

**POLISH REVOLUTIONARY FORMATIONS
IN THE RED ARMY STRUCTURES
(1918-1921)**

Adam Miodowski

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Białystok 2017

Review

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Translation and edition co-financed by
Faculty of History and Sociology & Institute of History and
Political Sciences
of University of Białystok

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ISBN 978 83 87881 49 8

Publisher

Wydawnictwo PRYMAT, Mariusz Śliwowski
ul. Hetmańska 42, 15-727 Białystok
tel. 602 766 304, 881 766 304
e-mail: prymat@biasoft.net, www.prymat.biasoft.net

Contents

Abbreviations	7
Preface	11
Chapter I The personnel and organizational base of the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia	27
Chapter II The disputes over the organization form of the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia	87
Chapter III The first stage of forming the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia	119
Chapter IV The second stage of forming the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia	141
Chapter V The conditions of the liquidation process of the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia	179
Conclusions	229
Bibliography	233

Abbreviations

- AMP – Alliances of Military Poles [pol. *Związki Wojskowych Polaków*]
- AUCP(b) – All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks) Central Committee [rus. *Всесоюзная коммунистическая партия (большевиков)* – *ВКП(б)*, transl. *Vsesoiūznaâ kommunističeskaâ pártiâ (bol'shevikóv)* – *VKP(b)*]
- AAN – Central Archives of Modern Records [pol. *Archiwum Akt Nowych*]
- CC AMPL – Central Committee of the Alliances of Military Poles of the Left [pol. *Komitet Główny Związków Wojskowych Polaków Lewicy*]
- CEC – Central Executive Committee [rus. *Центральный Исполнительный Комитет*, transl. *Central'nyj Iсполnitel'nyj Komitet* pol. *Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy*]
- CEC CWSD – Central Executive Committee of the Council of Workers and Soldiers Delegates [rus. *Центральный Исполнительный Комитет Советов Рабочих и Солдатских Депутатов*, transl. *Central'nyj Iсполnitel'nyj Komitet Sovetov Rabočih i Soldatskih Deputatov*, pol. *Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy Rady Delegatów Robotniczych i Żołnierskich*]
- CAW – Central Military Archives [pol. *Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe*]
- CPA – Commissariat for Polish Affairs [pol. *Komisariat do spraw Polskich*]

CWPP	– Communist Workers Party of Poland [pol. <i>Komunistyczna Partia Robotnicza Polski</i>]
CPC	– Council of People’s Commissars [rus. <i>Совет народных комиссаров</i> transl. <i>Sovet narodnyh komissarov</i> , pol <i>Rada Komisarzy Ludowych</i>]
CRDO	– Council of Revolutionary and Democratic Organizations [pol. <i>Rada Organizacji Rewolucyjno-Demokratycznych</i>]
CRDO	– Council of Revolutionary-Democratic Organizations [pol. <i>Rada Organizacji Rewolucyjno-Demokratycznych</i>]
CWD	– Council of Workers’ Delegates [pol. <i>Rada Delegatów Robotniczych</i>]
CPIU	– Council Polish of the Interparty Union [pol. <i>Rada Polska Zjednoczenia Międzypartyjnego</i>]
L-BSSR	– Lithuanian-Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic [lit. <i>Lietuvos-Baltarusijos Tarybinė Socialistinė Respublika</i> ; biel. <i>Літоўска-Беларуская Савецкая Сацыялістычная Рэспубліка</i> , transl. <i>Litoŭska-Belaruskaâ Saveckaâ Sacyâlistyčnaâ Rêspublika</i>]
NDP	– National-Democratic Party [pol. <i>Stronnictwo Narodowo-Demokratyczne</i>]
NCO	– Non-Commissioned Officer
PAF	– Polish Armed Forces [pol. <i>Polska Siła</i>]
PMEC	– Polish Military Executive Committee [pol. <i>Polski Wojskowy Komitet Wykonawczy</i>]
PMO	– Polish Military Organization [pol. <i>Polska Organizacja Wojskowa</i>]
PMRC	– Polish Military-Revolutionary Council [pol. <i>Polska Rada Wojskowo-Rewolucyjna</i>]
PPA	– Polish People’s Association [pol. <i>Polski Związek Ludowy</i>]
PRSC	– Polish Revolutionary Soldier Clubs [pol. <i>Polskie Rewolucyjne Kluby Żołnierskie</i>]

PSC	– Polish Security Council [pol. <i>Polska Rada Bezpieczeństwa</i>]
PSG	– Polish Security Guard [<i>Polska Straż Bezpieczeństwa</i>]
PSP-Left	– Polish Socialist Party – Left (pol. <i>Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Lewica</i>)
PSP RF	– Polish Socialist Party [pol. <i>Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Frakcja Rewolucyjna</i>]
PSP	– Polish Socialist Party [pol. <i>Polska Partia Socjalistyczna</i>]
PSU	– Polish Socialist Unity [pol. <i>Zjednoczenie Socjalistyczne Polskie</i>]
PSMC	– Polish Supreme Military Committee [pol. <i>Naczelny Polski Komitet Wojskowy</i>]
POWs	– prisoners of war
RRWC	– Republic’s Revolutionary War Council [pol. <i>Rewolucyjna Rada Wojenna Republiki</i>]
RCP(b)	– Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) [rus. <i>Российская Коммунистическая партия (большевиков) – РКП(б)</i> , transl. <i>Rossijskaâ Kommunističeskaâ partiâ (bol’shevikov) – RKP(b)</i>]
RSDLP(b)	– Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (bolsheviks) [rus. <i>Российская социал-демократическая рабочая партия (большевиков) – РСДРП(б)</i> , transl. <i>Rossiyskaya sotsial-demokraticeskaya rabochaya partiya (bol’shevikov)</i>]
RSFSR	– Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic [rus. <i>Российская Советская Федеративная Социалистическая Республика</i> , transl. <i>Rossiyskaya Sovetskaya Federativnaya Sotsialisticheskaya Respublika</i>]
RGASPI	– Russian State Archive of Social and Political History [rus. <i>Российский государственный архив социально-политической истории – РГАСПИ</i> , transl. <i>Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Social’no-Politicheskoy Istorii</i>]

- RGVA – Russian State Military Archive [rus. *Российский государственный военный архив – РГВА*, transl. *Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj voennyj archiv*]
- SDKPL – Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania [pol. *Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy*]
- GARF – State Archive of the Russian Federation [rus. *Государственный архив Российской Федерации – ГАРФ*, transl. *Gosudarstvennyj archiv Rossijskoj Federacii*]
- SC PAF – Supreme Council of the Polish Armed Forces [pol. *Rada Naczelna Polskiej Siły Zbrojnej*]
- SDC – Supreme Democratic Committee [pol. *Naczelny Komitet Demokratyczny*]
- TPRC – Temporary Polish Revolutionary Committee [pol. *Tymczasowy Komitet Rewolucyjny Polski* the so-called “*Polrewkom*”]
- WO – Warrant Officer

Preface

Forming in the first months after the February Revolution, sections of the extremely leftist branch of the Polish Socialist Party [PSP, pol. *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*]¹ – the Polish Socialist Party – Left (PSP–Left, pol. *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Lewica*] and the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania [SDKPL, pol. *Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy*] almost immediately made contact with Polish soldiers dispersed in the Russian Army, as well as serving in the Polish Rifle Division being part of the Army. The stimulus to take the action came from the example of the Bolshevik fraction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (bolsheviks) [RSDLP(b), rus. *Российская социал-демократическая рабочая партия (большевиков)* – РСДПП(б), transl. *Rossiyskaya sotsial-demokraticheskaya rabochaya partiya (bol'shevikóv)*], which appreciated the importance of soldiers' favor for radical revolutionary slogans, and developed intense activity among soldiers. Russian Bolsheviks established a special agitation structure, colloquially called *Wojenka*, whose office at the Central Committee of the RSDLP(b) served as the management of the military organizations' network responsible for propaganda. Within the scope of *Wojenka*'s impact there were also the most radical groups of Polish soldiers. Through the latter, and later also directly on the

¹ The abbreviations used in the monograph are provided in their English versions, for their easier identification in source materials and other publications.

basis of their own members' ranks of the Polish radical left wing, an intensive action was developed for creating Polish revolutionary formations and against the Polish Corps² in Russia established under the auspices of the National-Democratic Party [NDP, pol. *Stronnictwo Narodowo-Demokratyczne*].

Promoted in Russia after the Bolshevik revolution by some activists of the SDKPL and the PSP – Left, the idea of creating “Polish workers and peasants formations” initially received moderate attention from Polish military circles. This attitude was observed both among those who were still in active service, as well as among their demobilized companions. The widespread pacifist attitude among Polish military was a serious obstacle in attracting people ready to serve in revolutionary formations. It was previously infused by the very same emigrant radicals who, after November 7, 1917, for a change, had encouraged armed support for the revolution. Hence, it could not surprise that the rate of recruitment to the Polish revolutionary divisions was not too great. The emphasis put by the SDKPL on internationalization of the “red formations” constituted another factor inhibiting the inflow of Poles to them. In such a situation without the support of the Soviet civil and military authorities, any organizational initiatives from the Polish communist circles³ in Russia had no chance to be implemented.

The substantive framework of the undertaken research covers a wide range of issues illustrating the shaping process, the spatiotemporal evolution and forms

² The 1st Polish Corps was established in July 1917 on the basis of the Polish Rifle Division.

³ By Polish communists before the establishment of the Communist Workers Party of Poland, I mean extremely radicalized activists of SDKPL and PSP – Left.

of realizing the military ambitions of Polish communists operating in the revolutionary Russian realities. Primarily the activities of the SDKPL and the PSP – Left in the military field, as well as of their legal and organizational continuator – the Communist Workers Party of Poland [CWPP, pol. *Komunistyczna Partia Robotnicza Polski*] are characterized. The territorial framework of the dissertation closes within the boundaries of declining Russia and the rebirth of Poland, and the chronological framework is determined in the years 1918–1921, when the Polish revolutionary formations developed and finally collapsed.

In the spatiotemporal boundaries outlined above, the dissertation attempts to accomplish the research goals crucial for the issues mentioned in its title. Among them, there is showing activities carried out before and after November 7, 1917 by the SDKPL and the PSP – Left in the structures of the Alliances of Military Poles [AMP, pol. *Związki Wojskowych Polaków*] and the Polish Corps functioning within the Russian Army. In addition, the specificity of the CWPP's disintegration actions in the Polish Army, as well as, on the other hand, (in contrast) showing the effects of its involvement in planting the seeds for the organization process of the Polish Red Army.

Seeking answers to the questions important to the topic discussed in this dissertation, and thus determining historiographic facts in a reliable and accurate manner, it is necessary to rely primarily on the inductive method. The deductive reasoning is also helpful. This methodological choice is conditioned by the nature of the source materials used in the dissertation and the adopted reflection framework.

Selecting, grouping and synthesizing facts essentially allow the historian to properly construct their work. This

monograph is comprised of five chapters divided in the chronological and material layout. In the first chapter, the staffing and organizational base of the Polish revolutionary groups in Russia is characterized. In the second chapter, the disputes on their organizational form are discussed. The third chapter covers the first stage of their formation. In the fourth chapter, the second phase of their formation is presented. The fifth chapter shows the conditions of the liquidation process of the Polish revolutionary groups in Russia.

This approach to the dissertation's framework is conditioned by the nature and availability of source materials reflecting the activity of the CWPP and its political and organizational ancestors on military grounds. Due to the specificity of the Polish radical left wing environment itself and the spatiotemporal frame of its activity, the basic source database illustrating these actions can be found in Russian archives.

The archival query confirmed that the most valuable resources indispensable for the elaboration of the title subject are present in the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History [rus. *Российский государственный архив социально-политической истории – РГАСПИ*, transl. *Rossiiskij Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Social'no-Politicheskoi Istorii – RGASPI*]. First of all, the Fond 17 should be mentioned, consisting of files produced in the course of the activities of the Central Committee of the RSDLP(b) and its subsequent incarnations in the form of the Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) Central Committee [RCP(b), rus. *Российская Коммунистическая партия (большевиков) – РКП(б)*, transl. *Rossijskaâ Kommunističeskâ partiâ (bol'shevikov) – RKP(b)*] and the All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks) Central Committee [AUCP(b), rus. *Всесоюзная коммунистическая партия*

(большевиков) – ВКП(б), transl. *Vsesoiūznaâ kommunističeskaâ pártiâ (bol'shevikóv) – VKP(b)*]. Among the documentation there are *inter alia*: excerpts from the minutes of the Central Committee Organization Bureau regarding the activities of Polish communists; correspondence of the Central Executive Committee [CEC, pol. *Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy*] of the SDKPL and the CEC of CWPP Groups in Russia addressed to the headquarters of the Bolshevik Party; materials showing the activity of the Polish Bureau of Agitation and Propaganda at the RCP(b) Central Committee. Periodic reviews and political information sent from the Western Rifle Division to the RCP(b) Central Committee are also of great cognitive value

Other valuable source materials are provided in the Fond 68 reflecting the activity of the Provisional Polish Revolutionary Committee. They include, *inter alia*, meeting protocols, reports, orders and correspondence files of this institution with Polish and Soviet military, political, administrative and party authorities, from their local level to the central level.

The documentation composing the Fond 446 is of extraordinary significance for the development of the issue. The archives were generated by the CEC of the CWPP Groups in Russia. Among them, there are, *inter alia*, protocols and reports of the CEC, as well as correspondence between this body and the commanding staff of Polish revolutionary groups and political commissars at these units, and documentation of the Recruitment Offices of the Western Rifle Division.

The personal legacy of two leading representatives of the CEC of the CWPP Groups in Russia deserves special attention. In the first case, it is the Fond 76 depicting the political activity of Felix Dzerzhinsky, and in the second

one – the Fond 143 reflecting the actions of Julian Marchlewski. The contents of both fonds include personal notes, letters, telegrams and excerpts from the minutes of the organs' meetings in which the two party activists took part.

For the research implementation concerning the military and organizational conditions for the formation of Polish revolutionary groups, the key significance should be attributed to the collections of the next Russian archives, i.e. the Russian State Military Archive [rus. *Российский государственный военный архив – РГВА*, transl. *Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj voennyj archiv – RGVA*]. From the rich resources of this institution, the Fond 18 including the files of the Formation 1 Command of the Polish Red Army turned out to be useful. It contains documentation reflecting the course of organizational work related to the formation of this army, statistical data on the size of individual units, personal data on the commanding staff, materials depicting the functioning of the Political Division, political inspectorates and military commissars, information on indoctrination actions conducted among Polish Red Army soldiers and the analysis of the possibility of developing the recruitment and agitation campaign in the country.

To reflect the activity of Polish radicals in the military sphere in the Lithuanian-Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Fond 201 contains valuable archives. It includes documentation presenting the functioning and military struggles of the units of the Lithuanian-Belorussian Army and of its predecessor, the Western Army. Special attention should be paid to political reports, personnel records, combat logs, daily orders and situational reviews.

Even greater cognitive value is presented by the Fond 1458 reflecting the turbulent history of the Western Rifle Division and closely related to the Fond 1459 documenting the further history of this formation after being transformed into the 52nd Rifle Division. The key significance in case of both fonds should be attributed to the materials illustrating the course of indoctrination actions conducted among soldiers serving in this formation, protocols of Division party units, situational reviews, political reports and logs of combat operations.

The legacy of the individual regiments being part of the formation serves as natural supplement and a kind of development of this divisional documentation. Thus, the Fond 3856 contains the files of the 1st Warsaw Rifle Regiment, the Fond 3858 – the files of the 5th Minsk Rifle Regiment, the fond 3863 – the files of the 2nd Siedlce Rifle Regiment later transformed into the 3rd Siedlce Rifle Regiment. This list is supplemented by the files of the Reserve Rifle Regiment in the 1st Polish Rifle Division, substantively linked to the already mentioned documentation of the Formation 1 Command of the Red Polish Army – i.e. the Fond 4497. For each of the mentioned fonds, for the purpose of this work, materials reflecting organizational, indoctrination and combat activities of individual regiments, containing data on rotation in the command and military commissioners posts, and depicting interpersonal relations and the mood present in the soldiers' ranks should be considered useful.

The third Russian archive institution where the resource for the purpose of implementation of the title subject is available, is the State Archive of the Russian

Federation [rus. Государственный архив Российской Федерации – ГАРФ, transl. *Gosudarstvennyj archiv Rossijskoj Federacii – GARF*]. The Fond 1318 was used there, containing files from the People’s Commissariat for Nationalities. In this case, archives such as instructions and reports of individual Polish Commissariat’s departments (including the military one) and its regional representations, extracts from the minutes of the institutions of appointed in exile by the radical left, such as the Council of Revolutionary and Democratic Organizations [CRDO, pol. *Rada Organizacji Rewolucyjno-Demokratycznych*], correspondence of the Commissariat and draft decrees and other legal acts prepared by the Commissariat appeared valuable.

Summing up this part of the presentation of the dissertation’s source database referring to the files stored in the Russian archives, it should be added that some fragments of this resource, being of key importance for the reconstruction of the history of the Polish diaspora in the East, began to be microfilmed in the era of Polish People's Republic. These works were continued after 1989 involving copying the archives in a slightly different form, i.e. by photocopying them. Documents acquired in this form from foreign archives, the total number of which is estimated at several hundred thousands of microfilm frames and photocopies, were transferred to central archival institutions in Poland. The detailed list of the documentation obtained over more than thirty years is provided in the ten-volume publication of the State Archives Supreme Directorate [pol. *Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych*] under the general title: “Catalogue of Microfilms and Photocopies of Polonica

from Foreign Archives” and printed reports of the Military Archives Commission [pol. *Wojskowa Komisja Archiwalna*]⁴.

Among the polonica acquired this way, especially in the period before the political transformation, those concerning the activity of various sections of the Polish left wing operating within the borders of imperial and post-revolutionary Russia had significant importance. Among them there are also fragments of the fonds described above and used for the purpose of this work. Most of the copied materials were dispersed and enriched, among others, fonds containing the file remnants of radical parties. An alternative solution used by the archivists was to create separate fonds in which this type of documentation was collected. The Central Archives of Modern Records [pol. *Archiwum Akt Nowych* – AAN] containing the fond composed of 45 archival units catalogued under the number 1220 titled “The Polish Commission on History of the AUCP(b), at the Central Committee of the AUCP(b) in Moscow” is its good example. In the Central Military Archives [pol. *Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe* – CAW], it is a fond of 2367 archival units composed of the following the file numbers: VIII.800.1-87 and under the name “The collection of files from Russian archives”.

From the typical AAN resources, the documentation collected in the following fonds was used: the Council of the Polish Interparty Union [CPIU, pol. *Rada Polska Zjednoczenia Międzypartyjnego*] and the Central Polish Agency in Lausanne [pol. *Centralna Agencja Polska w Lozannie*] and a set of fonds under the general title “Polish organizations in Russia”, as well as the collection

⁴ J. Pięta (ed.), *Informacja o wynikach pracy Wojskowej Komisji Archiwalnej w archiwach Federacji Rosyjskiej w okresie wrzesień 1992 – czerwiec 1993*, Warszawa 1993, passim.

of files entitled “Polish socialist and revolutionary organizations in Russia in the years 1917-1918”. The CAW resource the fond of the Polish Supreme Military Committee [PSMC, pol. *Naczelny Polski Komitet Wojskowy*] was used.

Useful information about the actions of Polish communists in the military sphere can also be found in press publications. The periodicals used were of varied origin and appeared, among others, as official (*Izvestia Wsierossijskiego Ispolnitielnogo Komiteta Sovietov* [rus. *Известия Всероссийского Центрального Исполнительного Комитета Советов*, News of the All-Russian Executive Committee] and *Goniec Czerwony* [Red Messenger]), party *Młot* [Hammer] and *Trybuna* [Tribune]), dedicated organs, for example, addressed to soldiers (*Polskie Siły Zbrojne* [Polish Armed Forces], *Głos Robotnika i Żołnierza* [Voice of Worker and Soldier] and *Wiadomości Wojskowe* [Military News]). Due to the nature of the journalistic message, a far-reaching criticism of the information contained in these publications turned out to be necessary. The use of the methodology appropriate for this type of source enabled, however, obtaining the knowledge not available elsewhere about the issues under research.

The process of the historian reaching the important source facts can be facilitated by researching publications with materials containing archival materials acquired by other researchers. Due to the specific nature of the subject matter discussed in this dissertation, treated by Marxist historiography in a special way, the majority of published sources taken from both Polish and foreign archives appeared in the scientific circulation long before the political breakthrough of 1989. The individual monumental editions usually coincided at the time of

next more or less round anniversaries of the October Revolution's outbreak.

Detailed data on all the source publications used in this work are included in the bibliography and footnotes, while here, in the wider framework, the two classic yet slightly forgotten items on the discussed issue. The first one, in the chronological sense, of these multi-volume editions of sources was published under the title *Materiały archiwalne do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich* [Archival materials on the history of Polish-Soviet relations]. The volume opening the series edited by Natalia Gąsiorowska was published in 1957. In the preparation of this and subsequent volumes, a team of historians including Leon Grosfeld, Artur Leinwand, Aleksander Zatorski and several other researchers participated.

On an even greater scale and with the participation of Soviet historians, a multi-volume source publication entitled *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich* [Documents and materials for the history of Polish-Soviet relations] was prepared simultaneously in Polish and Russian. The first volume of the Polish edition was published in 1962, and the Russian-language version a year later. Among the Polish researchers involved in this project there were almost the same people who co-created the editorial team of the previously mentioned publishing series.

In the case of both collections of source materials, archives in the resources of the most important institutions in each country were referred to. Although the ambition of both editorial offices was a broader presentation of Polish-Russian and Polish-Soviet relations, in practice they were presented mainly through the perspective of party activity reflecting primarily

Bolsheviks' initiatives and individual factions of the Polish left wing.

Biographical information included in *Księga Polaków uczestników rewolucji październikowej* [Book of the Poles participating in the October Revolution] and documents published in the Russian-language publication *Kommunisticheskaja partija Sovetskogo Sojuza v rezolucijah i reshenijah* were extremely useful for analyzing the subject issues.

From the memoirs editions group the memories of Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, are worth mentioning, in them the author, *inter alia*, draws a picture of the destructive actions taken by Polish radicals and their protectors from the Bolshevik Party in the structures of the 1st Polish Corps. Stanisław Wojciechowski looked from a different position at the events of 1917–1918; his memories were used to elaborate on the issues discussed in the first two chapters. In her memories, Zofia Dzerzhinska presents a lot of interesting information on the political activities of the CWPP leaders in exile.

When researching the subject of the Polish revolutionary groups in Russia, the field appears already well explored, and it seems impossible to discover anything new today. This conviction gets confirmed by the great number of publications which, above all, Marxist historiography from the Polish People's Republic' era, but also from the inter-war period contributed to. However, when reading statements of researchers discussing the issues mentioned here before 1939, it turns out that the contemporary state of knowledge from today's perspective should be considered too superficial.

