

Original article

A history of the Neisse Garrison

Tomasz Szulc 

Faculty of Security Studies,

General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military University of Land Forces, Wroclaw, Poland,

e-mail: tomasz.szulc@awl.edu.pl

INFORMATIONS

Article history:

Submitted: 26 March 2018

Accepted: 12 May 2019

Published: 16 September 2019

ABSTRACT

The Neisse Garrison always held a strategic position starting with its establishment in the Early Middle Ages until the end of the 20th century. Its convenient location in the Sudety Foothills meant that it served defence functions protecting this area from both attacks from the north and the south. Over the centuries relations between the city and the military underwent numerous transformations depending on who controlled it. In the times of the Bishop's Duchy and the rule of Habsburg only small troops stationed in the garrison, and the security of the whole area was provided by bulwarks. In 1741, after Neisse was seized by Frederick II, the town acquired enormous significance. The symbiosis between Neisse and the military, which lasted for the subsequent 260 years, had a considerable influence on the development and importance of the town. As a result of changes which took place in the Polish Army on the turn of the 20th and 21st century, the Neisse Garrison was closed down.

KEYWORDS

Polish Army, military garrisons, Neisse Garrison



© 2019 by Author(s). This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY). <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Introduction

Security has always been and will always be one of the fundamental existential goals of all nations. The key factor in ensuring state security are tactical formations and military units whose basic role is the defence of borders inviolability. For the purpose of fulfilling this mission the Polish Armed Forces maintain a high level of combat readiness of military units in Poland and they also train subordinate soldiers so that they are able to efficiently conduct defence actions.

One of the most important factors determining the presence of Polish troops in a given region is its geographic and administrative location. Both in the past and today military troops are deployed in strategic places allowing to complete tasks resulting from the geopolitical assumptions of state security. For the purpose of providing the justification for stationing military units in the Neisse Garrison, the most important facts from

the history of this town will be analysed in the context of the presence of military troops on this territory.

1. Administrative and geographic location of Neisse

The administrative location of Neisse remains a contentious issue until today. From 1201, Henry I the Bearded gave the Neisse Land to the bishop of Wrocław, the Duchy of Neisse was related to Wrocław and consequently also with Lower Silesia [1, p. 17-8]. In 1680 a Dutch cartographer Frederick de Wit located Neisse in the region of Lower Silesia, which clearly emphasised that the town belonged to this land. This administrative location of the Neisse Duchy lasted until the Silesian Wars (1740-1763), when after the secularisation of Prussia the location of the town was more and more frequently associated with Upper Silesia. In the subsequent years the border between the Lower and Upper Silesia was determined by the Nysa Klodzka River which flows through the town dividing it into two parts, which made Neisse affiliation even more complex. In the years 1815-1945 the town administratively belonged to Regierungsbezirk Oppeln which in 1919 became a part of the Upper Silesian Province, and as a result some historians claim the Neisse is a part of Upper Silesia [2, p. 47-8]. Those who oppose this view strongly emphasise the cultural and historical ties between Neisse and Lower Silesia which became visible, for instance in the coat of arms of the Neisse Duchy in which, apart from the symbols of the town itself, there is also the emblem of the Piasts of Lower Silesia. Taking into consideration the above described discrepancies, Neisse is defined as a town located in Silesia without differentiating between the Lower and Upper Silesia.

The changes in the borders and area of Poland after World War II forced also the reorganisation of the administrative division of the country. Under the *Decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation of August 21, 1944* the pre-war administrative division was reintroduced, due to the lack of precise determination of the borders it did not define the actual number of voivodeships [3]. It was not until June 28, 1946 that pursuant to the *Regulation of the Council of Ministers on Temporary Administrative Division of the Recovered Territories*, the issue of temporary administrative division was legally regulated, the document distinguished fourteen voivodeships and two federal cities [4]. According to this division, Neisse was a part of the Silesian Voivodeship thus making the Neisse County.

In the years 1950-1957 some significant administrative changes at all structural levels of the country were introduced. Pursuant to the *Act on the Changes in the Administrative Division of Poland of June 28, 1950*, three new voivodeships were established, including the Opole Voivodeship where Neisse was located [5]. In the years 1957-1975 reforms related to lower structural levels were introduced, however, they did not significantly influence the administrative affiliation of Neisse. It was not until 1975 that pursuant to the *Act on the Two-stage Administrative Division of Poland and Changes in the Act on National Councils* the middle administrative level – counties, were eliminated and forty nine voivodeships were established [6]. In accordance with this new division, Neisse was still a part of the Opole Voivodeship, however, it was no longer the separate Neisse County.

As of January 1, 1999, pursuant to the *Act on the Introduction of the Fundamental Three-Level Territorial Division of the Republic of Poland*, yet another change in the administrative division of Poland was introduced. As part of this reform, the three-level division of the territorial structure of the country was reintroduced and the number of voivodeships was limited to only sixteen. The Opole Voivodeship, which included Neisse, was extended by some areas which earlier belonged to the Czeszochowa Voivodeship and also the Neisse County, encompassing nine municipalities and five cities, was created [7]. The administrative location of Neisse after 1999 was still the same in 2001 when the Neisse Garrison was closed down and has been maintained until today (2018).

During the dislocation of military units in the Polish territory, among others, one should take into account, the most probable security threats in this country. As a result, one of the criteria of military units dislocation in Poland is the distance between military garrisons and the borders of the neighbouring states which potentially can pose a threat to the security of this country. Current Polish borders were determined after World War II by the three victorious superpowers: the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Great Britain. The decisions related to the shape of the Polish territory were made at the conferences in Teheran in 1943, Yalta in and Potsdam in 1945 [8, p. 75-82]. After World War II the countries which neighboured Poland were: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Czechoslovakia and after 1949 also the German Democratic Republic [8, p. 75-82]. After the reunification of Germany in 1990, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, Poland neighboured seven states [8, p. 82-5]. Figure 1 presents the distances between Neisse and the states neighbouring Poland in 2001.

