

## **The Field Artillery Journal**

**Volume XIII, Number 4, July–August**

### **The United States Field Artillery Association**

#### **On the Polish-Bolshevik Front in 1919 and 1920**

By Michael J. Fibich, Major, F.A., O.R.C.

#### **Foreword**

I was assigned for duty with the American Legation in Warsaw as an Assistant Military Attache and arrived in Poland on the 21st day of September, 1919. During the following year, my continued observations of the operations on the Bolshevik front reawakened all of my natural fighting instincts. The intensity of the latter increased to such an extent, that at the time the Bolsheviks captured Wilna in their advance into Poland, I could no longer resist the temptation to take an active part in a war again, and therefore, submitted my resignation as a Major of Artillery in the U. S. Army. My resignation was accepted by cable on August 12, 1920. The next day I had become a volunteer major in the Polish Artillery and was assigned to the 11th Polish Division for duty.

My experiences embrace the years 1919 and 1920. In 1919, the Poles had succeeded in clearing their eastern frontiers of Bolshevik invading troops and had established their army along a line that resembled somewhat their present boundary. In May, 1920, the Polish Army executed its advance to Kijew. A month later, the Soviets directed against Poland an offensive, the momentum of which enabled the Bolshevik forces to reach the outskirts of Warsaw. In the following August, the Poles launched their counter-offensive. Hostilities ceased in October of the same year by reason of an armistice. Peace was finally signed in March, 1921.

The numerous instances that are related in the following pages are not to be accepted as criticism of the Polish Army as a whole. In the first place they are associated, in the major part, with the activities of the 11th Division. This division, in the period August 13, 1920, to December 7, 1920, was seriously depleted in its numbers of effectives. Immediately prior to that time, it had been through the terrible ordeal of a forced retreat for hundreds of kilometres. The effects of this ordeal might have had minor significance had it been possible to omit from serious consideration, the impressions produced upon the Poles by the numerous murders—some of the murders and tortures could not have been committed by normal human beings—which were perpetrated by the Bolsheviks and the Cossacks upon captured Polish officers and soldiers. Many of the men were very, very tired of war because they had seen continuous [p272] service for over six years. For these and other reasons, its morale was noticeably weakened.

In the second place, account should be taken of the difficult and discouraging conditions under which this army was at first assembled, organized and compelled to produce concrete results. It was composed of soldiers who had been brought together in one organization after a political and national separation which had endured over a hundred years. During all those years, the most worthy of all national characteristics had continued to bind them into a spiritual union: the language, their religion and traditions, and the spirit of Polish idealism. It made no difference after the armistice how divergently their psychologies differed in other ways. These sufficed to give them an ideal and an aim, and to unite them in all of their patriotic endeavors since that time.

When the armistice came in 1918, the German and the Austrian Armies fell to pieces in Central Europe while the Bolshevik Army made serious attempts to annex Poland as a member of the Free (?) Soviet Republic. Disorder for a time reigned supreme everywhere. The Central Powers had exhausted the land by their ruthless and systematic requisitions. Ruination and devastation had been

the lot of the country during the war, in almost every locality.

For the above reasons, to criticize would not be just. Full justice would be given to this report, however, if our officers will accept the numerous comments made therein, as instructional material for their general information rather than as mere criticisms of a foreign army. Most of the mistakes commented upon have been committed over and over again by armies in the past. This latter can be readily substantiated, for instance, by a perusal of the records of American campaigns, especially during the Revolutionary War and even in France. Amid present international conditions, preparation for war is necessary. The more thorough it is, the fewer important and costly mistakes that must be committed. Only certain of our idealistic statesmen are convinced of the approach of the "Millennium," of the uselessness of standing armies, and of the certainty of ability to create an efficient army "overnight."

Therefore, when reading over the following pages, it would be well to remember that the Polish troops in 1920 composed an army created "overnight." What the condition of the present Polish Army is, after its two years of intensive peace training under the direction of the most excellent instructors, is a question which the future will probably answer.

(NOTE: In the following pages, frequent remarks are made in reference to the American regular army. Such remarks should not be taken for pure, cold-blooded criticism. It is so easy to criticize. [p273] They are made primarily with a view toward pointing out certain defects that existed and which should cease to exist. Their elimination is necessary if we are to possess a national army beloved and respected by the people of America.)

### **With the Polish Division from 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1920, to the 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1920**

During that critical summer of 1920, just prior to my entrance in the Polish Army, my greatest fear was that it might be "all over" before I could take an active part in the fighting. The prevailing opinion then of practically all the foreigners in Warsaw was, that it could be only a matter of a few days before the city would be taken by the Bolsheviks. Notwithstanding the hopelessness of the situation, from the time that the results of the first skirmishes between the Bolsheviks and the Poles in front of Warsaw had been ascertained, I felt certain that the city would not fall and my reasoning was fairly logical. When a line is in position and other troops are retreating toward it somewhat in disorder, there is indeed always a possibility that the retreating troops may throw those in the line, also in disorder. Well, an opportunity for this possibility actually occurred near Warsaw. But the retreating Polish soldiers were absorbed—"taken in"—by those already in position (most of the latter were boy students and older men) and the line held.

The momentum of the Bolshevik offensive had almost completely lost its impetus by this time and great progress was already being made toward the hurried gathering together and the organizing of sufficient Polish mounted troops which, later on, initiated the campaign that put an end to the raids and the murders by Budena's Cossack cavalry.

It is interesting to note that these later Polish cavalymen were armed with pistols. Formerly, in the first attacks by the Cossacks, few of the Polish mounted men had pistols. On the other hand, every Cossack had been armed with one, and before each clash of troops, had always been able to discharge it effectively into the Polish ranks. But conditions had changed so that they were equally armed at last.

On the day that I reported for duty with the Polish Artillery in Marki, the afternoon of the 13th of August, I was very enthusiastic. My chance for some real fighting in movement warfare had finally come. I recall that the march "to the Rhine" in the American Army might have been more interesting if it were not for the *constant* presence of too many higher commanders "on the spot." When campaigning, soldiers like to be left to themselves as much as possible. Instead of being interesting and even instructive, it caused very strong and emphatic feelings of resentment among numerous [p274] civilian and other officers. This latter was especially true of the—th F.A. Brigade which was attached to the —nd Division.

Of divisional artillery there were in all eight batteries of French (75 cm.) and one battery of howitzers (155 cm.). My three batteries were located to the northeast, in the vicinity of Maciolki and Kobylki, about ten or eleven kilometres from Warsaw. The guns were in position and had been doing a lot of firing.

The Polish artillery was suffering for want of adequate supplies of ammunition. In fact, complete shortage existed once for over thirty hours. The reason for this was the hostile attitude of the neighboring powers at that time toward Poland. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, and Austria refused to let the ammunition pass into Poland through their territories, on its way from France. The French ammunition ship in Danzig had to delay the unloading, for some critical hours, because of the refusal to permit it to dock immediately. Then, again, the Polish infantry units used rifles of various types; the English, German, Russian, Austrian and French. All this tended to make more difficult the ammunition supply.

The above is one of Poland's strongest arguments for a seaport. Its relation and importance to the industrial and commercial life of thirty million people can be readily seen. The lack of an outlet, a free seaport, can mean eventually nothing more than either the deathknell of an independent people or their reduction to a small, unimportant and dependent nation.

Certain prominent Americans like to emphasize on every occasion, the unselfish motives (?) of the Peoples of the world today and their eagerness to take part in the general work for humanity. Is not everyone tired of the war? Those so-called unselfish motives and that interjealousy between peoples were disclosed very strikingly by the attitude which those peoples assumed when barbarous hordes were advancing through Poland. There can be no question at all that the Bolshevik hordes were barbarous; that their natures were similar to those of wild beasts, terribly cruel, inspired, not by national or patriotic ideals but by the lower instincts of greed, plunder and class hatred. Likewise, there can be no question that the Poles were *not* influenced by like sentiments. Yet, not a formal word of moral protest from any nation with the exception of France! Idealism between nations is only skin-deep when material gain and personal profit are at stake. It is well to remember this fact later on in my account when reading the part "The Psychology of War and Peoples."

On the other hand, the Spartacus movement in Germany, quite powerful in those days, was anxiously awaiting the approach of the "Proletariat armies of brother nations." This union, if it had [p275] taken place, would have probably thrown all of Western Europe into a chaos.

Many of the men did not have shoes or underwear and their uniforms were in very poor condition. Large numbers of them marched barefoot. This lack of clothing was easier to endure because it was then warm out-of-doors. So eager was the desire to obtain some kind of bodily covering, that the Poles, after each fight with the Bolsheviks, would make a great scramble for the battlefield and there search among the Bolshevik dead for shoes, coats, trousers, etc. It was not an uncommon sight when marching along, to see Bolshevik bodies lying about the fields, all or partly stripped of their clothing. Many of the Bolsheviks were well clothed with uniforms which had been captured only recently from Wrangels' Army in south Russia. The following winter and the winter before, the men suffered very much on account of the lack of proper and adequate clothing. In times of privation and dire need, men, even the most cultured and refined, will wear or eat almost anything in their battle against death or starvation.