Scientific works of researchers from the years 1944-1989 are characterized by completely different shortcomings. In the reality of that period it was difficult

or sometimes almost impossible to take up most of the issues related in particular to the activity of the communist movement in the military field. In addition to the very few exceptions, works created especially before 1956, but also afterwards, are characterized by rather debatable cognitive values. Historical materialism and the workshop and research canons resulting from it left their negative mark on them. The tone of narrative in historical studies on the issues of the activity of Polish left circles was given by the scientific circles associated with the Higher School of Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. To some extent, therefore, the above fact may disqualify a certain part of the output of the communist historiography in terms of scientific and cognitive values. After all, it is impossible to deny that some books and monographic articles, despite providing them with a scientific apparatus, were more like typical propaganda publications, already having their historically correct thesis in their titles.

Beginning with the symbolic date of 22 July 1944, one of the principles of the historical policy at that time was to create and maintain an impeccable image of the party and ideological ancestors of the "leading force". Without limiting the freedom of historical research, it would be impossible to achieve this objective. Therefore, undertaking "sensitive subjects", the historian was forced to reach for source facts selected by the ideological key to prove a historically correct thesis. Consequently, in their analysis, it was not possible to determine all the relevant historical and geophysical facts in a strict and reliable manner. This resulted in the fact that at the stage of their interpretation, and especially the synthesis of a given section of the historical process, reconstruction errors

were revealed. The researcher, adapting to the requirements of historical correctness, consequently made readers learn a distorted description of the past. In such general conditions, Polish Marxist historiography has also created a somewhat mythologized image of political and military activity of Polish communists in exile. Even the language of the description used to record the events taking place in this sphere was so distorted by phraseological references to the “classics of the newspeak” that it hindered both proper reading and reception before 1989, and even more so nowadays.

Like regarding the source publications, with reference to the scientific studies used in this dissertation it should be explained that a detailed list of them can be found in the bibliography and footnotes. Here, on the other hand, some of the most important and most representative publications will be referred to. Their content was a kind of starting point for the reflections made on these pages. Concerning the publications on the revolutionary conditions of the political and military activity of the Polish diaspora in Russia, the book by Aleksander Zatorski entitled *Polska lewica wojskowa w Rosji* [Polish military left in Russia] should be distinguished in terms of cognitive and workshop values in first place, followed by *Polskie korpusy wojskowe w Rosji w latach 1917-1918* [Polish military Corps in Russia in 1917-1918] by Mieczysław Wrzosek.

The above-mentioned studies, as well as the inter-war publications, especially by Henryk Bagiński, consider indirectly the issues mentioned in the dissertation’s title. The activities of Polish communists in the period between the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the moment of independence regaining by Poland were given a lot of attention by Ignacy Pawłowski and Kazimierz Sobczak in

a rather specific publication – with no footnotes, but provided with a bibliography – entitled *Walczyli o Polskę. Polacy i oddziały polskie w rewolucji październikowej i wojnie domowej w Rosji 1917–1921* [They fought for Poland. Poles and Polish troops in the October Revolution and the civil war in Russia 1917–1921]. The publication of Walentyna Najdus entitled *Lewica polska w Kraju Rad 1918–1920* [The Polish Left in the Soviet State 1918–1920] is much more beneficial, referring quite widely and reasonably in some chapters to actions taken on the military by the CEC of the CWPP Groups in Russia.

Among the contemporary published books, even if their content goes beyond the scope of the considerations undertaken here, it is still worth mentioning a work by Andrzej Nowak. His dissertation entitled *Polska i trzy Rosje* [Poland and three Russias] gives the opportunity to learn about the wider context of the political and military activity of the Polish left.

Among foreign language studies, primarily Russian-language publications are worth attention. Apart from ideological influences, works on political-military-revolutionary activities undertaken by the Polish diaspora on in Russia after 7 November 1917 by Aleksandr Manusevič should be assessed quite positively. Some of them were even published in Polish. All of them, without exception, are obviously a part of the ideologically correct Soviet historiography canon. Nevertheless, even in spite of the aforementioned “blemish”, they provide a lot of reliable knowledge on the “Polish contribution” to the revolutionization process of the Russian state.

Chapter I

The personnel and organizational base of the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia

The real opportunity to form a Polish army in Russia was considerably big. The basic premise justifying this statement was based on the significant mobilization capability. It is worth mentioning where these human reserves to create Polish formations on Russian territory originated from. The main recruitment base was the Polish diaspora in Russia. The displacement of civilians from Congress Poland, especially from the frontier areas, began from the first days of the war and included mainly those who had relatives in Russia. The factor inciting to leave the homeland were the rumors about the cruelty of soldiers serving in the Central Powers' armies. People moved to Russia also in search of employment. Only in Warsaw alone from 13 November 1914 to 15 July 1915 the Central Civil Committee's [pol. *Centralny Komitet Obywatelski*] Employment Search Section issued over 24 thousand referrals for a trip to Russia. Also people kept under surveillance were leaving Congress Poland, hoping that in the Empire's open country they would be able to sneak out from the troublesome monitoring. All these groups constituted a voluntary exile, lasting from the first moments after the outbreak of the war until the time when the Russians left Congress Poland.

In addition to these voluntary refugees, so-called civil prisoners, citizens of the Central Powers, mostly Poles, staying in the territory of Congress Poland before the outbreak of the conflict for various reasons, were sent to Russia. In turn, the evacuation of industrial plants also involved forced exile of some of their crews. This evacuation, contrary to the often-replicated thesis about moving factories with entire crews, did not entail the exodus of overly large human masses. This was due to the fact that the majority of factories' management tried to take with them, above all, technical personnel, especially engineering staff, constantly needed in Russia, a part of their administrative staff and skilled workers.

The evacuation of the rolling stock involved a different process. According to the regulations of the communication authorities, all personnel were evacuated along with the rolling stock, and using the transport option they usually went to wander with their families. In this way about 25,000 railwaymen left Congress Poland.

The main evacuation took place between July and September 1915, during which civilians, mostly peasants from the Governorates [rus. *губерния* transl. *gubernia*] of and Łomża, Siedlce and Suwałki, and the southern part of the Lublin Governorate were displaced. In addition, mass displacement also included Polish population living in the Grodno and Chełm Governorates located outside the borders of Congress Poland.

It is difficult to determine now the number of persons who were forced to move. Most authors researching on this issue tend to indicate the number of a million people. In turn, the Central Office for Registration of Exiles at the Committee of the Grand Duchess Tatiana estimated the number of Poles displaced from Congress Poland and the Western Governorates to over 2.5 million. However, while

estimating the Polish population in Russia, a significant part of the population of Polish origin, which moved to the Empire's interior before 1914, whether as a result of deportation or economic emigration, should not be taken into account. This group cannot be taken into account, since the characteristic feature of the Polish migrant population melted into the mass of the Russian indigenous population was the tendency to easily and relatively quickly submit to Russification.

In the interior of the Russian Empire, Polish people quickly became denationalized. It concerned mainly the exiles who, in order to alleviate their own destinies, were converting to Orthodoxy, as well as Polish soldiers who got married to local women and remained permanently in Siberia and Central Asia. In addition to that, among the 65,870 Poles residing in Siberia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, only 13,529 women Polish-speaking were found¹.

In connection with the above, even taking into account the few exceptions, this community should not be considered as a potential source of recruitment to the ranks of Polish military formations in Russia. Another potential source from which, under certain conditions, could have been served was Polish prisoners of war [POWs] from the Austro-Hungarian Army² and the

¹ All the passages cited from the source materials are provided in translation from Polish made for the purpose of the monograph. First quote: I. Blum, *Polacy w Rosji carskiej i Związku Radzieckim*, "Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny" 1966, Issue 3, p. 192. In the context of the data quoted in this publication, it should be added that some historians question their credibility.

² A. Miodowski, *Jeńcy austrowęgierscy w niewoli rosyjskiej w okresie przedrewolucyjnym (sierpień 1914-luty 1917)*, "Białostockie Teki Historyczne" 2016, Vol. 14, pp. 111-130.

German army. In 1917, there were in total over 100,000 Poles in Russian prisoner-of-war camps.

In practice, however, the big mobilization capacity was determined primarily by the large number of Poles in the ranks of the Russian army. Exact data has yet to be estimated³, but relatively accurate estimates based on available materials can be made. They contain extremely divergent data, which constitutes the main obstacle. According to Henryk Bagiński's estimates, relying on information obtained from the Russian General Staff, at the beginning of April 1917, about 700,000 "military Catholics" served in the Russian Army, including 119 generals and about 20,000 officers⁴. By providing this information, the author claimed, however, that the term "Catholic" cannot be equated with "Pole" and, hence, estimated the real number of Poles at around 500,000. Unfortunately, by providing the latter number, H. Bagiński did not specify on what basis this result was obtained. Włodzimierz Tęgoborski, Aleksandr Manusevič and Zygmunt Łukawski also provide the same number⁵. Higher estimates are given by Jan Marcińczyk, however

³ Research with this objective was undertaken by a historian from the University of Białystok, dr hab. Stanisław Czerep. The first step on the way to determine the number of Poles serving in the Russian army was to find data on officers of the highest rank of Polish origin in the Imperial Army in the Russian archives. – See: S. Czerep, *Generałowie i admirałowie polskiego pochodzenia w armii rosyjskiej 1914-1917*, Białystok 2014, passim.

⁴ H. Bagiński, *Wojsko Polskie na Wschodzie 1914–1920*, Warszawa 1921, p.107.

⁵ W. Tęgoborski, *Polacy Związku Radzieckiego*, Moskwa 1929, p. 28; A. Manusevič, *Diejatielnost polskich diemokratičeskich organizacji w Rossji w pieriod podgotowki oktiabrskoj riewolucji (mart-oktiabr)*, [in:] *Oktiabrskaja riewolucija i zarubieżnyje slovianskije narody*, Moskwa 1957, p. 68; Z. Łukawski, *Działalność Komisariatu do spraw Polskich*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego – Prace Historyczne" 1967, Issue 20, p. 66.

not being consistent about it, as once he mentioned 730,000, and in another point – 750,000 Poles serving in the Russian Army⁶. The NDP activist Bolesław Matuszewski was even more optimistic about the number of Polish soldiers. In his memorial of March 12, 1917, he estimated, taking into account POWs of Polish nationality, that there were approximately 1.5 million Poles in uniforms in the Russian state⁷. In turn, 600,000 were mentioned in the publications by Stanisław Wojciechowski, Stanisław Budkiewicz, Mieczysław Wrzosek and Stefan Migdał. The same number of 600,000 was also adopted by the Bolshevik Commissariat for Polish Affairs at the People's Commissariat for Nationality Affairs⁸. Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki provides two numbers. The first one: 700,000, at the same time admitting that it is strongly exaggerated. In the second variant, he indicates 300,000 of, as he stated, "Poles fit to serve in the ranks (...)"⁹. Close to the second number given by the general is the estimation of Aleksander Lednicki, who in the open letter published on January 22, 1920 stated, *inter alia*: "in the Russian Army in June 1917, there were 314,000 Poles in total, i.e. not including the ones at the front, scattered all over Russia"¹⁰. On the other hand, Jerzy Zdziechowski, in his

⁶ J. Marcińczyk, *Chwila osobliwa*, Lublin 1919, pp. 45, 71.

⁷ The Central Archives of Modern Records [AAN], the Polish Council of the Interparty Union [CPIU, pol. *Rada Polska Zjednoczenia Międzypartyjnego*], Military Department – Copy of the memorial of B. Matuszewski of 12/03/1917.

⁸ S. Wojciechowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, Lwów 1938, Vol. 1, p. 289; S. Migdał, *Piłsudczyzna w latach I wojny światowej*, Katowice 1961, p. 236; M. Wrzosek, *Polskie korpusy wojskowe w Rosji w latach 1917-1918*, Warszawa 1969, p. 25; W. Toporowicz, *Sprawa polska w polityce rosyjskiej 1914-1917*, Warszawa 1973, p. 261.

⁹ J. Dowbor-Muśnicki, *Krótki szkic do historii I Polskiego Korpusu*, Warszawa 1919, part 1, p. 16.

¹⁰ "Kurier Polski" of 22.01.1920 r. (supplement); M. Wrzosek, op. cit., p. 24.

speech delivered on April 13, 1917 at a meeting of the National Club in Petrograd, set the number of Poles in the Russian army at 750,000, including 19,000 officers and 109 generals. Waclaw Szczesny and Michał Kossakowski mention 340,000¹¹. However, using calculations based on indirect data, i.e. the number of Poles conscripted to the Russian Army reduced by the approximate amount of personal losses, Stefan Dąbrowski estimated that the Polish ethnic element consisted of approximately 450,000 soldiers¹². If, therefore, the extreme estimates are rejected and, at the same time, the total number of military emigres from the Polish territories estimated at around 2 million plus 100,000 Polish POWs in Russia is taken into account, then it can be assumed that there were approximately 500,000-600,000 military Poles in this country. This estimation, however, does not take into consideration the fundamental factor having a decisive significance for any attempts to create Polish military formations in the revolutionary Russian reality of 1917. The problem did not concern the potential mobilization capacity resulting from arithmetic, but it referred to these 500-600,000 Poles identifying with the idea of the Polish army in Russia. The revolutionary upheaval seizing the country since the spring of 1917 meant that the soldiers' masses, including Poles, in a flashing pace became demoralized and more and more favorably related to the pacifist slogans proclaimed by the Bolshevik agitators.

¹¹ *Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk. Diariusz Michała Kossakowskiego*, Vol. 2, k. 198; W. Szczesny (ed.), *Kwestia wojska polskiego w Rosji w 1917 r. Przyczynek do historii związków i zjazdu Polaków wojskowych z byłej armii rosyjskiej oraz do dziejów ruchu niepodległościowego i polityki polskiej w Rosji*, Warszawa 1936, p. 12.

¹² These calculations are referred to by M. Wrzosek, op. cit., p. 25.

The tone and direction of the agitation in the ranks of the “democratizing” Russian Army gave the RSDLP(b), and the actions of individual factions of the Polish left wing were in this respect only a complement to the mainstream actions directed to the military ranks. Almost the next day after the abdication of Nicholas II, the Bolsheviks initiated their agitation activity among military units. They were equally interested both in front and rear formations. To emphasize the importance of the issue in this matter, the Bolshevik leader presented his remarks many times. Vladimir Lenin in his “Appeal to the Soldiers of All the Belligerent Countries” stressed the importance of obtaining influence in the soldiers’ circles for the success of the process of intercepting the instruments of state power. In order to coordinate their own actions and give them the character of methodical activity, the Bolsheviks established a special organizational structure operating under the colloquial name of “Wojenka”. Its management was located at the Central Committee of the RSDLP(b) and was entrusted with the task of transposing the basic party cells to the military ground. As a result, between April and August 1917, around 45 such structures in military formations were organized. At the same time, nearly 30 military sections were established at the district and municipal committees of the social democratic party. In this way, the foundations were laid for the Bolshevik military organization.

Were there Poles in its structures? The answer is yes. The direct result of the indoctrination led by people originating from the SDKPL and the PSP Left was increasingly manifested by Polish militaries’ indifference towards the projects to create Eastern formations. Such moods could not be overcome by the ineffectual counter-agitation of the PSMC and the Piłsudski-ites from the

Polish Military Organization [PMO, pol. *Polska Organizacja Wojskowa*]¹³ supporting it from the spring of 1918. Spouting the slogan of the struggle for independence popular so far in all the diaspora's circles was no longer sufficient. The pro-revolutionary attitudes, *inter alia*, were fully manifested in the unit, which was part of the Polish Rifle Division (later the 1st Polish Corps), i.e. the 1st Reserve Polish Rifles Regiment stationed in Belgorod.

Two organizations played the key role in the process of radicalization of Bielgorodians. The first one was the Polish Workers' Union "Promień", whose statutory authorities became dominated by the radicals of the left when the leadership of the capital club was taken by Warrant Officer [WO] Władysław Matuszewski, and the vice-presidents were Stefan Królikowski and Bernard Mandelbaum. The other one was the Polish Revolutionary Soldier Clubs [PRSC, pol. *Polskie Rewolucyjne Kluby Żołnierskie*], which began to be organized at the end of June 1917. The first club was established in Petrograd with the cooperation of local SDKPL and PSP Left activists. Its organizing committee included: WO Włady-

¹³ The PMO from the very beginning of its activity also functioned in the areas directly belonging to the Russian Empire. In Ukraine, the first organizational structures were established in Kiev in August 1914 (initially under the name of the Active Combat Association). During the First World War, the PMO expanded its structures to today's Belarus, Russia, the Crimea, the Caucasus, Don and Kuban. In spring 1918 it adopted the name KN3 POW - Wschód, i.e. Commander's Head No. 3 of the Polish Military Organization - East [*Komenda Naczelna nr 3 Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej - Wschód*]. Despite the dissolution of the national organization structures after November 11, 1918 in the East they still existed, but were subordinated to the reborn Polish Army - See: A. Holiczenko, *Żołnierze tajnego frontu. Lista imienna KN3 POW - Wschód, 1914-1921*, Olsztyn 2012, p. 9-10; W. Rawski, *Działalność Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej w Moskwie, 1919-1920*, "Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy" 2013, Issue 3, p. 101.

ślaw Matuszewski, Second Lieutenant [2nd Lt] Adam Jabłoński, Private [Pte] Bojarski, Pte Marian Jasiński, Pte Noniecz, Pte Szymański and Feldsher Radkowski. According to the intention of the club's creators, it was supposed to bring together

revolutionary elements regardless of their party affiliation (...) party members can be club members only as long as it does not assume the character of an inter-party political association and does not participate in political matters outside as a compact whole. Strictly party groups operating within the club must be at the same time local party sections, provided that such exist¹⁴.

It was predicted that such structures would create a new platform to take up political agitation in Polish military circles, under the pretext of conducting cultural and educational activities. The capital club was created based on the clubs founded by the Bolshevik military organization. In time, it would become a model for the twin structures, which were to be organized wherever the military service was carried out by Poles. Apart from Petrograd, the following clubs were established: Moscow, Odessa and Saratov. The attempts were made to create the PRSC among front soldiers, where initially their activity was still banned. Such clubs managed to be founded, among others, on the Western Front, in Kronstadt and in the 8th Army.

The activity of all these structures was coordinated by the Central Board of PRSC established on June 25, 1917. In the first phase of its functioning, it defined the basic

¹⁴ *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, N. Gašiorowska et al. (general eds), Vol. 1: *marzec 1917-listopad 1918*, W. Gostyńska et al. (eds), Warszawa 1962, p. 84.

objectives that were to be achieved using the clubs' network. What were the intentions? First of all, they were supposed to tackle the following tasks:

- 1) associating Polish revolutionary elements remaining in the Russian Army,
- 2) cultural and educational work for the purpose of political and social awareness of soldiers,
- 3) fighting against anti-democratic influences among military Poles;
- 4) coordinating the political life of military Poles with the revolutionary trend both in Russia and in the country.

In practice, it meant that under the pretext of conducting cultural and educational activities, the clubs' management was going to implement the guidelines formulated during the All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP(b) Front and Rear Military Organizations organized in Petrograd from June 29 to July 6, 1917. Among the objectives articulated there, the greatest emphasis was placed on the need to "fight militarism" defined as the necessity to liquidate the "permanent bourgeois army". Translating these slogans into the language of practical action, the PRSC party's back office initiated a protest action against the plans to send the Polish Rifle Division to the Galician front and its participation in the summer offensive of 1917.

The full implementation of the above-mentioned objectives was possible due to divergent views of the clubs' organizers, i.e. the SDKPL and the PSP Left. What was the essence of this difference in their opinions? The latter group, wishing to intensify the process of expanding the clubs' network at the level of the army and the fronts, decided to provide personnel support to the Central Board of PRSC. For this purpose, on July 24,

1917, the program for the development of soldiers' party organizations was approved, delegating Władysław Matuszewski, Roman Łągwa and Marian Jasiński, i.e. activists of the capital PRSC, to join this action in agreement with the Petrograd section of the party. This meant strengthening the model of debate and political clubs promoted by this group. The fact that the PSP Left, at that time, cooperated with the Mensheviks-internationalists, while the SDKPL remained under influence of the Bolshevik faction created another complication.

In spite of the frictions, the Social Democrats were determined to uphold their cooperation at the military level with the PSP Left for the reason that the latter had much greater influence in the milieu of military Poles. The SDKPL was particularly interested in having it, even if it was to be indirect, for fundamental reasons. At the aforementioned All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP(b) Front and Rear Military Organizations, the resolution proposed by Vladimir Lenin which intended to intensify the agitation action in the Russian Army was approved. For the purpose of its coordination, the All-Russian Central Bureau of the RSDLP(b) Military Organizations was established.

Due to it, the SDKPL, being integrally associated with the Russian Bolsheviks, had to join the implementation of the intensified agitation action planned by the leader of the Bolshevik Party. For the Polish Social Democrats, this meant that they had to look to expanding their influence sphere in the milieu of Polish military, and in the meantime to use the opportunities offered by the cooperation with PSP Left. The achievements of the latter in the field of revolutionary agitation in the ranks of Polish military formations were quite significant. The

SDKPL, in addition to the activity among soldiers in Petrograd and its surrounding area based on the branches of the Polish Workers' Union "Promień", and also in Moscow, among others, based on the PRSC, established direct contacts with military Poles through its groups in Kiev, Pskov and other cities with large garrisons. On the other hand, the PSP Left managed to create three own sections in military units in a short time, which was the result of about 60 agitation actions carried out in the Russian formations in which Poles served. These sections were created in three armies.

In addition to the activities in the army, garrisons and fronts, over time, an attempt was made to synchronize certain club initiatives with the analogous activity of the Polish military movement structures recognizing the central military movement competing with the PSMC – the Central Committee of the Alliances of Military Poles of the Left [CC AMPL, pol. *Komitet Główny Związków Wojskowych Polaków Lewicy*]. Seemingly, it was obvious, but in practice it was impossible to implement. What was the reason? This was due to the fact that the Piłsudski-ites, who at that time set the tone of the CC AMPL's activity and sympathizers of the liberal-democratic milieu¹⁵ co-operating with them consistently opposed such initiatives.

The competition in this area between the moderate and the radical current of the left-wing in emigration began the day after the Congress of the Military Left which closed on June 22, 1917. In press publications, the Piłsudski-ites gathered in the former Revolutionary

¹⁵ The activities of this milieu in Russia are broadly described by: A. Miodowski, *Wychodźcze ugrupowania demokratyczne wobec idei polskiego wojska w Rosji w latach 1917–1918*, Białystok 2002, passim.

Faction – the Polish Socialist Party [PSP RF, pol. *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Frakcja Rewolucyjna*] and journalists who sympathized with them accused the leftist radicals in exile, among others, for contributing “o diminish the impact of the [Provisional] Council of State and the importance of the Piłsudski’s Legions for the country”. Speaking of the leaders of the party founders of the PRSC, they filed the most serious allegations against them, drawing the readers attention to the fact that “they are supporters of independence, and at the same time they fight the independence that arises in the country”¹⁶.

