for the General Staff (with respect to railway transport and means of transport), drafting General Staff decisions in the form of plans to prepare the railway network for army needs, preparation and training of transport officers, issuing opinions concerning the design of reconstructed railway lines and railway facilities and equipment, co-operation with the Ministry of Transport, drafting instructions and regulations with regard to the planning and

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140 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 93.

141 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 93, Order of the General Command of the Polish Armed Forces, No. 177/org. of July 18th 1945.

142 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 93.

143 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 100.

management of military transports, supervising the general military training of the Headquarters of Military Transport, military management of railway rolling stock, managing of military peacetime railway transports, and managing all financial affairs related to troops transport.

Generally, Branch IV of Military Transport of the General Staff did not undertake any work in the field of reconstruction or modernisation of railway lines or facilities. The Branch did, however, engage in intense work involving the collection and processing of data concerning the technical condition of railway lines, bridges and other railway facilities. The Branch also maintained army-purpose records of railway lines and facilities, bridges, viaducts and culverts – destroyed, under reconstruction and reconstructed.

The re-organisation and establishment of Branch IV of Military Transport coincided with the re-organisation of the Departments for Military Transports at the military district headquarters with intent to establish Departments IV of Military Transport.<sup>144</sup> Their new organisational structure included the respective sections for transport, technical issues, control and finance, and registry. These Departments reported to the heads of staffs of the respective districts, their former tasks were fundamentally left unchanged. The Departments were also in charge of constructing a number of military sidings with assistance from civilian enterprises supplied with surface materials as required.

On December 16th 1945, the Military Railway Transport Branch Offices were established in all the state railways districts.<sup>145</sup> The branch offices employed two-full time officers and six compulsory service soldiers. When re-organising the Headquarters of Military Transport, the Branch Offices were reformed into Local Offices of Branch IV of Military Transport, and set up to include the following sections: transport, technical issues, control and finance, and registry. Heads of Branch IV Local Offices reported directly to the head of Branch IV of Military Transport of the General Staff.

Such a solution did not prove long-standing: in 1948, the former Branch IV of Military Transport of the General Staff was renamed Board IV for Military Transport of the General Staff, Colonel Anatol Zamczyński M.Sc. Eng appointed the head of Board IV.<sup>146</sup>

Thereafter, on June 17th 1950, the Minister of National Defence Marshal Konstanty Rokossowski instructed the Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General

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144 Later renamed Branches IV for MC.

145 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 102.

146 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 102.

Władysław Korczyc to re-organise the military transport bodies.<sup>147</sup> Consequently, in the first half of 1951, the Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff was established in place of the current Board IV for Military Transport, the new body's competencies extended to include additional departments.<sup>148</sup> Following the re-organisation, railway troops were formed once again to comprise three battalions (3rd, 5th and 7th railway troop's battalions, respectively).

Thus, the re-organised Headquarters of Military Transport yet again included military transport bodies and railway troops alike. The Headquarters of Military Transport had its own structures: central, line, and field (designed for wartime purposes only).

The central military transport authorities included the following: the Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff, the Military Transport Departments of Military District Commands, and the Military Transport Department of the Navy Staff.

The re-organised Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff consisted of the following branches and departments: transport department, technical branch, mobilisation department, organisation and supplies department, training department, financial and control department, military railway department, general department, and registry. The individual branches consisted of departments, and individual departments of sections.

In 1951, Colonel Herman Czerwiakow was appointed head of the Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff.<sup>149</sup> The head of the Headquarters of Military Transport was also head of the Polish Armed Forces transport, reporting directly to the Chief of General Staff. Upon re-organisation, tasks of the Headquarters of Military Transport also included the planning of training and dispatching of railway troops, as well as supplying them with materials and transport equipment as required. As a result of re-organisation, the organisational structure of the Military Transport Departments of Military District Commands was also expanded to include mobilisation sections.

The head of the Military transport Department of a given Military District Command reported directly to the chief of staff of the military district, and – with respect to technical and transport issues – to the chief of transport of the Polish Armed Forces.

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147 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 102.

148 Head of the Headquarters of Military Transport, Chief Quartermaster Polish Armed Forces, 8.

149 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 104.

The main tasks of Military Transport Departments of the Military District Commands included the following: knowledge of the railway network and inland waterways in the district and the possibilities of their use for military purposes, organisation, planning and execution of military transport within a given region, planning and control of training of military units with respect to railway transport, supplying military units of the district with military waybills and the control of their use, supervision over the training and operations of regional military railway units.

The headcount structure of the Military Transport Department of the Navy Staff was identical to that of the Military Transport Departments of military districts. The head of the Navy's military transport branch reported directly to the chief of staff of the Navy, and – in case of technical and transport issues – to the chief of transport of the Polish Armed Forces. The main tasks of the Navy's Military Transport Department included the use of ports and vessels for military transport purposes, organisation of military transports in harbours, planning rail and coastal transport for the Navy and supplying the naval units with military waybills and the control of their use.

The headquarters of the military transport line units were intended to manage military railway and inland waterways transport in war- and peacetime. They were deployed on the country's railway network – Headquarters of Military Transport were placed in Regional State Railway Management buildings, Military Railway Section Commands – at designated operational unit buildings; Military Station Commands – in station buildings.

The line units of railway and inland consisted of the following subdivisions of railway transport: Headquarters of Military Transport (in Regional State Railway Management), Military Railway Section Commands (at designated Operational Departments of the Polish State Railways<sup>150</sup>), Military Railway Section Commands (at designated Operational Departments of the Polish State Railways<sup>151</sup>), Military Station Commands (at designated junctions and railway stations, and at border control checkpoints of the People's Republic of Poland), Military Food Points, Military Agitation Points and Military Stage Points. With respect to the inland water transport, line authorities included the following: the Water Transport Command of the Regional Directorate of Waterways, and Military Commands of Waterway Sections and Ports (formed during wartime only).

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150 Head of the Headquarters of Military Transport, Chief Quartermaster Polish Armed Forces, 10.