At first I had eighteen officers. The majority of them had seen service in the former Austrian Army. Some had served in the Russian artillery, while one or two had been with German troops. A few of the officers spoke English; more spoke German, and almost all of them could speak French. Of course Polish was their native tongue. Under such conditions, my endeavors to communicate orders and instructions were very much simplified.

The aims and ideals for which the officers were fighting were remarkably uniform as to their nature and were deeply believed in by all. Even among the enlisted men, many of whom could not read or write, the intelligent understanding of their cause and their reasons for fighting was astonishing for

that "oneness" and that almost religious feeling whenever they spoke of this subject. The best evidence that this "oneness" of aims and ideals existed at that time, was the willing and noble endurance, of both officers and soldiers, of the great hardships with which they had to combat. An army, not so united spiritually, would have been the first to extend a welcome hand to the "Soviet" troops. There has never been in Poland any serious trouble with Bolshevik Poles, in spite of the fact that numerous Bolshevik agitators were active in the country. The Poles believed earnestly that they were fighting for the most sacred possessions of man: freedom, language, traditions and religion.

The batteries were doing their utmost to support the infantry in defense. About the same time, a fire was commenced which later became known as the three days' bombardment. Artillery firing was going on almost continuously, one or more guns in each battery [p276] firing. Whenever it became dark, the Bolsheviks started immense forest fires going, for they feared counter-attacks. These fires would light up the surrounding country, so that even during the nights, our artillery fire could be fairly well observed. In a number of instances, the infantry were compelled to take up positions on a line with the guns and much direct fire was used.

On the 16th of August, the Poles launched their counter-offensive to the north and the northeast. The aim was to cut off the Bolshevik forces which had advanced to the west and the northwest of Warsaw. From that moment on, all the Polish forces began to move forward. My division reached as far north as Nasielsk, where we were placed in reserve for a few days. Then we entrained for Terespol, which is west of Brest Litewsk.

In France, troop transportation by rail was always considered a very uncomfortable experience. But travelling in Poland in this way was, in my opinion, more agreeable. One or more closed freight cars (dependent upon number of officers) were selected for the commissioned personnel. Fresh straw or hay was procured and bunks were comfortably arranged in each car. The enlisted men prepared their cars in the same manner. Any second lieutenant or even a sergeant was considered adequate authority for getting the hay or straw, provided, of course, that the latter was close at hand and obtainable. Such matters did not have to be referred to a colonel or a general, except when it was necessary to procure a supply from a long distance. After having tried a freight car a number of times, I will always say: "Me for the Hommes 40 and Cheveux 8" when travelling with troops.

From Terespol we immediately marched to Brest Litewsk. The 11th Division, as a part of the 4th Army, was made one of the front-line attacking divisions. We remained in the Brest Litewsk area approximately nine days.

During a part of that time, I was placed in command of the artillery within the southern half of the eastern sector. There were altogether within that sector, nine and one-half batteries, including two six-inch Russian non-recoil guns. The division occupied itself with organizing raiding expeditions against the Bolsheviks, with repleting its supplies and getting itself ready for the "jump off."

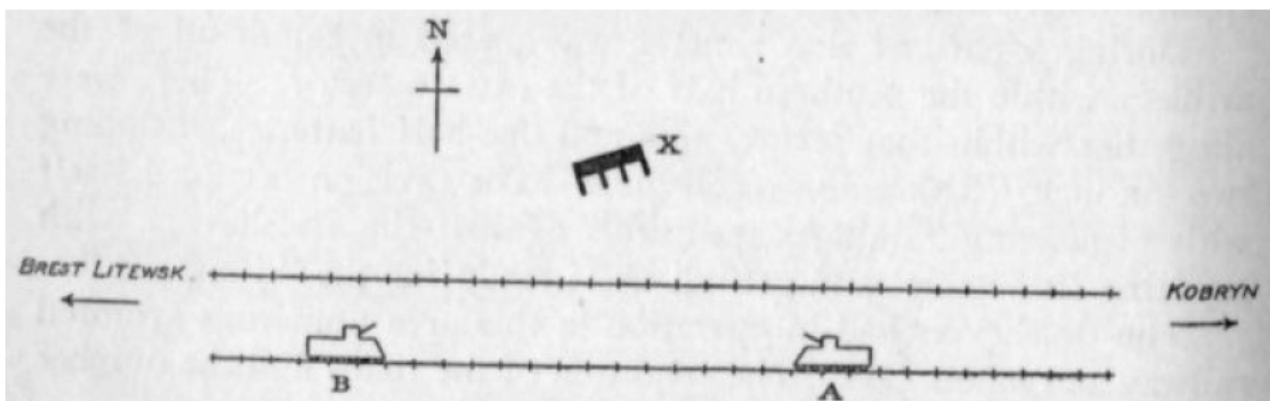
The Bolsheviks had in operation in this area numerous armored railway and motor cars. The condition of the roads and the number of railroad tracks favored such tactics.

In anticipation of fights with armored cars, I used to get my officers together and talk over with them the means for "bringing down" such targets, especially the railroad cars. On one point I was clear, and that was, that the only way to attack an armored train with artillery was to creep up as close as possible to it before [p277] firing. One or more guns might also have been previously placed in position, and there in concealment awaited the appearance of the train. But only direct fire could be effective.

The armored trains appeared almost always in the same formation. The locomotive (only lightly armored) was in the centre, while a heavily armored car was hooked on to both its front and its rear ends. Each car contained from one to three light field guns and a number of machine guns. The timber and the tools necessary for the construction and repair of bridges were carried along with it. The Bolshevik repair personnel hung on to both sides of the locomotive as it was moving, prepared to jump down, whenever necessary, to repair a track or a bridge.

An infantry battalion was to make a raid on the Bolsheviks, and I was ordered to dispatch one artillery platoon to accompany it. While this battalion was on the march, a Bolshevik armored train was seen about three kilometres away standing on a railway track. The lieutenant desired to creep up—this was possible because the terrain was partially wooded with tall bushes and trees—but the infantry commander ordered the lieutenant to fire at once. As was to be expected, after one or two rounds of adjustment fire, the train moved away. When I learned of this incident, I was very much disappointed. I even called upon the Artillery Brigade Commander personally and complained about artillery being placed unconditionally under the orders of the infantry but I got very little satisfaction.

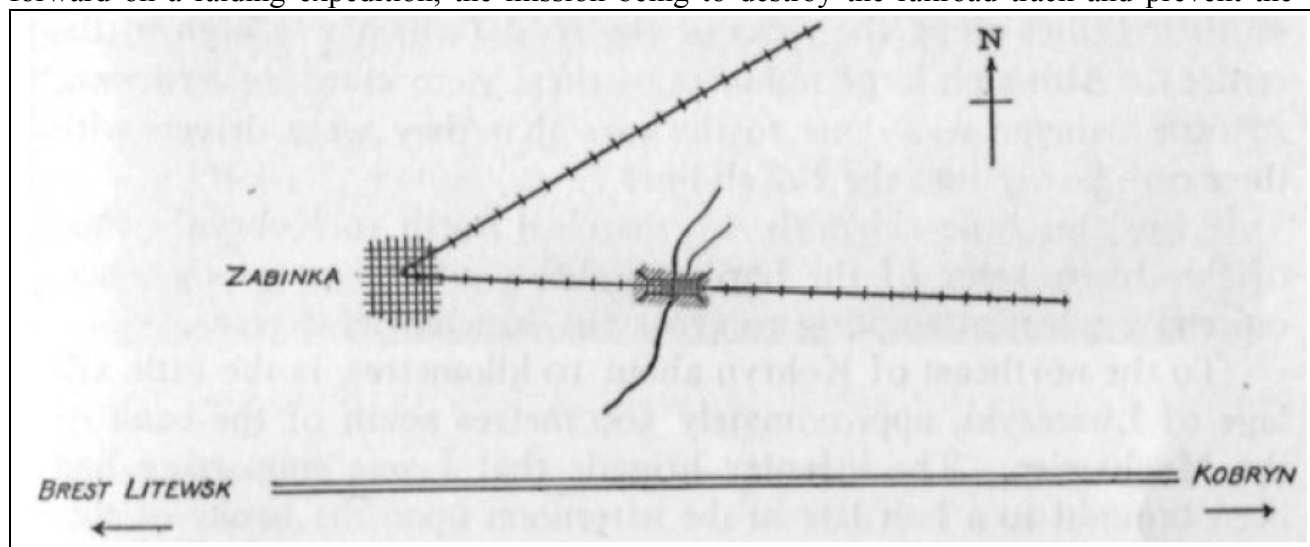
The following day, another battalion moved forward for the same purpose. This time a battery, commanded by a former Austrian and a very excellent officer, Captain M., accompanied it. Captain M. took up a very original position. To the south of the guns were two railway tracks. The nearer of the two tracks was from 800 to 1000 metres away from the guns.