In response to such attacks, radical politicians and publicists tried to make the community aware of the fact that the opposing party, here by no means limited to the the PSP RF, used similar standards in its proceedings. It was reiterated, therefore, that the important difference between the individual factions of the political elite came down only to the fact that each group had a different benchmark in implementing its own policies. The liberal democrats and the Piłsudski people, after all, were oriented towards the Central Powers, the national democrats – towards the Allies, and the radical left wing towards the political elements striving for an internationalist revolution. In *Promień*, the member of the leftist party of the PSP Left Stefan Królikowski raised this issue, writing:

Stop pretending to be kind and innocent simpletons mesmerized only by the nation’s book of inspirations, since your inspirations bear clear traces of your class allies of all nationalities (...). Why is it allowed to impose a Polish army on a worker and a peasant through the secret conspiracy

¹⁶ “Głos Robotnika i Żołnierza” No. 1 of 8.08.1917.

with Guchkov, and why are we, workers, not allowed to go to our brothers, Russian workers (...)?¹⁷.

In extraordinary circumstances, such as during the July election of the members of the government of the Petrograd AMP, when there was a threat of dominating the organ by the NDP supporters, both currents of the left wing were able to join forces. Thanks to the combined votes from the PRSC radicals and the Piłsudski-ites from the PSP RF and Polish People's Association [PPA, pol. *Polski Związek Ludowy*], supported additionally by the liberal democrats, the list of the military activists identifying themselves with the CC AMPL was pushed through. The representatives of the radical left in the leadership of the capital AMP were: Ptes Marian Jasiński and Bolesław Martinajtis, Second Lieutenant Jabłoński, WOs Władysław Matuszewski, Hilmanowicz and Muklewicz. It widened the scope of Polish radical left wing's influence on compatriots serving in the Petrograd garrison.

It is significant that this tactical agreement, despite its tangible benefits, was criticized by SDKPL leaders. In their opinion, due to the political strategy and their image issues adopted and implemented jointly with the Russian Bolsheviks, the PRSC should not be associated with the moderate left-wingers at the price of achieving some short-term success. It was reminded that according to the assumptions of the military program of Polish communists in exile, all activists involved in its implementation should, first of all, participate in undertakings on the territory of the Russian army units in which the service was carried out by Poles. In addition,

¹⁷ "Promień" No. 8-9 of 3.08.1917.

all such activities should be coordinated with the initiatives of the Bolshevik military organization. As a consequence of this criticism, the Social Democrats created a barrier limiting the field of military cooperation with the political milieus at that time setting the tone of the CC AMPL activity. In such a situation, the PSP Left maintained the leading role in the AMP operation. Paradoxically, its activists managed to implement some disintegration projects on the basis of the Alliances of Military Poles¹⁸ recognizing the PSMC as their headquarters or where the competition for influence in a given Alliance between the two governing bodies had not been resolved.

Equally active operations as PSP Left were led by military activists of the Polish Socialist Unity [PSU, pol. *Zjednoczenie Socjalistyczne Polskie*]. What credits did they manage to earn? Among others, from March to June they organized a network of branches in those centers where Russian units with a large number of Poles or where Polish formations were deployed. The most resilient agitation groups operated in the following garrisons: in Aleksandrovsk, Berdyansk, Kharkov, Chuguev, Gomel, Yekaterinodar, Yekaterinoslav, Kamianske, Kazan, Kiev, Lugansk, Minsk, Slavyansk, Taganrog and Voronezh.

The Kharkov PSU activists were the first among the soldiers of the Polish Rifle Division and its Reserve Regiment. As it was stated in one of the party reports already in March 1917:

Relations with Polish soldiers in the Russian army and Polish brigades in the army began to develop [as a result] a soldier organization will probably be established,

¹⁸ More on the Alliances' movement of military Poles in the Russian Army: A. Miodowski, *Związki Wojskowych Polaków w Rosji (1917-1918)*, Białystok 2004, passim.

remaining in constant contact with the Socialist Unity, spreading the principle of socialism among soldiers¹⁹.

It was not limited to ideological propaganda. Equally great emphasis was placed on combating the plans of organizing the Eastern formations. Poles serving in the Division and its Reserve Regiment, as well as those still remaining in the ranks of the Russian army, learnt from the PSU agitators that

The thought of creating a Polish army on the Russian side is a manifestation of arising militarism and imperialism of the possessing classes (...). The creation of the Polish army has a particularly reactionary character and is directed against the idea of liberty, and the intended future action of the Polish army would be a defeat for the Polish nation (...)²⁰.

The direct result of this of demagogic indoctrination conducted among soldiers was a significant decrease in their morale and, in the long run, the growing reluctance towards the idea of the Polish army in Russia.

Due to the actions of the agitators from the above-mentioned left-wing parties in exile, in the period preceding the General Congress, i.e. at the beginning of May 1917, the revolutionary moods appeared in the Polish Rifle Division. Their range was not too widespread at that time. However, in the middle of June, during the Division' stay on the near rear of the front in Strussiw, the revolutionary mood began to grow in strength to such

¹⁹ AAN. *Polskie związki socjalistyczne i rewolucyjne organizacje wojskowe w Rosji w latach 1917–1918 – zbiór akt. Sprawozdanie grupy agitacyjnej Zjednoczenia Socjalistycznego Polskiego.*

²⁰ S. Wojciechowski, *Wspomnienia, orędzia, artykuły*, Warszawa 1995, p. 161.

an extent that the formation refused to march to the front. This led to expelling of about 800 revolutionizing soldiers from the Division and arresting the leaders of the military committees already organized in the Division²¹. After partly taking control over the revolutionary moods in the Division's ranks, it was again directed to the front near Husiatyn, however, this move made the moods come alive again. It disturbed the representatives of the PSMC – the organ coordinating recruitment action which was established at the just completed General Congress of Military Poles. Its directorate was determined to apply remedies in the form of removing another group of soldiers driven by the revolutionary moods from the Division's ranks²². However, it turned out to be unnecessary as the Supreme Commander of the Russian Army issued an order to disband this formation. This decision was not made in response to the brave attitude of the Division's soldiers during the fighting retreat over the Styr River on August 24 and 25, 1917. The order was therefore withdrawn and the planned reorganization of the division could be commenced. In the near future, however, it turned out that the ban on military committees, as well as on any political activity in Polish formations was not always enforceable. All the steps taken by the organizers of the Polish army in order to enforce its application were presented in the anti-recruitment propaganda as the fundamental proof of the counter-revolutionary nature of this formation.

The Polish left-wing in exile conducting revolutionary agitation achieved the greatest success in the already mentioned 1 Reserve Polish Rifle Regiment stationed in Belgorod. The revolutionary character of this approximately

²¹ H. Bagiński, op. cit., p. 57.

²² "Wiadomości Wojskowe" No. 18, of 5.08.1917.

16,000 unit²³ was revealed already in the spring of 1917, manifested in the establishment of regimental, battalion and company committees, as well as in the presence of agitators and supporters of the SDKPL, PSP Left and PSU, as well as in close cooperation with the Belgorod CWSD. The works of the 49-member regimental committee were initially led by representatives of the PSP RF. Gradually, however, the group of representatives of the radical left in exile took over the initiative. Particularly active members were Stanisław Dziatkiewicz, Antoni Cichoński, Henryk Pączkowski, Marian Lewandowski and Bronisław Gawryś. The actions of the above-mentioned activists were favored by pro-Bolshevik Non-Commissioned Officer [NCO] Władysław Czyżewski, Stabskapitan Piotr Borewicz, Czesław Guzowski, Lieutenant Mieczysław Jackiewicz and the supporter of liberal democrats WO Karol Walc. The last of them was the chairman of the regimental committee. The above-mentioned collaborators not only cooperated with the Belgorod CWSD, but also with the so-called “Seven of the Revolution Protection” headed by Belgian attorney Leonid Meranville de Saint Claire²⁴. The leaders of the military movement in the regiment were not affiliated membership wise to any radical organizational structure, they only cooperated with them. Influenced by the regimental committee inspired by all the currents of the left wing in exile and the liberal democrats, among the soldiers the hostile attitude towards further fighting at the front, as well as the idea of creating a Polish army in Russia, took shape. It should be noted, however, that at first the military Poles from the Belgorod Regiment were not

²³ M. Wrzosek, op. cit., p. 89.

²⁴ Idem, *Przyczynek do historii I Rewolucyjnego Pułku Polskiego*, “Przegląd Historyczny” 1957, Vol. 48, No. 4, p. 709

opposed to the idea of founding the Eastern formations. The formation's delegates to the General Congress of Military Poles, among whom were Antoni Cichoński, Władysław Czyżewski, Henryk Pączkowski, Władysław Langner and Robakowski, probably did not leave the congress, either with the first or the second secession, because their names are missing on the list of participants of the Congress of the Military Left²⁵. Therefore, the reorientation of the the attitudes was probably later influenced by the anti-war agitation of the above-mentioned political environments. After dismissing Lieutenant Mieczysław Jackiewicz²⁶, who had been appointed for the position of the Regiment's Commander by the military committee, by the Russian military leadership and an attempt to reform this formation, the Belgorod political activists announced a protest declaration. It attacked, as it was defined, "Polish Kornilovites" whose personification was Col. Jakub Bohusz-Szyszko, designated by General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki as the new unit's commander. Fighting the publicly formulated accusations of the "mock engagement" and Bolshevik attitude the authors of the declaration announced in August stated that

Every drop of our blood can be sacrificed only for one of our ideal, for our beloved, independent fatherland of Poland. Having the opportunity to organize thanks to the freedom that the Russian Revolution gave us, we will form Polish troops based on democratic principles with a wide participation of Polish soldiers (...) headed by the Polish revolutionary central military committee which is

²⁵ *Kwestia wojska...*, p. 258.

²⁶ The arbitrary appointment of Lieutenant M. Jackiewicz for the position of the Regiment's Commander took place on November 8, 1817. More: A. Zatorski, *Dzieje Pułku Bielgorodzkiego*, Warszawa 1960, p. 95 et al.

introduce revolutionary discipline and supervision so that the units' leaders are not people of anti-democratic convictions²⁷.

From the context of this statement, it appeared that the leaders of the regimental committee chose an alternative to the Eastern Corps that were to be created in the form of Polish "democratic military divisions". They were intended to be organized by referring to the "rules and principles" already developed by the military committees in the Russian army. The further events showed that among the soldiers of the Regiment this concept gained the greatest recognition. It turned out that the level of their Bolshevization had already become so high that it was not possible to accept indirect solutions. Two events finally proved it. Firstly, the arrest by demoralized soldiers a group of officers operating in the structures of the "Placówka"²⁸, an organization created in August 1917 on the initiative of the Polish League of Active War Combat [pol. *Polska Liga Wojenna Walki Czynnej*], which unsuccessfully tried to neutralize the influence of the regimental committee. Secondly, the refusal of the transition to the 1st Polish Corps being created by Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki²⁹. Only the

²⁷ *Materiały archiwalne do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, N. Gašiorowska (general ed.), Vol. 1: marzec 1917-listopad 1918, A. Zatorski (ed.), Warszawa 1957, p. 93.

²⁸ Created by officers and a group of soldiers not submitting to the propaganda, the "Placówka" had two main objectives: firstly, to fully implement the resolutions of the General Congress of Military Poles, secondly, to heal the morale of the Belgorod Regiment. See: *Materiały archiwalne...*, Vol. 1, p. 71.

²⁹ General Pawłowski's report to the Moscow Military District Commander of 16 September 1917 stated that of almost 17,000 soldiers and officers, only 120 officers and 400 soldiers agreed to be transferred to the 1st Polish Corps – See: Central Military Archive [CAW]. I. 122.1.170.138: Związki Wojskowych Polaków

officers and a few Ptes from the “Placówka” were in favor of the latter. Thus, the PSMC’s and Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki’s hopes regarding the formation’s expansion got shattered. It was due to the constantly increasing radicalization of the soldiers. It was understandable that under these conditions, it was difficult to count on a major draft from the Regiment. In such a situation, the only more serious source of conscription that the organizers of the 1st Polish Corps could potentially count on, were the ranks of military Poles serving in the Russian Army formations. The recruitment, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Congress of Military Poles, constituted the basic task of the Polish Military Executive Committee [PMEC, pol. *Polski Wojskowy Komitet Wykonawczy*], being a PSMC agenda. The activists of the latter realized that automatic inflow of soldiers regulated by the General Staff’s directive on grouping Poles into separate companies would not bring results. Therefore, an attempt was made to make the existing recruitment mechanism work more dynamically and to implement the mobilization plan in a methodical way. Even before it was prepared, representatives of the centers were activated at the headquarters of military districts, fronts and armies, also called commissars³⁰. They were selected by individual AMPs and granted their legal legitimacy from the PSMC based on the Order No. 1 issued on 10 July 1917 by this central office. Apart from recruiting those who were willing to serve in the Corps, these representatives acted as spokespersons for military

w Rosji [ZWP]. On the other hand, in the telegram from the Belgorod CWSD sent to the headquarters in Petrograd, it was reported that only 9 soldiers and 200 officers agreed to move to the Corps - See: CAW. I.122.1.170.104; ZWP.

³⁰ The list of the commissars is provided in “Polskie Siły Zbrojne” No. 1 of 30.08.1917.

interests of Poles and the PSMC in relations with individual staffs of the Russian Army³¹. In order to strengthen their position, the PSMC persuaded Gen. Lavr Kornilov to issue an appropriate order approving the nominees on the posts³². However, he was dismissed by A. Kerensky, who still could not get rid of the original prejudices against the right-wing at the Alliance Center. The move of the Minister of War enormously complicated the activities of the PSMC representatives, making them essentially semi-legal. It hindered cooperation with the AMP to such an extent that it developed more seriously only in the Western Front formations³³. The body responsible for the recruitment activities of PSMC representatives was the so-called Military Commission at the PMEC headed by Gen. Jan Jacyna³⁴. In fact, the operation of the recruitment officer was led by Colonel Andrzej Tupalski, appointed representative of the PSMC at the Polish Armed Forces [PAF, pol. *Polska Siła Zbrojna*]³⁵. It should be added here that the Commander of the 1st Polish Corps also started the recruitment action on his own by sending his emissaries to the Russian units. However, no one had any greater success in this field, as the process of revolutionizing the soldier's ranks was proceeding at a rapid pace.

The PSMC delegation sent to Belgorod, notwithstanding the fact that it did not convince its soldiers to its ideas,

³¹ "Wiadomości Wojskowe" No. 18 of 5.08.1917.

³² CAW. I.122.100.101: ZWP, Copy of Gen. L. Kornilov's order.

³³ CAW. I. 440.12.9: Laudanski's files, k. 156; CAW. I.122.100.101: ZWP: Report from the PSMC conference with AMP delegates organized 24-30.10.1917.

³⁴ The Military Committee of the PWKW, apart from General J. Jacyna, also included General A. Osiński, Col. R. Jasiński, Col. A. Tupalski, Cpt. B. Jaźwiński, WO W. Kiedrzyński and K. Łubieński – See: H. Bagiński, op. cit., p. 124.

³⁵ CAW. I.122.100.101: ZWP: Report from the PSMC conference...

fell into disfavor among the regimental committee, which at its meeting of 14 July 1917 recognized these headquarters as the body representing the interests of the “Polish bourgeoisie” and, thus, refused it the right to represent military Poles in Russia. Like in the case of the soldiers of the Belgorod regiment, due to the agitation activities of the SDKPL, the PSP Left and the PSU, soldiers of the Polish hussars squadron at the Russian 7th Rifle Division, refused to make transfer to the 1st Polish Corps³⁶. The conclusion from the above findings is that, unable to directly inhibit the creation of Polish military formations in Russia, the SDKPL, PSP Left, the PSU and the PSP RF activists were determined to destroy the effects of the PSMC’s recruitment effort by political agitation in existing units.

The CC AMPL also carried out mass agitation against joining the ranks of the 1st Polish Corps in cooperation with the leftist in exile, with support of the Russian Ministry of War’s Political Department. This protection was provided by military leftist Aleksander Lednicki who had excellent arrangements with the head of the Ministry of War³⁷. Numerous CC AMPL activists equipped with propaganda literature and documents facilitating their work visited both existing Polish formations and Russian military units in which Poles served, agitating against the idea of the Polish army³⁸. The soldiers were encouraged to remain in the ranks of the “democratizing” Russian Army – opposed to the 1st Polish Corps being “a group of

³⁶ *Materiały archiwalne...*, Vol. 1, p. 291.

³⁷ Z. Wasilewski (ed.), *Proces Lednickiego. Fragment z dziejów odbudowy Polski 1915–1924*, Warszawa 1924, pp. 314-316.

³⁸ J. Dowbor-Muśnicki, op. cit., part 1, p. 52. The author presents, among others, copies of documents issued by the Political Department of the Ministry of War to the agitators conducting the anti-recruitment campaign.

lords who want to enter Poland and establish serfdom". As Henryk Bagiński states in his book, it was a hackneyed argument used by CC AMPL activists in order to scare off soldiers from joining the 1st Polish Corps³⁹. Discouraging was not limited to agitation in the military units, but it was also conducted outside of them, even in the means of transport used by soldiers. An example of this type of activities was provided by Prince Seweryn Czetwertyński acting as a witness in a trial filed by Aleksander Lednicki against Zygmunt Wasilewski in 1924. Then he testified that

In Orsha I once had a clash with an agitator who entered the wagon and urged soldiers heading to the point where Polish troops were organized to return. So, I had an argument with this delegate (...) of the Democratic Committee. I claimed that the soldiers should go to this point, and he argued that they should go in the opposite direction, since in Poland there are governments that consider the creation of the Polish army inadvisable⁴⁰.

This type of agitation did not cease even during talks aimed at eliminating the split created at the General Congress of Military Poles.

The anti-recruitment action was not limited only to indoctrination – if necessary, it even involved denunciation. In what circumstances did such acts occur? The most drastic example considered the CC AMPL and PRSC activists using the fear psychosis caused by the putsch of Gen. Lavr Kornilov. They persuaded the Russian post-revolutionist political elites that the co-founders of the attack were advocates for the creation of the Polish army.

³⁹ H. Bagiński, op. cit., p. 155.

⁴⁰ *Proces Lednickiego...*, pp. 273-274.

The Petrograd's CWSD, giving credence to these accusations, ordered its body, i.e. the Emergency Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution [pol. *Komisja Prawno-Śledcza do Walki z Kontrrewolucją*], to take appropriate retaliatory actions. On the night of 13 and 14 September 1917, the first stage of the revision in the capital PSMC was started. In connection with it correspondence and office documents were confiscated. The second stage of the revision was based on the report submitted by the former leading activist of the Petrograd AMP, WO Antoni Żaboklicki⁴¹. It took place on the evening of 14 September 1917, when the weapon legally owned by the PSMC was confiscated, previously handed over by the Petrograd Military District Staff. Two representatives of PRSC took part in the above actions alongside with Russians⁴².

The accusations of the PSMC's complicity in the putsch were finally not confirmed, which was also stated in the letter of the Central Executive Committee of the Council of Workers and Soldiers Delegates [CEC CWSD, pol. *Centralny Komitet Wykonawczy Rady Delegatów Robotniczych i Żołnierskich*] that, among others, "nothing that would indicate suspicious contacts of the PSMC was found in the confiscated documents (...)"⁴³. It did not prevent the initiators of the whole confusion from

⁴¹ In the post-Congress period, WO A. Żaboklicki was the president of the AMP in Petrograd for some time. Accused of robbing the Alliance's financial assets, he was, however, expelled from the military movement of Poles. He made this denunciation in order to redeem himself in the eyes of his companions. – See: J. Marcińczyk, op. cit., p. 132.

⁴² AAN. Polish Central Agency in Lausanne [CAP, *Centralna Agencja Polska w Lozannie*], box of press clippings No. 9: "Gazeta Narodowa" of 28.09.1917.

⁴³ CAW. I. 122.99.4: the Polish Supreme Military Committee, Letter of the CEC CWSD.

publicly announcing the slanderous opinion that these allegations were justified. During the rally held on 16 September 1917 by the CC AMPL and the Polish Workers' Union "Promień", in which, *inter alia*, Waław Szczesny and Bernard Mandelbaum spoke, a resolution stating that „we recognize that the PSMC led by National Democracy is ideologically connected with the Kornilov's counter-revolutionary revolt (...)”⁴⁴ was adopted. It became clear that the opponents of the PSMC and its recruitment action were determined to continue the extensive anti-recruitment activity. In connection with the commotion caused by the above-mentioned putsch, not only the CC AMPL itself, but also its local supporters decided to use direct pressure methods, apart from agitation, to effectively inhibit the recruitment.

In the field, however, it was not limited only to harassments in the form of revisions, but a much more radical means were used, i.e. arresting. The military committee of the Belgorod Regiment ideologically associated with the CC AMPL and its patrons from activist and revolutionary circles was an example. This committee, taking advantage of the existing circumstances, ordered to arrest the Regiment's Commander, Col. Jakub Bohusz-Szyszko, and an eight-member group of officers forming the management of the "Placówka". The command was entrusted again to Lieutenant Mieczysław Jackiewicz⁴⁵. The arrested people were charged with

⁴⁴ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 9: "Nowa Reforma" of 5.10.1917.

⁴⁵ A bit earlier, in response to the commander Lt Col. Winnicki's attempt to remove the most demoralized soldiers from the Belgorod Regiment, the regimental committee deprived him of his position, appointing the commander Lt M. Jackiewicz. As a result of the intervention of the advocates for creating Polish formations, Lt M. Jackiewicz was forced by the Commander of the Moscow

counter-revolutionary acts. When Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki in defense of the prisoners asked the Russian authorities for help in this case, the AMPL took the Belgorod soldiers under protection, stating in their press organs "Soldier's Affair" that their behavior is a manifestation of the fight against the Polish "reaction"⁴⁶. Moreover, the headquarters of the military left, as requested for support in getting rid of the guardianship of Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki by the newly appointed Regiment Commander and the head of the Executive Committee of the Belgorod CWSD Leonid Meranvill de Saint Claire, asked the Minister of War to expand the Belgorod regiment to the size of a division and then incorporate this formation into the Russian Army⁴⁷. In connection with the above proposal, the CC AMPL reminded the 1st Polish Corps Commander, still quietly counting on supplements from the Belgorod Regiment, in a special letter, not without irony, that according to the resolutions of the General Congress of Military Poles, the PAF can be created only from among those soldiers who agree to that. Meanwhile, in the case of the Belgorod Regiment, according to the CC AMPL, everything seemed to indicate that this condition was not met, and therefore this formation could not be treated as part of the PAF⁴⁸.