151 Ibid.

The Headquarters of Military Transport at Regional State Railway Managements were established in the process of re-organising the Military Railway Transport Branch Offices. A Military Transport Command was composed of the following sections: a transport department, a technical section, a mobilisation section, a financial and accounting section, and a registry. The head of military transport at a Regional State Railway Management was a representative of the Ministry of National Defence for the respective railway management area. He reported directly to the chief of military transport of the Polish Armed Forces in matters related to the preparation of railways for army needs and the organisation and delivery of central transport service – in matters of regional transport, he reported to the head of military transport in the military district. The main tasks of a Military Transport Command included the following: knowledge of the organisation, equipment and condition of the railway network in the respective Regional State Railway Management area, control of railway preparation for army needs and of works performed on the railway as commissioned by the Ministry of Defence, drafting opinions concerning the design of railway construction and reconstruction, control of maintenance and repair works on military sidings and rolling stock at the disposal of the Ministry of National Defence, drafting military transport plans and submitting them to the Regional State Railway Management, organising and supervising their delivery, control and handling of financial settlements with the railway management for the transport of troops and military supplies, and the training of military units in the field of railway transport. The responsibilities of the Military Transport Command also included the drafting of and updates to railway network descriptions of all Regional State Railway Managements, said descriptions comprising the following data: railway track infrastructure inventory; specifications of telephone, telegram and selector communication, of train radio communication, of MB and CB service centres and teletypewriter communications; specifications of railway line and junction station capacity; railway network diagram with 3,270 mm loading gauge mapped; specification of railway border crossings; list of stations with rolling stock shunting facilities; list of rolling stock furnishing and assembly stations; list of stations where folding ramp sets and complete K1 wagon equipment kits were deposited; list of stations where military reserves of surface reconstruction materials were deposited; list of junction tracks operational, disused, disassembled and planned over a designated special period; network diagram with steam locomotive depots, locomotive depots, wagon depots, and Railway Rolling Stock Repair Facilities added; diagram of steam, diesel and electric traction sections; list of fuel depots with coal stages specified; network diagram with water station layout; diagram of electrified railway lines, continuous

welded tracks and types of track infrastructure; list of coal wagon wall removal facilities; network diagram with emergency maintenance and emergency rescue train deployment mapped; network diagram with snowplough and railway crane deployment mapped; list and specification of rolling stock deactivation points on the Polish State Railways network; list of sanitary points; list of Civil Defence facilities (shelters).

Responsibilities of the Military Command of a Railway Section or station included the following: organisation and management of loading, transport and unloading of military railway transports on or at a respective section or station; preparing railway rolling stock and loading accessories for military transport; control of the technical condition of military ramps and sidings and delivering practical training for military units related to railway transport; securing all operational and sanitary services for transported military units; ensuring that the soldiers travelling by trains maintain order and comply with military discipline and railway regulations. During mass wartime transport of troops, food and agitation points were set up at larger stations.<sup>152</sup>

During wartime, the purpose of Headquarters of Military Transport was to secure the continuity of transport by railways- and waterways – transfers of troops and tactical compounds, as well as material supplies for the troops in combat. The wartime responsibilities of railway troops and militarised railway units also included reconstruction (or destruction) of railway lines.

In order to deliver all tasks as listed in wartime conditions, plans were made to establish a field Headquarters of Military Transport and to militarise the Ministry of Railways and Navigation. Military transport field bodies included the following: Military Frontline Transport Board, Military transport Branch for the Army (for each of the respective general armies), Military Commands of Frontline and Army Distribution Stations, Military Commands of Railway Sections, and Military Commands of Supply Stations.

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152 The staff of a 1st Class Railway Section Military Headquarters consisted of a commander of the railway section, one senior assistant to the commander, three assistants to the commander, three dispatchers and a clerk. The staff of a 2nd CRS Military Transport consisted of a commander of the section and railway station, three dispatchers, and a clerk. The railway section military commander reported directly to the head of military transport. For all members of the military in the railway section, the railway section military commander was the acting garrison commander. A railway station commander had similar authority over his troops.

The responsibilities of military transport field (frontline) services included the following:<sup>153</sup>

- Planning and performance of military transports domestically, and within the domestic territory-frontline area (to rear frontline bases),
- Planning the use of all types of transport,
- Securing the delivery of military transit transports for allied countries,
- Planning the use, training and supplying of transport units,
- Planning and works in areas of use, maintenance, and reconstruction of all relevant elements of transport network on home territory.

With intent to deliver all tasks as listed, the following units were organised as reporting to the head of the field (frontline) Headquarters of Military Transport: railway and road troops (railway troops brigades,<sup>154</sup> road troops brigade, bridge brigade, railway military bridge regiment<sup>155</sup>) – charged with the reconstruction, maintenance, and operation of roads and railways and with the regulation of road traffic; motor vehicle – transport units (transport brigades) – charged with the delivery of material and technical supplies for operational troops; transshipment units; and road and railway troop training units.<sup>156</sup>

The Head of Frontline Transport was the acting authorised representative of the Frontline command on rail- and waterways transport routes. The following units reported to the Head of Frontline Transport: the military transport bodies and railway troops forming a part of the Frontline (Army), field and line bodies and special (militarised) branches of the Ministry of Railways and Inland Navigation, serving Frontline (Army) railway and waterway sections in terms of organising and handling of military transports and reconstructing (or destroying) of railway lines and rail- and waterway facilities, and directors of Regional State Railway Managements and of Inland Navigation located in the area of Frontline operations – in the scope of military transports and reconstruction

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153 Ministry of National Defence, Transport Command 33/64, *Komunikacja wojskowa* (1965), 27.

154 The brigade of railway troops consisted of 6 road battalions.

155 The railway military bridge regiment was charged with the protection of railway bridges. The regiment comprised the following: a pontoon bridge battalion, a folding bridge battalion and a technical battalion. The regiment's equipment included machinery and equipment for bridge works and bridge construction (1/2 of the NZM-56 park and ¼ of the TMP park).

156 Ministry of National Defence, Transport Command 33/64, *Komunikacja wojskowa* (1965), 27–30.

(or destruction). Under conditions of mobilisation, the Ministry of Railways and Inland Navigation units were to be militarised, the Head of Frontline Transport becoming their immediate official superior. All railwaymen were to be drafted for service in railway transport.<sup>157</sup>

In the years 1950–1957, the Headquarters of Military Transport underwent practically no re-organisation activities, except an increase to the headcount of the railway troops department and organisation and supplies department in the Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. The increase of officer posts in these departments tied in with the restoration and subsequent development of railway troops units. In 1956, Colonel Jan Pzennik was appointed head of the Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces.<sup>158</sup>

The trends of comprehensive use of all modes of transport (railways, road, air and waterways) on the battlefield – becoming distinctly more profound in the 1950s and tying in with the introduction of nuclear weapons and the development of rocket artillery, transport aviation and other modern weapons and technical measures, resulted in an integration of the military transport and road services.