Geographically Neisse is located on the border of the Sudety Foothills and Silesian Lowland in the Nysa Klodzka River Valley, on its right bank in the estuary of the Biala Glucholaska River. In terms of landscape the Neisse Land is located in transitional areas combining some features of lowlands and submontane regions with medium and low mountains, foothills, uplands, basins and dips. These fluctuations in the landscape are visible in the topographical relief, geological and hydrological structure, soil cover, climatic conditions and the plant and animal kingdom [10, p. 39].

The climate in the Neisse Region is cold and humid. The region is abundant in streams, watercourses and wetlands which since the Neolithic Era (4.5-1.7 thousand of years B.C.) facilitated settlement. The most important watercourse is the Nysa Klodzka River which flows directly through the town. Its springs can be found near the Snieznik Massif and the river itself flows through the Klodzko Valley and the Bardzkie Mountains in the area of Bardo. Near this town there are artificial water reservoirs: Nyskie Lake, also called Glebinowskie Lake, and Otmuchowskie Lake [10, p. 39].

The choice of the location of the stronghold which was later transformed into the town – Neisse, largely depended on these favourable defence conditions. In the Middle Ages the stronghold was protected with thick woods and mountains in the south and numerous hills and marshes from the north-west to the east [11, p. 17-8]. Choosing the Nysa Klodzka River as the place of settlement was justified by easy access to water and

food, as well as convenient farming conditions. The settlement was the crossroad of numerous trade routes, which additionally supported founding the town and its development. A small distance, only about a dozen kilometres from the state border, even in the past forced Neisse to become a fortress guarding Silesia and protecting it from invasions from the south [11, p. 17-8].



Fig. 1. Distances between Neisse and the neighbouring states in 2001
 Source: Own study on the basis of [9].

The analysis of the information related to the administrative and geographic location of Neisse allows to conclude that placing the Neisse Garrison here creates rational premises for locating military forces in this place. It is also a rational decision to maintain military forces in the south-west part of the country only a short distance away from Poland’s southern neighbour. The geographic location of the town and the region facilitates defence actions. The administrative location of the town favourably influences sealing and intelligence operations along the southern border of the state to prevent uncontrolled migration in the region. In addition to this, in 2001 the military

units forming the Neisse Garrison were the only real military power along the border with the Czech Republic, which is shown in Figure 2.

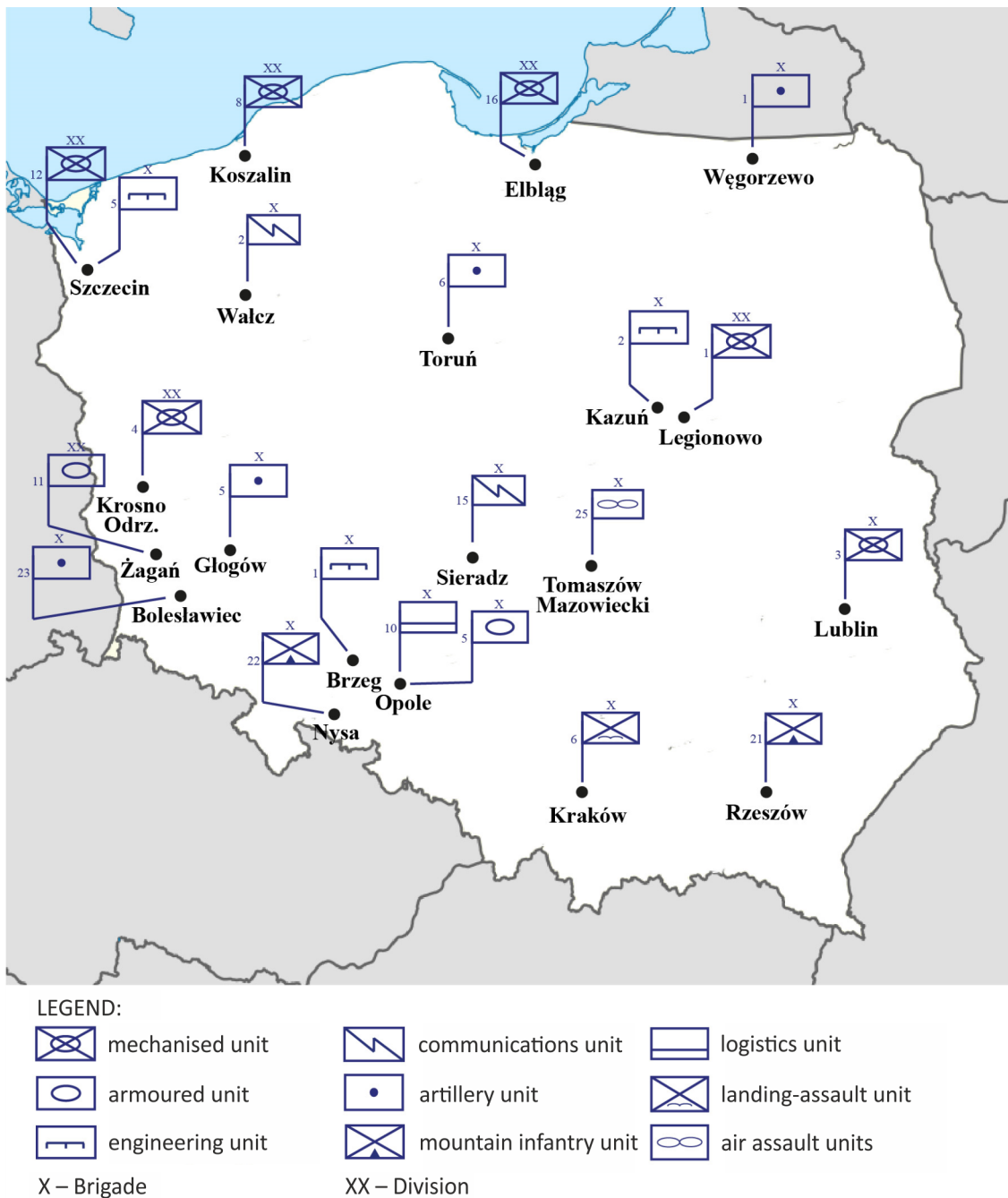


Fig. 2. Dislocation of Land Forces in Poland in 2001
Source: [12, p. 94].