The political and military activity of all the factions of the radical left wing was to enter a new qualitative phase after the Bolshevik revolution. Its effect was, on the one

Military District to resign in favor of Col. J. Bohusz-Szyszko – See: A. Zatorski, op. cit., pp. 114-115; M. Wrzosek, *Przyczynek do historii ...*, p. 707 et al.

⁴⁶ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 24: anonymous study "Polska Siła Zbrojna w Rosji" [Polish Armed Forces in Russia].

⁴⁷ *Dokumenty i materiały...*, Vol. 1, pp. 143-144.

⁴⁸ CAW. I. 122.1.170: ZWP, Letter of the CC AMPL to Gen. J. Dowbor-Muśnicki.

hand, the disintegration of structures of the Eastern formations and the Alliances of Military Poles, and on the other, the dynamization of the Bolshevization process among soldier masses left all alone. Those of them who could not expect repatriation eventually joined the ranks of Polish revolutionary formations fighting under the Red Army on the fronts of the civil war in Russia and then against emerging independent Poland.

Under the influence of coordinated pressure from the Bolsheviks and their allies from the Polish emigrant circles, in a natural way, after 7 November 1917, the advocates of the radical trend started to gain an advantage in the CC AMPL, which pushed this headquarter towards a close relationship with the Council of People's Commissars [CPC, rus. *Совет народных комиссаров*, pol Rada Komisarzy Ludowych]. The formal and legal framework of this evolution was formed in the decree of the Bolshevik government of 29 December 1917, while the practical implementation of its guidelines in relation to the Polish formation and the two movements of the military commissars was delegated to the SDKPL activists from the Military Revolutionary Committee⁴⁹. The task to establish an official contact with the CC AMPL was entrusted to Mieczysław Kozłowski and Julian Leszczyński.

The initial talks between both sides took place on 9 November 1917, which suggested that the Polish radicals perceived these headquarters as an organization that could expand their influence in the Polish military movement in the new conditions. The starting point for

⁴⁹ It concerns the organ established on 25 October by the Petrograd CWSD, which was supposed to officially prepare defense of the capital against the Germans, and in fact, it was the headquarters of the Bolshevik coup.

the substantive talks was to the right attitude of the KG to a few key issues, which were listed by the representatives of the radical leftist in exile⁵⁰. They were included in the following five questions:

- 1) Does the Military Left want to come into contact with the revolutionary government and what kind of contact?
- 2) Does the [Military] Left have complaints about the new government?
- 3) What is the attitude of the Central Committee of the Left to the Polish Supreme Military Committee?
- 4) Does the [Military] Left deem it appropriate at present to dissolve the [Polish] Supreme [Military] Committee and to create one revolutionary organization of Polish soldiers?
- 5) If so, how does it envisage it?

The analysis of the aforementioned questions indicates that both activists did not limit themselves in attempting to probe the left wing military headquarters' attitude towards the new authorities, and simply made the proposal to make the CC AMPL the only leader in the structures of the Polish military movement. The proposition to dissolve the PSMC was to be an incentive for the Central Committee to be on the side of the Bolsheviks. Thus, Mieczysław Kozłowski and Julian Leszczyński formulated a program of the break-out with the previous *quasi* conciliating line implemented by the CC AMPL in relation to the competitive headquarters. It seems that the announcement of the elimination of the PSMC meant for the radicals in exile putting an end to the fluctuations of the military left on the "democratization" of Polish troops.

⁵⁰ *Kwestia wojska...*, p. 201.

Contrary to expectations, the proposals presented by the CC AMPL were not welcome. In response, the leadership of this headquarter stated:

We do not want to use external force for internal policy purposes, just as we did not wish to have force applied against us. At the moment, no relations [with the PSMC] are taking place, but negotiations on the agreement with representatives of alliances dependent on the Supreme Committee are in progress in order to eliminate the split at least outside the Supreme Committee. The dissolution of the Supreme Committee is undesirable and even done independently from us and our will is going to hinder the situation of the Central Committee of the Left, exacerbating relations established with the alliances⁵¹.

Announcing the convening of the 2nd Congress of the Military Left, it was also informed that the new headquarters established by it would join in “moving Poles into separate military units in which democratic orders will be applied”. It was also signaled that the project considering it was to be presented to the authorities. In the cited response, it was emphasized that the CC AMPL was not a political organization, but a military alliance “guided in political work by the general line of socialist and democratic parties whose representatives were present in the Central Committee”⁵². It seemed, therefore, that the liberal democrats and socialists from the Revolutionary Faction concentrated in the CC AMPL would make a significant reorientation of their previous position, joining in forming the Polish army after 7 November.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² Ibidem.

The leftist radicals in exile, however, obstructed practical implementation of this specific about-turn in the AMP recognizing the Central Committee. Knowing that they would not be able to control this part of the military movement by drawing their current leadership on their side, they decided to fight for direct takeover of power in the governing bodies at the upcoming 2nd Congress of the Military Left. The assumption was made that the factor conducive to the implementation of this plan would be the progressing radicalization of the military Poles. The intensity of this process was particularly evident in Petrograd. It was even expected that before the meeting's opening, the radical faction would take over the majority of the AMP and that pro-Bolshevik delegates would be elected from them.

The indoctrination action methodically implemented was to guarantee the achievement of these goals. As part of it, on the initiative of the PRSC and the board of the Petrograd AMP, among others, rallies of Polish soldiers were organized, during which they were encouraged to fight against the influence of the PSMC and its political background⁵³. The resolutions adopted on 15 and 18 November were the most confrontational. The content of the first one was proposed by the newly appointed Commissioner for Polish Affairs Julian Leszczyński. Its basis was the decree regarding the conditions of the "democratic peace". Speaking about it, the Polish radicals, like the Bolsheviks, suggested that it meant "peace guaranteeing (...)real liberation to the Polish people (...)". The association between the declaration and the internationalist and anti-independence program of the SDKPL inevitably leads to the conclusion that the

⁵³ "Sprawa Żołnierska" No. 1, of 11.11.1917.

party activists were familiar with techniques of crowd manipulation. It is worth noting that they decided to do so despite the risk of political opponents being accused of duplicity. However, the prospect of gaining control over Polish military troops was worth the risk. The likelihood of public disgrace was small, because of low sophistication in politics presented by the majority of participants at such gatherings.

In the further part of the analyzed resolution, a fairly important reservation regarding the manner of establishing this “democratic peace” was made. It was stated there that it can

only be gained by the peoples themselves through the international revolution (...) revolutionary Polish soldiers in the name of international revolutionary solidarity, in the name of Polish people’s interests decide to take their place in the ranks of the fighting proletariat and the revolutionary soldiers in accordance with the resolutions of the Second Congress of the [Councils of] Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies⁵⁴.

In practice, it was an incentive for military Poles to join the ranks of the Red Guards. In the resolution adopted at the rally held on 18 November⁵⁵, the leading topic was the assessment of the “principle of neutrality” which, as emphasized, was “today proclaimed unanimously by the Polish bourgeois camp as a means of weakening the forces of the revolution (...)”. The alternative for neutrality proposed by the leftist radicals in exile was loyal persistence “in the ranks of the now-fighting Russian proletariat and Russian soldiers under the

⁵⁴ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 24: “Trybuna” No. 23 of 24.11.1917.

⁵⁵ It was headed by R. Łagwa.

common flag of the international revolution". The crowning argument for choosing this attitude, according to the resolution's authors, was the fact that significant circuits of the diaspora standing in the position of "revolutionary solidarity" supported "completely the slogans of peace, land and freedom [written] on the revolution banner, welcoming the decree of the [Council of] People's Commissars on just and democratic peace as an expression of the Polish workers' and soldiers' will"⁵⁶. The resolution proposed by Julian Leszczyński during his own speech was adopted by a huge majority of votes, against only five.

The active participation of military Poles in the revolution was supported by Julian Leszczyński and Bernard Mandelbaum. There was a lively discussion on the lecture of the first one. Two alternative positions were clearly outlined. The first one was to preserve the soldiers' neutrality of the events in Russia; the second one, in turn, proclaimed the necessity of active participation in them. Waclaw Szczesny, Bronislaw Siwik, Stefan Kramsztyk and several other supporters of the Piłsudski option and the group of liberal democrats supported the neutrality. In addition to the two mentioned above, all the soldiers inscribed for the vote opted for participation in the revolution.

The basic assumptions of the SDKPL's military concept were reflected not only in the rally resolutions, but primarily in official party declarations publicly communicated to Polish emigration mainly through the press. Regardless of the form of the message, the main emphasis was always placed on shaping the conviction about the harmfulness of the Polish diaspora's neutral

⁵⁶ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 24: "Trybuna" No. 23 of 24.11.1917. See also: *Dokumenty i materiały...*, Vol. 1, p. 168.

attitude, as well as on condemning plans to demobilize the military Poles from the Russian Army and to organize their return to the country. Even before the adoption of the resolution concerning the issue, CC AMPL activists associated with the liberal-democratic groups manifestly demonstrated opposition to this approach to the “principle of neutrality”. This completely new trend in their attitude was initiated already during the 2nd Congress of the Polish Democracy held from 19 to 25 October 1917, and the Bolshevik revolution only accelerated the reorientation process in the current position with regard to the idea of Polish army’s organization in Russia.

During the 2nd Congress of the Military Left organized in Petrograd from 11 to 19 December 1917, a battle for the souls of the Polish soldiers subordinated to the CC AMPL was to take place between the active libertarian democrats in exile and the Piłsudski-ites, on the one side, and the radical left wing parties, on the other side. The struggle for domination of the Polish military movement was taken over by the political circles which in June 1917 agreed on sharing their influence and cooperating in managing it. The factor that originally had connected the liberal democrats operating in exile in Russia, the Piłsudski’s circles of the PSP RF, PPA and PMO, and the radical leftwing was opposition to the idea of organizing Polish Eastern formations and aversion towards the propagators of this concept, i.e. the national democrats. Although each of these groups was driven by different motivations, for many months they cooperated with each other.

After the Bolshevik coup, attacks against the Polish Corps from the political circles created and directed by the CC AMPL during the inter-revolutionary period were

put to a halt. The liberal democrats sought to formalize the relations with the Regency Council being maintained since March 1917. On the basis of the cooperation, they intended to separate Poles from the Russian Army, then demobilize them and let them return to the country. The Piłsudski-ites' milieu, announcing the analogous postulate of demobilization, perceived the issue of evacuating these soldiers to the country in a slightly different way. According to their ideas, they should join the ranks of the Polish Eastern formations and return to their homeland under arms. The Polish communists operating in exile, on the other hand, intended to merge Polish militaries into the ranks of an internationalist revolutionary army. Due to the diametric opposition of the goals, a clash between the first two and the third of the political forces in emigration was inevitable. The conflict finally entered the decisive phase just during the debates of the 2nd Congress of the Military Left.

The Piłsudski-ites from the PSP RF, the PPA and the PMO, as well as the liberal democrats aware of the opponent's power possessed by the radical leftist groups in exile, decided to deepen their cooperation. This tactical collaboration was aimed at strengthening the impact on the group of independent delegates in order to prevent the danger of adopting resolutions decisive for the transfer of Polish soldiers to the revolutionary side of the barricade.

However, the position and credibility of both of them strongly weakened by their earlier acts in opposition to the plans to separate Polish military from the Russian Army. A sudden turn in this respect naturally aroused suspicion of insincere intentions among the Polish military left members. Both communities were interested in overcoming all the delegates' doubts in this matter and

confirming the change in the current attitude towards the idea of the Polish army in Russia during the first phase of the Congress⁵⁷.

Gen. Aleksander Babiański, speaking on behalf of the Supreme Democratic Committee [SDC, pol. *Naczelny Komitet Demokratyczny*] coordinating the activity of Polish liberal-democratic circles in Russia, and Franciszek Skapski, acting on behalf of the PMO, undertook the task of explaining to the delegates the motives for changing the current position with regard to the idea of organizing the Eastern formations. According to the first speaker, such a change had to take place, because “an indisputable government formed in the country and the war ceased”, and therefore right conditions were created to found national formations also in Russia, under the aegis of the Regency Council. Thus, according to the speaker, the CC AMPL should coordinate efforts with the central military movement of the PSMC remaining in the circle of national democrats’ influences, as their common “task was to withdraw free citizens of Poland from the disorganized Russian Army”⁵⁸.

Continuing the subject of cooperation between the two associations, Konstanty Dobrochotow stated that the delegates’ doubts would appear. In a way he complemented the comments made by Gen. Aleksander Babiański stating that in fact an agreement with the PSMC would be difficult to achieve, but, if newcomers from both sides

⁵⁷ More on the subject: A. Miodowski, *Polityka wojskowa środowisk piłsudczykowskich na gruncie rosyjskim po przewrocie bolszewickim (listopad 1917 – lipiec 1918)*, [in:] D. Grinberg, J. Snopko, G. Zackiewicz (eds), *Rok 1918 w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, Białystok 2010, pp. 394-410; Idem, *Polityka wojskowa środowisk liberalno-demokratycznych na gruncie rosyjskim po przewrocie bolszewickim (listopad 1917 – listopad 1918)*, “*Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*” 2009, Vol. 44, p. 5-17.

⁵⁸ “*Sprawa Żołnierska*” No. 4 of 13.01.1918.

would join negotiations, it could be implemented. In this way, the speaker made a clear reference to the unification action under the working name “front delegation”⁵⁹, being prepared by the liberal democrats’ supporters at the CC AMPL together with the PSMC. The speakers also maintained that “the mission of the forming Polish Corps should be to defend the Eastern borderlands so that they could reincorporated to reborn Poland”. Stefan Kram-szyk, an activist of the Military Center, as well as a representative of the Polish Security Council [PSC, pol. *Polska Rada Bezpieczeństwa*]⁶⁰, also spoke in a similar tone.

In response to these voices, the representative of the radical leftist electorate, Julian Leszczyński, stressed the importance of the Bolshevik revolution for the Polish cause, including for the military Poles. In this regard, he drew attention to the wide scope of the “democratization” of Polish institutions, including military ones, run by the Commissariat for Polish Affairs [CPA, pol. *Komisariat do spraw Polskich*] led by him. Some of the delegates applauded his statement that the military left should “bring the revolutionary declaration of the soldier’s and citizen’s rights to the regiments of the 1st Polish Corps”. Referring to the battles between volunteers from the

⁵⁹ The Front Delegation tried to counteract the radicalization of the soldiers’ masses using the slogans of national solidarity, acting as the “third party” for the liquidation of the conflict between the CC AMPL and the PSMC. – See” AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 9: “Dziennik Narodowy” No. 79 of 20.12.1917; “Dziennik Narodowy” No. 107 of 27.01.1918.

⁶⁰ The basic task of the PRB established on 9 November 1917 by the emigration circles (without the participation of left-wing radicals) was to defend the property and political interests of Polish citizens. The head of the PRB and its subordinate – the Polish Security Guard – were: F. Skapski and A. Prystor – More information: M. Wrzosek, *Polskie korpusy...*, p. 120.

Belgorod Regiment with the “Kornilovites”, the speaker said: “The heroic attitude of the Belgorod Regiment should be an example for us. The Polish revolutionary soldier cannot be a neutral in the face of the struggle of the Russian proletariat, if he does not want to testify to his political poverty”. In the further part of his speech, Julian Leszczyński justified the negative attitude of his institution towards the Polish Security Guard [PSG, *Polska Straż Bezpieczeństwa*] and the actions of the 1st Polish Corps, then he concluded: “We will guard order together with the Russian comrades bringing about the revolutionary order. (...) We will not let use Polish soldiers for land-based rents”⁶¹.

In the next phase of the 2nd Congress of the Military Left, the struggle continued between the Piłsudski’s coalition and the liberal democrats, on one side, and the radical left on the other aiming at winning support of the majority of delegates for each of the opposing visions of the future of military Poles in the Russian Army. From the very beginning of this battle, however, the prevalence of the pro-Bolshevik option was evident⁶².

Stanisław Bobiński, speaking at the Congress on behalf of the SDKPL, opposed the idea of merging the structures of the CC AMPL and PSMC promoted by the liberal democrats and the Piłsudski-ites⁶³. On the other hand, Franciszek Grzelszczak, the representative of the CEC CWSD, on behalf of the represented body, appealed to the delegates to support the idea of the joint fight of Polish soldiers at the side of Russian soldiers, as he

⁶¹ *Dokumenty i materiały...*, Vol. 1, p. 206.

⁶² A. Miodowski, *Związki Wojskowych...*, p. 157.

⁶³ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 24: “Trybuna” No. 27 of 30.12.1917.

stated: “Those who call the Polish soldier for neutrality, have no interest in his interests”⁶⁴.

In response to these voices, the Piłsudski-ites attempted to move the discussion to the field of reflection over demobilization. Stefan Weychert stated that

while for the Russian soldier demobilization meant a return to his family village, the Polish soldier is facing the task of settling accounts with Russia (...), in the light of the above, I will speak for the agreement with the PSMC in order to improve and accelerate demobilization⁶⁵.

Kazimierz Pużak, in turn, stated that “the demobilization of Russians should go hand in hand with the mobilization of Poles as a social force”. In the country, the Regency Council should be overthrown, since it contributed to “disparaging of Piłsudski’s holy and great work”⁶⁶. The representative of the left wing of PSP RF, Tadeusz Żarski put forward a project to appoint a commission that would work on the problem of demobilization⁶⁷. His proposal was elaborated by the former CC AMPL chairman Antoni Żaboklicki, suggesting the creation of the Central Polish Demobilization Committee, whose task would be to reach an agreement with the Central Powers and the Regency Council regarding demobilization and return of Polish soldiers to the country⁶⁸.

The representatives of PSP Left Władysław Matuszewski reacted to these speeches, responding that they

⁶⁴ “Sprawa Żołnierska” No. 4 of 13.01.1918.

⁶⁵ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 203: “Dziennik Polski” No. 252 of 15.12.1917.

⁶⁶ “Sprawa Żołnierska” No. 4 of 13.01.1918.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, No. 7 of 24.02.1918.

⁶⁸ Ibidem.

do not match the seriousness of the moment, and he himself deemed the demand for the immediate demobilization of Polish soldiers from the Russian Army harmful and *de facto* unrealistic⁶⁹. The above opinion resulted mainly from the fear of losing the possibility of further propagandist influence on Polish soldiers after they would leave the ranks of the Russian Army. After 7 November, its decomposition process gained even more momentum. What is important, most of the Polish military released according to the schedule as well as the deserters usually sought support from the AMP subordinate to the PSMC. The Piłsudski-ites and the liberal democrats tried to extend their influence over the members of the alliances with their headquarters at the CC AMPL. To the leftist radicals in exile, all these factors constituted a significant complication in implementing the disintegrated tasks entrusted to them by the Bolsheviks within the Polish military movement. And it was supposed to be only the first stage in the Polish military reintegration process. Its culmination should be the inclusion of Polish soldiers in the ranks of the internationalist Red Army.

Joining the discussion on demobilization, the delegates associated with the liberal-democratic camp argued that “it is impossible for free Polish citizens to continue to be in the ranks of the Russian Army”. At the same time, they demanded that Polish soldiers released from the service keep their weapons⁷⁰. Aleksander Babiański directly called on military Poles to take the example of Ukrainians and Finns and become

⁶⁹ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 24: “Trybuna” No. 27 of 30.12.1917.

⁷⁰ “Sprawa Żołnierska” No. 7 of 24.02.1918.

independent from the people's commissars' power⁷¹. The acting President of the CC AMPL, Stefan Miłoszynski, joining the liberal democrats' supporters, criticized the Bolshevik authorities for their negative position on transferring Polish soldiers serving in the Russian army to the stage battalion, describing it as applying special laws to Poles⁷². In the following part of his speech, the speaker referred to the issue of the attitude of the CC AMPL to the 1st Polish Corps and the PSMC. He indignantly rejected the thought of dividing the Corps into the stage battalions to induce its "democratization". On the other hand, speaking about the matter of the split in the movement of military Poles, he assessed that it had been caused by the desire to avoid fratricidal fights at the front. As the danger had already ceased to exist, it was worthwhile that the 2nd Congress of the Military Left would prepare the ground for an agreement with the PSMC. In the speaker's opinion, a joint plan on demobilization and the returning action of Polish soldiers to the country could become such a platform of agreement.

The issue of the attitude of the CC AMPL to the 1st Polish Corps and the PSMC was also addressed by other delegates. For example, Marcin Marczewski argued that the 1st Polish Corps "is a Trojan horse (...) with the help of which the national democrats want to smuggle reinforcements for reaction into the country. (...). The stronghold of the Polish bourgeoisie has to be conquered," the member of the exiled Central Committee of the AMPL proclaimed from the rostrum. In the further

⁷¹ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 9: "Dziennik Narodowy" No. 78 of 19.12.1917.

⁷² AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 203: "Dziennik Polski" No. 252 of 15.12.1917.

part of his speech, he also stated that an agreement with the PSMC was impossible, but he postulated action to create a joint committee on demobilization.

The speech of Konstanty Dobrochotow, another member of the exiled CC AMPL, revealed the tactics of the coalition formed by the Piłsudski-ites and the liberal democrats in the game with the radical left-wing electorate. The speaker, admitting that the agreement with the PSMC was difficult to achieve, stated that this should not, however, discourage the advocates of the settlement. "It is necessary to separate the political platform from the requirements of real work, especially in the field of the complex demobilization case, where nothing has been done so far. Only new people on one side and on the other can reach an agreement". The speaker expressed the hope that "the delegates on the 2nd General Congress of Military Poles selected at the front and army congresses of the Polish Military Alliances will set out new paths that will lead to the reconstruction of the movement's unity, and so far it is not necessary to demolish what exists".

In response to these voices, Adam Jabłoński representing the SDKPL stated that his group categorically rejects the compromise regarding the PSMC and the 1st Polish Corps. "We do not recognize the Supreme Committee as a representation of Polish soldiers. The committee received mandate for its activity not from Polish soldiers, but from Russian generals and foreign diplomats". The CC AMPL should become the only headquarters for military Poles. Adam Jabłoński emphasized, referring to the idea of convening the 2nd General Congress of Military Poles, that the delegates of the Belgorod Regiment and the group from Petrograd jointly declared the postulate that "the Supreme

Committee should be dispersed by the power of the bayonets”⁷³.

It should be added that the environment of the radical left wing in exile, expecting that the conciliation trend from the two Alliance centers would lead to the organization of the 2nd General Congress⁷⁴, came up with a series of initiatives intended to provide the Social Democrats and the PSP Left with the strongest possible representation among future delegates. Since it was expected that difficulties in obtaining sufficiently strong support by their own activists among the members of the AMP would appear, it was decided to promote candidates being Ptes with a background as workers and peasants. It was assumed that due to mental reasons they would prove to be so “controllable” that it would be possible to use them in the efforts aimed at pushing through and imposing the new program line on the military movement. Obviously, the one referring directly to the Bolshevik ideology.

An article was published in “Sprawa Żołnierska” with the argumentation used as part of the pre-election electoral campaign found reflection by the radicals in exile. Addressing the members of the AMP, people were urged to vote for comrades from the social underclass, especially those sympathizing with the radical left.

