

# First Directive, Warsaw Operation <sup>1</sup>

General M. Kukiel

## I. Development of the situation from the Time it was Decided to Assume the Offensive from the Bug,

### The Shifting of Operations to the Vistula Theatre

Ever since the time the battle was lost on the Auda and Berezina rivers<sup>2</sup> the main object of the Polish High Command had been to gain time in both theatres of operation – the Northeast and Southeast. The gaining of time was essential for the formation of new forces, particularly of strong cavalry. With the aid of the latter the Commander-in-Chief hoped to cope with the cavalry army of KomandArm Budėnny, gain a decision, and wrest from him the initiative in the south, so as to be able to make use of the forces thus released for a counterattack in the north.<sup>ref</sup>

The armies of the Northeast Front (Fourth and First Armies), in accordance with the plan of the Polish Commander-in-Chief, were to gain time through the medium of a retrograde movement and an active defence along the fortified line of the old German trenches (resting with their left on Vilnius), and finally and finally along the line of the Szczara and Niemen Rivers. By this time the importance of the latter had increased because of the narrowing down of the zone of action.

However, both of these lines had fallen with the first onslaught by the enemy (Vilnius on July 14, the German trenches on July 17, Grodno on July 19, and Slonim on July 20).

Fighting for the restoration of the line of the Szczara and Niemen Rivers, which upon the initiative of the Commander of the Northeast Front and subsequent concurrence by the Commander-in-Chief,<sup>ref</sup> had begun immediately, shifted on July 21 to the area on the left bank of the Niemen south of Grodno, and the area west of Slonim toward the line of the Selwianka. On July 22, the right wing of the North Front (Fourth Army) was badly defeated

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<sup>1</sup> The text that follows is not an exact replica of the original.

1) I have amended some errors and replaced archaic language and phrasing, especially where it might confuse readers who do not have English as a first language.

2) All places are given in the modern Polish form, not the German form of the original, except for a few places with standard English variants (especially Warsaw, Brest-Litovsk, the Vistula and L'viv).

3) Most clarifying notes are as they stand in the original, including any indication who they are from. My personal notes are followed by "MP".

4) Notes only concerned with citing references are marked <sup>ref</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Beginning of the month of July 1920 – Ed



and driven back on Bereza Kartuska and the virgin forest of Białowieża. On the following day the First Army was forced to give up the line of the Niemen; efforts to restore the situation were without avail. The Fourth Army on July 23 was situated in the area of Bereza Kartuska – Prużany – the Białowieża Forest, the First Army in the vicinity of Białystok – Tykocin, but the latter was defeated on July 25 on the Świsłocz River and at Sokółka.

The Polish group covering the North Front and which was at the same time maintaining connection between the two fronts, was engaged with the enemy up to July 25 in the region of the confluence of the Styr and Pripet Rivers. On this day, pursuant to instructions from higher authority, it commenced to withdraw in two stages toward the line Liubishew (mouth of the Stochód) – Drohiczyn (Pripet area) – Bereza Kartuska.

The forces of the Southeast<sup>ref</sup> held on this day the line of the Styr River (Third and Second Armies confronting the Russian Twelfth Army and units of Buděny's First Cavalry Army). Here they were engaged in sever fighting with Buděny's Army in the vicinity of Brody (18<sup>th</sup> Division of the Polish Sixth Army), retreating step by step from the line of the Zbrucz River towards the Sereth (Polish Sixth Army opposed to Russian Fourteenth Army); fighting then developed afresh on the lower Zbrucz (Ukrainian Forces).

At this point a cavalry corps<sup>3</sup> numbering two divisions had been gotten ready for action in the region of Zamość – Hrubieszów, a matter which decided the battle against Buděny's forces. The Commander of the Southeast Front was charged with the execution of this operation, having to this end at his disposal the Polish Second Army (1<sup>st</sup> Legion Division, 6<sup>th</sup> Division, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade) and the strategic cavalry.<sup>ref</sup> The Commander-in-Chief looked forward to a successful completion of this operation by the end of July. During the early part of August he was able to augment the number of troops at his disposal by the acquisition of considerable forces that had been released in the south. No less than two infantry divisions and one cavalry division having thus been released, it was possible by August 5 to concentrate them for action in the north.<sup>ref</sup>

It was on these considerations that he Commander-in-Chief based his decision in regard to the Northeast Front. This Front had yet to gain at least ten days by means of a step by step withdrawal to the line Brest – Osówiec – Grajewo, which was rapidly being fortified, and ultimately to the line Bug – Ostrołęka – Omulew River. While the strategic withdrawal was in progress, advantage was to be taken of the opportunity to organise Front reserves to be concentrated in two groups: one at Brest (9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Divisions), and another at Ostrów Mazowiecka (11<sup>th</sup> Division and 7<sup>th</sup> Reserve Brigade).

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<sup>3</sup> Not a Corps in a technical sense, but only a force made up of two independent divisions with no overall commander. MP.



After the success in the south, the Polish Second Army and a considerable portion of the cavalry in the vicinity of Siedlce passed to the control of the Commander-in-Chief as a manoeuvring force.

This was the plan as recorded by General Henrys, Chief of the French Military Mission after it had been communicated to him by General Rozwadowski, Chief of the General Staff, as the conference of July 27, together with the decisions based on it. After giving it due consideration, and concurring therein, General Henrys insisted upon the utmost haste in bringing to a conclusion the operations against Budënyy.<sup>ref</sup>

These decisions found expression in a field order of the Commander-in-Chief on July 27.<sup>ref</sup> The latter, in issuing the order, had taken into consideration also another factor that influenced the decision: namely, conversations relative to an armistice which had been agreed upon as a result of a conference at Spa, which were to begin on July 30, but had been delayed owing to a change in the position of the enemy. Clearly seeing through the intentions of the enemy, the Polish Chief of Staff came to the conclusion that the impending conversations would cause the enemy to speed up his offensive operations. He therefore demanded that the utmost exertions be made to prevent the enemy from crossing the line Grajewo – the Narew – Brest before August 5. To this end he assigned to the Polish First Army the mission of covering the direction Grodno – Warsaw in the Białystok area, while the Fourth Army and the Polesie Group were required to hold the line Bielsk – Brest together with the approaches along the Orłanka and Leśna Rivers leading to Kobrin. Bringing up the Polesie Group required some care in regard to the protection for the flank of the Southeast Front, which had to defend Kowel and Władimir-Wolynski. The order further placed the 14<sup>th</sup> Division and the 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the Front reserve at Brest, from which area the offensive operations were to be staged on a more extensive scale. With a view to holding the line Brest – Grajewo temporarily, the volunteer and reserve formations of Colonel Zagórski (two battalions and two batteries) and of Colonel Kopa (five battalions, two batteries, 1 squadron) were sent to that area. Compared with the plan recorded by General Henrys, we note that the order of July 27 fails to show beforehand the size of the forces with which the counterattack should be made, although it is more explicit with respect to the line of departure as the Brest area.