In November 1962, the Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces merged with the 15th Division of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces; the Command of the Military Transport Service of the Ministry of National Defence was formed. In February 1964, this unit was subordinated to the Chief Quartermaster of the Polish Armed Forces. The Command of the Headquarters of Military Transports of the Chief Quartermaster of the Polish Armed Forces was thus formed.<sup>159</sup>

A unified and centralised military transport system with the capacity to secure the comprehensive use and co-ordination of all modes of transport was formed. The scope of peacetime activities of the Command of the Headquarters of Military Transport of the Ministry of National Defence included the following:<sup>160</sup>

- Planning the operational-and-mobilisation use of the transport network and means of transport across the country,

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157 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 130.

158 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 130.

159 Headquarters of the Military Transport Service, Chief Quartermaster Polish Armed Forces, 11.

160 Ministry of National Defence, Transport Command 33/64, *Komunikacja wojskowa* (1965), 25–27.

- Preparation of transport by rail, road, and inland waterways for railway and road troops and for motor vehicle and transport units,
- Preparation of units for the organisation of transshipment areas (points),
- Comprehensive handling and management of military transfers.

In addition, the Headquarters of the Military Transport Service of the Ministry of National Defence supervised and directed specialised activities engaged in by the heads of military transport of Military District Commands and by line bodies reporting to them, as well as by motor vehicle and transport units.

### **3.1 Department of Military transport, Military District Command I Warsaw**

In the first quarter of 1945, the organisational structure of the Quartermaster Command of Military District Warsaw was expanded to include a Military Transport Department, its territory spanning the Warsaw and Białystok voivodships.<sup>161</sup> The Department was based in Warsaw, in a building at Litewska No. 3.

In July 1945, the process of re-organising the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces and reforming the District Command to peacetime operations as well as the coinciding expansion of its territory to include the Olsztyn voivodship (changing of the name to Military District Commands I) resulted in the establishing of Department IV of Military transport, reporting directly to the chief of staff of the District and based in a building at Solariego No. 4 in Warsaw.<sup>162</sup>

Major Stefan Ołtarzewski was appointed the first head of Department IV of Military Transport, Military District Commands I. Lieutenant Stanisław Mochnacki (military waybill reporting officer) and Second Lieutenant Adam Muzyczek (military transfer and sidings reporting officer) were in service at the Department. On May 1st 1946, Major Waław Zydel became the head of Department IV of Military Transport.<sup>163</sup> The importance of training in the field of loading and transferring units equipped with heavy equipment increased at the time. The department premises changed again; the unit moved to a building at 6 Sierpnia (Nowowiejska), then to the Warsaw Citadel in October 1947. The Department reported to the Chief of Staff, Military District Commands I, and

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161 Traction Central Management– Co-ordination CfMM, 1.

162 Traction Central Management– Co-ordination CfMM, 1.

163 Traction Central Management– Co-ordination CfMM, 1.

to the quartermaster of District Command I during military exercises. The repair and expansion works on sidings and military ramps at stations Muszaki, Czerwony Bór and Orzysz commenced at the time, in conjunction with the planned training of troops on training grounds, and large numbers of operational transports having been received at all stations listed.

In 1949 the subsequent stage of re-organising the armed forces involved an expansion of the district to include a part of the Regional State Railway Management. In the first half of 1950 a general re-organisation of military transport bodies was held, with Branch IV of Military Transport of District Command I set up as of January 1st 1951.<sup>164</sup> A Red Army Colonel Konstanty Romaniuk, M.Sc. Eng. was appointed head of this unit, its headcount comprising thirteen full-time officer and ensign positions, and one civilian. New Branch headquarters were set up at the quartermaster's building at Krajewskiego. In September 1952 the location of the Branch was changed again and transferred to the Pavilion X building at the Warsaw Citadel. The area of Branch activity comprised 7 voivodships at the time.

As part of practical training of railway troops in the years 1951–1952 works were organised to rebuild a forestry railway in Cisna and Nowy Łupków; while in the period of 1952–1953 railway lines and junctions were rebuilt on the area of the Regional State Railway Management in Olsztyn, Warsaw and Lublin. 1582 kilometres of railway lines were refurbished, numerous stations and railway junctions modernised, 851 metres of railway bridges and culverts were built. The estimated cost for all works listed totalled 2,457,681,000 zloty.<sup>165</sup>

In 1954 Lieutenant Colonel Alfons Rybałtowski was appointed head of the Transport Branch after a brief period of practical internship. The Branch staff consisted of 17 officers and ensigns and 2 civilians at the time. After 1956 Soviet soldiers were recalled from their positions in the Branch, following a further reduction to the armed forces. In May 1957, Branch IV of the Military Transport shifted to new operational status, its staff reduced to 12 professional soldiers and 2 civilian employees. At that time the Branch was moved yet again to a building at Krajewskiego street. Colonel Aleksander Jaśman, M.Sc. Eng. was appointed head of the Branch in June 1959. In 1962 the Branch – which had been operating independently from 1959 as part of the quartermaster's structures – was incorporated into the Warsaw Military District Quartermaster. Also in 1962, the Road District operating independently as part of quartermaster services from 1959

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164 Traction Central Management– Co-ordination CfMM, 2.

165 Traction Central Management– Co-ordination CfMM, 3.

was made a part of the Military transport Branch. In 1963, Colonel Konstanty Świrski, M.Sc. Eng, was appointed head of the Branch, the unit itself renamed Headquarters of Military Transport Branch of the Military District in 1966.<sup>166</sup>

### 3.2 Reconstruction of Railway Units<sup>167</sup>

The 1945 liquidation of railway troops did not account for the indispensability of these units in terms of securing wartime independence of military supplies. It can well be presumed that the liquidation of railway troops was an element of the Polish Armed Forces unquestioned subordination to the Red Army operation-wise, not least as the decision seemed to have been devoid of any rational premise. Notably, the significant destruction of the country's transport network and the need to reconstruct it called for the existence of railway troops – damaged to a large extent, Polish railways were rebuilt at a great cost in terms of human and financial resources; in 1946, 8,486 km of reconstructed railway lines and 52,250 m of railway viaducts and bridges were put back to service.<sup>168</sup>

The activities targeting the formation of railway units began with planning works and securing appropriate human resources. Immediately upon the disbanding of railway troops, an expanded railway battalion was to be formed as a mobilisation unit; the intention had to be abandoned due to staffing difficulties and material and hardware shortage. Only on July 10th 1947 did the Minister of National Defence instruct the chief of General Staff to provide preliminary insights concerning the organisation of a sapper-and-railway battalion in the first half of 1950.<sup>169</sup> In February 1948, the head of Transport Branch IV of General Staff Colonel Michał Terlecki instructed the military transport authorities to collect and study materials related to railway troops, while Branch IV analysed the materials concerning their organisation, equipment, and operation.