⁷³ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 9: “Dziennik Polski” No. 79 of 20.12.1917.

⁷⁴ The opening of the 2nd General Congress was scheduled for 5.03.1918 in Smolensk. The venue for the congressional works chosen by the so-called Front Delegation was not accepted by some prominent CC AMPL activists. Among them, there was R. Łagwa who already in January promoted Petrograd as an alternative. Later, due to the progress of the Central Powers’ offensive, there were also proposals to organize the Congress in Moscow – Gosudarstvennyj archiv Rossijskoj Federacii [GARF], f. 1318, op. 1, d. 1612, li. 52 ob.

They will not deceive you because their parties are against forming an army here on the services of the Regency Council which by the grace of Germany rules, not by the grace of the Polish people. Do not let them drug you with Piłsudski's name (...). The most beware of shaky people who [now say] to you this way, and will speak differently at the Congress. Send your soldier comrades. A worker or peasant can always handle it best, as it is about their skin. Get used to deciding for yourself, to governing. We do not know, maybe in the country you will have to create your peasants' and workers' government, take matters in your own hands⁷⁵.

Presenting the idea of reaching for actual power in the country by peasants and workers as realistic did not seem convincing to the Polish military with such a background. Their vast majority did not take these propaganda slogans seriously. It was much easier to them as on the Russian example they could observe that the "workers-peasants government" operating under the CPC's name was fictional. In its lineup, apart from symbolic exceptions, it was rather difficult to find people with a working class or peasant background. Intelligentsia dominated it.

Before adopting the final resolutions of the 2nd Congress of the Military Left and the election of the CC AMPL authorities for the second term of office, the report on the previous activities of the Committee was presented by his vice-president WO Waław Szczęśny. He stressed that the headquarters of the military left operated in difficult conditions, struggling with the lack of financial resources and indifference of the Polish community in Russia. What was worse, the majority of the CC AMPL

⁷⁵ "Sprawa Żołnierska" No. 5-6 of 3.02.1918.

members did not receive temporary leave from military units, which prevented them from being fully involved in fulfilling their duties. Therefore, those who worked in the CC AMPL “did little because there were too few of them” and their activity focused mainly on the Petrograd AMP. As the leftist headquarters’ output, the speaker mentioned activities within the framework of the PSC, the PSG and the Liquidation Commission for the Kingdom of Poland [pol. *Komisja Likwidacyjna do spraw Królestwa Polskiego*], as well as the nomination for Aleksander Więckowski for the Commissioner for Military Affairs of Poles.

It was not until 18 and 19 December 1917 that the delegates began voting on the draft resolutions. At this stage of the 2nd Congress of the Military Left, not only the differences between the radical left wing and its opponents’ coalition got confirmed, but unexpectedly discrepancies were also revealed between cooperating until then the Piłsudski-ites from the PSP RF along with the PPA and the liberal democrats. The course of subsequent ballots showed, for example, that the peasant activists opposed the attempts of some liberal-democratic faction’s members to break off the Congress⁷⁶. Also, the PSP RF supporters did not decide to leave the meeting in fear of losing their influence on the military delegates. Despite the lack of support from the Piłsudski-ites, some liberal democrats in uniforms, such as Mieczysław Norwid-Raczkiewicz from the Petrograd AMP and CC AMPL’s member Jan Strawiński, left the Congress. In this way, they protested against the Congress’ resolutions regarding the Polish Eastern formations and in response to rejecting the draft agreement with the PSMC. They

⁷⁶ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 9: “Dziennik Narodowy” No. 90 of 2.01.1918.

justified their attitude by the order to terminate the split received from the AMP, and when it proved impossible, they considered their further presence at the Congress to be pointless⁷⁷.

Despite the weakening cohesion, the coalition of the Piłsudski-ites and the liberal democrats managed to have some influence on the content of several adopted resolutions. During the votings, it turned out that the undecided part of the delegates decided to support some of the amendments proposed by political opponents, opposite to the position of the radical left. For example, to the draft resolution on demobilization agreed under the supervision of the radical military left representatives Roman Łągwa and Adam Jabłoński significant modifications were introduced. As a result, it contained the following requests addressed to the CPC and expecting it:

- 1) To approve the Central Demobilization Commission set up by the Central Committee of the Left with all the Polish democratic organizations in exile;
- 2) To issue immediately a decree on pre-term demobilization of Poles, during the current ceasefire, and to concentrate them within the border strip (...) to accelerate their return to the country,
- 3) To issue a military authorities' order stating that Poles currently dismissed from the ranks for any reason may remain in their units until they are transferred to Polish demobilization units,
- 4) To make an immediate agreement with the Supreme German Command for immediate transfer the Polish delegation to Warsaw over the front to enable a settlement between the Polish government and the

⁷⁷ Ibidem, No. 92 of 4.01.1918; cf. *Materiały archiwalne...*, Vol. 1, pp. 476–477.

German and Austrian governments in order to organize as soon as possible the return of Polish militaries and exiles to the country⁷⁸.

Passing this change in the resolution was possible thanks to skillful use of the pro-demobilization moods among the military delegates. The above-mentioned resolution clearly differed from the one on the Polish Eastern formations. In this case, the Piłsudski-ites and the liberal democrats did not manage to alleviate its tone in any way. It stated, *inter alia*, that

the attempts to create the Polish army or the Polish Armed Forces in exile merit determined condemnation (...) that certain already established Polish military units are influenced by the Polish reaction and that these influences should be eliminated (...) that all Polish military groups should be based on democratic principles, that is to respect the declaration on the soldier's rights, the existence of company and regimental committees, and freedom of socio-political agitation and cultural and educational work⁷⁹.

When the issue of relation to the PSMC and the creation of a unified leadership body in the AMP was discussed, the project proposed by the liberal democrats and peasant activists was the first to be voted on. However, it was rejected with 24 votes against 18, with a large number abstaining from voting, because the leftist radicals opposed the appeal included in the draft resolution calling on both political centers to take action to restore the unity of the movement, as it was put "for

⁷⁸ "Sprawa Żołnierska" No. 3 of 2.01.1918.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

the sake of the cause”⁸⁰. The resolution submitted on behalf of the radical left by Adam Jabłoński was adopted as an alternative by 46 votes with 12 abstentions. It described the PSMC as an “anti-democratic organization”, “not matching the aspirations of broad soldiers’ masses”, opposing the “democratization” of the Eastern formations and creating the PAF for political struggle. In the resolution, it was also emphasized that the PSMC had no right to pretend to direct the affairs of all Polish soldiers and to express their aspirations; therefore, they should push the committee aside from this role themselves. Referring to the postulate of reconstructing the unity of the soldiers’ movement, the resolution proposed solving this problem by declaring that the only headquarters would be the CC AMPL appointed by the 2nd Congress of the Military Left. The task of the new committee would be to gather all military Poles around it.

The definitive unification of the movement’s structures would take place during the 2nd General Congress of Military Poles convened by the CC AMPL, based on a democratic quantitative representation, and not organizations’ representations. The resonance of this resolution was weakened by an amendment introduced by Marcin Marczewski, which, in fact, represented a certain loophole for the agreement with the PSMC. It contained the following statements:

any agreement with the PSMC on the part of the Central Committee of the Left may take place provided that: 1) the Supreme Committee officially terminates all relations with the Inter-Party Council and the NDP; 2) it will renounce the formation of military force for militaristic purposes; 3)

⁸⁰ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 9: “Dziennik Narodowy” No. 84 of 26.12.1917.

If it agrees to implement the declaration on the soldier's rights and committees in companies, battalions, regiments, etc. in the formations currently recognizing the Supreme Committee as its headquarters⁸¹.

In the final phase of the Congress, the delegates addressed the issue of the relationship between the military left and the CPA. This issue was referred by Roman Łagwa on behalf of the resigning CC AMPL. It should be noted that at that time he had already cooperated with the authority. It was difficult, therefore, to maintain impartiality in the case referred by him. In his remarks, he reminded of the unsuccessful attempts to appoint a Commissar for Military Poles at the former Ministry of War. This fact, in his opinion, contrasted with founding such an institution by the CPC on the next day after the Bolshevik revolution.

In order to encourage the delegates to support the CC AMPL's participation in its work, the speaker emphasized that the Central Committee, through the structures of the Council of Revolutionary-Democratic Organizations [CRDO, pol. *Rada Organizacji Rewolucyjno-Demokratycznych*], was *de facto* already involved in the activities of the body. In view of the above, it was only necessary to officially confirm the facts and sanction the actions of the left-wing headquarters in this area. This argument convinced the delegates, as the resolution on participation in the works of the CPA was passed almost unanimously⁸².

Regarding the latter issue, it should be added that gaining support for the whole of the left-wing environment for this project became possible thanks to the flexible attitude of the Bolsheviks and their Polish

⁸¹ *Materiały archiwalne...*, Vol. 1, pp. 476–478.

⁸² "Sprawa Żołnierska" No. 9 of 10.03.1918.

comrades. This tactical abandonment of ideological and political principles was the price that was to be paid at the time for the access of a certain part of the socialists from the Revolutionary Faction to the camp of the radical leftist in exile. As a result, the conditions enabled that in the structures of the CPA, in addition to imprinting its works the SDKPL activists, activists of PSP Left and radical activists of PSP RF could function on equal terms. All these political forces cooperated with each other in central and local headquarters in the period between December 1917 and March 1918. The formal and legal basis for the cooperation of these three parties was created by the ideological declaration of the Council of the CPA, in which, among others, it was stated that this institution would act

under control of the Council of Revolutionary-Democratic Organizations: a) recognizing the current Government of People's Commissars elected by the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates and responsible before them; b) considering the Russian Revolution to be an act of the international revolution that puts the task of a direct struggle for socialism on the proletariat of all countries; c) in this way only accepting national and social liberation of Poland⁸³.

Due to ideological reasons, it was the hardest to accept such a cooperation platform for the Piłsudski-ites of the PSP RF. However, at this stage of the Russian Revolution, some party leaders recognized that this accession would be conducive for implementing the key political and military aims of the grouping.

⁸³ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 24: "Trybuna" No. 25 of 16.12.1917.

However, in the spring of 1918, the situation underwent a fundamental change. The radical left-wing in exile, having obtained what it had aimed at, was ready to close the short period of the tactical cooperation. The socialists from the Faction, in turn, realized that they were used for legitimating and making the competitive political environment credible among the diaspora. They also incurred the highest image-related costs in this coalition. Remaining in this alliance by the group setting independence slogans above revolutionary ones was condemning the PSP RF to inevitable marginalization. In defense against the threat of a “wash out” in their own ranks, it was decided to return to the sources of party identity. The historically conditioned anti-Russianness of the Piłsudski-ites circles within the group was subjected to transformation in March 1918, so that it took the form of anti-Bolshevism and anti-Sovietism. Within the Bolshevik political doctrine and in current political and military activity of the leaders of the new formation ruling Russia, the Piłsudski-ites saw the aversion towards the Polish aspirations for independence and the readiness to annihilate the reborn statehood in the case of their implementation. All this combined could not be accepted by the moderate left in exile.

Returning to the evaluation of the Congress works' effects, it is worth noting that in the agenda for the final meeting the point regarding the election of the Polish Commissar for Military Poles at the CPC was of fundamental significance. Through the general consensus, it was settled to let the newly elected the CC AMPL

reconcile this problem, and when it got established, Roman Łagwa was appointed for this position⁸⁴.

Another important issue addressed at this stage of the debate was the elaboration of the content of political declarations acceptable to all political circles represented among Polish military. Due to ideological obstacles and different political goals, the communication on these issues at the level of the congressional commissions failed. Fundamental discrepancies were revealed especially in relation to the attitude to the revolution and in the assessment of what was happening in the country after 5 November 1916. Stefan Weychert therefore, proposed to conclude with presenting the draft resolutions as declarations of individual factions. This conclusion was accepted against the arguments of Bernard Mandelbaum and Stanisław Bobiński, who pointed out that the Congress representing military masses should take a clear stance on the breakthrough events in Russia and the situation in the country.

On the last day of the meetings, the Organizational Statute of the Military Left [pol. *Statut Organizacyjny Lewicy Wojskowej*] was adopted and the emblem for the CC AMPL seal was established⁸⁵. Contrary to the demands of the socialists from the Revolutionary Faction supported by the liberal democrats, the majority of 28 votes against 18 decided, according to Roman Łagwa, to “dethrone the eagle”, i.e. to recognize the eagle without the crown as the emblem of the military left. At the end, the new CC AMPL line-up was appointed – agreed on at the meeting of the Council of Senior Members. The newly

⁸⁴ A. Zatorski, op. cit., p. 195; cf. A. Miodowski, *Związki Wojskowych...*, p. 131 et al.

⁸⁵ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 9: “Dziennik Narodowy” No. 84 of 26.12.1917.

elected headquarters included 6 representatives of the SDKPL and the PSP Left, 6 representatives of the PSP-RF, 5 representatives of the PPA, 3 representatives of the liberal democrats and 1 non-party member⁸⁶.

At the first meeting of CC AMPL it was formed as follows: Roman Łągwa was elected its president, and Marcin Marczewski and Władysław Matuszewski were appointed vice-presidents. Zygmunt Horbaczewski and Jan Diupero were appointed the secretaries, and the 2nd Lt Bogdan Steckiewicz obtained the function of the treasurer. The lack of representatives of the SDKPL in the board was officially explained by the fact that the CEC had not given appropriate mandate to represent it at the forum to the group members selected to the CC AMPL. In fact, the reasons were quite different and resulted, firstly, from a certain disappointment in the decisions made at the Congress, and, secondly, they were a derivative of reluctance to share power with non-Marxist groupings. In this situation, the disintegration coming from the inside was to be continued by the companions from PSP Left, while the Social Democrats intended to do the same by acting from external positions, i.e. based on the CPA “authority”.

⁸⁶ In the new CC AMPL the SDKPL environment was represented by: 2nd Lt A. Jablonski, General B. Mandelbaum, Junior NCO S. Dziatkiewicz; the PSP L was represented by: Lt R. Łągwa, 2nd Lt B. Steckiewicz, 2nd Lt W. Matuszewski; The PSP-RF was represented by: WO S. Weychert, Pte J. Diupero, Pte A. Szczepko, Pte E. Radgowski, and Pte M. Kaliski, WO S. Matuszewski; the PZL represented: Vet. M. Marczewski, Pte F. Chmielewski, 2nd Lt Z. Andrzejewski, Pte S. Krzan, Pte J. Małecki; the Democratic Committee was represented by the member WO A. Żaboklicki, military official S. Mickiewicz, 2nd Lt Z. Horbaczewski; the non-party was M. Uzdowski – See: “Sprawa Żołnierska” No. 3 of 2.12.1918.

The resolutions adopted during the 2nd Congress of the Military Left and the balance of power in the new CC AMPL indicated that despite the intense efforts of the radical left wing supporters, they failed to fully control the structures of these headquarters. However, it cannot be denied that the scope of influence of the Piłsudski-ites and the liberal democrats was significantly reduced. Assessing the arithmetical distribution of power in the CC AMPL after the Congress, the impression can be that this post-activist coalition⁸⁷ maintained its dominant position.

The radical left's success consisted in the fact of the fact that it managed to put its two representatives of the board of the headquarters, one of whom served as the treasurer and the other one took the position of president, at the same time receiving a nomination for the Commissioner for Military Poles at the CPC. In fact, the position obtained by Roman Łągwa in the military left wing balanced and *de facto* exceeded the influence of the arithmetic majority, i.e. the PSP RF, the PPA and the SDC, in the CC AMPL. The strength of the coalition between the Piłsudski-ites and the Liberals additionally weakened the frictions caused by personal and program differences.

Taking into account the closing words of the Congress spoken by Roman Łągwa, wishing the delegates to meet as soon as possible in Warsaw at the CWSD meeting, it became clear that the second phase of the clash over

⁸⁷ A. Miodowski, *Działalność polityczno-wojskowa polskich kręgów proaktywistycznych w Rosji w okresie międzyrewolucyjnym (marzec-listopad 1917 r.)*, "Białostockie Teki Historyczne" 2010, Vol. 8, p. 105-122.

taking control of the Central Committee was only a matter of the nearest time⁸⁸. And that is what happened.

The final defeat of the faction co-created by the PSP RF, the PPA and the SDC took place just after the Congress. The members of the new leadership of the left-wing headquarters about with the background of the PRSC activists began their activities by establishing the closer cooperation with CPA and the CRDO operating with it. This step resulted in close relations with the central and local organizations of the Soviet authorities. It was an announcement of the definite independence of the new CC AMPL from the influence of anti-Bolshevik circles. As a sign of protest, due to the initiation of a new program line by Roman Łagwa, three coalition groups terminated formal relationships with the CC AMPL. In practice, however, their military supporters continued to function in the Committee's structures, trying to freeze actions of the radical left-wing in exile. The resistance of the Piłsudski-ites – liberals coalition was overcome quite quickly through the support provided by the CPA. Since the turn of January-February 1918 the CC AMPL already carried out a significant part of its activities as part of the commissariat's agendas, in particular in its Military and Demobilization Departments⁸⁹. Due to it, they did not disorganize these actions as much as the coalition's members who had been definitely moved away from the influence on this headquarters.

⁸⁸ "Sprawa Żołnierska" No. 9 of 10.03.1918.

⁸⁹ Detailed information on the activities of both departments can be found indirectly through the analysis of the documentation of one of the AMP. – See: AAN. Organizacje polskie w Rosji – zbiór zespołów, Związek Wojskowych Polaków Garnizonu Toropieckiego – Korespondencja związkowa. [Polish organizations in Russia - the collection of fonds, the Polish Military Alliance of the Toropiecki Garrison – Alliance's correspondence.]

In such circumstances, the Piłsudski-ites supported by the liberal democrats lost another battle at the military level. Similarly as in the parallel action of taking over the initiative on the grounds of the Eastern formations, in the case of actions aimed at dominating the structures of the Polish military movement, the activities of this milieu were unsuccessful. It turned out that the reorientation of the current policy in this sphere was implemented too late to bring the expected results for the moderate left-wing.

The new CC AMPL leaders coming from the radical groups strengthened their own position in the headquarters and faced the dilemma whether they should transferring the personnel revolution also to the level of the AMP subordinate to them and eliminate the influence of the Piłsudski-ites and the liberal democrats coalition, or to decide to extinguish the activities of this branch of the military movement? The second solution seemed more rational since, for example, military decisions were made mainly in the CPA and in the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs [pol. *Komisariat Ludowy do spraw Wojskowych*]. For reasons of ambition and personnel, this option was rejected.

Before the structures of the CC AMPL structures were absorbed by the CPA Military and Demobilization Departments, its leaders attempted to use the subordinate AMP in the struggle for the "democratization" of the 1st Polish Corps. The role of the impartial mediator was entrusted to the Petrograd AMP. The choice of this particular Alliance was not random. There, the rivalry between the group of Piłsudski-ites and the liberal democrats and their adversaries from the emigration circles of the radical left was the longest.

The indication of the latter to the capital AMP created an opportunity to be recognized by the Gen. Dowbor-Muśnicki's supporters [pol. *dowborczycy*] collaborating then with the national democrats as an impartial peacemaker at the time, and, on the other hand, it allowed the radical left in exile to influence the course of the negotiations through its representatives. The proposal to use the Petrograd AMP as a peacemaker in the conflict between the 1st Polish Corps and the military and civilian Soviet authorities was made on 17 February 1918 by Tadeusz Radwański. After it was approved by the Alliance's leadership, a delegation⁹⁰ was appointed to contact the leading representatives of the CPC. Vladimir Lenin himself was to be given a memorial with a request to agree on the establishment of a Polish-Soviet mediation group. The idea of appointing such a body to negotiate with the Corps' Command, contrary to the expectations of its originators, did not rise people' commissars' interest. The delegation did not even manage to reach Vladimir Lenin. However, it was received by Joseph Stalin and Nikolai Krylenko. The most important message sent by the former to the "Polish comrades" was the laconic statement that "one should do what is possible to settle the conflict peacefully (...), but it is too late, nothing can be done"⁹¹. The rejection of this proposal was a clear signal for the radical left-wing electorate to definitively eliminate the influence of the Piłsudski-ites and the liberal democrats not only from the CC AMPL, but also from the subordinate AMPs. This

⁹⁰ The following were appointed to talks with V. Lenin, J. Stalin and N. Krylenko: T. Radwański, S. Miłoszynski, M. Jasiński, A. Jabłoński, W. Matuszewski and J. Diupero.

⁹¹ AAN. CAP, box of press clippings No. 9: "Dziennik Narodowy" No. 128 of 28.02.1918.

specific rejection of the hand drawn for cooperation was considered in this part of the soldiers' movement as a kind of warning signal against marginalization and further shifting of the decision-making center regarding matters related to Polish military from the Central Committee to the combined CPA Military and Demobilization Departments.

At this stage of the Soviet military policy implementation in relation to the Polish formations, only radical emigration activists could expect to be treated by the Bolsheviks as trusted partners. The hopes of the leadership of the left-wing headquarters that in the near future would manage to achieve an equal position had no chance of being realized. The most important reason for it was, apart from the Polish formations' disintegration, also the rapidly progressing demobilization of the old Russian Army.

Over the four months of Bolsheviks' rule, they managed to demobilize as many as 35 year groups of soldiers, constituting about 63% of the original state of the old army. Among the remaining four year groups only a small percentage was made up of Polish soldiers. As a result, the majority of the AMPs recognizing the Central Committee as its own governing body ceased to exist, or due to the scarcity of the member ranks it could not conduct its normal statutory activity. In addition, those left-wing AMPs functioning especially in the Ukrainian territories were "cut off" from the management center as a result of the Central Powers' offensive undertaken on 18 February 1918.

The above conditions ultimately determined the CC AMPL's fate. Before it definitively terminated its activity in

mid-May 1918⁹², some of its activists managed to participate in the process of “managing” the remains of this branch of the Polish military movement. Whenever possible, they transformed the AMP into Workers ‘and Soldiers’ Clubs. In particular, those Central Committee activists who at the same time held many functions in the CPA, set the tone to those activities. Based on their initiative, such structures were established in Petrograd, Moscow, Smolensk, Vitebsk, Kazan, Saratov, Kursk, Belgorod, Orel, Penza, and Voronezh⁹³. This was expected to expand the group of military supporters of the radical left wing in Russia. In such circumstances, the first phase of the implementation of military projects of the SDKPL and PSP Left ended. The number one goal was achieved. The structures of the Polish military movement were at such a disintegration stage that their final decay was already pre-empted. Thus, the implementation of the military plans of Polish communists operating in exile could enter the second phase. At this stage, it was intended to focus on completing the process of disintegration of the Eastern Formations that had been in progress since the spring of 1917. At the same time, it was intended to initiate organizational work related to the creation of Polish revolutionary units.

