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Soviet side. Considerable hope was also placed in the diversionary activities of communist elements in Poland.

As for Poland, she could not look on impassively as Soviet troops occupied her eastern territories, which had a centuries long tradition of common statehood with Poland, and whose inhabitants in the great majority, were opposed to communism and just like other nationalities conquered by Russia, strove to achieve an independent existence.

The initial Polish operations were launched from three points. In the north, from Wołkowysk, in the centre from Brześć and in Wołyń from Kowel. The forces used were indeed very weak, for along a front of over 300 kilometres they numbered only about 12.000 men. Nonetheless, they pushed back numerically superior Soviet forces and by the end of March, they held the approaches to the town of Lida, the line of the river Szczara and the Ogiński Canal, they captured the town of Pińsk in the Polesie marshes and in Wołyń reached the line of the river Styr.

#### IV

Military operations towards the end of 1918 and at the beginning of 1919, called for a great effort in order to build up the strength of Polish forces, which at the time consisted of three distinctly organised entities. The first and most important one, in central Poland, was composed mainly of units which came into being spontaneously at the time of the disarming of German and Austrian units. It was made up of the following groups of men:

- 1) Members of the P.O.W., the clandestine Polish Military Organisation, created by Piłsudski, about 60.000 strong by the end of October 1918.
- 2) Former soldiers of the Polish Legion, which, composed of three infantry brigades and some artillery, and two regiments of cavalry, had taken part in the Russian campaign as part of the Austrian army. These units were seasoned combat troops, with a magnificent fighting past. In 1917, after refusing to take an oath of allegiance to the Central Powers, the Polish Legion was gradually disbanded. A considerable number, composed of Poles from the Russian part of Poland, were interned by the Germans in special camps. Others, who came from Austrian Poland were incorporated in the Austrian units, while one brigade, under the command of Brigadier Józef Haller, on the 18th February 1918, fought its way through the Austrian-Russian front, trying to join up with the Polish army corps formed in Russia after the overthrow of the Tsar. It shared the fate of this army corps and was disarmed by the Germans after some heavy fighting at Kaniów, on the Dnieper, on the 11th May 1918. Former soldiers of the Polish Legion dispersed in civilian occupations, maintained their regimental links and with the break up of the armies of the occupying powers, reformed their units.
- 3) Soldiers of the three Polish army corps formed on the west bank of the Dnieper after the overthrow of the Tsar, from Poles serving in the Russian army. They too, were seasoned combat troops and after returning to Poland maintained their regimental links and when the opportunity arose reformed their original units.
- 4) Another distinct entity among the newly formed Polish units was the so-called 'Polish Armed Force' (Polska Siła Zbrojna) organised during the existence of the Regency Council. It was a fully equipped, regular formation

in combat readiness, consisting of one infantry brigade together with some training units, in all about 12.000 strong.

5) Lastly, former soldiers of Russian and Austrian units of Polish nationality, from retreating front line and rear formations of these armies.

These men provided the officer corps, the N.C.O.'s, and the instructors for the new army, while the ranks were filled mainly by volunteers, with a high proportion drawn from the educated classes and consisting of students of institutions of higher learning and of the upper forms of secondary schools. In the first half of 1919 the volunteer army was supplemented by conscripts. 6 years' draft was called up following an act of parliament.

Great difficulties were encountered at that time in forming new units, due mainly to lack of armaments and other military equipment. The stocks taken over from the occupying powers were inadequate to satisfy the needs of the growing army. There was no armaments industry as such, and all other industry had been almost completely devastated in the course of the war. In the formerly Austrian part of Poland industry hardly existed, except for the area of Cieszyn, which fell to the Czechs; as for the well developed industry of Upper Silesia, it could not be taken into account as its fate was still being argued over at the peace conference. In such conditions the newly created Polish army could not rely on the output of Polish industry which was not even able to meet the current needs of the state where transport and making good wartime destructions were concerned. The only source from which the lacking equipment could have come at that time, was the West, but supplies were to begin with meagre and haphazard.

Difficulties of another kind were created by the need to keep the various fronts supplied with troop reinforcements. This meant that individual battalions, squadrons or batteries would be separated from their base units in the process of formation, and their basic training hardly completed would be committed to the front-line.