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166 Traction Central Management– Co-ordination CfMM, 3.

167 A work by the late Colonel Marian Gembora (Military Office of Historical Research Archive, Ref. No. 1138), was the main reference source for this chapter. The work contains detailed information on railway and road-and-railway units of the Polish Armed Forces. This work, written in the early 1980s, was classified. Declassified in the mid-1980s, it was published in three copies, in all probability just a single copy has been preserved until this day and now forms a part of the special collection of the Military Office of Historical Research Archive. Historically speaking, the material is of huge interest, the author referencing multiple documents destroyed or missing today (such as railway unit chronicles).

168 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 2.

169 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 119.

The pre-1939 documents related to the role of the Polish Armed Forces's railway troops were collected alongside the instructions and regulations of the Soviet troops.

On February 15th 1950 the head of Branch IV of the General Staff Colonel Anatol Smaczyński presented the Head of General Staff Lieutenant General Władysław Korczyc with a report, wherein he justified the need to establish railway units, explained their war- and peacetime responsibilities, and laid out a proposition of their organisational and reporting structure.<sup>170</sup> On June 6th 1950, he suggested to General Władysław Korczyc that a battalion of railway troops be organised on site of the former navy railway artillery battalion in Darłowo that was disbanded in the same year.<sup>171</sup> Darłowo offered convenient technical and personnel support facilities, such as barracks, training grounds, and a number of officer staff. On August 8th 1950, the Minister of National Defence Marshal Konstanty Rokossowski issued a decision to form a battalion of railway troops in Darłowo.<sup>172</sup>

In the early 1950s, a development programme of the Polish Armed Forces was implemented as a consequence of the escalation of the international conflict in Korea. On October 30th 1950, the Military Commission of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party approved the programme of military expansion until 1956.<sup>173</sup> The approved plan assumed a significant increase in the number of railway troops, such an increase was intended as the most intense of all types of armed forces. The planned development of railway troops with intent to secure the engineering and logistics support for military operations was a direct derivative of the offensive nature of the contemporaneous Soviet military doctrine. Furthermore, the development of railway units arose from the need to rebuild the railway network which had suffered significant wartime damage: 38 % of railway lines, 46 % of bridge length (including all of the largest bridge facilities), 50 % of tunnels, 37 % of railway buildings, 6,000 steam locomotives and 60,000 wagons had been destroyed.<sup>174</sup>

The training of qualified specialists was of paramount importance to developing railway troops; consequently, the 30th Training Company of Railway

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170 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 125.

171 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 125.

172 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 126.

173 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 126.

174 In the early 1950s, a large part of railway lines, facilities and rolling stock has still not been restored.

Military Reserve Officers was formed in December 1950, secondary school military graduates called to service therein.<sup>175</sup>

In February 1951, works commenced to organise two training railway companies with intent to train non-commissioned officers for railway units. The subsequent non-commissioned ensign training course began on March 20th 1951,<sup>176</sup> with intent to train non-commissioned officers called in from reserve corps to serve in lower command positions in railway units. In December 1951, upon an order of the Ministry of National Defence, a training course was organised for reserve officers of railway troops, reserve officers for new military railway units were trained within this period.<sup>177</sup>

In 1950, a training curriculum for military transport officers was also introduced at the Officers' Military Engineering Academy in Wrocław. In 1952 the Academy added a skills improvement curriculum for railway military officers. As of 1951, the process of seconding railway military officers for university studies and training courses to the Military Academy of Rear and Transport Services in the USSR began. During the same period, efforts of the Headquarters of Military Transport resulted in the launching of Higher Academic Curricula and higher-level skills improvement courses for railway and road transport unit officers at the Department of Military transport of the General Staff Academy. In 1953 a faculty of military engineering was introduced at the Military University of Technology with intent to educate highly-qualified officers for railway and road transport units.

Thanks to all the training initiatives listed, a highly qualified staff of officers and non-commissioned officers were trained for the purposes of railway military units.

Two basic concepts of establishing the railway military were forged in the process of analytical and planning works related to the reconstruction of railway troops. One assumed the creation of battalions of rail and road troops trimmed off the Ministry of National Defence resources. Their development would coincide with wartime mobilisation; related activities continued until the mid-fifties. The other plan assumed that railway units would be set up with the use of the resources of the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry would benefit from works carried out by these units as part of their practical training. The latter concept

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175 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 126.

176 Regulation of the Ministry of National Defence No. 018/org. of March 20th 1951.

177 Course graduates were promoted to officer rank, and dispatched to the railway troops battalion as platoon commanders.

was adopted as the basis for developing and training railway troops in the second half of the 1950s.<sup>178</sup>

The reconstruction programme of railway troops units was completed over the period of 1950–1952. The newly formed railway troops were charged with the main task of wartime use for the purposes of securing engineering and logistics support for the reconstruction and operation of the frontline railway network. In peacetime the use of railway troops involved their participation in works to reconstruct railway lines and facilities, railway equipment, and civil engineering structures. Three railway troops battalions (5th railway troops battalion in Darłowo, 3rd railway troops battalion in Pikulice near Przemyśl, and 7th railway troops battalion in Września) were organised pursuant to a Ministry of Defence directive in the military districts of Warsaw, Pomerania and Silesia. While railway troops battalions were formed centrally, the designated organisational groups encountered numerous staffing, organisational and material difficulties. In terms of operational and training matters, railway troops battalions reported to military district commanders. The Branches IV of Military Transport handled all the planning and organisational affairs associated with the training of railway troop units in military districts. The management, performing of specialist task and supervision of the use of railway troops were all within the competencies of the Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. Upon formation, railway troop units became a mobilisation platform when railway troop brigades were mobilised.

In the years 1955–1959, railway troops underwent a re-organisation, due in the early years to political changes directly associated with the so-called “thaw.” The changes to international and domestic circumstances gave rise to three waves of armed forces headcount reduction. The 5th railway troop’s battalion in Darłowo was disbanded during the first wave of 1955. The third wave of armed forces reduction in March 1957 brought the disassembly of the 7th railway troops battalion. All railway units were consequently trimmed to a bare minimum (only the 3rd railway troops battalion in Pikulice remained). Many officers and non-commissioned officers were discharged and made part of the reserve corps, a part of the staff were retrained and assigned to other forces. The technical equipment and armaments were transferred to other units, the majority of all the barracks and training grounds were handed over to civilian authorities.

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178 This concept was extremely useful to the national economy: already in the 19th century, most railway troops in European countries constructed and repaired state railway lines as part of their military exercise.