On the other hand, the order of July 28 sets forth in detail the strength of the First Army (commanded by General Romer, with General Jędrzejewski as second in command). It comprised the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Divisions; the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lithuanian-Byelorussian Divisions, half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Legion Division (4<sup>th</sup> Brigade), half of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division (18<sup>th</sup> Brigade) the 7<sup>th</sup> Reserve Brigade, a number of individual regiments and battalions (including among them the groups of both Kopa and Zagórski) to a total of 71 battalions, 17 squadrons, 57 batteries. Of these, the 11<sup>th</sup> Division (9 battalions, 2 squadrons, 5 batteries) was withdrawn and sent to the rear for the purposes of reorganisation.



The Polish Fourth Army, commanded by General Skierski, consisted of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Divisions, half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Legion Division (2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade), half of the 6<sup>th</sup> Division (12<sup>th</sup> Brigade), two cavalry brigades and several independent units; in addition there were in the Polesie Group under General Sikorski the 18<sup>th</sup> Division, the 21<sup>st</sup> Mountain Division, half of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division (17<sup>th</sup> Brigade) and Bałachowicz's detachment (for the time being a total of 78 battalions, 20 squadrons, and 86 batteries).

The North Front had no reserves of its own at its disposal; a balloon park (employed as infantry), and individual battalions – reserve and volunteer – were added to it while the battle was in progress.

With a view to protecting the left flank against constantly recurring turning movements on the part of the Russian III Cavalry Corps and of elements of the Russian Fourth Army, the forces specified in the order of July 27 were augmented on the next day, i.e. July 28, but instructions calling for the formation at Ostrołęka of a group under General Suszyński, comprising three Ulan regiments (8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade). The instructions provided that it should join the group belonging to Kopa, with the mission of protecting the left flank of the First Army and of covering it against enemy action in the direction of Grajewo – Osówiec – Tykocin.<sup>ref</sup> Yet, by July 30, this group had already been strengthened, thanks to the course the events took. For, instructions had been issued for the formation of General Wroczyński's group, which was to absorb the groups of General Suszyński, Colonel Kopa and Colonel Obukh Wieszatynski (regiment of frontier riflemen); with the promise of early reinforcements in the shape of volunteer battalions, and the further addition of one volunteer and two Ulan regiments.<sup>ref</sup>

Events however developed rapidly, ushering in many unexpected changes. On July 27 Osówiec fell. On July 29 the Polish Fourth Army suffered a crushing defeat. On the entire front it gave way, retreating beyond the line of the Leśna and Orlanka Rivers and losing Kamieniec-Litewski and Czeremcha. Simultaneously the Polish First Army lost Bielsk, while Łomża was subjected to an attack from the north. The Polish forces fighting on the line Brest – Bug River – Ostrołęka, which at the conference of July 27 had been agreed to constitute the last resort, were now hard pressed by the newly developed situation. On July 30 the Commander-in-Chief directed the Polish Fourth Army to retake the line of the Leśna and Orlanka Rivers by means of a counterattack, emphasising that it would be necessary on the first days of August to launch a decisive counterattack from this locality. In view of the importance that the holding of Kowel and Władimir-Wolynski assumed, it was imperative that the Polesie Group should hold the approaches in the direction of Kobryn and cover from the north the Third Army. The group of General Wroczyński was required to drive the enemy back to the line Łomża – Kolno and to push forward to the line of the Wizna River opposite Osówiec – Grajow.<sup>ref</sup> The unfavourable news which had been received during the day had



the effect of limiting the advance prescribed for the Polish Fourth Army to the line Leśna – Nurzec<sup>4</sup> Rivers, the Polesie Group being ordered to support it with an entire division.<sup>ref</sup>

On this day (July 30) General Weygand, Marshal Foch's Chief of Staff, who since July 25 had served as chief military adviser to the Allies in Poland, suggested blocking the enemy's advance along the line of the Omulew River – Ostrołęka – Ostrów by rapidly moving the units brought up from the rear to that line; he further advised a concentration of the forces that had been released from the North Front in rear of the left flank of the Polish First Army in the Ostrów – Łomża area, for the purpose of covering the North Front and being prepared to counteract the enemy's enveloping manoeuvre.<sup>ref</sup>

When the Polish Fourth Army received the orders for a counterattack, the units of the North Front were headed in a rather disorderly retreat in the direction of the Bug. Between the Polesie Group, which had been unduly delayed in its withdrawal by the necessity of covering the flank of the Southern Front, and Brest, which it was required to defend, the enemy wedged in from the north; thus the 16<sup>th</sup> Division and units of the 21<sup>st</sup> Mountain Division were compelled to cut their way through, and in the course of the fighting reached the bridgehead.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Division of the Polish Fourth Army also fought its way through, from Szablinka behind the lower Leśna.<sup>ref</sup> Further to the left General Jung's group, half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, was retreating with its right along the Bug in the Mielnik area, while its left wing was endeavouring to hold up the enemy in the vicinity of Siemiatycze. At Mielnik the enemy seized the crossing. The Polish First Army was putting up a stiff fight at Brańsk, Suraz, Tykocin, Łomża and Nowogród facing to the east, north and west. "Situation is not promising," thus reported Colonel Sta---wicz, the liaison officer of the Commander-in-Chief on duty at the North Front headquarters, in a telephone conversation to Warsaw on the state of affairs.

And so, under the conditions depicted above, the battle on the Bug actually began on July 31. On that day, General Józef Haller assumed command of the Northeast Front at Siedlce. The situation was indeed critical. The Polish Fourth Army had been repulsed beyond the Bug. Part of the left wing behind the Bug, to the north of Siemiatycze, appeared to be surrounded. On the right, the Polesie Group, having reached the Brest area with considerable difficulty, now found itself engaged with superior forces of the Russian Sixteenth Army. On the left, the Polish First Army had been driven out of Brańsk and Tykocin. General Haller therefore decided to hold Brest and the line of the Bug by offensive action and to take advantage of the enemy's forward movement directed against the left wing of the Polish Fourth Army, for the purpose of attacking him in flank with the right, that is, the south wing of the Polish First Army in the direction of Brańsk – Nurzec and with one brigade of the Polish Fourth Army

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<sup>4</sup> The text is not entirely clear on this, but the Nurzec appears to be in the right area. MP.



towards Zerczesyce. He now was hastily moving up his reserves – several battalions<sup>ref</sup> – and demanded aggressive action on the part of Wroczyński's group.<sup>ref</sup>

As it developed, the orders for the counterattack were not executed. Nowhere did the combat situation permit a resumption of the initiative.