In spite of these difficulties, the formation and training of new units of the Polish Army, under the overall direction of General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, the Under-Secretary for War, was proceeding smoothly and by the end of March 1919, the armed forces were 170.000 strong, of which 80.000 were at the front. In April the army was already 200.000 strong.

The second distinct entity within the Polish Armed Forces was the so-called Army of Greater Poland (Armia Wielkopolska). The origins of its formation go back to the time of the rising against the German garrisons in Greater Poland. Its ranks were composed of former soldiers of the German army of Polish nationality and of young local volunteers. Having captured a lot of German stores the Army of Greater Poland was excellently armed while its soldiers were well trained combat troops. The bulk of this army remained on the Greater Poland front engaging German forces, and constituted a separate provincial fighting force, but from March 1919, some of its troops were used to reinforce units fighting on the eastern front. At that time the Army of Greater Poland was 60.000 strong.

The third and last distinct formation of Polish troops, was at that time being organised in France. It was the so-called 'Sky Blue Army' of General Józef Haller. Its main force consisted of four divisions formed while the war was still on and during the armistice. It was composed of volunteers from among the Polish emigrants to the U.S.A., of former prisoners of war of Polish nationality, from the Austrian army, released from Italian p.o.w. camps, and

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of p.o.w.'s from the German army, released from French camps. There were also Polish soldiers from Polish units formed in the north of Russia in the region of Murmansk. The 1st Rifle Division of General Haller's army took part in the fighting of the last few months of the Great War at the side of the French on the western front. The army numbered 80,000 men by April 1919, and was a formidable fighting force, excellently trained and armed, disposing of strong artillery and a regiment of tanks. It was transported to Poland in stages, the transfer being completed by mid-May 1919. Its units were used at once to provide a strong reinforcement of the Polish front in eastern Galicia. Two more divisions were considered to be part of General Haller's army. Both had been formed in Russia. The 4th Rifle Division, under General Żeligowski came into being in the south, and after fighting the Bolsheviks in Odessa, reached Poland via Rumania, taking part in the campaign against the Ukrainians in eastern Galicia. The 5th Rifle Division, formed in the far eastern territories of Russia, fought against the Bolsheviks in Siberia, suffering heavy losses, and reached Poland by sea, reduced to one brigade, as late as the summer of 1920.

## V

Up to July 1919, military operations on the Polish-Soviet front were limited in scope and with relatively small forces engaged. The main war effort on the Polish side at that time was directed against the Ukrainians in eastern Galicia, and in the southern part of Wołyń there were Soviet troops hostile to both Poles and Ukrainians. After the arrival of General Haller's army, a Polish offensive, begun in mid-May, threw back the Ukrainians to the east of Lwów. Then there followed a lull of a few weeks caused by political difficulties with the Allies, and after a Ukrainian counter-offensive had been repelled, towards the end of June, another Polish offensive was launched, commanded in person by Józef Piłsudski, the Polish C.-in-C. This attack finally broke the resistance of the Ukrainian troops and threw them back beyond the river Zbrucz, as a consequence of which fighting with the Ukrainians ceased altogether. At the same time the peace treaty was signed at Versailles and the sporadic fighting on the Greater Poland front also ceased. Troops released in this way could then be used to strengthen the front against the Russians.

While the fighting on the Ukrainian front was still full of intensity, the Polish Army carried out an important operation whose objective was Wilno, and in this case also, Józef Piłsudski assumed direct operational command. This was the first stage of a plan of operations designed to push back Soviet troops occupying parts of Lithuania and Byelorussia quite some distance to the east. Wilno itself and those parts of the Wilno Province where Poles constituted the majority of the population, had to be liberated from a communist occupation, first of all, to prevent a build up of Soviet forces in that area, and secondly, to deny time for the government of workers and peasants councils to establish itself effectively. Without weakening the forces engaged against the Ukrainians, Piłsudski gathered together a small operational group of proved fighting ability, composed of infantry and cavalry, in an area west of Lida, from where he launched his attack on the 16th of April. At one and the same time forces under his command attacked Lida, an important communication centre, and a suitable base for the operation on Wilno, and troops