⁹² The date of the end of the official activity is 16.05.1918, when the last statement of the CC AMPL was published in “Sprawa Żołnierska” (No. 10).

⁹³ GARF, f. 1318, op. 1, d. 1620, li. 56n.

Chapter II

The disputes over the organization form of the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia

After the Bolshevik coup, the SDKPL activists gained a dominant position in the environment of the radical left wing. The PSP Left and the PSU had to come to terms with operating in the background. In the new intra-Russian conditions, the political role of the group, which in the organizational and ideological dimension was connected with the Bolshevik party, naturally had to grow.

Apart from these two basic platforms of coexistence for the two social democracy, the military sphere remained a binder between them. Before 7 November, as well as after the day, the SDKPL cooperated with the Bolsheviks in the process of desintegration of the old Russian Army's structures. Before the Bolshevik revolution there were two leading activists of SDKPL in the Military-Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd CWSD, i.e. F. Dzerzhinsky and Józef Unszlicht. In its office Konstanty Brodzki was employed. Also Kazimierz Cichowski worked in the Committee. In the RSDLP(b) structures, a group of five members responsible for monitoring military issues was set up at the threshold of the coup. It was co-created by people who were also members of the Bolshevik Party's Central Committee and

the Military-Revolutionary Committee. In this group, there were: A. Bubnov, J. Stalin, Y. Sverdlov, M. Uritsky, and F. Dzerzhinsky¹. Much less attention was paid by the party activists to the Eastern formations. It resulted from the conviction that both the ethnic military movement and the military units organized by particular nations would not stand the test of time. They were to disappear with the rise of the revolutionary army built “on the principle of internationality, excluding any division based on nationality”. The implementation of these plans in a natural way had to lead to elimination of “the Polish military formations practicing anti-democratic orders”². The Social Democrats fought them first and foremost through propaganda, using the activists of the allied PSP Left for conducting direct agitation whenever it was possible.

The set of typical “arguments” used in these verbal attacks included the accusation of remaining in the Eastern formations “on services of the counter-revolution” and the allegation of their “anti-democratic” character. The former of these euphemisms described the milieu of political and military Corps’ organizers assembled in the pro- National Democratic CPIU and in the PSMC respectively. On the other hand, while using the latter one, the pre-revolutionary orders in the Corps were pointed out, where military discipline, drill and appropriate morale set the standard. According to the Social Democrats, without liberating the Eastern formations from all these “ballasts”, it was not possible to transform them into a component of the revolutionary army.

¹ More on the issue: W. Najdus, *Polacy w rewolucji 1917 roku*, Warszawa 1967, pp. 315-316.

² *Dokumenty i materiały...*, Vol. 1, p. 253 et al.

The SDKPL activists realized that it was not an easy task on the example of the above-mentioned Belgorod Regiment, where “democratization” was thought to have reached its fullness. After the victorious battle of Tomarovka fought 14-15 December 1917, with the White Guard troops, its name was even changed to the 1st Polish Revolutionary Regiment. The bafflement of the left-wing radicals in exile became even bigger when, on 24 December 1917, the Belgorod soldiers refused to execute the order of the Soviet authorities to move to Kharkov to support the activities of the revolutionary units against Ukrainian formations.

As part of retorts for this insubordination on the night of 29 to 30 December 1917, the unit was disarmed, and the Regiment’s Commander Capt. Mieczysław Jackiewicz and his deputy, Lt Rokicki were murdered³. Reaching for such draconian pacification methods directed against the revolutionized, after all, military, gave completely unexpected negative side effects. Firstly, since then it became more difficult for the People’s Commissars’ supporters in emigration to conduct agitation among Polish soldiers and convince them to “democratize” the Eastern formations, because the case of the Belgorod caused a crisis of confidence of the radicals in exile and their Soviet patrons. Secondly, when in the spring of 1918 activities aimed at creating Polish revolutionary groups were undertaken on a greater scale, it turned out that “Due to the accident with the Belgorod Regiment, colleagues relate to the idea of joining the Red Army very warily”⁴. Thirdly, as a result, the Liberal Democrats, and especially the National Democrats gained a valuable

³ A. Zatorski, *op. cit.*, p. 228 et al.

⁴ Quoted from the letter of the CPA in Orel to the CPA headquarters – GARF, f. 1318, op. 1, d. 1612, li. 8.

argument for even deeper discreditation of their political opponents on the left side of the political scene in exile.

All the facts combined became a serious obstacle in gaining support by the radical leftists in the soldiers' ranks. The above-mentioned event and its repercussions made the leaders of this milieu realize that without taking decisive action to consolidate already "democratized" divisions and to impose the revolutionary norms of functioning on these yet opposing structures, it would be impossible to include Polish militaries to the process of creating a new model army. The goal was not achievable without Bolsheviks' constructive support. It was necessary to obtain from them a legal tool to accelerate the "democratization" of the Polish troops.

The example of Belgorod proved that the regulations in force were no longer sufficient. There was a need to develop them further and create new ones. The CEC CWSD declaration of 13 December 1917, characterizing the formula of functioning of the Eastern formations in Russia acceptable to the authorities, was a harbinger showing that the direction had been taken. It boiled down to a few basic principles from which it transpired that

2) the Polish shall troops exist on general principles as guests of the revolutionary army to complete the front; 3) in the Polish divisions, appropriate military organizations and democratic orders shall be immediately introduced, such as [soldiers'] committees; 4) in the Polish divisions, the rule of electing commanders is immediately introduced, and military honors and orderlies are abolished; 5) all orders issued by the new revolutionary authority of the councils shall be extended to the command members; 6) the Polish divisions shall be formed

on the advice and consent of Polish revolutionary organizations represented in the councils⁵.

The fact of holding the vice-president's position of by Stanisław Budzyński proved to be helpful in obtaining the above-mentioned declaration. After the December excess with the Belgorod Regiment, the Bolshevik leaders realized that if they wanted to have a full range of possibilities to influence the Polish military, they should not rely solely on the SDKPL comrades. It was necessary to replace the existing informal cooperation in this field between the Social Democrats and the left-wing PSP movement with a coordinated disintegration action maximizing the advantages of both environments. At the same time, it was assumed that the coordination of military activities should be preceded by some form of organizational unification. In order to make the Polish radicals an efficient tool to implement the Bolsheviks' ideological goals, the PSP Left leaders were urged to attempt to consolidate party structures with the SDKPL.

The consolidation process of both radical left-wing parties in exile, on the one hand, and the Bolshevik's pressure to make the disintegration activities in the Polish Corps more dynamic, on the other hand, produced effects quickly achieved by the agitators. Under the influence of its massive propaganda campaign, an immediate decrease in the morale of soldiers and officers took place in the Corps' formations. Undoubtedly, disconcerting disputes over the manner of realizing the idea of the Polish army conducted in the elite's circles in exile, as well as growing existential problems were additional factors intensifying and accelerating this

⁵ CAW. I.122.100.94: ZWP, CC CWSD Declaration of 13.12.1917.

process. If we also take into account the pacifist attitudes natural at that time in Russia, the more frequent decisions about desertion made by the Polish military become understandable.

The most drastic example of it was the behavior of the military servicing in the 1st Polish Corps after the clashes with Russian revolutionary formations. Indoctrination and the fear of losing one's life in the final phase of the war made more and more soldiers and even officers submitted answer the CPA's calls for demobilization. The case of turning of 700 deserters being a kind of the Corps' elite to the Minsk Commission's representation was significant. They were members of the so-called Knights' League [pol. *Legia Rycerska*], and, therefore, mostly officers⁶. Similar cases, although on a smaller scale, took place in the area of activity of the Mogilev Commissariat's delegation. In the wake of the commanders' acts, rank-and-file soldiers began arriving at the demobilization points. As a result, on 19 February 1918 in Minsk, according to various data, three to four thousand people were asked to be demobilized under the conditions proposed by the Soviet authorities, and in Mogilev not much less – between two and three thousand⁷.

⁶ "Polska Prawda" No.71 of 12.02.1918.

⁷ Ibidem, No. 71 of 12.02.1918 and No. 72 of 13.02.1918 provides the higher numbers, while A. Manusevič, *Polskije internacjonalisty w Rossii*, Seria: *Učonyje Zapiski Instituta Slowianowiedienja Akademii Nauk SSSR*, Moskva 1962, p. 41, , referring to archival materials produced by Soviet civil and military institutes indicates the lower numbers. It is worth mentioning in this context that there are two Polish publications by A. Zatorski, in which the author, without a word of comment, once gives one data and the other one. – cf.: A. Zatorski, *Polska lewica wojskowa w Rosji*, Warszawa 1971, p. 269 and Idem, *Walka polskich formacji rewolucyjnych w obronie władzy Rad (grudzień 1917 – marzec*

Surprised by the scale of the phenomenon and excited by the unexpected success of indoctrination activities, due to their original failures, local SDKPL, PSP Left and CC AMPL activists passed extremely optimistic reports on their leaders in Petrograd. In one of them, addressed to Roman Łągwa, it can be found:

Every day, hundreds of refugees come in, only the democratic element. They refer to their commanders with hate (...). There have been, however, [events] when the officer brought all units of soldiers and gave up without a fight⁸.

The scale of the Corps' disintegration was confirmed in the letter of its commander to the president of the PSMC, and then of the Supreme Council of the Polish Armed Forces [SC PAF, pol. *Rada Naczelna Polskiej Siły Zbrojnej*] Władysław Raczkiewicz. The letter dated 16 February 1918 includes the following statements: "Our people flee every day, almost all borderland people have run away. In the present moment, I have some 700 bayonets [Regiments: 6th and 7th] and 800 bayonets of the 1st Division in the fortress [in Babruysk]. The condition of the 1st Division is more than desperate⁹". From the cited words, one can conclude that the decay of the formation structures was supported by the deepening downfall of the morale among Polish soldiers. In some of them, under the influence of indoctrination referring to the internationalist ideas, the sense of patriotism, honor

1918), [in:] I. Pawłowski, H. Liczewski (eds), *Z postępowych tradycji oręza polskiego 1917-1939*, Warszawa 1966, p. 36.

⁸ GARF, f. 1318, op. 1, d. 1600, li. 40.

⁹ H. Bagiński, *Dokumenty z okresu organizacji i walk wojska polskiego na wschodzie 1917-1918. Załącznik do skargi przeciw gen. J. Dowbor-Muśnickiemu*, Warszawa 1936, p. 29-30.

and loyalty sworn in the oath almost completely disappeared. From the point of view of Russian and Polish communists, it was human capital potentially perfect for the needs of the emerging revolutionary armed forces.

Reaching for this mobilization potential by the Bolshevik People's Commissars after 18 February 1918 was even more likely since the German leaders strongly opposed the Corps formation. What was worse, the Polish creators of military policy in Russia, both the generals and politicians, with new strength and in the new party coalition arrangements continued their orientation disputes. Some in favor of the alliance with the Central Powers, others promoting the alliance with the Entente.

For fear of the Bolsheviks, the former group was unexpectedly joined by General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki. Deciding to cooperate with the German side, the Corps' Commander did not know its plans for the Eastern formations. However, he knew the prospects of his unit and the soldiers serving in it in case he decided to continue confronting the Bolshevik forces. In the circumstances at the time, it was only possible to choose between greater and lesser evil. The former one could bring to Polish militaries demobilization followed by political indoctrination and finally mobilization of the pro-Bolshevik soldiers to the internationalist revolutionary units. The latter one gave a slight chance to save the Corps and its return to the country as a united formation. In less favorable circumstances, it led to demobilization and subsequent re-evacuation of the Dowbor's supporters to the country. Even the implementation of the latter scenario was, in the opinion of the unit's command, a solution less-than-effective than the consent to its "democratization".

In the outlined circumstances, the second objective of the SDKPL and PSP Left plans in the military sphere, i.e. the disintegration of the Corps, was achieved. Thus, the phase of destruction ended, during which the Polish military movement was first destroyed, and then to a large extent contributed to the burial of the idea of creating a Polish army on the Russian territory. In this case German military circles crossed the t's and dotted the i's. The time came to proceed to the construction phase, i.e. to develop organizing activities related to the formation of Polish, or internationalist with the participation of Poles, revolutionary formation.

The idea to create "Polish workers' and peasants' formations", promoted after the Bolshevik revolution by part of the radical left wing in exile, initially arose moderate interest in the Polish military circles. This attitude was observed both among those who were still in active service, as well as their demobilized companions. The pacifist attitudes common among the military were a serious obstacle in attracting people willing to serve in revolutionary formations. Paradoxically, earlier instilled by the same radicals in exile, who after 7 November 1917, for a change, encouraged them to support the revolutionary armed forces. It could not be a surprise to anyone that the scale of access to the Polish revolutionary divisions was not too great. An additional factor inhibiting the inflow of Poles to the "Red formations" was the SDKPL's pressure on their internationalization. Most of the revolutionized Polish military did not identify with the idea and opted for formation of ethnic groups within the multinational Red Army.

In the circumstances, without the support of the Soviet civil and military authorities, any organizational initiatives emerging from the circles of the radical left-

wing in exile had no chance of being realized. The first manifestation of help provided by the Bolsheviks was the blocking of recruitment to the Eastern formations at the legal and administrative level¹⁰. It was expected that at this time at least some of the Polish military would be captured and directed to revolutionary units. Appropriate orders in this matter were issued by the Supreme Commander of the “democratizing” Russian army, WO Nikolai Krylenko.

On the basis of these guidelines, in December 1917, the radicals in exile set up the 1st Polish Revolutionary Battalion at the 1st Minsk CWSD Revolutionary Regiment. A key role in these activities was played by the Belgorod soldier WO Waclaw Daszkiewicz, who at that time was the head of the Military Department of the Western Region and Front CPA¹¹. Acting through the commissariat’s structure, a sufficient number of deserters was recruited from various Corps’ units to be able to expand the Polish company to the size of a battalion within the Regiment and to start organizing another regiment¹². During the recruitment action, it was openly declared that the units in organization would become “one of the elements of the Polish revolution’s armed force”, and the very existence of these formations would create a chance for “the Polish proletariat to take its own country’s fate into its own hands”. Proclaiming that “the

¹⁰ Information on the specifics of the Soviet legal culture of that period can be found in: A. Bosiacki, *Utopia, władza, prawo. Doktryna i koncepcje prawne “bolszewickiej” Rosji 1917–1921*, Warszawa 1999, passim.

¹¹ S. Heltman, *Robotnik polski w rewolucji październikowej na Białorusi*, Mińsk 1927, p. 66.

¹² “Polska Prawda” No. 30 of 21.12.1917; “Polska Prawda” No. 32 of 23.12.1917.

People's Revolution in Poland is a realistic issue"¹³, potential benefits in an individual and social dimension that could be brought by the access of Polish military to the revolutionary ranks were indirectly indicated. The full implementation of this measure, however, was interrupted by the German troops' offensive initiated on 18 February 1918 and the occupation of Minsk.

Another way to create "Red" Polish troops was to incarnate pro-Bolshevik troops only from one selected Corps unit to some smaller revolutionary formation. The latter option was implemented when organizing a company made up of soldiers from the 1st Engineer Regiment. Here, under the influence of the agitation under the banner of the revolution, over 130 Polish military men with Lt Col. Uścińowicz at the forefront transferred¹⁴. The same scheme was used when the seeds of the first revolutionary unit in exile on the Northern Front emerged. On the basis of a bottom-up initiative, but obviously soon supported by the military CPA structures, a driving squadron was established there by the pro-Bolshevik Polish cavalry soldiers from the 1st (Baltic) Cavalry Regiment. Binding decisions in this matter were made at the beginning of February 1918 at the meeting of the 12th Army AMP. In the announced declaration there was a call "to organize revolutionary Polish battalions remaining in close contact with the People's Government¹⁵ and whose task shall be to fight with the counterrevolution both in Russia and in the country after returning to it"¹⁶.

¹³ "Polska Prawda" No. 36 of 29.12.1917.

¹⁴ *Dokumenty i materiały...*, Vol. 1, p. 297-302.

¹⁵ Here the RKL was referred to.

¹⁶ GARF, f. 1318, op. 1, d. 1603, li. 1-2.

The successes of the left-wing radicals in exile achieved in two units included in the 1st Polish Corps had the greatest propaganda resonance. At the end of December 1917, in Vitebsk, where the artillery units' formation point was located, the pro-Bolshevik activists of the local AMP ceased all relations with the PSMC and submitted to the AMPL selected at the 2nd CC AMPL Congress of the Military Left¹⁷. On behalf of the headquarters, Stefan Weychert came to meet the revolted soldiers. Thanks to the involvement of the secretary of the Central Committee in this grassroots initiative and at the same time establishing cooperation with the Vitebsk Military-Revolutionary Committee, the "democratization" action was prepared and carried out in the 1st Heavy Artillery Division and the 2nd Artillery Brigade. On the rubble of these Corps units, the 1st Polish Revolutionary Squadron of 1st of January was established¹⁸. Its commander was Stefan Czerniecki, who was one of the initiators of the December frond. Antoni Roszkowski, who collaborated with him at that time, was "rewarded" being delegated from the Vitebsk AMP to work at the local Military-Revolutionary Committee. Several other pro-Bolshevik military became delegates of the squadron in the Vitebsk CWSD¹⁹. It was significant that it was to be a combat unit, not a stage one. At first soldiers deprived of

¹⁷ It was about S. Czerniecki, A. Leppert and Roszkowski. – See: CAW, I.122.100.103: ZWP, Protokoły zebrań ZWP w Witebsku z 22.12.1917 r. i 29.12.1917 r.

¹⁸ The date indicated in the name of the unit, firstly, was associated with the date of the rally during which it was brought to life, and, secondly, referred to the 10th anniversary of the 10th Congress of PSP Left in Cieszyn in 1908 celebrated on that day. On the unit itself and the circumstances of its creation the following periodics informed: "Żołnierz Polski" No. 33 of 2.02.1918 and "Polska Prawda" No. 73 of 28.02.1918.

¹⁹ GARF, f. 1318, op. 1, d. 1608, li. 9n.

weapons requisitioned them from their Corps' colleagues from the unrevolutionized mortar artillery squadron. Food supplies for several hundred soldiers were provided by the local military Soviet authorities²⁰. In response to all these events, on 15 January 1918, the Command of the 1st Polish Corps announced an order dissolving its troops stationing in the Vitebsk province.

The key role in recruiting deserters from corporal formations to revolutions was initiated by radical activists of these AMPs recognizing the Central Committee as their own headquarters²¹. Similar actions were also taken by a group of the most pro-Bolshevik Belgorod soldiers. These military agitators, led by the social democrat Władysław Ścibor, came to Minsk to look among those incoming ex-Dowbor's supporters for soldiers willing to serve the revolution with a gun in hand²².

²⁰ Divergent data on the size of this unit are available. "Sprawozdanie delegatów z Witebska w kwestii uformowania Dywizjonu Rewolucyjnego im. 1 Stycznia" [Report of delegates from Vitebsk on the formation of the 1st Polish 1 January Revolutionary Squadron] mentions about 800 soldiers – See: GARF, f. 1318, op. 1, d. 1608, li. 22. In turn, "Raport wydziału Szkolenia Ogólnorosyjskiego Kolegium do Spraw Organizacji Armii Czerwonej o formowaniu jednostek Armii Czerwonej w guberni witebskiej z 5.04. 1918 r." [Report of the Department of Training of the All-Russia College for the Organization of the Red Army on the formation of units of the Red Army in the Vitebsk province of May 5, 1918] provides the number of 690 soldiers – See: *Dokumenty i materiały...*, Vol. 1, pp. 371-372.

²¹ A. Zatorski, *Polska lewica wojskowa...*, p. 272.

²² Idem, *Dzieje Pułku...*, p. 243. Leaving the ranks of the 1st Polish Corps the subordinates of Gen. J. Dowbor-Muśnicki were not easily influenced by the revolutionary agitation. Those of them who were characterized by the highest morale, joined *inter alia* the ranks of the armed formations organized by the borderland elites. See: K. Filipow, *Skryte oddziały Wojska Polskiego: Samoobrona Litwy i Białorusi (1918–1919)*, [in:] D. Grinberg, J. Snopko, G. Zackiewicz (eds), *Rok 1918 w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, Białystok 2010, pp. 411-418 and previous works of the author on this subject.

For the military radicals of the 1st Polish Revolutionary Regiment, the indoctrination campaign in the Belarusian areas was not the most important area of their activity. They focused primarily on their own environment, which at the beginning of 1918 became deeply disintegrated. As it was already stated, it was a result of the repressions that fell on the Regiment after refusing to carry out the order of the Soviet authorities to leave the Kharkov region to support the activities of revolutionary units against the Ukrainian formations. As part of the retaliation for this insubordination, on the night of 29 to 30 December 1917, the unit was disarmed and its commanders murdered. However, this was not the end, as the Regiment was liquidated upon the order of the Commander of the Bolshevik forces in Ukraine Gen. Vladimir Antonov-Ovseyenko.

It provoked unexpected repercussions of political nature and forced the CPC to get involved in the case. At its command a special commission was set up to investigate the circumstances of the Belgorod events²³, as well as the order to dissolve the unit was also withdrawn. Even Vladimir Lenin was involved in extinguishing the emotions in the affair, encouraging in the letter of 3 January 1918 Gen. Vladimir Antonov-Ovseyenko to accept the prestigious failure resulting from the cancellation of his order and explaining the motivations which had driven the central authorities in this matter. He wrote, among others: “Here you need an over-tactful approach, because it is about a national issue”, about the relations between Russians, Poles and Ukrainians²⁴.

²³ “Izvestia Wsierossijskogo Iсполnitelnogo Komiteta Sovietov” No. 263 of 12.01.1918.

²⁴ W. Lenin, *Dziela*, Warszawa 1958, Vol. 36, p. 482.

The disapproval of these actions on the part of the Bolshevik commanders in Ukraine forced changing the place of stationing the unit. The decision taken on 4 January 1918 by the CPC to move to Moscow deepened the demise of the soldiers' morale and widened the circle of those interested in demobilization. Of the nearly twenty thousand soldiers in the Regiment, half chose this option. A small part decided to join the 1st Polish Corps, the rest in the number of about six thousand was divided into a group of capable of active service and those who could only perform it in garrisons. Of the latter, the 2nd Polish Revolutionary Regiment was created, also called "Poznań" [pol. *Poznański*], and the former group remained in the reorganized 1st Polish Revolutionary Regiment called "Warsaw" [pol. *Warszawski*]. It turned out to be a temporary solution, since on 30 January 1918, on the basis of the order of the Commander of the Moscow Military District five companies were distinguished from the 1st Regiment, and they became the foundations to the 3rd Polish Revolutionary Regiment identified as "Krakow" [pol. *Krakowski*]. It is worth mentioning that this part of the Belgorod soldiers was sent to perform garrison service in the city, from which the name was taken to call their entire group²⁵.