After a personal visit to the units and first-hand survey of the situation at the front, General Haller, on August 1, halted the execution of the orders he had issued. He next ordered the reserve to promptly take up positions at the threatened points and to defend the lines that were being held.<sup>ref</sup> At 1:30 a.m. information from the front at Brest elicited the fact that all forces had been committed to action. At 5:00 a.m. reports came in announcing the fall of Nowogród on the Narew and an enemy movement, what appeared to be primarily his cavalry, on Miastkowo and Ostrołęka, and that counter measures were being taken from Łomża. By evening, the enemy began a general attack on Brest with units of his 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> Rifle Divisions. Simultaneously, other divisions of the Russian Sixteenth Army, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, after forcing a crossing of the Bug at Mielnik, drove off units of General Jung's group, which, on its right flank, had hastened back from the Bug.

General Weygand after examining the situation, came to the conclusion in the course of the day that on the North Front it was of fundamental importance to stop the enemy along the line Omulew River – Ostrołęka – Bug River; also that the Polish First Army and the left wing of the Fourth (presumably between Siemiatycze and Brańsk) must halt the enemy at all costs, fighting for every inch of ground and at no place yield ground voluntarily; the right wing of the Polish Fourth Army was to hold without fail the line of the Bug. While emphasising the importance of reinforcing both flanks by an accumulation of reserves along the line Ostrołęka – Ostrów – Brest, he nevertheless cautioned against unorganised counterattacks on the part of units that had either been repulsed or defeated. It is very likely that his opinion thus expressed was in part responsible for halting the counterattacks that had been ordered for August 1.<sup>ref</sup>

General Rozwadowski, in response to the news of an enemy breakthrough at Nowogród and the threatening envelopment of Łomża, demanded that a convergent attack be launched on the latter, from Ostrołęka by Wroczyński's group and from the south by the Polish First Army. With this in view he authorised the Polish First Army to withdraw to the line Ciechanowiec – Czyżew – Zambrów.<sup>ref</sup> But at this time the leading elements of the Pomorsk Group belonging to General Roja (reserve of the Commander-in-Chief – 5 battalions) were already arriving at Śniadowo.

At 8:00 p.m., in a conversation with Colonel Zagórski, who had just been appointed Chief of Staff of the North Front, General Rozwadowski supported the governing idea of the Commander-in-Chief; namely to fortify the line from the Narew, by the shortest route up to the Bug, and farther along the Bug up to Brest. This was to insure our holding the advance positions and at the same time render it possible for us while resting on Brest to deliver a



blow from the south, in a northern direction as far as possible via the Bug to the west of the city. The left wing would then operate along the line Osówiec – Grajewo. The object of these operations was to immobilise the enemy and to gain time, pending the transfer from the south of the Second Army, and in this manner to endeavour bringing about a decision.

However, at about midnight on August 1/2, Brest was taken by the Russian Sixteenth Army, only the fort proper remaining in Polish hands.

Concomitantly, ever since July 28, the following units of the Southeast Front were engaged in combat with the Russian Cavalry Army in the area Beresteczko – Brody: the Polish Second Army, the strategic cavalry group, and the 18<sup>th</sup> Division.

Since the 30<sup>th</sup> of July the Commander-in-Chief had been at the General Headquarters of the Southeast Front in Chełm.<sup>ref</sup> Having tried in vain to get through by automobile in the direction of Horochów – Mikelajow or that of Beresteczko, he had returned to Chełm. General Rydz-Śmigły, in an order to the Polish Second Army dated July 31 took the occasion to make this announcement: “the Commander-in-Chief is waiting in Chełm for reports that will enable him to make a general decision.” A letter from the Commander-in-Chief addressed to General Raszewski who was conducting the operations on this front, demanded of him quick and energetic action. Information received on August 1 augured well for a decisive success.

Before midnight of August 1, news of the fall of Brest had reached Chełm. General Rozwadowski then approached the Commander-in-Chief with respect to the counter-measures to be taken and the latter’s decision in the premises. General Rozwadowski was of the opinion that it would be necessary to attack Brest from the south; to this and the forces of the Polesie Group, the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade which was covering the north flank of the Polish Third Army, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Rifle Regiment would be available. He also recommended that the operations against Budëny be conducted with the greatest possible vigour, so that the entire Polish Second Army and one cavalry division might be released as soon as possible and transferred by rail to the Brest sector. The Commander-in-Chief thought that it would be advisable to launch a counter-offensive with the 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade from the south; inasmuch as the fort might hold out until August 3; otherwise; this brigade had better be used to cover the retreat of the Polish Third Army to the line of the Bug. On the very next day he envisaged the likelihood of having to transfer northward units of the 18<sup>th</sup> Division.<sup>ref</sup> At this time, however, the principal decision had already been made in regard to the withdrawal of the armies of the Southeast Front on the Bug, and with respect to the speedy liquidation of the operation against Budëny, with a view to releasing units for the reinforcement of the North Front. Thereafter General Rydz-Śmigły’s order<sup>ref</sup> made its appearance demanding a vigorous continuation of the action throughout the entire second day of August, and on August 3 the withdrawal of the Polish Second Army on the Bug, in connection with a general regrouping of the front along the line Bug River – Władimir-Wolynski – Brody – Strypa River.



In the afternoon the Commander-in-Chief left Chełm, arriving at Warsaw in the evening.<sup>ref</sup>

At about midnight on August 1/2, General Rozwadowski issued orders for a counterattack on Brest; this decision came as a result of an exchange of views with the Commander-in-Chief. Simultaneously, in conjunction with Front Headquarters, he made preparations for an attack on Łomża, requiring the concentration of 3,000 bayonets at Śniadowo and proceeding against Łomża from the south and east.<sup>ref</sup>

The Wroczyński group, reinforced by some coastal battalions, now passed to the command of General Roja.<sup>ref</sup>

The events of the day in the north were unfavourable. On a wide front, from Pratulin up to Drohiczyn, the enemy had crossed the Bug exerting much pressure in the direction of Biała and threatening Terespol from the north. The 18<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Brigades, as well as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade all fought with the enemy for the lost positions, but lost ground. In view of the situation that was developing at Pratulin, the Brest fort was abandoned.<sup>ref</sup>

General Sikorski, who commanded the Polesie Group, hastily regrouped his forces, assembling a strong reserve for counterattack in the north at Biała.<sup>ref</sup> The Front Commander directed that counter-measures be instituted with the aid of the 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and part of the Polesie Group (separated under the command of Colonel Ładoś) in the vicinity of Janów; the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was to be employed against Mielnik.<sup>ref</sup>

Counterattacks on the Narew launched from Ostrołęka in the direction of Miastkowo were unsuccessful; only the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade under Colonel Luchinski, advancing on Łomża from the east, was quite successful at Mężenin. There could be no doubt but that Łomża would fall.