He had been marching to the east and had not observed a Bolshevik train B which had been standing in a concealed place on the outer track. He placed his guns in position at X. Here he waited in concealment. Soon along came train A. When it arrived close enough, the guns opened fire on the locomotive. In one of our [p278] former conferences, we decided that it was preferable to aim all fire on the locomotive because from previous observations of such fire, it was noticeable that the shells exploded outside when they hit the armored car. Delayed action fuses only had been used. The first shell hit the locomotive, the steam burst out in different directions making a lot of noise. The train of course stopped, while the Bolsheviks who had been hanging on to the locomotive, jumped quickly to the ground, swearing and shouting.

Then train B appeared on the scene unexpectedly and opened fire on the battery at about 1200 to 1500 metres. The battery endeavored to return the fire of both trains as best it could but the chances were unequal and the guns were soon silenced. B closed in with A and pulled it out of sight. The battery had no casualties. The destroyed train A was later captured by the 16th Polish Division at Maloryta.

At Zabinka, east of Brest Litewsk, there is a railway fork, one line going to the northeast and the other toward the southeast. One Bolshevik armored train was known to be on the southern line about ten kilometres east of the fork. An infantry regiment and an artillery battery were sent forward on a raiding expedition, the mission being to destroy the railroad track and prevent the



escape of the armored train. The expedition succeeded in arriving unobserved at a point east of the train and destroyed a large bridge. An attempt was made to approach as close as possible and the artillery opened fire on the train. The Bolsheviks learning that the bridge was destroyed, ran the train westward into Zabinka unexpectedly, shot up the town hurriedly and escaped on the northern route.

The division moved forward now on its advance to the east. South of Kobryn, there is an intersection of two main roads. I received instructions to aid the infantry to hold this crossroad. We were to cut off the retreat of the Bolsheviks who were attempting to reach Kobryn to the north. The trees on either side of both the roads were tall. On account of the deep mud and swamps, it was impossible for men and horses to leave the highways. I used for [p279] this purpose one battery. Two guns were pointed in the direction of Mokranj and the other two toward Maloryta. The guns were ordered to fire along the sides of roads. Machine guns belonging to the battery were placed between the sections. The infantry, with the exception of the patrols which were reconnoitring to the south of the crossroad, took up a position behind the guns.

About midnight, the enemy attacked with armored motor cars. The artillery replied with one shell per gun per minute. The Bolshevik column was halted about two kilometres away. The captures by the battery (2/11 p.a.c.) consisted of four armored motor cars, two heavy motor trucks, one new Fiat passenger car, a few motorcycles and machine guns. The Bolsheviks were very eager to get by this crossroad because their nearest dead were about 30 metres from our gun muzzles. Evidently they had tried to crawl on their bellies along the sides of the road (which was high in the centre). Although large numbers of them were killed, nevertheless, so little damage was done to the cars that they were driven with their own power into the Polish lines.

After this little skirmish, we marched north to Kobryn. East of this town, some of the hardest fighting of the war took place, especially when attempting to cross the Muchawiec River.

To the northeast of Kobryn about 10 kilometres, is the little village of Luszczynki, approximately 500 metres south of the bank of the Muchawiec. The infantry brigade that I was supporting had been brought to a halt late in the afternoon upon the banks of this river. They had suffered quite a few casualties. On the opposite bank of the river, the Bolsheviks were very well fortified amid their trenches and machine guns.

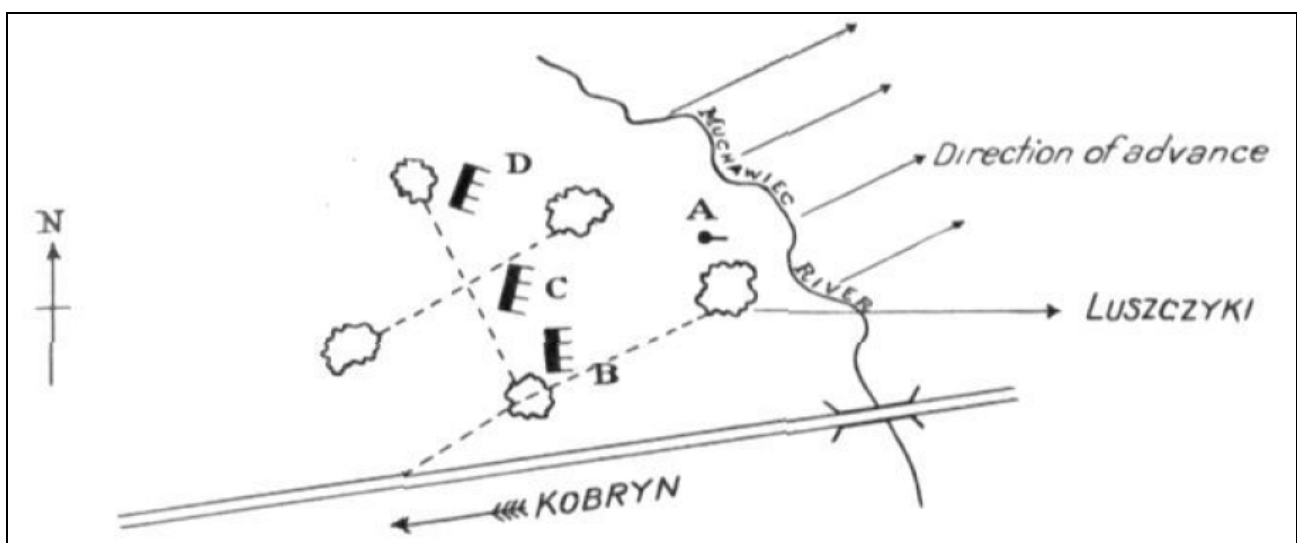
Then followed one of my busiest nights. It was decided that the infantry was to attempt to cross the river the following morning and that I was to prepare some kind of fire with which to support it. All

the artillery officers that could be spared were set to work at making tracings, to an enlarged scale, of the 1/100,000 German map that we had. I had procured from Warsaw for myself adequate supplies of tracing paper. My batteries were located about two kilometres from the river.

At midnight, I appeared at the nearest battery and selected one chief of section and six men to accompany me to Luszczyki which was still burning. The Bolsheviks were firing continually upon the village and vicinity with their machine guns. The battery 7/11 p.a.p. itself was being fired upon by Soviet artillery.

I dismounted and took the men with me on foot, ordering the battery commander in the meantime to send forward to a certain point one of his guns and two caissons loaded with ammunition. [p280]

I had decided upon a little clump of bushes on the northern end of the village as the station for the advanced gun. A proper place was selected and the gun was drawn to it by hand with the aid of the infantry. Narrow trenches were dug on either side of it for the purpose of giving the men some concealment.



Upon the tracings, I sketched out the plan for the morning's fire. "H" hour was set for 7:30 A.M. Each battery commander and the infantry were supplied with these tracings. Before morning, telephone wires had been stretched to Luszczyki, which was to be the point of observation. The batteries were located at B, C, and D, while the advanced gun was placed at A, about 700 metres from the river. The river was taken as the initial line of the accompany fire.

About ten minutes before the opening of the fire, I took position behind an oak tree about 20 metres to the right of the advanced gun. The infantry commander was close by. As soon as our fire commenced, the single gun had barely fired a few rounds when it appeared as though all the Bolshevik machine guns were concentrated upon it. The men dropped into the trenches. I shouted at the top of my voice for a moment that they continue the fire but not a soul budged. So I walked over to the gun and no sooner had the men recognized me than they jumped up alertly and fired like "H . . ." I observed in front of the gun some twigs which might have interfered with the firing and made a motion as though I wanted to cut them down. But one of the soldiers snatched the hatchet out of my hand and proceeded to cut the twigs himself.

The finest firing that was ever done with one gun took place that morning. After a short artillery preparation, the infantry went over the top, accompanied by the fire of my batteries, and suffered, during the crossing, practically no casualties.

Advanced guns, usually by platoon, were constantly on duty with the advanced party. When the head of the column reached Horsk one of my guns (4/11 p.a.p.) stopped by its fire the further progress [p281] of an armored motor car. A fragment of the shell had killed the chauffeur and the

car, without anyone at the steering wheel, ran to the side of the road, into a ditch, and overturned. The car was new, contained one machine gun, and appeared to have been constructed on a Ford chassis.

We continued to move on in an easterly direction toward Kartusa Bereza. The country through which we were then advancing was stripped completely of everything but hay and straw. We had just marched through parts of the famous Pinsk marshes which lay to our south and east. The horses were keeping up very well. The battalion requisitioned as much hay and straw as was possible.

The men, with few exceptions, slept in barns. Every time I came to the barn selected as my billet, my orderly threw out the upper-half layer of hay because the Bolsheviks had slept on it a few hours previously. As it began to get colder, we made holes for ourselves in the fresh hay beneath and covered our bodies completely with it, so that only the heads were visible. The battalion headquarters was usually stationed in the nearby peasant hut to which the barn belonged.

This is the land of storks. On almost every peasant cottage, one could see gray and white storks sitting alone on the tops of their nests.