2. Military aspects of Neisse history before 1945

Most of historical sources sees the genesis of the name Neisse in the name of the river which it was given earlier, before any settlement was established here [13, p. 9]. Over

the centuries there were quite a few names which were used to refer to this place: Nysa, Nise, Neise and Neysse. The first records related to the name of the stronghold on the Nysa Klodzka River come from the 10th c., the place was mentioned in *Chronica Boemorum* before 991 [14, p. 9]. The history of settlement in this place reaches the times of the Middle Paleolithic (90-60 thousand years B.C.). The oldest findings encompassing objects and flint tools from the area of Domaszkowice date back to this time [15, p. 38]. Most probably the first settlement in this region was established in the early Middle Ages (10th-12th century) in the north-east part of the later medieval stronghold.

The precise determination of the date and circumstances of the foundation of Neisse is hard due to the small number of records on the theme in historical sources. Assumedly, the beginnings of the stronghold reach the 12th century when Neisse was controlled by the castellany in Otmuchow which was subordinate to the bishops of Wroclaw from 1155 [13, p. 9]. The selection of this particular place for a settlement was based on rational premises. Today's area of the town was located near the Nysa Klodzka River, which facilitated farming activity and fishing, it also offered easy access to drinking water. The area of the town was unforested and surrounded with marshes, which made it easier to conduct defence operations to protect the town from invaders. An additional advantage of the place was the fact that it was located on the intersection of the most important trade routes in this part of Silesia, including the strategic Sudety Route stretching along the Polish-Czech border [16]. The small, only a little more than a dozen kilometres, distance from the Czech border even in the 12th century forced Neisse to take the role of a stronghold protecting the border zone from the invasions of southern neighbours. The highest intensity of conflicts with the Czech took place during the reign of Boleslaw the Wrymouth in the years 1108-1138, they resulted from contention between the Polish duke and his brother Zbigniew accepting support from Czech rulers. As a result of constant Polish-Czech conflicts a chain of castellan strongholds and local military centres were built in the region of the Neisse stronghold. One of them was the Otmuchow Castellan given to the Wroclaw Bishopric in 1000 by Boleslaw the Brave [16]. In the years 1198-1201 it was connected with the Neisse Land given to the Wroclaw Diocese by the then Bishop of Wroclaw, the Duke of Opole Jaroslaw [17, p. 6].

Jan Dlugosz in his work titled *Historiae Polonicae* wrote that in 1134 Boleslaw the Wrymouth erected in this place a masonry stronghold granted it numerous rights and privileges [16]. The first historical records related to Neisse as a town date back to 1223. In 13th-century documents the existence of the Old and New Towns, located on the opposite river banks, was mentioned. With time the "New" town located on the right river bank grew, while the "Old" part was devastated [18, p. 1]. Nowadays the year 1223 is considered the historical beginning of the town.

In the Middle Ages Neisse and its surrounding region were controlled by the bishops of Wroclaw who established a bishop's duchy lasting until the church demesne was secularised in 1810 [13, p. 9]. This fact significantly contributed to the improvement of the security of the stronghold as it acted as a deterrent. It was considered then that the infringement of Church possessions would bring anathema and condemnation. In the 13th century the Bishop of Wroclaw Laurence changed the town rights from Polish to

Flemish and as a result the significance of Neisse grew and it became the main urban settlement on the Nysa Klodzka River [18, p. 1]. Despite these advantageous conditions, the town did not manage to avert conflicts and wars in this period. The first war tragedy which affected the town was the invasion of Mongols in 1241. The Mongol invasion of Europe started in 1236, it was led by the grandson of the long-standing ruler of the Mongol Empire Genghis-Khan – Batu-Khan [19, p. 97]. After conquering Kievan Rus, the Mongol army set off in the direction of Hungary and Transylvania. Poland was just a secondary direction in this expedition and the Mongol forces invaded it only to prevent it from helping the Kingdom of Hungary [20, p. 58]. After defeating the Polish forces in Malopolska, the Mongols attacked Silesia and Opole. The decisive clash took place in Legnica on April 9, 1241. The Polish forces were defeated and the Mongols, withdrawing in the direction of Moravia and Hungary, plundered, devastated and nearly completely burnt down Neisse [19, p. 97].

In the years 1282-1287 in the Neisse Land there was a lasting conflict between the Bishop of Wroclaw Thomas and the Duke of Wroclaw Henry IV Probus. The misunderstanding was related to their property and the judiciary in the Neisse-Otmuchow Castellany. In 1248 in reaction to the anathema pronounced by the bishop on the duke, Henry IV Probus's forces devastated and plundered Neisse. In consequence the controversial land became the sole property of Wroclaw bishops. Since then the church had full control over this area and the title of duke used by the bishops of Wroclaw was indisputable [21, p. 4].

Neisse under the church rule obtained numerous economic privileges, which contributed to the dynamic development of the town. In the 14th century the Neisse Land became an important trade and craft centre on the scale of the whole country, which resulted from the development of the trade route network in which numerous routes intersected in this area. New secular buildings, churches and fortifications were built in the town. A new ring of powerful fortifications, including very high walls, a double moat, four gate towers, four smaller wall towers and eight bastiles were erected [16]. The construction of all these fortifications was financed by townsmen and was supported by the bishop whose dwelling was additionally surrounded with a defence wall.

In the 14th century some geopolitical changes took place in Silesia. As a result of the Treaty of Namslau in 1348, Silesia and Neisse, which belonged to the region, were subordinated to Czech control [21, p. 11]. Under the Czech and bishops' rule the town developed very dynamically. New monasteries, hospitals and schools were built, thus making the second after Wroclaw centre of education and culture in the region [19, p. 103].

At the beginning of the 15th century the Hussite movement, questioning the established religious and social order, developed in Silesia, it was started by Jana Hus, Professor of the University in Prague. In 1428 the territory of Silesia was invaded by the powerful Hussite army supported by local peasants. Neisse was invaded by forces led by Prokop, a Hussite leader [13, p. 11]. As a result of military clashes the suburban areas of the stronghold and the Old Town were devastated, they were later arduously rebuilt by Neisse inhabitants in the subsequent years.