The Commander-in-Chief next threw into the battle on the North Front the weak reserves with a view to reinforcing the counterattack against the Narew in the Janów area.<sup>ref</sup>

Information from the south continued to be favourable: the concentric advance was developing successfully. The retreat of the hostile Cavalry Army, moreover, was confirmed by air reconnaissance.

General Rozwadowski, by adhering to his original opinion now intended to finish the battle with Budëny by means of a vigorous blow, the end being in sight. He therefore planned to shift all forces from the south to the Siedlce area, while conducting with the numerically weak forces remaining in the south an active defence in Eastern Galicia.<sup>5</sup> General Weygand, having discussed the matter in a conference with him, concurred, but insisted in turn on strengthening the groups at Ostrołęka and Łomża; besides, he demanded that Malkinia be covered and that connection with the Polish Third Army be maintained. He also advised to bring the advance

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<sup>5</sup> Modern west Ukraine. MP.



in the south, “which had already yielded everything that could be expected of it”<sup>ref</sup> to an immediate standstill.

These views of Generals Rozwadowski and Weygand coincided in general with the decisions already arrived at in Chełm by the Commander-in-Chief himself. There had only been some divergence of opinion in regard to the curtailment of acceleration of the fighting with Budenny.

The directive issued in the evening by General Rozwadowski<sup>ref</sup> required the holding of the line of the Bug River from Brest to the mouth of the Nurzec, and also of the railway line Malkinia – Ostrów; it moreover promised that reinforcements from the south would arrive in the Siedlce area.

On August 3 a successful though difficult action for the crossing of the Bug took place at Brest. The counterattack of the Polesie Group from Biała in the direction of Pratulín continued; further to the left the divisions of the Polish Fourth Army were reorganising preparatory to a counterattack. On the left flank of the Polish Fourth Army there occurred a new menacing breakthrough at Granne. The Polish First Army continued to be engaged in severe fighting, its groups forcing their way through the enemy emerging from the Łomża and Śniadowo area in the direction of its rear communications. It then withdrew to the line of the Bug between the mouth of the Nurzec and Malkinia (Osinski’s group), and towards Ostrów (Żeligowski’s group); General Wroczyński took up the retreat on Ostrołęka after his troops who had been surrounded at Łomża had cut their way through the enemy.

The Commander of the Northeast Front reconciled himself during the day to the withdrawal of the Polish First Army’s right to the Bug, but required of its left to hold the area between the Bug and the Narew with mobile groups covering the line Malkinia – Ostrów – Ostrołęka. General Wroczyński was given orders to launch a counter attack against Miastkowo and Śniadowo.<sup>ref</sup>

A victory was achieved in the south, which was not properly exploited, however, owing to a premature withdrawal started by units of the Polish Second Army. The Commander of the Southeast Front then placed the 18<sup>th</sup> Division at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief. Yet this excellent division, exhausted as it was through heavy, protracted fighting, was in need of new men to bring it up to its proper strength. The Commander-in-Chief therefore required, in addition to this division, the transfer from the south of the 65<sup>th</sup> Regiment (16<sup>th</sup> Division), and also of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade.<sup>ref</sup> On this day General Weygand suggested that the line Biała – River Bug – Ostrołęka – Omulew be reinforced, and defended at all cost; he also stressed the necessity of creating reserves and accelerating the work on the fortification of Warsaw.<sup>ref</sup>

On August 4 fighting developed with alternating success. The counterattack of the Polesie Group and of the 14<sup>th</sup> Division under General Konaszewski in the direction of Pratulín and



Janów continued. Janów fell. However, the enemy effected a breakthrough at the very city of Brest on the left bank of the Bug and seized Terespol, while to the west of Drohiczyn and Granne he staged a successful movement in the direction of Sokołów. Between the Bug and the Narew Żeligowski's group was engaged in severe fighting at Ostrów; at the same time, Roja's group of which he was to assume command on this day, was surrounded at Ostrołęka.<sup>ref</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, which had been withdrawn from action by brigade on the day before and placed in reserve, was sent to Siedlce and Kosów for the purpose of launching a counterattack in conjunction with General Jung's forces, whereas at Kosów, it was also to cooperate with General Osinski's group.<sup>ref</sup>

General Haller's order issued August 5, contemplated a further counterattack on the part of the Polesie Group and the Polish Fourth Army, with the mission of restoring the line of the Bug River. Newly arrived battalions were also committed to action. The Polish First Army meanwhile was holding the Bug River and the line Brańszczyk – Długosiodło – Przedświt; Roja's group was required to defend Ostrołęka as long as possible. Front Headquarters was transferred to Mińsk-Mazowiecki.<sup>ref</sup>

The Commander-in-Chief now directed Roja's group to march on Śniadowo and Ostrów. Simultaneously, tanks assisted by airplanes, were at attack Ostrów from Wyszaków.<sup>ref</sup>

In the south, the 18<sup>th</sup> Division was holding Brody; it was in close contact with units of the Russian Cavalry Army and awaiting relief by the 6<sup>th</sup> Division of the Polish Second Army. The Polish Third Army at this time was withdrawing, pursuant to orders, on Władimir-Wolynski and the line of the Bug. The heavy fighting of the 12<sup>th</sup> Division in the sector of the Polish Sixth Army between the Rivers Sereth and Strypa (Mikulińce) was progressing successfully.

On August 5, General Sikorski, commanding the Polesie Group and the 14<sup>th</sup> Division which had been placed under his control, finally gained the upper hand over the Russian Sixteenth Army; on the entire line from Terespol to Drohiczyn units of the Russian Sixteenth Army began to fall back behind the Bug. Yet at the same time, to the left, General Jung's group had been pierced in the centre and driven back on Sokołów.

The Polish First Army maintained itself splendidly in the Malkinia area; General Żeligowski, however suffered tremendous losses at Ostrów, his divisions occupying the line Brańszczyk – Przedświt. Roja's group was now at Ostrołęka, with part of its forces at Różan and cavalry covering its left flank. A sudden advance towards Śniadowo proved unsuccessful due to a hostile envelopment.<sup>ref</sup> The Front commander as well as the Commander-in-Chief were very much displeased with the performance of the Polish First Army; hope for ultimate success, however, was not yet given up.<sup>ref</sup> General Roja, however, was given a new order directing him to advance on Śniadowo a second time, with assurance that reinforcements were on the way.