The men were feeling good, although somewhat tired. I was never more tired in my life, but the fatigue had a glorious feeling and made one laugh at it. We were short of food for both the men and the officers. Nothing but potatoes and black barley bread had been issued to us for days. The woods were full of wild mushrooms. Small quantities of pork and other grease could sometimes be procured. We could requisition very little from the peasants because the latter had very little themselves.

Yet, in spite of these handicaps, we managed to prepare, whenever conditions and time permitted, a number of princely banquets. We ate potato pancakes, often three times a day. Each battalion headquarters had an official stamp with which all orders and passes were sealed. From time to time, I dispatched a soldier to Warsaw. The battalion order was sufficient to pass him through the lines. My mother had been sending me at intervals, to Warsaw from New York, sugar which was very difficult to obtain in Poland at that time. I sweetened boiled water with the sugar, soaked in it the barley bread with the crust cut off, and then fried it in grease. It was very good when you were hungry.

Memories of kidney stew used to torment me frequently. To get kidneys was out of the question. All we could find was mushrooms. With them we made the finest stew I believe that was ever eaten under like conditions. [p282]

We drank tea and lots of it, but sometimes without sugar. If our supply of sugar was very scanty, then we found a way to get around that hardship. The Polish soldier would make for himself a large pot of tea or would fill three or four glasses, and allow the tea to cool off a little. He would then place a lump of sugar in his mouth and hurriedly drink down all of the tea. It was good when you did not have anything else.

The further to the east we marched, the more neutral and passive the attitude of the peasants became toward us. I cannot say that this attitude was hostile. Above all else, they were sincerely glad that the Bolsheviks had been driven back. Whatever sympathy they had probably nourished at one time for the Soviet country, was now turned into an intense hatred, intermingled with fear. In instances where there was no eager active support of the Polish troops by them, they assumed instead, a manner of behaving which might be called "watchful waiting." They were not going to offer anything to us until they had first found out to what extent we were going to requisition food and forage supplies from them. The Poles paid for all the supplies that were taken with memorandum receipts or by payment in Polish marks.

But in numerous localities very little of such supplies had been left behind by the Bolsheviks. There was one exception to this, at Sluck, the end of our march. In that locality the Bolsheviks had been concentrating large quantities of food and forage supplies which they had requisitioned in Poland.



They did not have time, however, to get away with it all before we arrived.

In those parts of Poland where the Bolsheviks had had time to do real, forcible requisitioning, very little food, in fact, practically nothing was left for the peasants. What they could not take with them they destroyed by fire, barns and all. So the peasants naturally feared that the Poles might take away from them what little they had. I am certain that on the whole, the Polish troops were generous and displayed good judgment.

At times, when my orderly had succeeded by doubtful or undoubtful means in finding something "good" and had prepared a real meal, it was not an uncommon sight to see half-starved peasant women and children standing near by the place where I was eating and looking hungrily on. I was hungry also and had to eat in order to keep fit and because there was not enough to "go around," they had to be ordered away. It was a sad spectacle, but what could one do.

About this time, I had a peculiar feeling that I was ill with appendicitis. My right side was causing me much inconvenience and the doctor feared that the appendicitis was acute. It was without doubt an unpleasant sensation to suspect that one had acute [p283] appendicitis about 48 miles from nowhere, to the nearest first-aid station where an operation could possibly be performed. The only transportation to that place would be a one-horse country wagon.

The Polish army suffered a great deal from the lack of medicinal and sanitary necessities. In those days, the country was too poor to purchase them abroad in adequate quantities. There were times when it was necessary to leave behind, alone on the road, wounded soldiers, after hurried application of the most elementary kind of first aid.

This pain bothered, rather irritated me to such a degree, that I requisitioned at one of the nearby country estates, a large open carriage and hitched on to it two artillery horses. During the next day or so, I rode in it at the head of my column, while my horse was being led immediately in rear. In a few instances, I observed fire from the carriage and alongside the guns. It was not very long before I had ample proof that it was not acute appendicitis which was causing me the inconvenience. The large noodles that I had eaten over forty hours previously were at the bottom of all the trouble.

I had two orderlies, a personal servant, and one for my horse. The latter naturally was always with me. The former followed me up from place to place and sometimes took his time about it. I requisitioned for him a light country wagon with one horse. It contained my baggage and necessary personal equipment. He was usually the last to leave the billeting place. After gathering together all my belongings, he followed the general direction of the column.

There appeared to be a fair supply of horses in the 11th Polish Division. Frequently, horses were seen roaming about among the trees, of their own accord. Many peasants concealed their horses in dense patches of woods. Whenever possible, I took possession of any stray horses and put them in use in the battalion. If there was need for a certain number of country wagons, the latter were requisitioned from the natives (including a driver) for a definite period of time. As soon as the need for these ceased, each peasant, with his horse and wagon, was allowed to proceed to his home.

On the eastern outskirts of Kartusa Bereza there are two streams. The main bridge had been destroyed by the Bolsheviks and in accordance with an agreement with the infantry commander, I was to cross both streams at 5 A.M. on a certain morning. The peasants informed us that the streams were fordable with horses. The infantry was to cross over a bridge about 3 kilometres down the stream and then to proceed immediately to occupy the ground to the east of the destroyed bridge, that is, in the general direction in which I was to march. They were certain that they would occupy this ground before 5 A.M. [p284]

At 6 A.M., having been informed by infantry patrols that our infantry had crossed the bridge, I marched toward the stream. My batteries were halted in the town along the side of the road, in column formation. I proceeded ahead with a few orderlies and my adjutant to the nearest stream, in order to search for a place to ford it. Such a place was soon found. I then sent an order by the

adjutant to the leading battery to move forward, and digging the spurs in my horse, I called to the orderlies to follow me. I had not proceeded more than about 300 metres in the direction of the second stream, when the Bolsheviks opened up on my little party a terrific fire with machine guns and rifles. My orderlies galloped to the rear as fast as their horses could take them. My horse, for whom I had a lot of respect and who I believe had more common sense than I, instinctively turned on one leg to the rear, stood trembling for an instant, took hold of the bits with his teeth and made for home for all he was worth.

In that short interval my mind worked faster than it ever did. "Will it be safer to go back on the horse or off of him?" was my one thought. I decided that it would be most comfortable to be on "all fours." I therefore made one jump, landed in the soft black turf and crawled back to the stream. There I executed the "Eliza of Uncle Tom's Cabin" performance by hopping quickly over the loose-floating beams to the opposite bank. The Bolsheviks might have captured a major or at least his dead body, had they been more enterprising. But they were certain, without a doubt, that they had "gotten me," especially when they saw my horse galloping back without his rider. In any event, of what good is a dead or a wounded soldier? However, I thought of such a possibility and reached unconsciously to my side to make certain that the pistol was there.

A number of guns were unlimbered, off to one side of the road, and we fired with direct observation, right into the dense moving columns of the enemy. The morning haze had already risen and they were clearly distinguishable. The sight was very impressive. The 75 shells would ricochet along the ground and cut deep ruts in the dirt and into their ranks. They were anywhere from 700 metres to two kilometres distant. It was a case of every gunner for himself. Here and there, one could hear an officer say to the gunners: "Oh! that bunch has enough, there is another bunch over there, give them some." As a result of this mixup, I lost only eight horses.

We continued our march to the east, to the Szczara River. Here the Bolsheviks were well entrenched on the opposite bank. Our infantry occupied the old German trenches which had been constructed of concrete during the World War and which were in [p285] surprisingly good condition. Right where the Sluck road cuts these trenches about a kilometre from the river, a wonderful view is to be had of both banks. On the opposite bank were the former Russian trenches, now apparently filled with Bolsheviks. The enemy had a few guns and were sending us their messages of greeting, almost too eagerly. My own infantry, for some reason, refused to permit us to send a few in return.

About thirty hours later, the march was taken up again. By this time the Bolsheviks were becoming desperate. We had been driving them very hard. From the peasants we learned that they had been using from ten to twelve horses to a gun. We ceased from now on to march with the infantry or at least, along the same roads. They took advantage of the numerous "short cuts." Our general direction was now Baranowicze. We arrived by forced and roundabout marches, just about 20 kilometres to the west of that city.

When we reached this last place, our infantry were very tired. The horses were also tired. Whenever possible, I had permitted the men who were not mounted, to ride on the carriages and wagons. Some very good marches had been executed. On one occasion, one of these marches included a continuous hike of about 77 kilometres (about 48 miles), and after a rest of about six hours, a further march of 40 kilometres was made. The former had lasted from about 10 A.M. to 3 A.M. A great part of the march was on hard state roads and we naturally made good time. The last few rests had to be increased to about 25 minutes.

From then on, up to the occupation of Sluck, the hardships of both the horses and the men were not so great. The country through which we had to march was fairly wealthy in food. Nearly every soldier was dressed differently. Numerous Bolshevik overcoats and Cossack fur caps were in evidence, which fact was a happy occurrence, as it was already getting very cold.

In France, the infantry had always been criticizing the artillery for not being able to keep up with it.