On the eve of beginning of the armed operations by Germany and Austro-Hungary against Soviet Russia, the Belgorod military radicals linked to the leftists in exile presented an initiative to further reorganize both base units. It was part of a broader project introduced by the CPC, which on 13 January 1918 issued a decree

²⁵ Belgorod, as a result of the offensive of the Central Powers, found itself on the borderline of the Ukrainian territories and territories administered by the Soviet authorities. In this way, it became an important border guard point.

announcing the creation of the “socialist volunteer army”²⁶. This decision created the conditions for the consolidation of already existing Polish revolutionary groups and those that were meant to be organized in the near future within one of the Red Army brigades. There was even a proposal concerning the patron of this unit whom Tadeusz Kosciuszko was to be. In the brigade’s structures there were to be found three Riflemen Regiments, the 1 January Heavy Artillery Squadron, the Light Artillery Squadron and the Cavalry Division.

In the case of most of the above-mentioned divisions, the full headcounts had not been reached. A great depiction of it was the cavalry unit, for which only on 20 February 1918 about 800 soldiers and officers were separated from the 2nd Regiment. Based on this group, it was possible to create only the 1st Cavalry Partisan Unit²⁷. Organized *ad hoc* it was immediately sent to the Ukrainian front, where it fought with the armed forces of the Central Powers and formations subordinate to the Ukrainian Central Council. It was only in June, after the necessary recruitment, that this unit was transformed into a cavalry squadron called colloquially from its commander’s name the “Borewicz squadron”²⁸. After a few weeks there was another reorganization, as a result of which the 4 Polish Revolutionary Cavalry Regiment was formed. However, the unexpected abandonment of plans to organize the Polish revolutionary brigade led to the rapid transformation of the regiment into a multi-ethnic unit. The 4th Regiment was included in the 24th

²⁶ G. Obichkin et al. (eds), *Dekrety Sovetskoj vlasti. V dvuch tomach*, Vol. 1. Moskva, pp. 316, 352 et al.

²⁷ This unit was also sometimes referred to as the 1st Moscow Soviet Partisan Regiment.

²⁸ It is about Capt Piotr Borewicz.

(Simbirsk) Rifle Division led by Władysław Pawłowski. This formation was directed to the Eastern Front, where it fought against the forces of Admiral Alexander Kolchak.

The reasons for abandoning the formation of the Polish revolutionary brigade are interesting. Several reasons contributed to this, among them the most important was the human factor. The demoralized soldiers' ranks were shrinking more and more with each passing day. Even the most desperate and, as it seemed, ready to serve the revolution soldiers left their mother units. The scale of the phenomenon is perfectly illustrated by the case of the 2nd Regiment, whose numbers fluctuated around 1200 privates in March to decrease to five hundred in April. As a consequence, it was decided to liquidate it²⁹. However, it was not predicted that it could get even worse. The biggest fiasco was incurred in the case of the 3rd Regiment when even several dozen soldiers could not be obtained to form it. Thus, its creation was abandoned before the organizational process managed to enter a more advanced stage. The only available recruitment base for the Polish revolutionary units was therefore the 1st Regiment, whose ranks in spring 1918 were not numerous enough to carry out the original organizational projects.

Now, the issue of the numbers in the above-mentioned Polish revolutionary groups. From the correspondence of one of the organizers of the cavalry squadron created by the pro-Bolshevik Polish cavalrymen from the 1st (Baltic) Cavalry Regiment, with the CPA military units, it becomes clear that serious difficulties related to the use of the term "Polish" in the unit's name appeared. Some of the ultra-nationalist SDKPL activists, commonly referred

²⁹ Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Voennyj Archiv [RGVA], f. 3450, op. 1, d. 6, li. 36.

to as “luxembourgists”, did not accept emphasizing the ethnic roots of the revolutionary formation created by the Polish military. Wherever it was possible, they stigmatized the tendency to indicate the origin of a given revolutionary unit. The same thing happened in this case.

On behalf of the Commissariat Roman Łagwa explained the causes of the “verbal” confusion and advised on how cavalrymen should try to manage it. He wrote, among others, “If you try, your battalion, however it will be called *de iure*, it will be a *de facto* Polish. Of course, lead all actions in agreement with the local revolutionary authorities³⁰”.

Due to the fact that not all revolutionary units, in which Polish military dominated, had location determinants in their names, it was difficult at the turn of 1917/1918 to assess the scale of Poles’ accession to revolutionary formation. This type of information was not even in possession of their organizers, as it can be learnt, *inter alia*, from the communiqué signed by Roman Łagwa and his associate Bogdan Steckiewicz. The following statement was found in it: “the number of Poles in the socialist army is undefined, because there is almost no data on how many Polish soldiers joined its ranks”³¹.

Also today, due to the lack of source materials containing relevant statistical data, it is not possible to acquire this type of knowledge secondarily³². The same observation also applies to the number of Poles in the multiethnic divisions of the Red Guards and the Red Army in organization. Thus, it is impossible to assess the effects of the recruitment action to revolutionary

³⁰ GARF, f. 1318, op. 1, d. 1613, li. 10-41.

³¹ “Sprawa Żołnierska” No. 9 of 10.03.1918.

³² Such documentation was probably not produced.

formations conducted in the Polish military circles in Russia. The accounting difficulties deepened even further with the “internationalization” of the above-mentioned revolutionary Polish divisions. Although the Polish military constituted the core of these units, with time, the inflow of Russians and representatives of other nations led to the loss of their “Polish” character.

In addition to the imperfections of the military book-keeping, a certain influence on the assessment of the size and use of the mobilization potential of Polish soldiers was also caused by misunderstandings between individual factions of the radical leftists in exile. Two opposing views emerged regarding the ways to “manage” Polish military personnel remaining in Russia. In the most vivid manner, the clashing of both these concepts could be observed on the example of disputes regarding the future of the 1st Polish Revolutionary Regiment. The advocates of the first option recruited from members of the SDKPL advised demolding of this unit, demobilization of the soldiers serving in it, and sending the ones willing to be still under arms to the formation of a mixed ethnic composition co-creating the core of the Red Army. The alternative option promoted by the radicals gathered in the CPA military circles and their collaborators from the CC AMPL included the transformation of the Regiment into a Polish voluntary unit separated within this army.

Originally, under the influence of Soviet military circles, the second of the considered options was chosen. By the decision of the Commander of the Moscow Military District of 9 March 1918, the most pro-Bolshevik soldiers from the 1st Regiment and a smaller group from the 2nd Regiment were to supply the ranks of the newly formed

Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment³³. WO Stefan Zbikowski was appointed as the Commander. His deputy and at the same time the staff chief were initially 2nd Lt Stanisław Dziatkiewicz, and eventually these duties were performed by WO Wojciech Szudek. The political commissioner and at the same time the quartermaster was Władysław Ścibor. Of the two mentioned, the first one and the fourth one were associated with the SDKPL and the third with the PSP RF. The party background of the lower level commanding staff looked similar. The Social Democrats dominated filling about $\frac{2}{3}$ positions, and $\frac{1}{4}$ of positions was occupied by PSP Left members and supporters. The least numerous group was the pro-Bolshevik activists of PSP RF and the PPA.

Such proportions in the shares were not accidental. The influence of the SDKPL in the combined Military and Demobilization Departments of the CPA, and even in the CC AMPL, i.e. in the institutions with which personnel issues were consulted, was so significant that it managed to pass through the candidates of their own activists to these positions without any issues. The dominant position of this milieu in the Regiment was also evidenced by the fact that a thirty-men SDKPL party cell was operating within it. The PSP Left did not manage to create structures with analogical potential. It should be added here that social-democratic activists also dominated the

³³ The names “*Czerwony Rewolucyjny Pułk Warszawski*” [Red Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment] and “*Czerwony Pułk Rewolucyjnej Warszawy*” [Red Regiment of Revolutionary Warsaw] was used interchangeably. More on the organizational transformations is recorded in the archival documentation. See: Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj archiv social'no-politicheskoi istorii [RGASPI], f. 446, op. 1, d. 9, li. 1. The subject of the Regiment is also referred to in the several-tenth-page monographic study – See: A. Koskowski, *Czerwony Pułk Warszawy*, Warsaw 1977, passim.

Regiment's PRSC and used its forum to conduct indoctrination actions among soldiers. The party associates from the Department of Culture and Education of the CPA set the tone to all this. Among the speakers invited by them, apart from the activists of the mother group with Julian Marchlewski, Vladimir Lenin was even twice in the lead.

All this combined was to guarantee the loyalty of Polish soldiers serving in the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment towards their political mentors. The desire to neutralize the attacks of the "luxembourgist" group invariably advocating the dispersal of Polish soldiers in multi-ethnic units of the Guard and then the Red Army was an additional reason for the overrepresentation of the SDKPL military activists in the commanding staff of the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment.

Favoring the Social Democrats in the commanders' nominations did not stop the press criticism inspired by the supporters of the internationalist trend within the party. In *Trybuna*, a series of publications appeared in the second half of March in which the CC AMPL and the combined Military and Demobilization Departments of the CPA were subject to criticism for "mistakes and distortions" committed in the military area. The conclusion of all these attacks, in which the leading role was played by Stanisław Bobiński, was a call for the liquidation of both organizational structures. Justifying this conclusion, it was constantly emphasized that the Central Committee lost its *raison d'être* with the entry of demobilization into so advanced phase that the self-liquidation of the AMP was a natural outcome in this situation. An analogous argument referring to the official pragmatics was used to postulate the solution of the combined military departments of the Commissariat. At the

appropriate time, they were to secure the existence of soldiers in the social dimension during the demobilization. In a situation when the dismantling process of the old army was over and the Red Army began to organize, their mission was also considered finished³⁴.

In addition to the two organizational structures against which the main strike of the attack was directed, the Moscow section of the PSP Left was criticized. The resolution adopted in January by one of the Belgorod companies served as a pretext. The voting on it took place during a rally organized immediately after moving the remains of the Regiment to Moscow. The content of the resolution was formulated by military activists of the PSP Left. It included, among others, also the unfortunate – as it was to turn out – statement that the Polish soldier “cannot support the People’s Commissioners’ Government in all his actions oriented towards introducing the socialist regime in Russia”³⁵. Reaching for this resolution at the end of March with the intention to make its content a kind of a corroborative “unorthodoxy” of the political line of the allied group was a long-term element of pressure exerted on the PSP Left to unify its program with the SDKPL. This was part of the plan imposed by the Russian Bolsheviks to merge the two parties into a homogeneous group with a communist profile. As element of the current policy, the attack on the Moscow section of the PSP Left was aimed at pushing the party’s activists into the defensive in the upcoming game for positions in the institution, which was decided to replace the “discredited” AMPL and military units of the CPA. The

³⁴ See e.g. the publication entitled *Bezplodne wysilki* published in “Trybuna” No. 39 of 5.04.1918.

³⁵ W. Najdus, op. cit., p. 276 et al.

March propaganda attack was a clear signal that the liquidation of these organizational structures had already been decided. If it had been otherwise, the SDKPL leaders would not have taken the risk of undertaking the above-mentioned actions in opposition to their Russian comrades.

The initial phase of the changes took place already in April. At that time, the expected decision to dissolve the combined Military and Demobilization Departments of the CPA was announced, and the CC AMPL was self-liquidated. However, the moment of establishing a new institution with competence to carry out military projects of Polish communists and their Bolshevik protectors was postponed. It was not until June 1918 that the Military Political Department of the CPA was established. This delay was due to internal frictions in the left-wing circles in emigration. It was linked not only to the above-mentioned personal-party issues, but also it was a derivative of the disputes over the scope of competences and the territorial framework of the designed institution's activities.

In the interim period, the CPA undertook actions in the military sphere by temporary proxies. They were located at the headquarters of these formations and districts where soldiers of Polish origin served. For the position of the Commissar in the Moscow Military District Stanisław Bobiński was appointed, i.e. a person involved in the destruction of the old structures responsible for military projects. Taking over the reins in the military field by the Social Democrats representing the internationalist optics based on the views of Rosa

Luxemburg³⁶ seemed to determine the prospects for the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment.

The Commissioner for Polish Military Affairs in the Moscow Military District who, having learned about the establishment of this unit, reacted in a manner typical of its political milieu, i.e. by ordering its immediate disbanding. Only the determined resistance of the Regiment's Commander supported, among others, by Roman Łągwa and Stanisław Dziatkiewicz, blocked the implementation of this decision by Stanisław Bobiński³⁷.

The state of internal split resulting from the lack of a coherent view within the SDKPL on the form in which Poles should contribute to the armed ranks of the revolution could not be maintained any longer. It threatened with the group's disintegration. It also made it difficult to plan unification with the PSP Left. The scale of the dangers threatening the radical circles in exile was noticed by some of the social democrat leaders. They alarmed their Bolshevik protectors from the CPC on these threats. Therefore, the passivity of the latter should be attributed mainly to the fact that such a situation occurred and was maintained for a long time. Only the Bolsheviks were able to impose a compromise on both sides, or to reformulate it as one of the two antagonistic concepts of military action. However, before 18 February 1918, i.e. until the emergence of an external threat in the form of the Central Powers' armies' offensive of, also the Bolshevik elite had not yet developed consistent military concepts. At the end of 1917 most People's Commissars

³⁶ R. Rauba, *Naród w myśli politycznej Róży Luksemburg*, Zielona Góra 2005, passim. The Author presents the considerations on the issue of Poland's independence on pages: 134-160.

³⁷ The fact was mentioned in: I. Pawłowski, K. Sobczak, *Walczyli o Polskę. Polacy i oddziały polskie w rewolucji październikowej i wojnie domowej w Rosji 1917-1921*, Warszawa 1967, p. 160.

were in favor of the view that establishing the armed forces should be based on the militia system, the most optimal one for the so-called transition period. That is why they were involved in developing Red Guards workers' voluntary divisions.

The idea of universal arming of the people was not a new concept. The Bolsheviks referred here to the pre-socialist traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century, and those of their modern times from the early twentieth century. The slogan was used for the first time during the French revolution. The representatives of the Paris bourgeoisie, forming on 13 July 1789 the bourgeois militia troops, later named the National Guard, initiated the tradition of appealing at the moment of threat to the general public, which after arming transformed into the national armed forces. The people who served in them became soldiers appointing the commanding staff from among themselves. This idea was fully realized from 1792, already on the eve of the overthrow of the monarchy, when the principles of universal arming of the people and the mode to organize the People's Militia were established in the forum of the Legislative Assembly. These formal principles were developed and in practice tried in practice by the Jacobins. In the short period of their rule, the military policy implementing the vision of the "armed nation" was realized in the most complete way. Next generations of French revolutionaries referred to this tradition. This was the case in 1830, 1848 and 1870.

In the circles of the European socialist movement, August Blanqui³⁸ began to propagate the idea of universal armaments connected with disarming the permanent

³⁸ More on the issue: R. Garaudy, *Źródła francuskie socjalizmu naukowego*, Warszawa 1950, p. 278 et al.

army in 1838, and, after a long break, Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue³⁹ developed it in 1880. Finally, the issue was refined and included in the program canon of radical movements at the so-called The International Workers' Congress⁴⁰ in Paris in 1889.

Following the sister European groupings, the Russian Social Democracy also included in the party's program during the deliberations of its second congress in 1903 a point on the need to replace the permanent army with a people's militia⁴¹. One of the keen proponents of this idea at the forum of this group was Vladimir Lenin, who in a book published in March 1903 before the said congress entitled "To the Rural Poor. An Explanation for the Peasants of What the Social-Democrats Want" presented his own arguments regarding this issue. The actions undertaken by Russian radicals in the era of the 1905-1907 revolution were an expression of the practical implementation of the record adopted at the second congress. Acting under the Council of Workers' Delegates [CWD, pol. *Rada Delegatów Robotniczych*], they promoted the creation of divisions of the so-called Workers' Protective Guard, which in a short time began to be transformed into the structures of the workers' militia. The future organizer of the Bolshevik revolution "elevated by the revolutionary zeal" announced in mid-1905 that

³⁹ P. Lafargue, *Pisma wybrane*, Warszawa 1961, Vol. 1, p. 390 et al. The views of the "classics" of the European radical movement on military issues are included in a comprehensive 140-page study entitled: W. Korczak et al. (eds), *Marksizm-leninizm o wojnie i wojsku*, Warszawa 1969.

⁴⁰ During the Congress, i.e. on July 14, 1889, the Second International was founded.

⁴¹ A. Jegorov, K. Bogoljubov (eds), *Kommunisticheskaja partija Sovetskogo Sojuza v rezolucijah i reshenijah s'ezdov, konferencij i plenumov Central'nogo Komiteta*, Vol. 2: 1917-1922, Moskva 1983, p. 41.

the emerging militia units should be treated not only as a self-defense formation, but as a leaven for the future revolutionary army⁴².

In November, in subsequent publications referring to the issues of revolutionary and military nature, he upheld his earlier opinion on the importance of the revolution in implementing the postulate of general arming of the people, but complemented this reflection with the statement that in Russian conditions the need to revolutionize cadres of the Imperial Army is as much essential⁴³. With these statements, the author introduced this two-trackness to the Bolshevik military policy, fully revealed in the actions of the CPC at the turn of 1917/1918. On the one hand, it became engaged with determination in the development of workers' voluntary divisions in the Red Guards, and, on the other hand, through the "democratization" the program of revolutionizing the old army's staff outlined in 1905 was implemented.

The political conflict with the Central Powers and the threat of aggression on their part forced the CPC to give up this peculiar two-fold idea and to re-orientate the original organizational concepts. However, this was not done by giving up one of them, but by synthesizing certain elements of both visions of creating revolutionary armed forces. Therefore, it was considered necessary to establish a permanent army, but still with a volunteer profile. Some Bolshevik leaders even thought that abandoning the idea of the people's militia as a foundation for creating revolutionary formation was temporary. Once the external threat ceases, it will be

⁴² W. Lenin, *Dziela*, Warszawa 1951, Vol. 9, p. 214.

⁴³ Ibidem, pp. 437-438, 469-470; Idem, *Dziela*, Warszawa 1951, Vol. 10, p. 44.

possible to return to the original line of military policy. An expression of this type of views was, among others, announced on 3 January 1918 in “Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People”, in which the support for the concept of co-existence of the Russian Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army and armed workers’ masses organized on the basis of the people’s militia was articulated. In the face of a direct threat to the offensive of the Central Powers’ armies, a fundamental evolution of the Bolshevik views in the sphere of military issues took place. The decree of the CPC of 15 January 1918 announcing the organization of permanent armed forces by means of obligatory conscription was the signal of a definite abandonment of the original concepts assuming the implementation of the idea of universal arming of the people⁴⁴.

The representatives of the “luxemburgist” trend in the SDKPL, not without objection, accepted a new line of actions in the military field imposed by the Russian comrades. However, this reorientation of their current position was of a minor nature. It was only a consent to the introduction of a universal duty of military service as an alternative to the original concept of recruiting soldiers to the armed ranks of the revolution. On the other hand, their view on the rules of forming particular units within the Red Army did not change. The reluctance towards reliance on the ethnic key was still manifested in this context.

This attitude was a derivative of two premises. First of all, the group of “luxemburgists” hoped for the imminent fulfillment of plans to “light up the universal revolution”.

⁴⁴ S. Klackin, *Na zaščitie oktiabrja. Organizacija riegularnoj armii i milicjonnoje stroitelstvo v sovietskoj riespublikie (1917-1920)*, Moskva 1965, p. 71 et al.

They believed that the implementation of this idea and the consolidation of a new framework of social life in the global dimension required rather rejection than displaying ethnic differences. In their opinion, this requirement was no less relevant to the revolutionary armed forces. And here the second of the reasons should be mentioned for which some of the Social Democrats opted for the internationalization of revolutionary troops. According to the “luxemburgists”, the armed forces whose bayonets were to annihilate the old world could not in themselves possess the relics of the past in the form of ethnic units. They, therefore, drew their opponents’ attention to the fact that “the national army broke the unity of the revolutionary front and the class solidarity of the working masses, preserving nationalism and separating the soldiers, peasants and proletarians of other nationalities from each other”. However, it was not limited to abstracts. Not all of these arguments were presented in the rigid framework of revolutionary phraseology. To those to whom only a specific arguments spoke were shown the Bartosz Głowacki Polish Rifle Regiment in Moscow⁴⁵ and the “Polish regiments” in the 1st and 4th Army of the so-called Soviet Southern Republics, as examples of units created according to the ethnic key, which “in the hour of trial” turned out to be “politically uncertain”, or even “hostile to the Soviet power”. Striving to impose their own military concepts on the entire party, the January 1st Conference of the SDKPL Groups in

⁴⁵ It was organized under the auspices of the Polish Council of the Inter-Party Unification CPIU. The Bolsheviks liquidated it after the allegations about the cooperation of the Regiment with the Russian counter-revolutionary formations had arisen.

Russia passed a resolution prohibiting the formation of Polish revolutionary groups⁴⁶.

Based on the premises mentioned above and constantly exposing negative examples of the functioning of ethnic units, the “luxemburgists” blocked the organization process of the Polish regiments for long enough⁴⁷ to seriously limit the possibilities of their further development. The partial correction of their views in relation to military issues could not eliminate internal dissension in this sphere by any means. What is equally important, the ideologically founded and far from political pragmatism change influenced the implementation of the plans for the unification of the radical left in exile. The factional frictions persisted until the Bolshevik people’s commissars finally settled the dilemma: whether to organize troops of the Red Army with a homogeneous or mixed national composition emphasizing the internationalism of the revolutionary armed forces.

Faced with the threat of the destruction of Soviet Russia by the Central Powers’ armies marching East, the Bolsheviks were forced to abandon, at least for some time, the ambitious plans to “light up the universal revolution” and to replace them with a more ground-based project of defense of the current state of possession in Russia. The CPC leadership concluded that at this stage of the revolution one should reach for proven “imperialist” models of creating armed forces, and not experiment in this sphere in such extreme conditions.

⁴⁶ *Narodnyj Komissariat po Diełam Nacjonalnostiej. Otczot o diejatielnosti: 1 nojabrja 1917 g. – 20 ijunja 1918 g.*, Moskva 1918, pp. 21-22; “Trybuna” No. 1 of 28.01.1918.

⁴⁷ In the era of revolution, due to the dynamics of events, time flowed by a much faster rhythm. Hence, even a period of several months was perceived as relatively long.

It seemed, therefore, that the above-mentioned circumstances would also induce the “luxemburgists” to further modify military plans and reconcile with the prospect of expanding Polish revolutionary groups. However, it did not happen. Using their influence in the People’s Commissariat for Nationalities Affairs, at the turn of April and May 1918, they managed to push through the inter-sectoral consultations regarding the mode of ethnic units’ formation, such legal regulations that temporarily blocked all Polish initiatives. It was established that individual ethnic groups belonging to the Red Army can be organized only “on the territory of a compact residence of a given nationality”. The right to create their own divisions, therefore, gained nations existing within the limits of the Soviet jurisdiction. At that moment, for example, Ukrainians and Armenians. The exceptions from this general rule were allowed. The revolutionary units could be formed to recruit from refugees, emigrants or former prisoners of war, provided that the given national commissariat, for example the CPA, would act in concert with a radical party grouping representatives of that nation and operating in Russia, for example with the SDKPL, with a kind of guarantee that the organized formation would not join the “counter-revolution camp”. This path was applied in practice in relation to the Latvian divisions.