The Commander of the North Front prescribed the following zone boundaries: General Sikorski's group was to extend up to Mielnik; the Fourth Army up to Kosów; and the First Army up to the line Śniadowo – Czerwin – Różan. On August 6 the Polish Fourth Army was ordered to concentrate the 14<sup>th</sup> Division in the area Łosice – Sarnaki and to stage a flank counterattack northwestward along the Bug. General Jung was required to launch a counterattack; the Polish First Army and Roja's group were to strike against Ostrów. General Konaszewski, commanding the 14<sup>th</sup> Division, received personal instructions from the Front commander explaining to him the decisive importance of the operation.<sup>ref</sup>

In the south, the success of the 18<sup>th</sup> Division at Radziwiłłów stopped for some time to come the offence of the Russian First Cavalry Army. Moreover, the entraining of this division for its scheduled departure was not to begin until August 7.

The Chief of Staff meanwhile was continuing to battle on the Bug with a firm determination to fight it to a victorious conclusion; it was with this in view that he was concentrating his forces. He intended transferring the 18<sup>th</sup> and (possibly) the 6<sup>th</sup> Divisions upon completion of their release from the south.<sup>6 ref</sup> Also General Weygand concurred in these measures.<sup>ref</sup> However, he insisted on energetic efforts towards the completion of the defences of Warsaw, especially since the battle then in progress would decide the fate of the line of the Bug. He advocated that the enemy be halted on the line Omulew – Ostrołęka – River Bug; that lost ground be reconquered and that with the least possible delay sufficient troops be assembled on the left flank, with a view to bringing to an end, by means of a counter-offensive, the enveloping manoeuvre of the enemy between the Narew and the frontier with East Prussia. "The battle on the Bug will be won, if all commanders do their duty."

Under the conditions of the situation as it then existed, the Commander-in-Chief, on the night of August 6, was about to carry out the last part of the basic idea governing the battle which had been scheduled for that day.

## **II. Estimate of the Situation.**

### **Decision**

The possibility of a shifting of the operations to the Vistula had to be seriously taken into consideration by the Commander-in-Chief after he had decided to give battle on the line of the Bug and to manoeuvre from the Brest area. About July 27 this matter had become the subject of considerations and discussion between the Polish leaders, the Commander-in-Chief, General Weygand, the Chief of Staff and the Army Vice-Minister General Sosnowski.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The 18th Division was to be sent towards Tłuszcz as far as Łochów (on the Warsaw – Malkinia railway line – Ed).

<sup>7</sup> On 9 August promoted to Minister for Military Affairs. He also commanded the Reserve Army. MP.



Several different variants were proposed for the operation that was destined to decide the fate of the Government.<sup>ref</sup>

The Commander-in-Chief had participated in these conferences, both before his departure for Chełm and after his return, when the situation, in view of the progress of the fighting on the Bug, had already injected the problem of operations on the Vistula; at that time, probably on August 3, he had announced that he would be prepared to make a decision on the morning of August 6.

The proceedings of these conferences were not made of record, nor were there prepared any sketches or rough drafts of the work done prior to August 6, bearing on the contemplated operation. Reports rendered by individual participants are incomplete and contradictory. This is particularly evident when, after the lapse of several years, we begin studying all of the arguments and conversations that took place at a period of great stress and the exceptional concurrence of circumstances. The documents of this period, however, enable one to determine the trend of thought of the individual participants.

General Weygand sent daily memoranda to the Chief of Staff submitting summaries of the views presented by him at the conferences, and persistently stressing the necessity of forming a strong and dependable front, behind which it could be possible to organise the forces that were needed to settle the issue, and of providing for the concentration of strong reserves on both flanks. The strategic manoeuvre envisaged in these memoranda was to be a manoeuvre of reserves employed in a counter-offensive. General Weygand was outspoken in stressing the danger of an encirclement of our forces in the north between the Narew and the Prussian frontier, and demanded the formation at that point of a strong army under vigorous leadership, with the mission of launching a frontal counterattack in an eastern direction. To the end that the necessary forces could be acquired for this purpose, he recommended sacrificing the line held in the south, i.e. in Eastern Galicia.<sup>ref</sup> None of his notes, as far as is known, makes any mention of the situation which would be created in the event the front line were withdrawn to the Vistula. Apparently in that event, General Weygand wished first of all to build up on as narrow a front as possible, a powerful solid line, and thereafter to assemble reserves on both flanks of the principal group of forces (in the area north of Modlin, and in the Karczew – Góra-Kalwaria area).

On the Polish side, the difficult events of the past two months had shaken the belief in the possibility of forming a strong line, considering the existing proportions of strength and distance involved. Both the Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of Staff, and finally also General Haller and General Zieliński (Third Army commander), who at various times had presented several strategic plans of action, now anticipated an early conclusion of the manoeuvre directed against the flanks and rear of the enemy; and so, the forces to be employed frontally against the enemy were to be required to contain him at the same time.



The manoeuvring group, according to the unanimous opinion of the Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of Staff, ought to be assembled on the right flank of the North Front, it being the more powerful and more advanced; at the same time there should also be concentrated in that quarter such units as were to be transferred from the south. Both chiefs took into consideration the danger of an enemy envelopment from the north and the necessity of reinforcing the group that was containing the enemy on that flank. The Chief of Staff, however, would revert time and again to the idea of a double envelopment of the enemy, and the desirability of employing the north group offensively; in the event of success, he proposed to turn with this group the main enemy forces, thus leading up to an operation of the “Cannae” type. The Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of Staff did not contemplate denuding the South Front entirely but decided to release from that front merely a limited number of forces, and at the same time to defend L'viv. They reasoned that the forces employed for this purpose would be well compensated for, if the forces of the Southwest Front could contain the enemy.<sup>8</sup>

These strategic plans of the Commander-in-Chief and his Chief of Staff, which had been arrived at within the last ten days, were expected, upon the shifting of operations to the Vistula and in the further development of the battle to accomplish the following: a) the immobilisation of the enemy along the approaches to the capital, and b) the concentration of the principal manoeuvring forces to the south of Warsaw in the Dęblin area, or along the lower Wieprz, closer to the flank of the enemy, who undoubtedly would advance on the capital on converging lines. The lesser mobile force, it was decided, would be required north of Warsaw for the purpose of preventing a possible retreat on the part of the Polish forces and also the fall of the capital itself, prior to the launching of the contemplated Polish enveloping manoeuvre. It can readily be seen that the influence both of General Weygand and the Chief of Staff would make itself felt not only with respect to the strengthening of those forces but also with regard to their manner of employment.