In Poland, I frequently had a suspicion that the infantry did not move forward fast enough for the artillery. All the infantry units in the 11th Division which I had been supporting could not possibly make any justifiable complaints that my guns were not on hand when they were needed. I remained throughout the duration of the offensive on the "heels" of the infantry.

## **The Field Artillery Journal**

**Volume XIII, Number 5, September-October**

The United States Field Artillery Association

### **On the Polish-Bolshevik Front in 1919 and 1920..... 440**

By Michael J. Fibich, Major, F.A., O.R.C.

## **The Psychology of Armies and Peoples and War**

The people who are to compose an army which will be adequately effective in time of war and inherently national, must be reared in an atmosphere of patriotic and historic culture. By this I mean that a soldier, in addition to possessing good military instruction, must also be imbued with an intense, almost blind love for his country and every incident associated with it. To accomplish this, proper social education and preparation are necessary before he enters the army. Every measure should be taken in civil life to teach and glorify, in the schools, in the theatres and elsewhere, the traditions of the land and the heroic deeds of the valiant soldiers who have fought for the honor of their country during its past history. We create in that manner all *tradition* and a national *esprit de corps*.

There is a marked difference between a soldier who fights in the defence of the rights of his country simply because it is "Fun"—that "show what we can do spirit"—or to defend the land because he obtains his "bread and butter" from it, and that soldier who fights for the higher ideals, for the freedom, for the honor of his country and its sacred traditions. The latter soldier feels that he is fighting not so much for the present as for the future, for the preservation of the trust and traditions that were bequeathed to him by his forefathers. The men of Valley Forge nobly displayed like sentiments. It is this spirit that made Poland free again and enabled her to endure safely the terrible experiences of 1919 and 1920.

Prior to the war, and immediately after we entered it, the people of the United States were not united in their true expression of the higher ideals. The nation had not been brought up uniformly in *one* environment or with *like* principles. Leading public associations gave very little of their attention to these matters before the war. Much to our chagrin we have learned that second citizenship papers will not alone develop that type of an American who will fight not only for the material benefit of America but also, and yet more willingly and determinedly, for her idealism and her institutions. The continued influx of immigrants to this country and the indifference of the American public for a long time to the social and political education of the former, were likewise responsible, in no small degree, for the absence of this spirit. [p440]

However, the fault was not entirely with the naturalized Americans. Numbers of American boys whose forefathers were born in the states were not sincere advocates of even some of the basic principles of Americanism. "My Country Right or Wrong" and "One for All and All for One" held no deeper meaning for them. Many Americans in France refused to drill when the Armistice came, walked away from their posts, all because, as they claimed at the time, they had come to France to fight and for no other reason; now, because the fighting was over, they wanted to go home at once. It would have been a sad picture of disorder had discipline not been enforced up to the last moment of relief from the army. The various military duties of peace time are the most efficient means for

creating discipline. In addition, the training that the men received did not fail to benefit them personally in various ways.

My observations of the allied armies in Europe have led me to believe that there is much of the "Bolshevik" and the "grumbler" in our soldier. He endeavors to reason too much for himself the "whys" and the "wherefores" that he must perform such and such a duty and tries to explain, with his own understanding, many of the various orders that are given him. There is one word that virtually embraces a soldier's complete dictionary in time of warfare and that is "obey." The only thing that he is supposed to know thoroughly is "how to obey." The more active and severe the operations, the more tightly must the bonds of discipline be drawn and it is here that the soldier is called upon to do the least amount of reasoning. Occasional unwillingness, everlasting grumbling over the food, clothing, duties assigned, lack of promptness in executing formalities and instructions, were some of the characteristics noticeable.

The American public will be inclined to call the above, the natural-born independence of the individual American; an attitude assumed by him for reason of the strong dislike for military service. I would call it the lack of considerate appreciation and understanding for the duties and requirements of citizenship, and for the ideals and the historic mission of our country.

Our noble women at home had spoiled the average soldier to such an extent that many of the little comforts and pleasures made possible by their coöperation and which should have been looked upon by the soldier as a luxury, were accepted by him as a "matter of course." Wars are cruel and one must be prepared to suffer. Though they suffered some discomforts, on the whole, our soldiers were better off than the soldiers in any of the allied armies. It is difficult to state beforehand, how large numbers of American soldiers in France would have acted had they been compelled to perform their duties without overcoats and gloves in intensely cold weather, many without [p441] shoes and underwear, not to mention the absence of numerous other comforts, most of which the Boys in France had. Those were the trials to which the Polish soldiers were subjected.

Some little justice must be given, however, to those who *complained*. The screws of discipline naturally had to be drawn tightly during active operations but once hostilities had definitely ceased, those same screws might have been loosened up just a little bit without any harm being done, on the contrary even, "for the good of the service."

I doubt whether a more enthusiastic class of young officers had ever entered the army at any previous period from civil life. The intense desire and impatient willingness to learn and to do the proper thing was as sincere as might have been hoped for. It was not discipline so much—this was especially true of that particular type of college man who had entered the service—that was needed. What they required, above all else, was proper and *considerate* guidance and leadership. The refusal, for instance, to permit the men to wear their helmets when it was raining very heavily, or, compelling the men to wash daily the carriages and harness, even though the terrain through which they would be marching (not on parade but campaign marches) on the following day, was very muddy—all, for no other reason than to make an *impression* on the "Boche"—were not very likely to enhance the "*esprit de corps*" of any organization. On the contrary, it destroyed the enthusiasm and made evident an astonishing lack of understanding of the psychology of those "New" elements who had entered the army.

The chief aims should have been: guns in good condition that shoot straight, and horses that were capable of taking those guns wherever necessary. These latter should have been the principal concerns of the higher commanders, while those mentioned above were two of many minor incidences far too insignificant to have required the personal attention of a busy colonel, especially a general, in the field.

The regular army should not, under any condition, isolate itself from the people at large. Such isolation in the past has done more than anything else to bring about the present unpleasant feeling of hostility of the American public toward everything that is "regular." It must remain constantly in

a position to feel the pulse of the nation. In the World War, there were frequent and lucid examples that the average regular personnel were strangers and did not understand adequately either the nature of the beatings of that pulse or the spirit that animated it.

A national army is a people's army, bound inseparably with the highest and purest of national ideals. There is nothing strange about its existence—of which all citizens might not be proud. It [p442] has given to our nation the most noble of all of our traditions. It has never played for popularity or overemphasized its own importance. It has always been exceptionally modest in its behavior and I believe too much so, for there is a possibility that in the future, our public school histories will lay great stress on the fact that the American troops would not have put "one over" the Boches if the marines had not been there. Many of our citizens look upon the army as something peculiar and unwelcome, as something which has been forced upon them and with which they *will* have nothing in common. "Oh darn the regular army officers and soldiers" is frequently heard on all sides. Regular troops have always been and must continue to be kept purposely in the side light, *out of sight*, for fear that they might be seen, while I suppose the public will never cease to say, as it did in the past, "A marine here, a marine there, a marine is everywhere."

But it is *our* army, the American Army, and every citizen should bend all of his endeavors, if not for sentimental reasons then at least for patriotic reasons, to make it the finest army possible. The army needs to be boosted now and then; it needs good will and public moral support. It is the citizen who must, whether he wills it or not, provide for its maintenance. He must also provide the human "food" element. There can be no difference, no impassable gulf between the regular and the civilian armies. Both are a vital part of each other and, do they not aim toward the same ideal?

The attitude of the European toward his army is somewhat different from that of the American. A regular army officer is regarded as a normal human being engaged in vitally important work. For is his work not important? Is it not possible for an army officer to labor for an ideal, to become wholly enthused and "in love" with his work just like any person in civil life with his profession? The former must work uninterruptedly, with dogged patience, and must constantly prepare for the day when that final test and supreme decision on all of his efforts up to that time, shall be made. That day may never come for the officer, while the man in civil life reaps the fruits of his labors progressively as the days go by. Most European troops will not be billeted in "dog" tents even in peace time if there are barns and other adequate billeting facilities on hand. Many an American lady would call it murder if her poor little "Doggie" were left over night in a "human dog tent."

Armies will exist and wars will take place until the time shall come when the peoples of the world will have sincere faith in the *same* lofty ideals and adopt more or less the same standards of living and culture. Such a condition of affairs throughout the world unfortunately is, as yet, far from realization. Until this goal is attained, [p443] mere union, without the power to *command* respect for decisions, will have no concrete significance.

One cannot talk ideals to, or claim the respect of peoples who do not confess the same beliefs or who do not understand us. It would be absurd to rely entirely on honeyed declarations of peace offerings to a people whose psychology differed so fundamentally from our own. Certain of those peoples have been living for centuries in fear of the knout. If you desired to treat them courteously as equals, to invite them to your table, they would lose respect for you because you had lowered yourself to their level. On the other hand, there remains the opposite extreme, the typical aristocrat and many of the nobles and the intellectuals who are too arrogant to sit at the table with commoners. I merely cite this as an example, and make mention of the two extremes of the Russian people because both of them together compose over ninety per cent. of the population of Russia. The only thing that such peoples understand is *force* and the power to enforce what you say.