In the second half of the 15th century the Czech crown and Silesian rule conflict still lasted. In 1469 the Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus, laying claim to the Czech crown, invaded Silesia, including Neisse, after conducting military operations with the Czech King George of Podebrady. In 1471 after the death of the Czech king, the Czech parliament proclaimed Vladislaus II Jagellonsky king, contrary to the will of the opposition supporting Matthias Corvinus [20, p. 99]. The newly nominated king did not plan to give up his rule in Silesia and, as a result, the conflict with Matthias only became more serious and gained a wider scale. In 1473 peace talks were held in Neisse with the participation of the representatives of Polish, Czech and Hungarian diplomacy, and also a papal mediator, Cardinal Marco Barbo [17, p. 19]. The negotiations were not successful and it was not until the next year that under a new treaty drawn up in Muchobor near Wroclaw, Silesia became Matthias Corvinus's annuity. After his death in 1490, Vladislaus II Jagellonsky took over the power in Hungary and, as a result, Silesia and Neisse were subdued to the Czech Kingdom again.

The time of Renaissance, Reformation and the beginnings of Counterreformation was the time of intensive development for Silesian towns. After the end of the Hussite Wars there was long period of peace in the Neisse Land. The economic decisions and care offered by the Bishop's Duchy means numerous privileges for the town and, hence, it reached its prime and became a local monopolist in trade services and industry [21, p. 14-5]. In 1526 after the death of the Czech and Hungarian King Louis II of Hungary in the battle of Mohacs, Bohemia and the Neisse Duchy were subdued to the Habsburgs and Austria under the Vienna Treaty [22, p. 118-9]. As a result of reformation, which reached Silesia in the first half of the 16th century, the position of the incumbent bishop Jan V Turzo, who moved from Wroclaw to Neisse and made this town the capital of the diocese, was weakened.

During the dynamic development of Neisse in Renaissance and Enlightenment, the town did not manage to avoid numerous natural disasters which regularly decimated the local population. There were fires, the river regularly overflowed its banks and there were also epidemics, and in 1590 there was also an earthquake. Only in 1521 an epidemic claimed the lives of 4 thousand inhabitants [16]. Despite these geopolitical and religious changes, numerous adversities which took place in the 16th century, according to numerous historians the period was one of the best in Neisse history.

The beginning of the 17th century meant a hard Counterreformation time for Neisse and also the Thirty Years' War started. The Habsburg Monarchy, which controlled Silesia, continuously aspired to strengthen its power in this region. It was expressed, among others, by the introduction of the counterreformation policy by Bishop Archduke Charles Habsburg, it forbade Neisse protestants to profess their faith. The protestant inhabitants of the town became the primary enemy of the bishopric. They were subject to various types of repressions, their leaders were banished, lost their property and in extreme cases were also sentenced to death. Such counterreformation actions of Bishop Charles were interrupted by the beginning of the Thirty Years' War which made the situation in this area even more complex [21, p. 15].

In 1618 Czech and Silesian protestants took over the initiative in the conflict with the bishopric by concentration their forces in the Neisse region which at that time was the centre of Catholicism. Two years later the main leader of protestant forces Jan Jerzy Hohenzollern invaded the town and deprived its inhabitants of all types of armour. He imposed an enormous contribution on the townsmen and bishop's administration, which led the town to bankruptcy [17, p. 20]. The situation changed when Bishop Charles returned to Neisse and in 1622 brought there Jesuits who were famous for their controversial methods of reinstating Catholicism. A significant part of protestants were forced to emigrate, thus the town was left by a large number of economically valuable people [21, p. 15-6]. The other followers of this faith were forced by the bishop to pay large sums of money in revenge for the actions against Catholics.

The period of the Thirty Years' War was the time of regression for Neisse. There were constantly allied or enemy military troops which brought losses to the town as it was necessary to maintain them. In 1632 the besieged Saxons and Danes plundered the town and burnt down the suburbs. A year later, as a result of the incessant war and poverty among the inhabitants, an epidemic broke up in the town claiming the lives of thousands of people and thus becoming one of the most tragic events in the history of this town [13, p. 13-5].

In the years 1639-1642 Neisse was besieged by Swedish forces. In 1642 after a few weeks of defence operations the town capitulated. The Swedish did not fulfil the conditions set out during negotiations. Despite earlier assertions, they arrested officers and soldiers were forced to join the Swedish army. Additionally the occupier imposed a very high contribution on Neisse which practically could not be paid by the inhabitants. When the Swedish army was leaving Neisse in 1642 they decided to burn down the whole town. The fire they started in four parts of the city was spreading so quickly that it was not possible to contain it. According to a legend, as a result of intensive prayers of the town inhabitants who asked St. Jacob for intervention, suddenly a torrential rain fell on the town and put down the fire and so also saved Neisse from complete destruction [17, p. 20].

The turn of the 17th and 18th centuries was the time of stability and peace for Neisse, it allowed economic growth and the reconstruction of the town after many years of war. The efficient policy of Polish bishops led by Francis Louis von Neuburg resulted in the erection of new sacral and secular buildings which turned Neisse in the Baroque capital of the duchy. After analysing the experience of the Thirty Years' War and the threat of the invasion of the Turkish army, the town made a decision to rebuild the fortification system yet again. In 1700 a special system allowing to flood the southern part of the city was installed just in case it was necessary to cut off a part of Neisse during a siege. For forty years this system of fortifications worked very well and was an effective deterrent to potential invaders [16].

In 1740 the King of Prussia Frederick II the Great took advantage of the death of the last male descendant in Habsburg dynasty, the Emperor of Austria Charles VI and made an attempt to gain power over a part of his empire, including the Neisse Land. The Prussian army crossed Silesian borders in December 1740 and by the end of January

1741 it controlled nearly the whole area which at that time was one of the richest Austrian provinces. Despite the intensive siege led by Prussian King Frederik II, Neisse was not conquered. For the purpose of effective artillery firing, the commander of the town defence forces Colonel von Roth burnt Neisse suburbs. As part of preparations to a battle, bridges on the Neisse were burnt down and thanks to the accumulation of water in the Biala River, the southern and eastern part of the town were flooded. During the clash the Prussian Army continued intensive firing of the stronghold and destroyed a sixth part of Neisse. The well-organized defence of the town and severe winter influenced Frederick II's decision to withdraw Prussian forces [16].