General Sosnowski, the Army Vice-Minister was an outspoken advocate of the offensive, and as such favoured assuming it; he also approved of the strategic manoeuvre that was to develop as a result of the strategic withdrawal. Being responsible for the organisation of the national defence forces, he had turned over to the Commander-in-Chief tens of battalions and squadrons organised from reservists, volunteers, border guards etc.; and watched those poorly trained men, unprepared for field service as they were, being thrown into the fighting for the successive lines extending from the confluence of the Szczara and the Niemen to that of the Bug and Narew.<sup>ref</sup> What was even worse, these replacement units, of which tens went to the Bug River and 80 were placed on August 2 at the disposal of the Northeast Front, were improperly absorbed in that they were employed in separate tactical units. This apparently had

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<sup>8</sup> The intentions of the Commander-in-Chief were not disclosed at this time in a single document directly issued by him, and only appear and are made of record in his work “Year 1920”.



to be done, inasmuch as the continual participation in battle of the major units had precluded a reorganisation of the latter and incorporation of these new troops.<sup>ref</sup> The plan of successive withdrawal from action of the divisions and brigades for the purpose of reorganising was not carried out. Aside from the cavalry, up to August 5 it was just barely possible to withdraw from action two divisions (5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>), some remnants of a third division (2<sup>nd</sup> Lithuanian-Byelorussian), and the 7<sup>th</sup> Reserve Brigade. With a view to making proper use of the large new forces which were being furnished by the country, General Sosnowski now rejected the method hitherto employed, and which consisted of defending stubbornly every inch of soil; henceforth he was decidedly in favour of withdrawing the units from action, and of endeavouring to gain time even at the sacrifice of several day's distance. This he contended was necessary in order to supply the divisions with new equipment, armament and clothing; as each day that the battle on the Bug was being prolonged threatened to render it impossible to accomplish this.

Notwithstanding all of this, General Sosnowski, who was also a member of the Council of National Defence, had put off until the last the defence of the capital – although its temporary loss might have a fatal effect on the outcome of the war; as a matter of fact, the Government intended to not leave under any circumstances.

This is the approximate nature of the discussions that came up during the conferences on Saxon Square.<sup>9</sup> During the night of August 5/6 the Commander-in-Chief arrived at his decision, by means of a mental process of reasoning in which he took into consideration the situation of the Polish forces and that of the enemy, the conditions incident to the assembly of forces for a counter-offensive, problems involving the concentration of forces and their location, and finally the direction of the strategic manoeuvre.

The situation on the front at this time, by making use of the data then at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief, maybe summarised as follows. In the south the enemy had been defeated, but not destroyed; thus he might soon resume offensive operations on an even larger scale. In the north, the battle was being continued, the troops fighting vigorously and with the will to win. Here the enemy was undoubtedly immobilised to a certain extent and under the impression that a stubborn defence and counterattack was in progress; however, his offensive energy was by no means exhausted, as proved by increasing activity on his part on the right flank.

Two enemy armies, the Sixteenth, together with the Mozyr Group, and the Third, were engaged in battle on the middle Bug; two other enemy armies, the Fifteenth and Fourth, as well as III Cavalry Corps, were operating between the lower Bug and the Prussian frontier. Here the general advance of the enemy westward had reached its climax, his front extending in general along a southeast to northwest line.

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<sup>9</sup> The location of the General Staff building in Warsaw – Ed.



Polish forces were committed to action or engaged in the execution of their duties to the last man; they were very much worn out by fighting and their strength was dwindling; the Polesie Group was holding out well, as was also the right of the Fourth Army; but the left wing of this army was giving way. The First Army, moreover, was torn into two parts; one was maintaining itself well on the Bug, while the other was being hard pressed by superior enemy forces in the area near the confluence of the Bug and Narew;<sup>10</sup> this caused it to incline to the left in rear of the general grouping of forces. General Roja's group had moved ahead and was still holding on, but was nevertheless threatened with being cut off and enveloped by the enemy.

Therefore the general estimate regarding the situation on the front, as made on the night of August 6, had to be regarded as unfavourable for us. The bow string, stretched as it was to the very breaking point, might snap at any moment. At the same time, our armies were already fighting in the Vistula theatre between the Bug and Vistula rivers and between the Bug and Narew. Consequently they might be thrown back in the direction of the Vistula, and while thus compelled to withdraw, might not have an opportunity to regroup their forces along the Vistula for a new effort. Under these circumstances there would be a real danger of their being forced away from their line of retreat which led directly to the capital.

The forces which had already been released in the south, in so far as they might be released, would not be able to arrive and enter the battle before the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> of August. Taken by themselves, the reserves of the Commander-in-Chief were inadequate to bring about a victory; the entire army would have to participate in the battle and make the greatest exertions at that; but this army was nearly exhausted and quite depleted. Yet at the same time, it was impossible to do anything in the way of augmenting the army's strength to any appreciable extent by pouring into it regiments under the existing stress of the battle that was going on. Finally, aside from the necessity of filling up depleted units which were then actually engaged in combat, it was necessary to supply them with new equipment and reorganise them. This, it must be admitted, is difficult to accomplish without a pause in the fighting.

Therefore the conclusion suggested itself that it would be impossible to assemble on the Bug the forces which were considered necessary for success. Thus it was found that the freedom of action, the filling of depleted units, the gathering of new forces, and the regrouping of the army for an offensive could be achieved only by means of a strategic withdrawal to the Vistula.

The natural direction of withdrawal, that is, one perpendicular to the combat front, would have been: for the Polesie Group – the line of the lower Wieprz; for the Fourth Army – the Dęblin – Warsaw area; for the First Army – Warsaw; and for Roja's group – the Pułtusk – Modlin area.

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<sup>10</sup> That is, the area west of Ostrów. MP.



On the lower Wieprz there might be assembled two good divisions of the Polesie Group; it was moreover impossible, without risking a too hazardous flank march, to withdraw in the direction of Dęblin one or two divisions of the Fourth Army. The remaining part of this army might serve as a covering force on the middle Vistula and thus augment the forces detailed for the immediate protection of Warsaw. The forces on the Wieprz River might be increased at the expense of the South Front by moving the units already designated farther up on the right flank. The Wieprz River afforded effective protection of the forces that were assembling there. The disadvantage inherent in the excessive distance from Warsaw – amounting as it did to three marches – would be compensated for by the facility with which the troops would be able to disengage themselves from the enemy and effect a regrouping.

A transfer of troops to the nearest Warsaw suburbs (Karczew or Garwolin areas) entailed the danger that the assembling forces might have to be committed to action on the Vistula before they had a chance of completing their concentration.

It was expected that the enemy would direct his principal efforts against Warsaw; it was quite probable that he would turn it on the north with part of his forces – imitating in a measure Paskevich's manoeuvre<sup>11</sup>. This in turn would necessitate leaving a considerable portion of our forces along the approaches to Warsaw, which were not to be yielded to the enemy, and also increasing Roja's group to the size of a small army capable of holding out against the threatened envelopment. As the enemy was pushing his offensive mainly in the direction of Warsaw, it was assumed that he would send only unimportant forces towards the Wieprz River. Thanks to this circumstance there would be a chance of defeating the enemy on the Wieprz and to launch with several divisions an offensive from that quarter against the flank and rear of the armies attacking Warsaw.