The same might be said of certain other nations. They have to be brought up all over again—"made over"—and entire generations would be required for the purpose. One cannot change the psychology, habits, and customs of a people with the stroke of a pen or by means of a peace treaty. In the early years of the present century, our public school histories taught us of the great friendship

of the people of the United States for the government and the *people* of Russia. No Russian people *ever* ruled Russia. The most degenerate aristocracy, possibly in all the world, with the Czar as their chief, ruled its people in a despotic manner. We might have sympathized with the lot of the people but we could not express our friendship, in other words, our approval. Friendship can only exist between those who are spiritually equals.

If the United States and other powers at that time had adopted a different policy and had refused to enter into intimate relations with the Russian government until the latter had turned over a "new leaf," then the latter might have been induced to treat its own people as equal *human* beings with *godly* souls and not as cattle. Unfortunately, material benefits cover up many a loop hole.

Notwithstanding the fact that the spirit of idealism did so much for Poland, that country suffered nevertheless from a serious handicap, forced upon the people by external influences. One hundred and forty-seven years of subjugation had been sufficient to alter, in a moderate degree, the psychology of the Polish people. The three occupying powers had succeeded in imbuing the natures of the Poles who inhabited the respective parts of Poland, with many of their own characteristics. All the Poles did not think in the same manner, practiced various standards of efficiency and did things in different ways. [p444]

Many of these characteristics contradicted each other as they were brought into play when Poland began forming her army. They were closely associated with the events that preceded the war and with the peculiarities of the environment in which the Poles had been brought up for generations by the hostile nations who had divided her among themselves. Their effects would not have proved so discouraging and detrimental to *initial* progress had they been applied in practice separately within each of the three parts. But when brought together in one organization, trouble and friction was the result. In spite of all that, the spirit of Valley Forge permeated the Polish Army during 1919 and 1920.

### **The Polish Soldier**

The Pole has it in him to become a splendid soldier. Proper military instruction and national education should eventually give the best results. He grumbles very little, is of a quiet disposition and patiently submits to the disagreeable experiences of actual warfare. Although numbers of them have no public school education, they nevertheless are intelligent and sensible, and grasp things very quickly in their own way. Before the war, numbers of them had not received any uniform national training, either in the duties of citizenship or in the principles of democratic patriotism. Dependent upon the locality from which they came, their culture was local rather than national. It is this *national historical culture* which must play so important a rôle in every sincerely patriotic country. The evils resulting from the difficult and limited conditions in which they were forced to live before the war, produced certain moral defects that were discernible during the Bolshevik advance into Poland. I believe that these defects are temporary and must eventually disappear under a strong, centralized and patriotic form of government.

I doubt whether Poland will ever organize of her own volition, a military expedition against any of her neighbors. The offensive toward Kijew was not an attack against the vital interests of Russia or true Russian integrity. The purpose then was to break up hostile concentrations of troops on the southeastern frontiers of Poland. There is greater probability that some such expedition will be organized against her by a foreign power. In such an event, she will be compelled to fight in a way that she least knew how to do at that time, and that is, to defend herself systematically.

The Polish soldier prefers the attack to the defense. The offensive is more agreeable to his temperament. He will not submit willingly or joyfully to the rôle of a defender in the trenches.

It is true that certain units in the Polish Army fought very bravely during the retreat. The nature of such fighting, wherever [445] it did take place, proves that the Polish soldier possesses the characteristics requisite for a soldier on the defensive. The display of these characteristics was not as general as might have been the case and was more commonly conspicuous among the troops

from the former German and Austrian parts of Poland than it was among those who came from Congress Poland (Russian part).

Discipline is required to make an attack, but a better kind of discipline is required for a successful defense. Fighting alone is not the most difficult part of warfare. In the excitement of the moment, during an attack, soldiers will move forward—the braver will lead while the less brave will follow—but bearing up with the discomforts of a war of position, the intense drudgery and monotony immediately in rear of the front line, the nerve-racking bombardment, the wet, the cold, the mud, etc., all make greater demands upon a soldier. Soldiers will prove themselves more equal to these demands, the longer and the more thorough their course of training has been.

To defend the ground effectively, retreat slowly and systematically in the presence of the enemy, in accordance with the demands of the military situation, requires a special kind of training. The majority of these Polish units did not receive this training. The chief obstacle to everything in those critical days was the lack of time. They had been hastily gathered together and immediately after, thrown into action against the Bolshevik invaders.

A good soldier for the defensive must possess certain psychological characteristics. I believe that the Pole of today possesses those characteristics and whether dormant or apprehensible, thorough preparation and instruction beforehand, is the surest and the only method to be considered when it is desired to bring them into play.

However, I cannot overemphasize the importance for the Poles of instruction in the strategy of the defensive as a primary consideration, while instruction in the strategy of the offensive should receive only secondary attention.

### **General Aspects of the Fighting on the Polish-Bolshevik Front**

The numerous battles did not take place along one continuous line but comprised, in the majority of cases, individual manoeuvres and partisan warfare. The Polish fighting line was made up of independent mobile and flexible combat units, the smallest of them being a regiment—in exceptional cases a battalion.

From the very beginning, the fighting with the Bolshevik army disclosed the fact that it aimed in all of its manoeuvres to occupy only the more important points of resistance, as villages, woods and roads. [446]

All of its offensives were directed along the lines of main roads, making almost exclusive use of flank attacks.

The Poles did not, as a general rule, undertake frontal or direct attacks against the Bolsheviks. 'Tis a fact that during the offensive toward Kijew, there were numerous instances of frontal attacks, but these were made against troops more or less on the run. The aim was rather to initiate flank movements. The psychology of a *good* Russian soldier is important enough to be given consideration because he is better on the defensive than on the offensive. He fears flank attacks. The appearance of enemy soldiers on his flanks or to his rear has seldom failed to produce a panic.

Amid these conditions certain higher Polish commanders considered it most important to withhold under their direct orders as large bodies of reserves as possible. Of course, a higher commander can personally direct a battle or influence it in any way, only if he has on hand effective reserve supports.

A series of strong points, such as villages, railroad stations, etc., were organized in great depth and occupied by independently acting groups. Strong advance guard posts, both mounted and on foot, were placed far to the front. This arrangement afforded an opportunity for striking the enemy on the flanks whenever he broke through, possibly defeating in that manner his purpose.

The name usually given to this form of fighting was an active defense. To a certain extent it agreed somewhat with the temperament of the Polish soldier who had proved himself more fitted for

adapting his nature to it than to a passive defense. The strength of resistance of the latter is less than that of the former.

### **Artillery Tactics and Firing**

I relate the following incidences because I consider them important when firing and manoeuvring artillery in movement warfare. Certain facts stood out with particular vividness. They were the salient features of all warfare. Formerly, before the war, I was not prone to give some of them much thought. But after having been confronted with numerous and varied situations, I feel that their importance cannot be overemphasized. I was fortunate in having been assigned to the 11th Polish Division because these facts were brought home to me in a more impressive manner than would have been the case had I been attached to one of the better and more matured Polish divisions.

1. The numerous orders received in action, on the march, and in the billets were conspicuous for their lack of a continued execution of some one definite plan. Such a plan should have aimed boldly toward the general goal and might have been later modified by the [p447] progress of events, as the situation demanded. Poor results and the weakening of the *esprit de corps* are due to the initiation of a piecemeal and a wavering preparation.

Orders were frequently used which were the direct opposite of orders issued earlier, sometimes even a few hours. This also occurred in the American Army during the march to the Rhine. The frequent changes of order in column, kinds of ammunition in batteries, the unnecessary interchanging of battalions and batteries within the same or between different battalions, and the return of the same batteries or battalions to their former positions (sometimes the order for the second change would come a few hours after the first change), could find its justification not only in the lack of a definite plan, but also in the general constant desire to see things moving.

There is a fault which can cause much trouble. It is the failure to send to an organization beforehand, a word of warning, foretelling some contemplated movement. Orders when received usually demanded *immediate* action without consideration of the time necessary for preparation. Artillery requires a little time for preparation.

Battery and battalion billets were often selected from the map without regard to the situation or the comfort of the men and of the horses. In some instances batteries, upon arriving at the designated villages during the night after a long march, found them already occupied by troops of other organizations.

During the nine days that the artillery remained within the area of Brest Litewsk (September 1–10), I was twice placed by written orders, on two different occasions, in command of artillery in the southern half of the eastern sector. According to the orders, this artillery was supposed to be defending Brest Litewsk. When I was not in command of the sector, other officers were being changed about in a similar manner and placed in command of it for a day or two. As there was not at that time in the Polish Army, any uniform method for preparing a defensive plan of fire organization, different kinds of plans were attempted but none completed.

The above and similar occurrences may appear offhand of minor importance, but they were nevertheless, in many instances, avoidable and resulted needlessly in:

- (a) Increased fatigue to soldiers.
- (b) Very tired and improperly cared for horses.
- (c) Natural discontent incident to frequent unnecessary changes which even the ordinary soldier could sometimes comprehend.
- (d) Numerous delays on the part of the artillery, which delays caused misunderstandings, confusion and at times, hard feelings between officers. [p448]
- (e) Inability of battalions and batteries to efficiently prepare even a temporary organization of fire within the sector assigned to them.