In October 1741 Prussian troops made another attempt at besieging the town by continuing destructive artillery firing. According to historians, the stronghold was attacked then with about 3 thousand bullets and 1.2 thousand bombs [13, p. 17]. During secret negotiations between Austrian Empress Maria Theresa and Frederick II the Great it was agreed that Lower Silesia would be passed to Prussia. At the beginning of November 1741 the Austrian Army left the town and Neisse went under Prussian control. Under a peace treaty signed in Wroclaw on June 11, 1742 the Habsburgs lost nearly the whole Silesia excluding the Cieszyn Duchy and Karniow-Opawa Silesia [17, p. 26].

In the years 1742-1888 Neisse changed its nature and it was no longer a bishop's town as the Wroclaw Bishopric was systematically losing its significance, and it became a Prussian military town. Frederick II the Great, being aware of the strategic significance of Neisse and the intentions of Austria which wanted to regain the lost, rich Province of Silesia, decided to develop the defence system along the newly established Prussian-Austrian border. His idea was to transform every stronghold in the Neisse Land into a fortified military camp. In 1745 on the left bank of the Nysa Klodzka River a new town called Friedrichstadt was built, it was a great military complex in which there were nearly only military barracks [15, p. 20]. A ring of forts and strongholds which were protruded outwards was built, they were located on transport routes and in mountain pass regions to play the key role in national borders defence operations.

The bastion structure of the defence system in Neisse was tested during the Second and Third Silesian Wars when the town one more time had to face military operations. During the Seven Years' War in the years 1756-1763 the Austrian army trying to regain the land lost in 1742 made two attempts to besiege the town. In spite of significant losses resulting from intensive firing of the stronghold, the fortification system stopped the invaders and hence Neisse was still under Prussian control [19, p. 106]. The development of town fortifications turned Neisse into a strategic Prussian defence bastion along the southern border of the country.

The military development of the town under Prussian control started a period of economic regression related to broken trade contacts with Bohemia and Moravia which were then under Austrian control. Neisse lost its privileges granted during the Wroclaw bishopric rule and incurred significant losses in nearly all sectors of regional economy. An economic downturn was also the reason for the fall in the number of inhabitants and their impoverishment. According to historians, in 1735 in Neisse there were 5708 inhabitants, while in 1806 only 5222, some of whom were soldiers stationed in the town [16].

The first part of the 19th century was a very important yet difficult time for Silesia and Neisse. As a result of the Napoleonic Wars with Prussia, nearly the whole area of Silesia was devastated. The conflict forced Prussia to undertake economic and social reforms which turned this region into one of the highest industrialised areas in Germany and Central and Eastern Europe [23, p. 250]. The Napoleonic Wars revealed the Old Kingdom of Prussia, this forced the German state to conduct the necessary reforms, which had influence also on the functioning of the Neisse Land. The most important of them was the secularisation of the Church property in 1810, which was the definite end of the Wroclaw bishops' rule in this area which lasted a few centuries. After that in terms of administrative organisation, Neisse and the surrounding area were no longer a duchy and became the Neisse County. In 1816 the county was separated from Lower Silesia and became a part of the Opole Regierungsbezirk, a part of Upper Silesia, which had a significant influence on the later history of Neisse [16].

During World War I Neisse was no longer a defence bastion and was transformed into a logistic supply base for German operational forces. The garrison was responsible for the recruitment, training and rehabilitation of soldiers injured on the front line [17, p. 33]. In Neisse there was also a prisoner-of-war camp where Russian, English, French and Romanian officers were kept. In 1916 also Captain Charles de Gaulle, the later president of France, stayed here when he was taken captive. After the war in Neisse only a small subunit of 410 soldiers was left, it was a part of the first battalion of the 7th Prussian Infantry Regiment and the motor battalion of the 3rd Prussian Artillery Regiment [24, p. 8-9].

At the beginning of the 30's of the 20th century the Great Crisis started in the United States and it spread nearly all over the world, including the Neisse Land. A few industrial plants in the town went out of business, unemployment grew and the number of inhabitants emigrating from Neisse to find better living conditions fell. The situation improved when Adolf Hitler came into power as he wanted the country to be stronger in military terms and hence initiated the progress of the arms industry. No military facilities were developed in the town and the industrial plants switched from civilian to military production. In 1938 Neisse was flooded by Nysa Klodzka and Biala Glucholaska Rivers yet again. The flood was one of the most tragic natural catastrophes in the history of this town and even claimed the lives of a few inhabitants, it also meant the devastation of the town infrastructure [16]. After this event, Neisse was very quickly rebuilt so as to prepare for conducting offensive manoeuvres, which was in accordance with the Hitlerite concept of the future. In 1939 these operations turned into the largest military conflict in the 20th century – World war II.

In march 1935 Hitler, in response to France's introduction of a two-year military service, officially rejected all military limitations imposed on Germany during the Versailles Treaty [24, p. 10]. The continued remilitarisation of Germany resulted in the reestablishment of the Military District in Silesia, it was district No. 8. At the beginning of the 30's of the 20th century the development of the garrison in Neisse was started again, in 1939 it was a preparatory camp for numerous German troops. In December 1934 the formation of the 8th Infantry Division, whose command stationed in Neisse from October 1938, was

started [24, p. 14]. The responsibilities of the 8th Military District encompassed the creation of necessary conditions for the main offensive forces of the German South Army to attack Poland, protecting and sealing the border with Poland, recruitment in tactical formations and units existing in peace time to achieve war levels of staff and organising reserve divisions in accordance with the mobilisation plan [24, p. 23-6].