Upon examining this situation and the possibilities it embraced, the Commander-in-Chief well realised the unfavourable proportion that existed between the troops that could be assembled on the Wieprz and the strong array of forces with which it would be necessary to act on the defensive in the attempt of immobilising the enemy in front of Warsaw and Modlin. He was conscious of the danger which the allotment of a comparatively small force for the decisive action might entail, while the major portion of the forces would meanwhile be absorbed in the defence of the capital; yet he could not risk the capital. Painful, too, was the decision to transfer forces from the south, inasmuch as an undue weakening of that front might afford an opening to the Soviet Southwest Front in the direction of Lublin, against the supply lines of our forces assembled on the Wieprz. The Commander-in-Chief was of the opinion that it would be possible to transfer from the south, without too much risk, at first about one infantry

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<sup>11</sup> This is a reference to the 1830-1831 Russo-Polish War (the "November Uprising"), where the Russian General Ivan Paskevich turned Warsaw to the north to evade the frontal defences. Both sides of the 1920 war were very aware of this historical precedent from the start. MP.



brigade (probably meaning the 6<sup>th</sup> Division, half of which was already in the north) and also a small portion of cavalry.

The principal features of the plan arrived at during the night consisted of involving the enemy in a general engagement along the approaches to Warsaw. In order to counteract the danger of an enemy turning movement north of Modlin, the plan further provided for aggressive action against the enemy's flank and rear on the part of the enveloping force formed on the Wieprz, while covering at the same time the Polish right flank on the Bug and protecting with minor forces the city of L'viv and the oil fields.<sup>12</sup>

The first task was entrusted to the Commander of the Northeast Front. The second mission, that is, the hazardous drive directed against the enemy's rear with comparatively weak forces, was to be carried by the Commander-in-Chief in person, for not only was the flank of this manoeuvring force being menaced by the Russian Twelfth Army, but its rear was being threatened by the Russian First Cavalry Army as well.

Having thus made his decision the Commander-in-Chief arrived on the morning of August 6 at the Belvedere for the conference, in which the Chief of Staff and Vice-Minister also participated. The Chief of Staff presented two variants for the enveloping manoeuvre from the south: namely either to concentrate the Polish Fourth Army within close proximity of Warsaw, or to assemble it behind the Wieprz. The Commander-in-Chief rejected the first proposal, and developed his own views. He proposed to regroup the right of the Northeast Front and emphasized at the same time that the line of the lower Wieprz with Dęblin for support constituted the logical assembly area for the enveloping forces. Next the basic idea of the contemplated operation were discussed; the proposed dispositions of the units and their subsequent moving up to the line of departure, together with the direction the operations were to take, were determined in general outline.

### **III. First Directive for the Operation**

On August 6, at about 1:00 p.m., Colonel Piskor, Chief of the Operations Section, handed Captain Regulski, Chief of the Eastern Section, a synopsis of the proposed concentration, as approved by the Commander-in-Chief; he explained to him the decision reached at the conference, and directed him to issue the necessary order. During the afternoon and evening, the actual preparation of the text of the order brought about an important twofold change. According to the original draft, the new Seventh Army was to be organised on the right of the North Front between Dęblin and Warsaw; the Third Army, which was to form part of the Middle Front, was shown as comprising only the 7<sup>th</sup> Division, the 6<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian Division, Bałachowicz's detachment and a cavalry brigade. The Middle Front extended merely so far as

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<sup>12</sup> Now in W Ukraine, the oil fields were centred around Drohobycz (Drohobych), 80 km SSW of L'viv.



Ustilug.<sup>13</sup> The Second Army remained on the South Front. No doubt, as a result of new conferences with the Commander-in-Chief and General Weygand, in response to the numerous expressions of opinion by the Chief of Staff, there were made in the course of the final editing of the order quite a few changes which in turn caused fundamental alterations to the disposition of forces, and increased the prospects of the principal operation. The Second Army in the south was dissolved, its designation as well as its headquarters being transferred to the army which originally had been designated as the Seventh. The two divisions – 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Legion Divisions – were transferred to the Third Army. The South Front now consisted of just the Sixth and Ukrainian Armies; yet the boundary between the Middle and South Fronts was nevertheless changed to Brody.<sup>ref</sup> It required an astute mental struggle before all these points were finally settled.

At about 6:00 p.m. on the same day Captain Regulski, upon instructions from Colonel Piskor, submitted a draft of the order to General Weygand, who already knew the gist of the new decisions. The latter approved it without suggesting any changes, and immediately proceeded with the utmost energy to interest himself in the work of carrying out the plan. Late at night General Rozwadowski signed the order in its final form, whereupon this memorable “Order for Regrouping” dated August 6, 1920, #8358/III, was immediately distributed from headquarters.<sup>ref</sup>

Stressing the rapid invasion of the interior of the country on the part of the enemy and his attempts at launching from the Bug an offensive against Warsaw, the order provided for moving the troops of the Northeast Front back to the line of the Vistula, and at the same time involving the enemy in a general engagement at Warsaw. The basic line of defence: the Orzysz River – Narew River – Warsaw bridgehead – Vistula River – Dęblin bridgehead – Wieprz River, and farther on, the line of the Sereth or Strypa Rivers afforded an opportunity to construct positions that would favour the delivery of thrusts against the hostile flanks and lines of communications.

The main strategic idea implied – a) immobilising the enemy in the **south**, with a view to protecting L'viv and the oil fields; b) localising in the **north** the battle along the German frontier, at the same time resisting stubbornly the enemy's attacks on the bridgeheads; c) executing the offensive mission in the **centre**, for which purpose the mass of manoeuvre which had been assembled on the lower Wieprz was to strike against the flank and rear of the enemy forces attacking Warsaw and rout them. The group of forces gathered along the upper Wieprz was to cover the concentration, and thereafter join the mass of manoeuvre, proceeding from there in a north-easterly direction. In order to ensure coordination of effort, this group was to launch an attack from the north sector.

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<sup>13</sup> According to order #10000 of August 9, the Southeast Front covered Eastern Galicia as far as Kryłów in the north. The sector Kryłów – Brody, having been turned over to the Southeast Front, was held by the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. Ed.



The missions and distribution of forces over the three Fronts were as follows:<sup>14</sup>

1. The **North Front**, commanded by General Haller, consisting of three Armies, of which the Fifth Army under General Sikorski (Kopa's detachment, the Pomersk detachment, the cavalry group, a frontier guard brigade, the 17<sup>th</sup> Division, the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, and the promised 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade) was to observe the defensive on the Narew and Orzysz Rivers and prevent enemy attempts at crossing these rivers. The cavalry was to act aggressively against the right flank of the enemy.