The essence of changes to the Armed Forces of the Polish People's Republic involved the re-organisation and modernisation of the army as well as its adaptation to the new war doctrine of the Warsaw Pact. The 3rd railway troops battalion was transferred from Pikulice to Bakończyce near Przemyśl. In 1957, the battalion was re-organised, a new 2nd railway regiment ultimately replacing it.

### 3.2.1 The 5th Railway Troops Battalion in Darłowo

The 5th railway troops battalion was formed in August 1950<sup>179</sup> in Darłowo on the basis of the well-developed Navy railway artillery battalion, in conformity to operational status 10/7. Major Konstanty Świrski was made commander of the unit; Second Naval Lieutenant Czesław Rogala was made his deputy for political affairs. This battalion was the first railway troops unit formed upon the end of wartime hostilities. An organisational group consisting of 18 officers and non-commissioned officers and 99 sailors was assigned to the newly formed battalion.<sup>180</sup> Many sailors had previously served in the Navy railway artillery battalion, which was disbanded in 1950. The process of assigning officers and non-commissioned officers from other types of armed forces to the battalion began soon thereafter. In October 1950, the organisational group took a barracks facility complex over from the Navy and began expanding and adjusting it to their current requirements. That same month soldiers of the draft were incorporated into the battalion for the first time. By December, the battalion headcount reached 614 soldiers.

In the years 1950–1952, the battalion served as a training unit charged with preparing command staff for the railway troops battalions that were being formed.

On May 21st 1951,<sup>181</sup> commander of the PMD (Pomorski Okręg Wojskowy) Major General Bronisław Półturzycki was obliged to designate organisational groups from the 5th railway troops battalion to form new railway troops units in Pikulice and Września.

Over the following years, the battalion was being systematically improved with respect to the railway line and bridge construction and reconstruction skills. During wartime, the battalion's tasks also included the operation of railway

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179 Order of the Ministry of National Defence No. 084/org. of August 8th 1950, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 135.

180 Order of the Navy Commander No. 022/50 of August 24th 1950, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 36.

181 Directive of the Ministry of National Defence No. 00020 of February 21st 1951, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 140.

lines. Pursuant to the order of the Ministry of National Defence of December 1st 1952,<sup>182</sup> the 5th railway troops battalion was expanded and reformed from operational status 10/7 to 10/14. The organisational structure of the battalion was partially changed; a training battalion was formed, comprising two road companies, a bridge company, an operations platoon and a service platoon. Upon reforming the headcount of the battalion, it comprised 60 officers, 146 non-commissioned officers, 655 privates, and 192 non-commissioned officers' academy cadets, totalling 1,053 soldiers.<sup>183</sup>

In October 1950, the 30th reserve officers training company was set up at the battalion for the purposes of training officers – platoon commanders for railway troops.<sup>184</sup> Lieutenant Edmund Krawiec was appointed commander of the reserve officers training company. 121 graduates of secondary schools (especially railway schools) were assigned to the company for a period of two years. An ensign training ended with practical internship, students assuming the position of platoon commanders in railway units. Once the training was over, final examinations were held, closing with promotion to the most junior officer rank – an ensign. A total of 67 graduates were promoted and remained in the military service, appropriately assigned to the 3rd railway troops battalion in Pikulice, 7th railway troop's battalion in Września, or to military transport bodies.

In 1952, a Training Curriculum for Reserve Officers of the Railway Military Forces was introduced at the battalion, the purpose of the course being to train railway troop reserves, engineering and technical staff in particular. Captain Aleksander Tarasiewicz was appointed course commander. The training of the first class of 75 reserve officers (including mostly Polish State Railways personnel) began in mid-January 1952. The curriculum covered a three-month course; upon completion all graduates were awarded an officer's rank. Approximately 360 reserve officers were trained at the 5th railway troop's battalion in Darłowo.<sup>185</sup>

On March 10th 1953, the Chief of General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces ordered the Training Curriculum for Reserve Officers of the Railway Military Forces to be transferred to the 7th railway troop's battalion in Września.<sup>186</sup>

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182 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 140.

183 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 141.

184 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 141.

185 A special-purpose mobilisation course was also organised, graduates assigned to positions of responsibility in the army and Polish State Railways.

186 Order of the Co General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces No. 0125/org, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 149.

In order to improve the anti-aircraft defence of military troop trains and military operational and supplies transports, an Independent Squadron of Anti-Aircraft Defence of Military Transports was formed at the 5th railway troops battalion as of December 31st 1952, to operational status 10/15. The Squadron comprised anti-aircraft defence platoons from the 5th, 3rd and 7th railway troops battalions; the overall headcount comprised 11 officers, 22 non-commissioned officers and 73 privates (including 20 cadets) for a total of 106 soldiers. Lieutenant Stanisław Skurtys was appointed commander of the Squadron.<sup>187</sup>

The practical training of the battalion was performed while constructing and refurbishing railway lines, belonging to the military or the state railway.

The 5th railway troops battalion was dispatched for its first field camp in Olszanica in 1951. As part of their practical training the soldiers of the battalion worked to support the reconstruction of the Uherce – Olszanica – Ustianowa – Krościenko railway line. In 1952 the companies of the battalion were dispatched for practical training to field camps in Skandawa, Braniewo and Mordy, their training involving construction of sidings, station tracks and fixed ramps. In 1953, the battalion was dispatched to Nurzec, Zielonka, and Słupsk camps, where it built military sidings and refurbished station tracks.<sup>188</sup> In 1954, the companies of the battalion were dispatched to Nurzec and Koszalin field camps and performed works associated with the construction of a military railway siding and refurbishment of station tracks. In 1955, the battalion was dispatched to a field camp in Skandawa, where it carried out work associated with the construction of sidings and permanent ramps for army purposes.

In conjunction with a resolution passed by the Polish People's Republic government with regard to the reductions in the numbers of the Polish People's Republic Armed Forces, on September 26th 1955, the commander of the PMD ordered the battalion to be disbanded by December 15th 1955.<sup>189</sup>

Consequently, the 5th Railway Troops Battalion disappeared after 5 years of existence; nonetheless, the personnel trained in the battalion went on to organise new railway units. Twenty-eight officers and 3 professional non-commissioned officers were transferred to the 3rd and 7th railway troop's battalions and military transport authorities respectively, the remaining part of professional personnel

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187 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 150.