(f) Without a prepared flexible organization of fire, no fire concentration could have taken place in *time* to be of any good.

I must admit that many of the errors committed were justified by events that preceded the operations. The Polish Army was, to a certain extent, like the American Army. The latter was a young organization and the defects that were apparent were due primarily to our necessarily hurried and abnormal expansion from a small unit into an army of millions. On the other hand, the Polish Army was not only young but an entirely new organization.

The staffs of all units are the most important and yet the most difficult to train. Such training requires a lot of time. The situation in our army was more favorable in that we had a fairly efficient staff organization before the war. This enabled our higher staffs later on to meet more confidently the varied situations of actual warfare. But the Polish staffs had been organized since the armistice. Among the staff personnel there were comparatively few who possessed prior general staff training and there had not been time to put others through some course of instruction.

This is an important lesson for the people of America. Our general staff in time of peace should be a few times larger in number than the tables of organizations normally require.

If we had been thrown on our own responsibilities right from the very beginning and under the same conditions as the French were, could we have accomplished the same results in the same space of time?

The beneficial effects of French assistance to our army in France cannot be overestimated. At every important point there was to be seen a capable French officer or sergeant who was always on hand with very valuable advice.

I believe that one of the greatest tasks that the French ever put over—which is a proof of their extraordinary forethought and patience—was to place at our disposal a large, excellently trained personnel who could speak the English language. Over two million Americans in France were not required to have even the most elementary knowledge of French in order to learn the warfare as it was then being fought on the western front. It was a wonderful feat. They met us with our own language. Imagine what would have happened if two million French soldiers arrived in the United States and we had to do all the instructing in their language.

Everything that money, national prestige and moral influence could obtain was ours in France. This was not the situation in [p449] Poland in 1919 and 1920. Europe was just getting over the World War. All aid that was received by Poland was given begrudgingly and doubtfully, probably even with a taint of unjust suspicion.

2. It is understood that divisional artillery is placed in reserve when it is exhausted, shot up or otherwise unfit to perform efficient work on the front. Nevertheless it appeared as though there was a constant endeavor to place batteries in reserve even though such batteries were in fairly good condition. In the Brest Litewsk area, at least two batteries were kept in reserve almost continuously near the other batteries which were in position. In the event of a strong attack by the Bolsheviks these batteries would have been unable to throw effective fire upon the enemy at the proper time.

In a situation where the Bolsheviks had little artillery and no observation of any kind, it would have been putting the artillery to more effective use by placing all the batteries in positions and then whenever the situation required it, to move forward a platoon from any one battery for special missions with the infantry. Under the conditions existing at that time, batteries rested best when "dug in," with the guns near the villages in which were quartered the horses and the greater part of the men. A more comfortable arrangement was possible than would have been the case if the Bolsheviks had been able to counter-battery.

3. In order to obtain the most efficient fire direction, the units of one command should be centralized as much as is possible and whenever the military situation permits. Yet it appears that the tendency toward decentralization of a command and of the fire power was the common

occurrence. The *battalion* is the tactical firing unit. Every device should be used to keep it as such. Batteries and platoons should not be turned over unconditionally to infantry commanders whenever it is possible for the battalions to which those batteries and platoons belong, to operate as a tactical unit. Special missions are frequent in movement warfare and it will be necessary to make such divisions, but when these divisions are unnecessary, then the shifting of responsibility to battery and lower commanders appears to be the only aim. The fire power of artillery is thereby destroyed. The rapidity and efficiency with which a battalion or higher commander might coördinate, or concentrate it upon a given point, at the proper time, are seriously hampered because of the divided and independent battery-firing organizations.

The front of a battalion of infantry may be too wide to be effectively covered by the fire of an artillery battalion. The fronts of the respective companies may vary in width. They may be irregularly distributed over the terrain, with unequal spaces between them. Under those conditions it would be an error to assign one battery independently to each company. The situation would be best solved [p450] by the concentrated fire of the three batteries upon the most threatened point or part of the line.

Another false tendency is the other extreme: ambition for concentrating. Certain brigade commanders in the American Army were also overambitious in this way. Although their commands had been split up, that is, the regiments or battalions detailed in support of various infantry units (which shifting about is at times necessary when moving forward rapidly), they were nevertheless very jealous of this division. Instead of being satisfied to exercise merely the functions of general supervision and administration over the care and the supply of their units, they endeavored by every means possible to retain direct command of all of them, even down to batteries and guns.

By the improper division of responsibilities an excellent opportunity was lost to develop the initiative of junior officers. The demand of the higher commanders should have been for concrete results. The method of obtaining these results should have been left to the immediate commanders, guided by necessary instructions. The Polish battery commanders on the whole were good artillerymen. Their control of fire was even excellent in some cases. Most of them were former officers of the Russian, Austrian and German armies. What they needed was encouragement and incentive to go ahead with the work within their proper spheres. A feeling among them that they would be held responsible for certain results was all that was necessary to obtain excellent improvement in conditions. But instead of an intelligent and considerate form of procedure, we saw in the higher artillery commanders a tendency to control the actions of subordinate officers, leaving very little field for individual initiative.

If visible signs of fire direction were to be seen it was due, in specific instances, to the initiative of certain battalion and even battery commanders. If single guns were placed in advanced positions it was also due to their initiative, although the use of advance guns was not as general as should have been the case.

4. A serious error is often made in the failure to take proper precautions on every occasion by preparing for any possible emergency, especially when the enemy is hurriedly retreating. One should always credit the enemy with doing that which we least desire or that which we might try to do were we in his place.

During a halt of a few days near the Szczara River, nothing was done to prepare our sector for defence by designating lines of defence, eventual battery positions, etc., as precautionary measures. War was still going on. The Bolsheviks might attack. This was the same situation (11th of November) within the area of Sluck. No orders had been received since the 13th of October requiring the [p451] preparation of defence plans. Peace had not yet been signed. Such plans might have included eventual assembly places for troops, lines of resistance, eventual battery positions, the fires, sectors, observation posts, liaison nets, etc. This preparation would not have necessitated the movement of troops which were naturally scattered all over the terrain on account of the quartering conditions. It would have been merely a defensive measure taken in the event that the

Bolsheviks should attack.

There is only one reason that might have justified this condition of affairs exclusive of the reasons given in the foregoing pages. Possibly the Polish higher commands felt the absolute certainty that the Bolsheviks would not come back and attack. This is very probable because the retreating Bolshevik soldier at that time had very little fight in him. Such certainty would have been impossible in the face of a more trained enemy.

5. In the majority of cases the preparatory data for firing was made with the aid of the map. The 1/100,000 map was used for this purpose. This preparatory data (the magnetic north angle and the range) was fairly accurate and the method gave satisfactory results. The aim was to obtain initial firing data, which, when used, would throw the first salvo in the direction or the zone where the observing officer was looking for it. This latter result, when firing by light of day, was always obtained. When the batteries had had time to adjust their fire during the day on certain points within their sectors, moderately accurate fire could be directed upon any threatened point within the respective sectors during the night. When the batteries had not had time to adjust their fire, then the accuracy of such fire was problematical. Upon the receipt of a report that the Bolsheviks were attacking a certain point, a short period of observed sweeping zone fire generally sufficed to hold them temporarily. But, of course, this would not always be the case against a trained and determined enemy. For fire during the night without previous day adjustment, in addition to the data obtained from the map, adequate allowances had to be made, for reasons of safety, in the range, and also, if possible, certain meteorological conditions were considered. Precision fires were never used. Zone, sweeping and systematic fires were of the most common occurrence.

The other method of firing was direct fire with open sights. Seldom were guns laid for indirect fire by the use of B. C. instruments. This was due, to a large extent, to the character of the terrains across which the battery commander or observer had to move forward with the advancing infantry. The practice of laying the guns by the B. C. instrument under the conditions then existing, was superseded by a more practical and easier method. In possession of a 1/100,000 map, the observer merely noted thereon by a dot, [p452] the location of his battery and proceeded forward paying very little attention as to how far he was proceeding, to the position of the guns with relation to his observation post, or to the direction line of his guns. He was concerned primarily with the enemy, with his own infantry and with the terrain over which he was passing. After he had reached a suitable place from which to observe, he identified on the map some point to his front, drew a line from the latter point to his guns, and telephoned the magnetic north angle and the range with other corrections to his battery.

6. An observer from each battery was always well up toward the front, very frequently in the front lines of the infantry. During an advance either one section or a platoon accompanied each advancing infantry battalion. A platoon was found to be the more practical. A system was worked out by means of which one gun was always ready to fire. It was connected by telephone with the observer. The other gun was in motion toward the observer. When the latter gun had proceeded forward far enough (that is, in advance of the gun already in position), the telephone line was cut near by it and a telephone was attached, while the gun furthest to the rear was started forward and the wire between guns rolled up. If only one section were used, the gun must necessarily be out of action during the time that it was in motion. The latter fact was bound to have a bad moral effect upon the infantry whenever armored cars and trains were expected. A gun of the same calibre as the field gun but of the howitzer type would have been preferred, due to its curved fire and the ease with which it might have been concealed.