Neisse was one of the garrisons in which the Germans started the long prepared invasion of Poland. It is estimated that before the outbreak of war, 40 thousand soldiers stationed in the town. In the first phase of the conflict, when the Germans successfully conducted their campaign on the eastern front, Neisse was used as the supply facilities to support the main forces. In 1944, as a result of the counteroffensive of the Red Army, the town was turned into a stronghold for the last time. Soldiers led by Colonel Georg Sparre prepared for the siege by digging anti-tank ditches, making wire entanglement, mine fields, embrasures in buildings, barricades on roads and numerous underground passages [21, p. 18]. In consequence of the intensive firing of Neisse by the besieging Red Army Forces, a significant part of town buildings was destroyed and the town was one of the most devastated area during World War II. The culmination of the assault took place in March 1945 when the Soviet forces cut off the rail connection with Neisse, which meant that it was no longer the strategic communication and logistic centre. In the night of March 23 and 24, 1945 German subunits withdrew from the town leaving there only civilians unable to evacuate, hence they finished more than 200 years of Prussian and German rule in the Neisse Land.

3. Neisse Garrison as an element of the security system of the Republic of Poland in the years 1945-2001

When German forces were defeated on the eastern front in 1945, the Red Army occupied the whole area of Silesia. The appearance of Soviet forces brought hopes that the people in the region would be liberated and that the stability and order would be back. Contrary to these expectations, front forces were led by the will to take revenge and so they conducted numerous executions in reprisal, rapes on civilians and plundering were also common [25, p. 427-31]. The two-month period of invading and occupying Neisse by the Soviet forces brought tragic consequences for the town. Despite the lack of any actual resistance from the defenders of the town, the Red Army continued military operations on a wide scale. They used artillery to bombard empty buildings, started fires and were brutal to the civilians who stayed in the town. It is estimated that at that time over 70 percent of the town architecture was completely destroyed. On May 9, 1945 completely devastated Neisse was handed over to the Polish administration [26, p. 12]. Under the Polish jurisdiction the reconstruction of the infrastructure and industry in the town was started. In 1946 the organised action of resettling German inhabitants from Neisse was conducted. They were replaced by the inhabitants of eastern voivodeships of the 2nd Republic of Poland who finally accepted Neisse as its regional homeland and triggered the economic development of this town.

Military facilities, barracks and storage amenities left here after the war made logical premises to use the Neisse area as the dislocation place for the forces returning from

the march on Berlin. An additional factor which facilitated the deployment of forces in this town was the necessity to protect the new borders in the south-west part of the country. The garrison in Neisse was subordinate to the 4th Military District established in Wroclaw after the war.

The first Polish military unit located in Neisse Garrison was the 33rd Infantry Regiment which was part of the 7th Lusatian Infantry Division. The said division was established on the Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army No. 8 of August 20, 1944 [27, p. 16]. In 1947 the 33rd Infantry Regiment received a name to distinguish it – Neisse. Before 1947 the regiment command staff was composed mainly of Russians. Later in the years 1947-1948 the process of replacing the staff with Polish soldiers was started. In the case of Neisse, the commander of the 33rd Infantry Regiment was also the commander of the garrison. In the initial period of the garrison's existence in Neisse it was not possible to fill all barracks with soldiers due to numerous, post-war damages in military infrastructure. As a result of the above soldiers were located in the best maintained buildings in Tadeusz Kosciuszko St. and the former garrison hospital in Kornel Ujejski St.

In 1949 the 7th Infantry Division was subjugated to the Krakow Military District which was then called the 5th Military District. In January 1950 the division became the Territorial Infantry Division and in May 1951 it was subordinated to the 11th Infantry Corps, which changed its function one more time. As a result of the reorganisation of the division structures, the dislocation place of selected military units also changed. At the end of 1951 the following units and subunits were located in Neisse:

- 33rd Neisse Infantry Regiment – JW 2867,
- 35th Infantry Regiment – JW 1768,
- 18th Combat Engineer Battalion – JW 1873.

In 1952 the infantry regiments received positions and in 1953 as a result of the disbanding of the Military District No. 5 the 7th Lusatian Infantry Division was again subordinated to the Commander of the 4th Military District which in 1954 received a new name – the Silesian Military District [28, p. 60, 79]. In the years 1953-1954 the existing military infrastructure in Neisse was enriched with modern barracks located on the former German drill square. The advantageous location and convenient logistic conditions of the garrison influenced the decision on moving the command of the 7th Infantry Division and most of its subordinate units to Neisse in May 1955.

The reform of the Polish Army conducted in Poland in the second half of the 50's influenced the shape of the Neisse garrison organisational structures. In 1956 army corps were closed down in the military forces and, as a result, infantry divisions were directly subordinated the military district commands. The direction of the changes in the Polish Army was the reduction of infantry units and establishing mechanised military units on their basis. On September 9, 1956 pursuant to the *Ordinance of the Minister of Defence No. 026/Org.* the 7th Lusatian Infantry Division was transformed to the 2nd Warsaw Mechanised Division in Neisse. When the 2nd division was created, its command was located in the military infrastructure facilities in Kornel Ujejski St. [29, p. 88-9].

In 1957 the command of the division and the garrison was moved to Karol Marcinkowski St. where it stayed until December 2001.

At the end of 1956 after fulfilling the order to form the 2nd Mechanised Division in accordance with the division position type B, the organisational structure comprised the following units:

- Command of the 2nd Mechanised Division in Neisse – JW 2812 (on the basis of the Command of the 7th Infantry Division),
- 75th Staff Company in Neisse (formed from scratch),
- 6th Mechanised Regiment in Czestochowa – JW 1598 (on the basis of the 6th Infantry Regiment),
- 33rd Mechanised Regiment in Neisse – JW 2867 (on the basis of the 33rd Infantry Regiment),
- 36th Mechanised Regiment in Lubliniec – JW 1784 (on the basis of the 36th Infantry Regiment),
- 13th Medium Tank Regiment in Opole – JW 2633 (on the basis of the 13th Independent Tank Regiment),
- 37th Tank and Armoured Artillery Battalion in Neisse – JW 3032 (formed from scratch),
- 21st Training tank Battalion in Gliwice – JW 3102 (transferred to the 1st Mechanised Division),
- 37th Howitzer Artillery Regiment in Kozle – JW 2941 (on the basis of the 38th Light Artillery Regiment),
- 2nd Rocket Artillery Division in Kozle – JW 2975 (on the basis of the 10th Anti-Tank Artillery Division),
- 24th Anti-aircraft Artillery Division in Lubliniec – JW 2133 (transferred to the 2nd Infantry Division),
- 48th Communications Battalion in Neisse – JW 1975,
- 18th Combat Engineer Battalion – JW 1873,
- 21st Chemical Protection Company in Neisse,
- 10th Reconnaissance Battalion in Neisse – JW 2087 (on the basis of the Reconnaissance Battalion Platoon of the 7th Infantry Division),
- 52nd Automobile-Transport Battalion in Neisse – JW 3228 (on the basis of the Automobile Platoon of the 7th Infantry Division),
- 160th Mobile Tank Overhaul Basis in Komprachcice – JW 1929 (formed from scratch),
- 155th Mobile Artillery Repair Workshop in Kozle – JW 3638 (formed from scratch),
- 172nd Mobile Vehicle Repair Workshop in Neisse – JW 2335 (formed from scratch),
- 2nd Division Supply Point in Neisse – JW 1018 (formed from scratch) [30, p. 436-8].

The 60's and 70's of the 20th century were the time stable economic and demographic development for the Neisse Land, it was also the period when attempts were made to repair the devastations left after World War II. In the 80's of the 20th century the time of economic stagnation was brought which with time turned into a crisis. Under the influence of the deteriorating economic situation in 1985 a decision was made to gradually reduce the number of soldiers and also to give the army a more defensive nature [28, p. 88-90]. In 1987 the process of one more army restructuring started. Pursuant to the *Order of the Minister of Defence No. 070/Org. of December 27, 1988* in October 1989 the Henryk Dabrowski 2nd Warsaw Mechanised Division was disbanded.

The commanders of the 2nd Warsaw Mechanised Division who also performed the function of the Neisse Garrison Commanders in the discussed period were:

- Col Artur Reginia (11.10.1955-17.11.1956),
- Col Zbigniew Ohanowicz (18.11.1956-14.11.1964),
- Col Stanislaw Banasiak (14.11.1964-20.06.1966),
- Col Kazimierz Makarewicz (20.06.1966-18.08.1966),
- Col/Brig. Gen. bryg. Jozef Jaworski (19.08.1966-24.10.1970),
- Col/Brig. Gen. Edward Drzazga (24.10.1970-13.08.1975),
- Col Edward Kulak (13.08.1975-13.10.1979),
- Col Kazimierz Tomaszewski (14.10.1979-23.01.1984),
- Col Henryk Janusek (03.1984-05.08.1987),
- Col Boleslaw Balcerowicz (05.08.1987-06.10.1989) [30, p. 451].

The staff, equipment and infrastructure of the Neisse Garrison were used to form the 20th Material-Technical Base and also the materials and technical devices forming its structure [31, p. 23]. This situation was maintained until 1992 when in Neisse an elite mountain infantry unit was established, it was the symbol of the reforms in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. Pursuant to the *Instruction of the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces of April 14, 1992* the 20th Material-Technical Base was used as the basis to form the 22nd Brigade of Mountain Infantry [29, p. 186]. Thereby the strategic location of the Neisse Land for the security of the region and the state was recognised again. The primary function of the brigade was the protection of the southern border of the state. It was one of the first of this type of units created in Poland. As of May 5, 1992, the 22nd Brigade of Mountain Infantry in Neisse took over the tradition of the 11th Carpathian Infantry Division, the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division, hence also becoming the continuator of the heritage of Polish soldiers fighting in Tobruk, Monte Cassino and Bologne [31]. Pursuant to the *Decision of the Minister of Defence No. 90/MON of August 26, 1994* the brigade received a distinguishing name and was called the 22nd Carpathian Brigade of Mountain Infantry.

In January 2001 a decision was made to disband the 22nd Carpathian Brigade of Mountain Infantry in Neisse. On the basis of the *Order of the Commander of Land Forces No. 03/Org of January 8, 2001* and the *Order of the Commander of the Silesian Military District No. PF3/Org of February 6, 2001* on September 30, 2001 the 22nd Carpathian Brigade of Mountain Infantry was dissolved which also meant the end of the Neisse Garrison.

son. Based on the brigade structures on October 1, 2001 the 22nd Carpathian Mountain Infantry Brigade of Territorial Defence was formed in Klodzko [33].

Conclusions

Over the centuries the area of the Neisse Garrison was the arena of numerous military conflicts and various military forces clashed here, which determined the functioning of the whole region. The history of this town proves that Neisse has always played one of the more important roles in the defence strategy of the state it was subordinate to. This fact influenced the size, shape and development of the town which, because of the priority to perform defence functions, were systematically limited. Taking into account the geographic, economic, social and first of all military aspects, Silesia and the Neisse Garrison made an essential element in the defence system of the Polish state.

Acknowledgement

No acknowledgement and potential founding was reported by the author.

Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

ORCID

Tomasz Szulc  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8162-8243>

References

1. Czaplinski M, Kaszuba E, Was G, Zerelik R. *Historia Slaska*. Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wroclawskiego; 2002.
2. Pysiewicz-Jedrusik R, Pustelnik A, Konopska B. *Granice Slaska*. Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Rzecka; 1998.
3. Dekret Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego o trybie powolania wladz administracji ogolnej I i II instancji z dnia 21 sierpnia 1944 roku (Dz. U. z 1944 r. Nr 2, poz. 8).
4. Rozporzadzenie Rady Ministrow w sprawie tymczasowego podzialu administracyjnego Ziem Ocalonych z 29 maja 1944 roku (Dz. U. z 1944 r. Nr 28, poz. 177).
5. Ustawa o zmianach podzialu administracyjnego Panstwa z 28 czerwca 1950 roku (Dz. U. z 1950 r. Nr 28, poz. 255).
6. Ustawa o dwustopniowym podziale administracyjnym Panstwa oraz o zmianie ustawy o radach narodowych z dnia 28 maja 1975 roku (Dz. U. z 1975 r. Nr 16, poz. 91).
7. Ustawa o wprowadzeniu zasadniczego trojstopniowego podzialu terytorialnego Panstwa z dnia 24 lipca 1998 roku (Dz. U. z 1998 r. Nr 96, poz. 603).