188 The construction of the military siding at Nurzec was handled jointly with the 7th railway troops battalion.

189 Order of the Headquarters of the Pomeranian Military District of September 26th 1955; in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138.

assigned to other military units or discharged and included in the reserve corps; the 196 draft privates were released early as reserve troops. Pursuant to an order of October 8th 1955, the Independent Squadron of Anti-Aircraft Defence of Military Transfers<sup>190</sup> was relocated to the 7th railway troop's battalion in Września. The technical and railway equipment was transferred to the 3rd and 7th railway troop's battalions. Rolling stock – an armoured steam locomotive, armoured wagons and armoured trolleys – were handed over to the 3rd railway troops battalion in Bakończyce. The barracks facility in Darłowo (including all equipment) was re-transferred to the Navy.

### 3.2.2 3rd Railway Troops Battalion in Pikulice near Przemyśl

On July 17th 1951,<sup>191</sup> pursuant to an order by the Minister of National Defence, the 5th railway troops battalion was formed in Pikulice near Przemyśl with a headcount of 632, in conformity to operational status 10/7. The 3rd railway troops battalion was the second military railway unit to be established upon the end of wartime hostilities. In September, the battalion was joined by an organisational group of 6 officers and 120 soldiers from the 5th railway troops battalion. By October 20th 1951, the group took over and adapted the barracks complex in Pikulice to their purposes. In late October, the first draft soldiers were recruited for the battalion. Also that month, a complement of 28 ensigns arrived (mostly graduates of the ensign course in Darłowo), appropriately assuming positions of platoon commanders. In early November, the battalion was joined by personnel from the 5th railway troops battalion, by graduates of the Officers' Military Engineering Academy in Wrocław, and by officers and non-commissioned officers from other types of armed forces.

Lieutenant Colonel Konstanty Świrski (former commander of the 5th railway troops battalion) was appointed the commander of the battalion, Captain Jan Borowiecki his deputy for political affairs.<sup>192</sup>

From November 1951, the battalion conducted intensive training and restored the barracks facilities, adapting them for railway troops requirements. On January 18th January 1952, the first military oath ceremony was held at the battalion, battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel Konstanty Świrski receiving

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190 Order of the Headquarters of the Pomeranian Military District No. 00573/oper of October 8th 1955.

191 Order of the Ministry of National Defence No. 063/org. of July 17th 1951 (10/7), in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 155.

192 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 156.

the oath taken by 235 junior troops.<sup>193</sup> In October 1952, another complement was added to the battalion: graduates of the 30th Training Company of Railway Military Reserve Officers were appointed platoon commanders. On January 1st 1952, the 3rd railway troops battalion headcount reached 506. The battalion was charged with the construction and reconstruction of railway lines and facilities, culverts and bridges, and with the operation of militarised railway lines.

The battalion comprised two permanent way companies, a bridge company, a technical company and an operations platoon. The permanent way company was charged with the construction of trackbed and tracks. The bridge company's responsibilities included the construction and reconstruction of wooden bridges and temporary culverts. The tasks assigned to soldiers of the operations company included the handling of heavy equipment: S-100 bulldozers, KU 1201 excavators, standard-gauge Tw1-98 locomotive and PS-15 generator (15 kVa) with the devices it powered: cross-cut saws, drills, saws, lathes, column drilling machine, and spot-light masts used as construction site lighting. The tasks of the operations platoon included the operation of the permanent-way maintenance train during tracks overhaul and securing telegraph and telephone communication.<sup>194</sup>

The Tw1-98 locomotive was leased in the 1950s from the Regional State Railway Management in Warsaw, and used to haul work trains. Shortly after the battalion had been reformed as the 2nd railway regiment, the locomotive was returned to the Polish State Railways (in March 1958).<sup>195</sup>

On December 3rd 1952,<sup>196</sup> the battalion's operational status was changed from 10/7 to 10/14. In order to continue the training in the field of anti-aircraft defence, on December 3rd 1952, 3 anti-aircraft defence platoons were dispatched from the 3rd railway troops battalion to the Independent Squadron of Anti-Aircraft Defence of Military Transfers at the 5th railway troops battalion in Darłowo.<sup>197</sup>

In order to add to the full-time personnel of the 3rd railway troops battalion, a further 180 soldiers were recruited for the permanent-way companies on February 12th 1953.<sup>198</sup> They took the military oath in late March 1953, upon completion of the basic training.

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193 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 159.

194 *Pociągi pancerne* (1999), 107.

195 Polish State Railways General Management, Central Traction Management, *Księga inwentarzowa parowozów*.

196 Order of the Ministry of National Defence No. 00415/org. of December 3rd 1952, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 160.

197 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 162.

198 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 162.

In the autumn of 1953, once all subdivisions returned from their practical training, the 3rd railway troops battalion was relocated from Pikulice to the barracks in Przemyśl-Bakończyce. The facility was a much larger one, with a railway siding with capacity for further expansion on site.

On November 11th 1955, upon order by the commander of the Warsaw Military District, the battalion's operational status was changed from 10/14 to 10/16, with a headcount of 655 soldiers.<sup>199</sup>

In April 1956, the 3rd railway troops battalion was relocated again, from Bakończyce to the new barracks facility of Przemyśl Zasanie. The barracks in Bakończyce remained at the disposal of the battalion, for use as a reserve troops training facility. This was also where the Railway Equipment Depot was organised at the time, reporting directly to the Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces.

From 1952, the battalion also provided military and railway training for the students of the Warsaw, Cracow and Silesian Universities of Technology for military railway purposes. The technical skills of the battalion upon the completion of training were tested during works performed for the purposes of both the army and the national economy, organised annually at field camps (during the period of May to September).

The battalion was dispatched to its first field camp in Ustrzyki Dolne in 1952. The 3rd railway troops battalion engaged in works associated with the reconstruction of the Ustrzyki Dolne – Krościenko railway line,<sup>200</sup> 12 km long. The line was converted from 1,524 mm broad gauge to 1,435 mm standard gauge. The reconstruction of the line also involved full length rail and track replacement as well as bridge and culvert reconstruction. Apart from delivering the aforementioned tasks, the battalion (assisted by reserve troops) completed an intermediate-level repair project on a 20 km section of the Zagórz – Komańcza – Łupków railway line at a field camp in Zagórz. Additionally, the battalion was involved in the construction of a railway siding leading to the military barracks at the Pikulice garrison – the project had to be discontinued as a result of the battalion having been relocated from Pikulice to Bakończyce in 1953.

In 1953, the battalion left for a field camp in Bezwola near Łuków, a military railway siding had been constructed during its term. The works involved the construction of a 9 km section of a siding access track, branching off from Polish State Railways station in Bezwola. Due to on-site difficulties the development

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199 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 164.