7. The telephone was our chief means of communication. The telephone will always work, if not at once, then after a short delay. In the Polish Army, where there were telephones and telephone controls of many varieties, Austrian, Russian, German and French, the telephone had never failed to work. Sometimes its operation was delayed but the more experienced the personnel, the shorter the periods of delay. Each battery had from seven to eight miles of wire. With sometimes two forward

observers per battery, most of this wire was in constant use. It is of primary importance that the artillery have its own independent liaison net. In the army during the advance, the higher commands ran telephone wires to the lower units while during the retreat, the reverse took place.

Flag signalling was never resorted to, due no doubt to the efficiency of the telephone. Also, the nature of the country and the position of the forward observers made its use impossible. Some of the batteries were proficient in flag signalling.

8. When on the march each gun carriage, caisson and wagon had with it some loose hay. At every stop or halt for at least a few [p453] minutes, the drivers would drop their horses a little hay. When the column moved on, the drivers or cannoneers would pick up what hay remained on the ground. This habit gave good results, for it helped to keep up the strength of the horses which got on the average as little as two or three pounds of oats per horse per day. A soldier will always contribute to get some hay for his horses if he loves them and he should be permitted to keep such hay near him on his carriage. He should be encouraged to seize every opportunity to procure it when the regular supplies fail to arrive. Fear that the Bolsheviks (as was the case with the American Army on its march to the Rhine in the presence of the Germans) might be displeased by the unsightly appearance of artillery carriages with hay packed up on the limbers, was not permitted to interfere with the welfare of the horses and a soldier's love for them. For the lack of grooming kits, the horses were rubbed down for months with nothing more than barley or rye straw. It was never necessary to hitch more than six horses to a gun carriage or caisson. Frequently not more than four horses were used.

9. Each Polish battalion commander has attached to him a quartermaster and a personnel officer. The former performs general quartermaster duties: the procurement of food for animals and men and the various other supplies and materials needed by a battalion. The personnel officer helps the quartermaster and is also the paymaster of his battalion. I think this is an excellent arrangement especially that of having attached to a battalion staff, a quartermaster officer. In mobile warfare, the battalion acts more independently. It is more advantageous and easier for it to supply itself with its own transportation from a rendezvous or refilling point than would be the case if a regiment or other headquarters, not interested personally in them, attempted to supply two or more widely scattered battalions. When the Lieutenant, my quartermaster officer, reported to me for duty, I informed him that I had no intention of giving much thought as to the whereabouts of his train (which was under my orders) or of the needs of my batteries; that he was to take those burdens upon his own shoulders. He was a very efficient officer and in the days that followed, I could devote all the time to my firing batteries, manoeuvres, the firing, our infantry and the enemy.

10. In open warfare, it is absolutely necessary that a battery be very mobile. Therefore an arrangement, whereby a battery commander during an active campaign would be responsible for only that which he used from day to day (say the first five sections), with the remaining caisson sections assembled together within each battalion in the nature of a caisson company under the command of a separate officer (also of the battalion), would, I think, be very satisfactory. Placing the various supplies within reach of a battalion [p454] should be the primary function of the regiment and higher units. The battalion should be furnished with the means to procure those supplies intended for its own use.

The small country baggage wagons are very practicable. They can go almost anywhere, and if necessary, be taken apart quickly and carried across a stream.

11. A system of coördinates, even double kilometric squares, superimposed on these 1/100,000 maps, would have greatly increased the efficiency of the work both for the artillery and for the infantry. It would have facilitated and hastened the responses of the artillery to the calls made by the infantry for artillery fire. The ideal map for the use of artillery in mobile warfare would be either the 1/40,000 or the 1/50,000 with a superimposed quadrilateral system of coördinates.

12. The pantograph issued down to include battalion commanders, when none other than the

1/100,000 map was obtainable, would have proved a very valuable instrument. For special, temporary or rather short-period operations, directions for firing on tracings which contained greater details, might have been given to the units interested. The tracings could be made to a larger scale easily and rapidly. When the infantry receive a tracing like that, they seldom need any long accompanying verbal or written explanation.

13. Light one horse, two-wheeled carts with proper mechanism for quickly dropping and rolling up wire would have proved of great service to the artillery, especially for accompanying guns. Quantity would not have been as valuable as mobility, ease in concealing and handling. About two miles of light thin wire per cart would have been adequate. A six-horse telephone carriage of the American type would have been too cumbersome and practically useless in Poland in battery and battalion manoeuvring.

### **Cavalry**

The attachment of the Polish soldier for his horse is sincere and probably an hereditary trait. As a rule he makes a good horseman. The traditions of Poland of hundreds of years ago have done much to create the splendid *esprit de corps* that exists at the present time in certain mounted units.

At the beginning of the Bolshevik offensive, the Polish Army was seriously handicapped by the lack of sufficient forces of cavalry. In order to meet the destructive attacks and raids of Budena's Cossack cavalry, a corresponding force, giving strong protection to the front, the flanks, and along the lines of communication was needed. This was the primary cause for the retreat of the Polish Army. Bolshevik cavalry, sometimes in numbers as low as ten, [p455] would pass through the Polish lines, suddenly attack hospital and other columns or units, put all, even the wounded, to the sword and disappear. The entire incident would ordinarily last but a few minutes, so quickly was it done.

Within the terrain of operations of hostile cavalry, independent Polish fighting units customarily concentrated in villages. To meet the mounted attacks, use was made of advance guard posts and patrols and of an organized line of resistance in front of (outside) the village. The village proper was prepared for defence. Entrances were blocked, roads were closed, machine guns efficiently placed. Advantage was taken of all other means of defence such as fences, ditches, houses, etc. It was the intention of the Polish commanders to defeat the Bolshevik charge beyond the outskirts of the village.

Sometimes the Bolsheviks attacked in what might be called a crescent formation. A Cossack cavalry force upon sight of a Polish mounted body would immediately advance to the charge with the front of their line dented to the rear (form of a crescent). Immediately after the two forces had clashed together, the Bolsheviks would suddenly swerve about and gallop to the rear. The Poles would probably follow. But prior to that, the two Cossack wings (points of the crescent) during the charge, did not stop with the rest but kept on galloping for some distance further until they became screened behind woods or other barriers. At a given signal, they would emerge from their hiding-places and attack the Poles on the flanks and in the rear.

The Bolshevik cavalry instituted a method of using their machine guns which had not been practiced in other armies until that time. The guns were mounted on small, light, two-wheeled, one-horse carts, always prepared for action. They could fire at a moment's notice from the carts, by facing the rear ends in the general direction of the objective.

### **The Infantry And Field Service**

The Polish Army contained some very good divisions of which the 14th, 15th and 16th Pozanian, and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Legionary might be mentioned. The method of attack of the former was steady, massed and heavy, while that of the latter was lighter and resembled very much the skirmish formation.

It appears that the greatest possible use was not made of machine guns. They should have been

compelled to keep up with the attacking infantry. They generally postponed the occupation of the forward positions until the latter had been made secure by the infantry.

When marches are undertaken in situations similar to those which existed on the Bolshevik front, machine guns should not march together in machine-gun company formation, but should be distributed [p456] throughout the column. Guns must be prepared for instant action and their personnel must always accompany them. The same distribution should be made of the artillery, possibly a platoon to a battalion of infantry.

The forward reconnaissance of the infantry of the 11th Division might have been bolder and more determined, more thorough and persistent. It kept very close to the main body. The reports sent in from such reconnaissance parties frequently overestimated the strength of the enemy.

The service of security was not as well conducted as it might have been. The old rule that "a main body without artillery should be safe from rifle fire and a main body with artillery should be safe from hostile artillery fire" was not generally lived up to. At times the advance guard failed to make it possible for the main body to proceed unimpeded by smaller obstacles and without unnecessary halts.

When the column reached the Szczara River and the Sluck road, it was delayed about thirty hours because the reconnaissance had not been bold and thorough. It was reported that the infantry could not cross at once because all the crossings had been either burned or destroyed. The main bridge was reported as entirely destroyed. This river divided formerly, the Russian and the German occupation forces during the World War. But the main bridge was not destroyed. On the night of 2nd–3rd October, the infantry crossed the river by means of loose boards over the smoldering piles.

I had an excellent opportunity to observe closely the work of the infantry in numerous engagements. The infantry of the division as a whole did not place enough reliance in its own weapon. It never aimed, in any one instance, to gain its point by rifle fire superiority. It did place reliance in the machine guns which were used consistently. The fact that it advanced so rapidly was due to certain company and battalion commanders who were very efficient.

The Polish engineers did excellent work in the construction and repair of bridges. Bridges, 50 metres wide, strong enough to hold artillery and heavily loaded trucks, were constructed in from three to four hours.