8. Slusarczyk J. *Granice Polski w Tysiącleciu*. Torun: Adam Marszałek; 1993.
9. Portal wyznacz.pl. *Distance map*, [online]. Available at: <http://wyznacz.pl/mapa-odleglosci> [Accessed: 30 August 2017].
10. Kondracki J. *Geografia regionalna Polski*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN; 2000.
11. Leszczyński J. *Zarys dziejów miasta do roku 1740*. In: Kesicka I, Morga M (eds.). *Miasto Nysa. Szkice monograficzne*. Wrocław: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe; 1970.
12. Sorokopas Z. *Obrona Narodowa 2001*. Warszawa: Bellona; 2000.
13. Sikorski M. *Nysa w kregu zabytkow i historii*. Krapkowice: Drukarnia SADY; 2010.
14. Sikorski M. *Nysa. Skarby sztuki i osobliwosci*. Opole: Silesiapress; 1999.
15. Daniel J. *Nysa. Przystanek wędrowca*. Nysa: Urząd Miejski w Nysie; 2003.
16. Grygorowicz M. *Garnizon Nysa na przestrzeni wiekow*, [online]. Available at: <http://www.garnizon.nasza.nysa.pl/> [Accessed: 30 May 2018].
17. Daniel J. *Nysa. Miasto–Twierdza*. Nysa: Agencja Reklamowo-Wyd. INSERAT; 2008.
18. Szypowska M. *Nysa*. Nysa: Sport i Turystyka; 1965.
19. Dziewulski W, Zalewski K. *Zarys dziejow Ziemi Nyskiej*. Niewinska I (ed.). Opole: Instytut Śląski w Opolu; 1980.
20. Zerelik R. *Dzieje Śląska do 1526 roku*. In: Czapliński M, Kaszuba E, Was G, Zerelik R (eds.). *Historia Śląska*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego; 2002.
21. Safiak R. *Nysa*. Nysa: Książka Komputer Prasa; 1999.
22. Was G. *Dzieje Śląska od 1526 do 1806 roku*. In: Czapliński M, Kaszuba E, Was G, Zerelik R (eds.). *Historia Śląska*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego; 2002.
23. Czapliński M. *Śląsk od wojen napoleońskich i reform pruskich do Wiosny Ludów (1806-1850)*. In: Czapliński M, Kaszuba E, Was G, Zerelik R (eds.). *Historia Śląska*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego; 2002.
24. Majewski R. *VIII Okręg Wojskowy Wehrmachtu we Wrocławiu (1936-1945)*. Wrocław: Wyższa Szkoła Oficerska Wojsk Zmechanizowanych; 1991.
25. Kaszuba E. *Odbudowa i utrwalanie władzy (1945-1948)*. In: Czapliński M, Kaszuba E, Was G, Zerelik R (eds.). *Historia Śląska*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego; 2002.
26. Tomczyk D. *Jak zdobyto i zniszczono Nyse*. Nowe Nowiny Nyskie. 1999;30-32.
27. Gac S. *7 Dywizja Piechoty*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej; 1971.
28. Babula J. *Wojsko Polskie 1945-1989. Proba analizy operacyjnej*. Warszawa: Bellona; 1998.
29. Kajetanowicz J. *Wojsko Polskie w systemie bezpieczeństwa państwa 1945-2001*. Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo im. Stanisława Podobinskiego Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie; 2013.
30. Margules J. *Drugie dywizje w bojach o Polskę 1776-2000*. Warszawa: Bellona; 2003.
31. Majewski R., *Zarys historii Śląskiego Okręgu Wojskowego*. In: Barczewski Z, et al. (eds.). *Barwy służby. Śląski Okręg Wojskowy we wspomnieniach*. Wrocław, Warszawa: Zarząd Główny Związku Byłych Żołnierzy Zawodowych i Oficerów Rezerwy WP; 2005.
32. *22 Brygada Piechoty Górskiej*, [online]. Website of the 22nd Carpathian Mountain Infantry Battalion in Klodzko. Available at: <http://22kbp.g.wp.mil.pl/pl/13.html> [Accessed: 1 April 2018].
33. *22 Brygada Piechoty Górskiej OT*, [online]. Website of the 22nd Carpathian Mountain Infantry Battalion in Klodzko. Available at: <http://22kbp.g.wp.mil.pl/pl/14.html> [Accessed: 1 April 2018].

Biographical note

Tomasz Szulc – M.A. in Army Logistics Management, Ph.D. Candidate at the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, course of study: history. Polish Army Officer during the service at the position of a lecturer at the General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military University of Land Forces in Wrocław. Areas of interest: contemporary history, crisis management, Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland.

Historia Garnizonu Nysa

STRESZCZENIE

Od momentu założenia we wczesnym średniowieczu aż do końca XX wieku Garnizon Nysa był strategicznym miejscem. Dogodna lokalizacja na Przedgórzu Sudeckim sprawiła, że Nysa pełniła funkcję obronną przed atakami zarówno z północy, jak i z południa. Na przestrzeni wieków relacje Nysy z wojskiem ulegały licznym przemianom w zależności od tego, kto sprawował funkcje władcy miasta. W czasach Księstwa Biskupiego i panowania Habsburgów w garnizonie stacjonowały niewielkie oddziały wojska, a bezpieczeństwo regionu zapewniały wały obronne. W 1741 roku, po zajęciu Nysy przez Fryderyka II, ranga miasta jako ośrodka militarnego znacznie wzrosła. Symbioza Nysy z wojskiem, która trwała przez następne 260 lat, miała istotny wpływ na rozwój i znaczenie miasta. W wyniku przemian, które miały miejsce w Wojsku Polskim na przełomie XX i XXI wieku, Garnizon Nysa został zlikwidowany.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE Wojsko Polskie, garnizony wojskowe, garnizon Nysa

How to cite this paper

Szulc T. *A history of the Neisse Garrison*. Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces. 2019;51;3(193):529-46.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0013.5007>



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY).
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>