200 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 169.

of the access track embankment required extensive earthworks (half of the 9 kilometre access track ran upon a 1,5m high embankment, the other half routed in a 2m deep cutting). Furthermore, the siding construction project involved the construction of 7 side tracks (each 6 km long); trees were felled and stumps grubbed on site as well. During the same year, the battalion performed railway station expansion works at a field camp in Tarnobrzeg.

At the Polish State Railways station in Żurawica, the battalion carried out track repairs, and engaged in the practical training of non-commissioned officer cadets in the field of railway operation.

In 1954, the battalion was dispatched to another field camp in Bezwola for the purpose of continued siding development. The investment was completed 12 days ahead of time, in conformity to the commitment to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Polish People's Republic. That same year the battalion subdivisions engaged in bridge construction works at a field camp in Wyszków, the project coinciding with the battalion's bridge company having joined forces with the 63rd road troops battalion to reconstruct and refurbish road bridges across the River Vistula in Wyszogród and Plock.

In 1955, upon an order by the head of the Headquarters of Military Transport of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, the battalion was engaged in works at the Hurko-Medyka field camp, to expand the Dry Transshipment Port in Medyka and local sidings for army purposes.

In the same year, the battalion (having joined forces with the permanent-way company) also worked on an intermediate-level repair project of the Siedlce – Czeremcha railway line, at a field camp in Mordy. The non-commissioned officers academy, in turn, worked together with the permanent-way company to expand the Dry Transshipment Port in Medyka. The operations company of the non-commissioned officers academy provided training in the field of handling rail traffic signalling devices at the Polish State Railways station Żurawica.

In February 1955, the bridge company of the battalion commanded by Second Lieutenant Zygmunt Leciak – having joined forces at a field camp in Iskań with the 83rd road troops battalion – completed the construction of a high-water road bridge (187 m long) across the River San.

On April 3rd 1956, by order of the Chief of General Staff,<sup>201</sup> the battalion began constructing the Cisna – Przysłup – Kalnica – Wetlina narrow-gauge forestry railway line, during a field camp in Przysłup near Cisna. The purpose

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201 Order by the Co-General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces No. 00592 of April 3rd 1956, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 173.

of extending the existing Nowy Łupków – Cisna narrow-gauge line towards Wetlina was to foster economic recovery of the Bieszczady Mountains and increase timber shipments. While constructing the narrow-gauge railway in 1956 at the field camp in Przysłop the battalion constructed 13.5 km of railway embankments (as an undeveloped structure) and 32 culverts. All works were performed in difficult technical conditions in a mountainous area. The value of all works carried out totalled 9 million zloty. The 3rd railway troops battalion was joined by subdivisions of the 7th railway troops battalion from Września for the purposes of works to construct the narrow-gauge railway line in the Bieszczady Mountains. The 3rd railway troops battalion (thereafter the 2nd railway regiment) continued working on the narrow-gauge railway line until 1959.

In 1957 the battalion continued (together with the 7th railway troops battalion) works associated with the construction of a narrow-gauge railway in the Bieszczady Mountains – the actual railway line was developed on previously prepared embankments. At the same time the battalion subdivisions engaged in works associated with the modernisation of the Polish State Railways station in Szczakowa<sup>202</sup> and the electrification of the Trzebinia – Szczakowa railway line.

Pursuant to the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Polish People's Republic of March 25th 1957<sup>203</sup> and the Order of the Minister of National Defence of April 19th 1957<sup>204</sup> concerning the reductions to army numbers, on April 26th 1957 the commander of the Warsaw Military District ordered the operational status of the battalion to be changed from 10/16 to 10/19, the battalion itself renamed the 2nd railway regiment. The battalion was to be reformed by June 15th 1957.<sup>205</sup>

### 3.2.3 7th Railway Troops Battalion in Września

Upon the order of the Minister of National Defence of July 17th 1951,<sup>206</sup> the 7th railway troops battalion was formed in Września to operational status 10/7 with

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202 As of July 1957, 7th railway troops battalion subdivisions were working to modernise station Szczakowa; they were replaced with 2nd railway troops regiment subdivisions at a later time.

203 Regulation of the Council of Ministers No. 109/57 of March 25th 1957.

204 Order of the Ministry of National Defence No. 031/org. of April 19th 1957.

205 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 178.

206 Order of the Ministry of National Defence No. 063/org. of July 17th 1951, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 178.

an overall headcount of 632 soldiers. The battalion was the third railway unit to be formed upon the end of wartime hostilities in Poland.

An organisational group of 12 officers and non-commissioned officers and 90 privates from the 5th railway troops battalion arrived to the newly formed battalion on August 18th 1951.<sup>207</sup> Major Eugeniusz Majer was appointed commander of the 7th railway troops battalion with Lieutenant Antoni Piszczyk as his deputy for political affairs. By October 20th 1951, the group had taken over and developed the barracks facility complex. In November 1951, the battalion began training and adapting the barracks facility to meet the purposes of railway troops. In late October, the first group of draft junior troops was incorporated into the battalion. In early November, the battalion was joined by a supplement from the 5th railway troops battalion (command personnel) and by graduates of the Officers' Military Engineering Academy in Wrocław. The officers and non-commissioned officers dispatched from other types of armed forces of the Silesian Military District arrived to the battalion as well. In October 1952, graduates of the 30th Training Company of Railway Military Reserve Officers in Darłowo joined the battalion, appropriately appointed platoon commanders or assigned as bridge technicians to the Technical Section, for example.<sup>208</sup>

On January 1st 1952, the headcount of the 7th railway troops battalion reached 538 soldiers;<sup>209</sup> on January 10th, the first military oath ceremony was held at the battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Włodzimierz Godek receiving the oath taken by 448 junior troops.<sup>210</sup>

To secure anti-aircraft defence training, two full-time anti-aircraft defence platoons were dispatched from the 7th railway troops battalion to the 5th railway troops battalion in Darłowo on December 3rd 1952.<sup>211</sup> Both platoons were incorporated in the Independent Squadron of Anti-Aircraft Defence of Military Transports.

On December 3rd 1952,<sup>212</sup> the operational status of the battalion was changed from 10/7 to 10/14. Upon the order by the Chief of General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, the Training Curriculum for Reserve Officers of the Railway Military Forces was relocated from the 5th railway troops battalion in

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207 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 179.

208 Lieutenant Colonel Kazimierz Balog's account of December 10th 2006.

209 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 179.

210 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 185.

211 Order of the Ministry of National Defence No. 00415/org. of December 3rd 1952, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 185.

212 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 187.