Along the approaches to Warsaw, the First Army under General Latinik ( the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup><sup>15</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Divisions, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lithuanian-Byelorussian Division and 7<sup>th</sup> Siberian Reserve Brigade) was to wear down the enemy by means of defensive action.

Farther upstream from Karczew up to Dęblin, the Second Army under General Raszewski (2<sup>nd</sup> Legion Division, 4<sup>th</sup> Division, and one cavalry brigade) was to remain in observation along the Vistula.

2. The **Middle Front**, commanded by General Rydz-Śmigły, was to constitute the mass of manoeuvre. The principal assault group represented by the Fourth Army under General Skierski (14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup><sup>16</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> Divisions, temporarily the 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade, and the soon to join 6<sup>th</sup> Division) was assembled along the line Dęblin – Łysobyki – Kock, disposed in depth, with Mińsk-Mazowiecki as the direction of attack.

From Kock to Brody the Third Army, under General Zieliński (6<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian Division, 7<sup>th</sup> Division, Bałachowicz's detachment, one cavalry brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Legion Divisions) was to protect first and foremost the flanks and rear of the concentration area; and subsequently, after leaving the cavalry behind as a covering force, it was to take up with its infantry a gradual advance in the direction of Łuków.

3. The **South Front**, commanded by General Dowbor-Musnicki,<sup>17</sup> that is, the Sixth Army (5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Divisions, one cavalry brigade and the Ukrainian Army belonging to General Pawlenko<sup>18</sup>), was to protect Eastern Galicia.

General instructions then issued provided for breaking off the battle, evacuation, use of roads, immediate departure of units upon disengagement, occupation of lines of departure, and preparations for receiving replacements; they also listed the crossings over the Vistula

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<sup>14</sup> This list is nowhere near all the Polish forces facing the Soviets. For example the entire 1st Cavalry Division and Volunteer Infantry Division are missing, plus many smaller units. MP.

<sup>15</sup> Commanded by General Krajowski, this division was to prove the mainstay of the Fifth Army. Ed

<sup>16</sup> An error. The 16<sup>th</sup> ID is intended. MP.

<sup>17</sup> General Dowbor's assignment was approved by the Commander-in-Chief on August 8, but he did not actually exercise command. Ed.

It seems he declined the post. General Iwaszkiewicz took it instead. MP.

<sup>18</sup> This is Petliura's forces, generally known as the UNR. MP.



between Warsaw and Dęblin, only one steam ferry being available at Góra-Kalwaria at the time.

The beginning of the retrograde movement was scheduled for the night of August 7. In this connection the Roja group and the left of the First Army was to contain the enemy as long as possible in his endeavour to advance from the direction of Malkinia on Warsaw, and prevent him from forcing our troops back onto the bridgehead before August 12, by which time it was expected the work on the fortifications would be completed. The troops holding the bridgehead were to remain on the defensive until the completion of the concentration of the Fourth Army on the Wieprz, i.e. until about August 16. The left of the Third Army at this time was withdrawing to the Wieprz while maintaining connection with the Polesie Group, which was covering its withdrawal.

Yet the issuing of the order bringing about a regrouping of its forces did not mark the end of the labours of the Polish High Command in connection with the preparatory work for the Warsaw Operation. The further development of the plan exacted strenuous and incessant effort on the part of the Staff, for the absolute confidence in the basic idea of the strategic plan of operations tended to bring about rapid alterations in the details of execution, in order to conform to the changes in the strategic situation.<sup>19</sup>

Considerable changes were effected in the missions of the individual Armies, as well as those of their components, as, for instance, sending part of the forces allotted to the First Army to the assistance of the Fifth Army, the mission of which had unexpectedly become difficult and highly important. But the basic idea of the manoeuvre remained intact. An unbending will ensured that the plan was carried out as originally conceived.

Only on rare occasions has a plan of operations been executed as thoroughly as the directive governing the Warsaw Operation.

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<sup>19</sup> But two days later some changes were introduced by a "Special Order" dated August 8.<sup>ref</sup> This order notably increased the forces north of Modlin, and also clarified the method whereby the several missions were to be accomplished by individual Armies upon the completion of their concentration. The order of August 8/10 substantially modified the order of August 6, inasmuch as it represented the initial instructions governing the strategic manoeuvre north of Warsaw – Ed.



## Postscript by Editor

In connection with General Kukiel's article, it should be noted that the former "Commander-in-Chief", Marshall Piłsudski, while on "vacation" in 1925, sharply criticised this article in the newspaper "Courier Poranny". Piłsudski held that General Kukiel's article misrepresented the actual situation in which the Commander-in-Chief was concerned in the summer of 1920. The second part of the article, in particular, was subject of sharp criticism (Estimate of the Situation – Decision). In regard to General Kukiel's remark that the Chief of Staff (Rozwadowski) again and again reverted to the idea of a double envelopment and the desire to employ the north group offensively, in order to bring about a "Cannae", Piłsudski's sarcastic comment is: "Hurrah! A disciple of Schlieffen! The Bolsheviki and Tukhachevski had better beware!" etc.

Be that as it may, the "Special Strategic Order", prepared by Rozwadowski (#10000) on the night of the 9<sup>th</sup>, nevertheless provided for a double strategic envelopment. Moreover, on this document, a reproduction of the original and accompanied by a photograph of General Kukiel, there appears Piłsudski's own initials. In his various articles Piłsudski maintains that General Rozwadowski, the then Chief of Staff, did not offer the variant which provided for the concentration of the Fourth Army on the Wieprz.

In 1929 General Kukiel once more wrote an article on the subject of the "authorship of the strategic plan" in the form of a pamphlet dedicated to General Rozwadowski. This time, in an endeavour to stress Piłsudski's services to the country, he lists him among the leaders who "leave all the work of planning to their chiefs of staff, and from a number of plans submitted to them select one for adoption, thus limiting their activities in this respect to the expression of their will: 'this must be done – I will assume responsibility for it' ... The General thus exercises his executive prerogative by the mere act of making his decision ... However, the decision on August 6 was reached by the Commander-in-Chief **in accordance with his personal conviction**, by his own efforts and by his own methods, while the Chief of Staff started to put it into execution with enthusiasm. ... In war everything depends on the manner of execution."

The part played by Piłsudski is certainly not enhanced by these statements, if we consider General Kukiel's opinion presented in the same article. The latter holds that General Rozwadowski, in the course of the fighting on the Bug – the plan of which contemplated an enveloping manoeuvre from the south – would each day evolve the same conception in regard to it and adapt it to the changed situation. Upon the withdrawal to the Vistula, this finally led to the idea of an enveloping manoeuvre from the line of the Wieprz as one of the several variants. Ed.