Darłowo to the 7th railway troops battalion on April 30th 1953,<sup>213</sup> All Training Curriculum personnel were quartered in the barracks of the non-commissioned officers academy.<sup>214</sup>

Following the disbandment of the 5th railway troops battalion upon the order by the commander of the PMD of October 8th 1955,<sup>215</sup> the Independent Squadron of Anti-Aircraft Defence of Military Transports was relocated to the 7th railway troops battalion. In October 1956, the Squadron was dispatched out of railway troops structures to Zgorzelec.<sup>216</sup> On November 8th 1955,<sup>217</sup> the operational status of the 7th railway troops battalion was changed again from 10/14 to 10/16, with a headcount of 655 soldiers.

The 7th railway troops battalion was dispatched to its first field camps in Mordy and Platerów in 1952; the practical training of the battalion subdivisions involved works associated with full-length railway surface replacement on the Mordy – Siemiatycze section. That same year, the battalion was dispatched to a field camp in Zielonka, where the troops engaged in works to construct seven temporary wooden bridges for the purposes of the narrow-gauge railway line being built at that time at the Centre for Ballistic Research.<sup>218</sup> In 1954, battalion subdivisions continued working on the line. The battalion was dispatched to a field camp in Nurzec in the same year with intent to join the 5th railway troops battalion from Darłowo in constructing a military railway siding.

The battalion also engaged in the construction of a railway siding to the barracks in Września for in-house purposes. The siding (approximate length: 5 km) was enlarged to form a small railway station at battalion barracks. It was fitted with rail traffic signalling devices (including manual semaphores). A 25-metre long bridge and two culverts were built as part of the construction project; the siding was to be used in the training of operation subdivisions and for in-house service purposes.

In 1954, the battalion was dispatched to field camps in Nurzec, Śrem and Poznań. At the training camp in Nurzec – having joined forces with the 5th

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213 Order of the Chief of General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces No. 0125/org. of March 10th 1953, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 187.

214 The full-time variable headcount at the course totalled 100 students.

215 Order by the Commander of the PMD No. 00537/oper of October 8th 1955, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 188.

216 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 188.

217 Order by the Commander of the Silesian Military District No. 0172 of November 8th 1955, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 90.

218 In the 1960s, the Centre was renamed the MIOAT in Zielonka.

railway troops battalion from Darłowo – it continued works to construct a military siding. At the field camp in Śrem, assisted by bridge companies and jointly with the 78th road troops battalion from Toruń, the battalion constructed a 150-metre long road bridge across the River Warta in Śrem. The bridge was commissioned for traffic on July 22nd for propaganda-related reasons. At the field camp in Poznań, supported by its permanent-way company, the battalion refurbished tracks at the Polish State Railways station in Poznań. The battalion also provided practical training for non-commissioned officer academy cadets in the field of railway operations at PKP stations in Września and Poznań. In 1954 the battalion continued to expand and modernise its own siding in Września; the works were performed by the subdivisions that remained in the garrison.

In 1955, the battalion was dispatched to field camps in Waliły, Chwalibogowo and Kuryłówka. At the Waliły camp a military siding was constructed; 7 kilometres of track were constructed and 53,000 m<sup>3</sup> of soil were displaced; local works also included felling trees and grubbing up stumps.

In August, at the Chwalibogowo field camp, the battalion constructed two road bridges (15 and 22 m in length, respectively), for purposes of the Września county. At the camp in Kuryłówka, supported by two bridge companies and together with the 63rd road troops battalion from Płock, the battalion constructed a 252-metre long road bridge over the River San in Kuryłówka.

In 1956, the battalion was dispatched to field camps in Skandawa, Przysłup near Cisna, and Poznań.

At the Skandawa camp, assisted by two permanent-way companies and three reserve troops companies, together with the 5th railway troops battalion from Darłowo, the battalion engaged in works to construct a military siding, and the second track of the Sątopy Samulewo – Korsze railway line (length: 15 km).

At the camp in Przysłup, upon the order by the Chief of General Staff,<sup>219</sup> the battalion engaged in works to construct the Cisna – Przysłup – Kalnica – Wetlina narrow-gauge forestry railway line, jointly with the 3rd railway troops battalion from Bakończyce. The battalion constructed 8 kilometres of tracks and 4 small bridges (total length: 100 m). The earthworks in difficult mountainous terrain involved moving of 54,000 m<sup>3</sup> of soil. At the field camp in Poznań, the battalion renovated 17 kilometres of station tracks at the Polish State Railways station in Poznań.

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219 Order of the Commander of General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces No. 00592 of April 3rd 1956, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 198.

In 1957, the battalion was dispatched to their subsequent field camp in Przysłop; using first-year junior troops, together with the 3rd railway troops battalion from Bakończyce, the battalion continued to construct the narrow-gauge Cisna – Przysłop – Kalnica – Wetlina railway. On June 15th 1957, the subdivisions of these battalions<sup>220</sup> were incorporated into the 2nd railway regiment.

Furthermore, the battalion participated in combating the effects of natural disasters, soldiers protecting bridges from ice floes, taking part in flood prevention action, and clearing snow from railway lines, stations and roads.

The 7th railway troops battalion completed its training on April 24th 1957. On May 2nd 1957, first-year troops were dispatched to field camps in Przysłop and Szczakowa to modernise and expand the marshalling yard.<sup>221</sup>

Acting upon the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of March 25th 1957 and the order of the Ministry of National Defence of April 19th 1957 concerning the reductions to army numbers, and pursuant to the order of the commander of the Silesian Military District of April 30th 1957, the 7th railway troops battalion was disbanded, the disbandment period set for May 1st until July 20th 1957. All the technical and railway equipment owned by the battalion was transferred to the 2nd railway regiment that was being formed in Przemyśl.<sup>222</sup>

All the officers and non-commissioned officers were reassigned to military transport authorities and to other Silesian Military District units; some were released as part of the reserve corps. Some personnel (24 officers and 15 non-commissioned officers) were transferred to the 2nd railway regiment under formation. Once the battalion had been disbanded, the second-year draft troops were granted early release into the reserve corps. The barracks were handed over to the Municipal National Council in Września, some facilities placed at the disposal of the Soviet Army (transport battalion of the Soviet Army).<sup>223</sup>

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220 Order of the Commander of the Silesian Military District No. 08/org. of April 30th 1957, and order of the Commander of the Warsaw Military District No. 026/org. of April 26th 1957, in: Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 203.

221 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 213.

222 Gembora, Ref. No. 1138, 213.

223 Lieutenant Colonel Kazimierz Balog's account of December 10th 2006.