The opinion of the SDKPL on Polish organizing initiatives was invariably ill-inclined. It was invoked during the 2nd Conference of the SDKPL Groups in Russia taking place in May. The motivation of this resistance did not change either. Like a mantra, two terrorizing words were repeated: “nationalism” and “separatism”. The “luxemburgists” fear of occurrence of these phenomena in the Polish military circles seemed to

be greater than the fears of consequences of a conflict with their CPC protectors. The latter group, through the most trusted “Polish communists”, had already started to prepare the ground for completing the reorientation process of the military projects of the allied group.

Chapter III

The first stage of forming the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia

The speech of Stanisław Bobiński at the 2nd Congress of the SDKPL Group became a harbinger of the upcoming change in the SDKPL's approach to military issues. In it, he proposed the creation of divisions with a mixed ethnic composition, where, however, the Polish military would constitute $\frac{3}{4}$ of the personal composition. The speaker recognized the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment as a model example of such a unit. This "foreign national element" in *quasi*-Polish formations was to constitute a kind of security, a guarantee of their loyalty to the political administrators.

The proposed solution satisfied both parties to the internal party dispute¹. It met the expectations of the faction opting for the separation of Poles from the multiethnic military ranks serving in the Red Army, as well as the demands of the "luxemburgists" seeking to keep Polish soldiers in the state of dispersion. Thanks to the adoption of such an organizational formula in the creation of Polish revolutionary divisions, it was possible to classify them into a group of internationalist formation formed on the basis of the order of military commissioner Leon Trotsky of 24 May 1918. Such units were formed in

¹ "Trybuna" No. 71 of 17.05.1918.

the Soviet territory using the recruitment base of soldiers of different ethnic origin, prisoners taken in the struggle between Russia and the Central Powers².

The development of the coherent position on the participation of Poles in creating revolutionary formations allowed in mid-1918 to proceed to the planned expansion of the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment. At the end of June, its headcount fluctuated around 1,400 soldiers, while the target level was to be more than twice as large³. Acquiring supplements turned out to be an extremely difficult task. The mobilization possibilities in the Polish military circles already serving in the Red Army significantly decreased due to the ongoing armed struggles with external and internal opponents.

The publication in *Trybuna* mentioning a telegram by Cpt. Piotr Borewicz, commanding the 4th Revolutionary Regiment being part of the 24th Simbirsk Rifle Division, was a good illustration of the scale of losses suffered by smaller and larger divisions with the dominating Polish ethnic group. It included information that in the course of the cavalry operations carried out by this unit, half of the soldiers serving in it on the Eastern Front was killed⁴.

Another reason for the decrease in the mobilization base was the demobilization carried out at the turn of 1917/1918, which resulted in a definite break with the army of Poles from the territory of the Russian western gubernyas. These military men returned to their family homes, and after 18 February, they found themselves in the Central Powers' occupation zone. The only potential recruitment reserves were practically the circles of

² A. Miodowski, *Jeńcy austrowęgierscy...*, pp. 111-130.

³ RGVA, f. 3856, op. 3, d. 12, li. 38.

⁴ "Trybuna" No. 61 of 3.05.1918. There is no information on the initial headcount of the division.

demobilized Polish military descended from Congress Poland who so far for various reasons had not returned to their homeland and ranks of Polish prisoners of war from the Central Powers' armies. It also included civilians from the Polish diaspora community, and ultimately the own exiled members' ranks of the SDKPL, the PSP Left, and a much narrower circle from the PSP RF and the PPA.

The most desirable recruit for the Polish revolutionary groups were, first of all, ex-Belgorod soldiers and soldiers demobilized directly from the old Russian Army. Minor trust was given to those who had had an experience of service in the Corps' units. To some extent, the prisoners of war were also counted on, however, the Czechoslovak example⁵ acted somewhat discouragingly and, thus, prevented a greater openness to this direction of recruitment.

Trying to intensify this process, a number of direct actions were initiated and the press was harnessed in the agitation and recruitment action. All the SDKPL groups and leading party columnists got involved in these activities. In the first place, the exiled radical circles had to rebuild among the uniformed trust lost in a light-hearted manner on the night from 29 to 30 December 1917, on the occasion of the annihilation of the Belgorod Regiment. It was not easy. Therefore, in the initial phase of these actions it did not bring expected results.

Assistance in overcoming distrust attempted to provide military and civilian Soviet authorities, which, as it was said before, also were not without fault in provoking the manifested aversion towards the Russian

⁵ The Czechoslovak Legion was a military formation established in Russia in 1917 of Czech and Slovak prisoners of the Austro-Hungarian army. In May 1918, the Legion joined the civil war in Russia on the side of the Whites.

and Polish radical left⁶. The highest expectations were placed upon the agitation conducted by press publications. Among Polish publishers, *Trybuna* played a key role in this action. Numerous articles appeared in it calling for joining the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment. Their titles alone created an aura of threat, which also Polish military men should not to defy. For this purpose, for example, readable for all analogies from the sphere of weather phenomena were used with relish. The titles warned, therefore, against the effects of passivity, calling from the front pages: “Clouds are gathering”⁷, so that in the next publication, even further strengthening the message, alarm the entire diaspora with a message: “Storm is coming”⁸. All readers who were faced with the dilemma whether to preserve the distance to the Polish revolutionary groups or, in spite of all objections, to join their ranks, were finally called by *Trybuna*: “Decide!” According to the argument included in the last publication, a positive response meant to every Polish military that he would “fight for his own cause, for the people’s cause, for the cause of the liberation of the Polish people through revolution”⁹.

However, the huge propaganda effort could not bring effects proportional to its scale, even if it was not coordinated with the legislative initiatives of the CPC and their derivatives in the form of orders issued by the Red Army command. A good illustration of this type of situation was the decree of 22 April 1918 designing a minimum period of service in units of the Red Army for

⁶ Thanks to the initiatives of the Moscow People’s Commissariat for Military Affairs, this reluctance was overcome to some extent.

⁷ “Trybuna” No. 64 of 9.05.1918.

⁸ Ibidem, No. 126 of 24.07.1918.

⁹ Ibidem, No. 131 of 30.07.1918.

six months. The introduction of this requirement in such dynamically changing Russian realities worked discouragingly, especially for those who were waiting for repatriation. There was a widespread fear that such a relativist connection with the revolutionary formations would prevent them from returning to the country, when such a possibility would appear. Moreover, the limited effects of the recruitment campaign resulted from the pacifist attitudes demonstrated by the majority of Polish soldiers and the fear of losing their lives just before the end of the Great War.

It should be remembered in this context that the intention of the “export of the revolution” to the West demonstrated by the Bolsheviks also had discouraging impact on the demobilized military. This idea was perceived by most of them as a preview of continuing the war. Therefore, many hoped, during this six-month service, not only to get the task of defending Soviet Russia against the aggression of the Central Powers, but also to participate in an offensive whose finale, according to the announcement of the commissars, was to take place not in Warsaw, but on the shores of the Atlantic. Soldier troops were well aware of the fact that the possible participation in such a long battle route would bring many opportunities to lose their lives. This kind of perspective was not too inviting even for the Polish soldiers “seduced by the revolution”. In their attitudes, they did not differ in anything from Russian comrades. Without an element of coercion and restoring discipline, no one was able to remake these people into soldiers and bring morale back to them exclusively through agitation.

Due to the weak response among the demobilized, the decision was made at the Moscow Commissariat for Military Affairs to reach for Poles serving in dispersal in

the multi-ethnic units of the Red Army in a far wider manner than originally planned. According to the available data, in the first stage, i.e. until 1 June 1918, a group of nearly 300 soldiers formed into a battalion, who until then had served in the liquidated “Polish” rifle regiment of the 1st Army of the Soviet Union Southern Republics¹⁰, were transferred to the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment. The next “acquisition” were the soldiers from one of the guard teams in the number of about 600, among which there were even the Haller-ites caught on their way to Murmansk¹¹. However, the most spectacular reinforcement turned out to be soldiers from the 1st Polish 1 January Revolutionary Squadron, which was created in merging two “democratized” Corps units, i.e. the 1st Heavy Artillery Squadron and the 2nd Artillery Brigade. This revolutionary squadron grew over time into a regiment, also called Warsaw¹². The number of soldiers serving in it between 1917 and 1918 ranged between 400 and 1200¹³, so that when they were incorporated into the Warsaw Revolutionary Rifle, it would oscillate around 1000. The ranks of the extended unit were also supplied with several dozens of soldiers from many other Red Army formations, and even much more numerous Polish military groups from divisions originally organized by the PSMC or CPIU. Examples of such accession were

¹⁰ Z. Łukawski, *Przyczynek do historii Zachodniej Dywizji Strzelców*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego – Prace Historyczne” 1960, Vol. 4, p. 122.

¹¹ The numerical data available in the documentation of this unit – See: RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 77, li. 63n.

¹² It considers the 4th (Warsaw) Reserve Regiment. It is worth emphasizing the special esteem among uniformed radicals for the adjective “Warsaw”. Three different regiments referring in their names to the Polish capital already have been identified.

¹³ The numerical data available in the documentation of this unit – See: RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 77, li. 63n.

companies from the Bartosz Glowacki Polish Rifle Regiment in Moscow to them and an unorganized group of 200 Haller-ites¹⁴.

Summing up the issue concerning the scale of soldiers' inflow to the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment, the majority of this data should be assessed as too high. It contains the headcounts of the mother units from before Polish military had left them automatically assuming that the same number of these soldiers was sent to divisions of the Regiment. Therefore, losses that took place in the transfer period were not taken into account. As in the case of the Belgorod, Polish military people routinely resigned from further service. Therefore, there is no proof for claiming that in the middle of 1918, about 2,000 Polish soldiers served in this unit. The total number of them did not exceed 1200, and among them, besides Poles, military of other nationalities were included. Up to the level of numbers oscillating around 2000, the unit approached itself only in October 1918. It was already functioning as part of the Western Rifle Division and was known under the name of the 1st Warsaw Rifle Regiment¹⁵.

The decision of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Councils of 29 May 1918 introducing mandatory military service was decisive for the further development of Polish revolutionary groups. On its basis, on 3 July, over 600 conscripts were incorporated into the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment. It is worth pointing out in this context that they constituted $\frac{1}{3}$ the then personal

¹⁴ I. Pawłowski, K. Sobczak, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

¹⁵ A. Miodowski, *Polityka wojskowa radykalnej lewicy polskiej (1917-1921)*, Białystok 2011, p. 234. The monograph: *Polish revolutionary formations in the Red Army structures (1918-1921)* is based on the habilitation thesis quoted in this bibliographic footnote.

state of the unit¹⁶. It gives an image of the scale of the boycott among Polish soldiers remaining in Russia towards organizing initiatives in the military sphere of the exiled radical circles and their protectors from the CPC.

Looking for a way, at least in the quantity and propaganda dimensions, since it was no longer possible in the personal and ethnic wise, to create a full-fledged Polish regiment, it was decided to include companies consisting of Chinese, Koreans, and Muslims. It was attempted to turn this evident failure into a success. Thus, a propaganda campaign was initiated within which, for example, *Trybuna* emphasized that thanks to the presence of Chinese, Koreans and Muslims from Central Asia and the Caucasus in the Regiment, its internationalistic character was strengthened¹⁷.

Of course, it was not clear that it meant a simultaneous weakening of its Polish character. Those of the Social Democrats who fought against the formation of Polish revolutionary groups within the group, and who perceived the intra-party success as a compromise introducing favorable proportions between Poles and foreigners in a ratio of $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ had the right to feel disappointed. Mainly under their influence, actions were taken to prevent further “deepening” of the internationalization of the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment. The factor conducive to their actions was the closer and closer prospect of the end of the Great War and the binding hopes of the Bolsheviks to the outbreak of proletarian revolution in Germany.

The People’s commissars thought that the intervention of the Red Army would be necessary for the success of plans to revolutionize the Reich. It was connected with

¹⁶ RGVA, f. 3856, op. 3, d. 12, li. 55.

¹⁷ “Trybuna” No. 137 of 6.08.1918 r.

the necessity of crossing through the Polish ethnic area by its divisions, ensuring the security of the rear. In Moscow, it was recognized that the freedom to implement the plans for “exporting the revolution” could only be ensured by the introduction of the Councils’ authority over the Vistula on the way. It was expected that the implementation of this task would be best implemented by Polish comrades from the exiled radical groups. Therefore, it was necessary to pay greater attention to the development of the “armed arm of the Polish revolution” than ever before.

The fact that CPC treated this issue as a priority was proved by the appearance of Vladimir Lenin accompanied by SDKPL leading activists among Polish military. The Bolshevik leader, speaking to the soldiers of the Warsaw Regiment, presented a likely scenario of the progress of revolutionary changes in Western Europe. In his opinion, the success of these changes was largely dependent on the attitude of soldiers, including Polish soldiers. The key theme of this statement was the call to create an “international Red Army” capable of defeating the “imperialist forces”. From these general remarks showing the scale of the project, in which some Polish soldiers could decide to join the revolutionary groups formed in Russia, there was a shift to the presentation of specific issues related to “revolutionary tactics”. In this area, Lenin’s statements were completed by the Polish Social Democrats accompanying him.

Specifying the speech of the Bolshevik leader, Stanisław Bobiński explained the role of Poles in the country and in exile in the “export of the revolution” to the military. In turn, Julian Marchlewski highlighted the image of the socio-political situation in Germany and tried to make them aware of the importance of

establishing the revolutionary orders in this country to strengthen radical movements in the rest of the continent. The speeches of Bernard Mandelbaum, Julian Leszczyński and Mieczysław Warszawski-Bronski concerned the existential matters of Polish soldiers, but indirectly they had the purpose of mobilizing the military from this particular unit, also those hesitating whether to join its ranks. The proverbial “i” in the indoctrination action was dotted by the political commissioner of the Moscow Military District, Nikolay Muralov. Speaking to the Regiment’ soldiers, he explicitly pointed out the key role of the revolutionary armed forces, including the Polish formations, in the “ignition of the revolution’s fire” and the consolidation of the new political order in Europe¹⁸.

The propaganda and indoctrination activities were also supported by transversal initiatives in the organizational sphere. The Bolshevik People’s Commissars set an extremely ambitious goal for the activists of the SDKPL and the PSP Left. It was presented in the following way:

The task of the Polish communists is to create a Red Army supporting the revolution in Poland. It should be created both in the country and here in the Soviet Republic, where

¹⁸ “Trybuna” No. 133 of 1.08.1918. See this press account with the descriptions of the meeting contained in the following scientific publications: I. Pawłowski, K. Sobczak, op. cit., p. 182 et al; , *Z zagadnień formowania międzynarodowych oddziałów Armii Czerwonej (1917-1920)*, “Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny” 1964, No. 2, p. 197 et al; W. Najdus, *Lewica polska w Kraju Rad*, Warszawa 1971, p. 156. The publications show that there are discrepancies in the dating of this event. It considers is 1 and 2 August. In this context, it is worth paying attention to the press coverage in “Trybuna”, which was posted in No. 133 of August 1. Further comment seems no longer necessary.

there are already combat personnel in the form of the Warsaw Red Regiment (...) ¹⁹.

In *Trybuna*, propagating this idea, it was emphasized that

the slogan: «Under arms, to the ranks! » should be found alive with the wide masses of the exiled poor returning to the country. Let us come back (...) as a compact fighting force, ready with bayonets to pave the way for a better life and a new order, to socialism. We look at the red banner as soldiers of the proletarian revolution ²⁰.

In this preliminary stage of the creation of the Red Army of Poland, the exiled radicals had to reform the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment still in its beginning stage into a division ²¹. The original plan to create such a formation was submitted to the headquarters of the Moscow Military District on July 27, 1918 by Stanisław Bobiński ²². According to this proposal the Western Rifle Division was to consist of six rifle regiments ²³, two cavalry regiments, an engineer regiment, an artillery brigade, a car company, an air force unit and a sanitary service unit. The author of the organizational concept proposed that the right to appoint military commissioners in individual units of the division should be given to the

¹⁹ "Trybuna" No. 151 of 17.11.1918.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Originally, it was intended to be called the 1st Moscow Rifle Division.

²² At that time, he was the duty of the commissioner for Polish military affairs at the headquarters of the Moscow Military District.

²³ On the basis of six rifle regiments, three rifle brigades were to be formed. In the 1st and the 2nd brigade, it was planned that the Polish ethnic element would dominate, and in the 3rd Brigade – the Lithuanian and Belarusian elements.

proper party organs of Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian radical groups. For coordination and control of their actions appropriate regarding ethnicity KLdsN cells would be responsible. The right to fill command and staff positions should be given to the political and military leadership of the Moscow Military District. In the project of Stanisław Bobiński, regarding the method of soldiers' recruitment to the division, two methods of recruitment, i.e. volunteering and mobilization, were taken into account. The latter option was to be implemented according to a territorial, not ethnic, key²⁴. The latter form was supported by the "luxembourgists" who were still setting the tone for the military policy of the SDKPL.

The organizational proposals submitted to the Moscow Regional Commissariat for Military Affairs were accepted. By this organ's order of 3 August 1918, the process of creating the Western Rifle Division was initiated. Another order from 14 August required directing to conscripts men born in the territory of Congress Poland and the northwestern Governorates of the former Empire. People permanently residing in Russia at that time, as well as those who were staying on its territory as war refugees were considered. By the order of the Revolutionary Military Council²⁵ of 21 October, soldiers from the front units of the Red Army who expressed their will to move to the Polish revolutionary division were excluded from conscription²⁶.

²⁴ E. Kozłowski, W. Ryżewski, *Polskie formacje rewolucyjne w świetle dokumentów*, "Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny" Issue 4: 1967, pp. 268-269.

²⁵ In the archive materials, followed by other versions of the organ's name appearing in literature: the Revolutionary War Council and the Supreme War Council.

²⁶ K. Sobczak, *Z zagadnień formowania międzynarodowych oddziałów Armii Czerwonej (1917-1920)*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Wojskowej

Initially, Stefan Żbikowski, the former commander of the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment, was given the task to organize work on its construction. However, he was already on 3 September moved to the position of the second military commissioner of the division, Stanisław Bobiński was appointed the first one. The third *politruk*²⁷ located at the headquarters of the unit located in Moscow was Stanisław Budzyński²⁸. The vacant position of the commander was taken up in September by WO Włodzimierz Jerszow. The second center of formation of the division along with Moscow was to become Tambov. It was in the region of the Southern Front that the process of transforming the Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment into the 1st Warsaw Rifle Regiment and proceed to the creation of the 2 Siedlce Rifle Regiment²⁹, the Warsaw Hussars Regiment and the 1st Light Artillery Squadron was meant to be completed. The third formation point of the division was Vitebsk, where on the basis of the remains from the 4th Warsaw Reserve Regiment³⁰ a regiment was formed, which, in addition to preserving its original name, continued to use the name of the Polish

Akademii Politycznej - Seria Historyczna” 1967, No. 17, p. 54 et al.; cf. W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, p. 155.

²⁷ *Politruk* (Russian политический руководитель, *politiczeskij rukowoditel* – political leader, political director). Originally (1918-1942) person in charge of political and educational work in the subunits of the Red Army and the Fleet, in 1935-1942 also a military rank in the corps of political officers in all types of troops.

²⁸ R. Łagwa was appointed as the head of this staff. – W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, p. 155 et al.

²⁹ Originally, this unit was referred to as the 2nd Podlasie Rifle Regiment. It was not until 10.09.1918 that the name “Siedlce” was used in the name. In mid-October, the Regiment’s number also changed. The exchange of numbers with the Lublin Regiment was made. Since then, both units have functioned, as the 3rd Siedlce Rifle Regiment and the 2nd Lublin Rifle Regiment.

³⁰ It considers the Regiment created by the development of the 1st Polish Revolutionary Squadron named after 1st of January.

capital in its name, i.e. the 4th Warsaw Rifle Regiment³¹. In the main base of the division in Moscow, five more units were created. One of them was organized on the basis of the guarding team's staff consisting of Poles and was given the name of the 3rd Lublin Rifle Regiment³². In addition, the Mazovian Uhlan Regiment and the 2nd Light Artillery Squadron were created.

In cooperation with the Lithuanian section of the RCP(b), the 5th Vilnius Rifle Regiment was created. Its cadres were recruited mainly from refugees from the northwestern Governorates of the former Empire. Initially, the formation of another regiment under the working name "Kaunas" was planned on the basis of this mobilization base, but this project was eventually abandoned. Yet, another unit included in the Polish division was created based on the potential of the liquidated 6th Moscow Division, its technical structures and the rifle regiment, i.e. the 6th Grodno Rifle Regiment.

The structure of the division provided for the existence of an intermediate level in the form of brigades. The Soviet military spheres, in consultation with the exiled radical circles, established three such units. Each

³¹ On the margins of the issue, in which every now and then there is a reference to the Polish capital in the names of Polish revolutionary units, it should be added that in the southern part of the Voronezh gubernya, in 1918, another formation called "Warsaw" operated. However, it was not a regiment in which Polish soldiers constituted a more numerous group. The name "Warsaw Infantry Regiment" came from the days of the old Imperial Army. After the inclusion of the "democratized" unit into the Red Army, the soldiers serving in it, only for reasons of sentiment, decided to keep its original name. The regiment was never part of the structure of the Western Rifle Division.

³² From mid-October 1918, after changing numbers with the Siedlce Regiment, the unit functioned as the 2nd Lublin Rifle Regiment. There was also a change in its assignment by inclusion in the 1st Brigade.

of them was organizationally connected with the center of deployment of Polish revolutionary groups, i.e. in Moscow, Vitebsk and Tambov. All units established in the last town were included in the 1st Brigade. The 2nd Brigade, besides the formation organized in Vitebsk, was composed of some units created in in Moscow, i.e. the 3rd Lublin Rifle Regiment, the Mazovian Uhlan Regiment and the 2nd Light Artillery Squadron³³. The 3rd Brigade organized in Moscow included the 5th Vilnius Rifle Regiment and 6th Grodno Rifle Regiment were in the 3rd Brigade³⁴.

In addition to the structures of the Western Rifle Division, whose individual units fought notably scattered on three fronts³⁵, the Polish leftist radicals operating on Russian territory managed to create one more major revolutionary formation, i.e. the 1st Lublin Infantry

³³ In mid-October, the Siedlce Regiment was moved to the 2nd Brigade, and the Lublin Regiment was excluded from it.

³⁴ The issues related to the process of formation of individual units of the Western Rifle Division are discussed in more detail in the following publications by: I. Pawłowski and K. Sobczak, J. Hofman, and chronologically the first work on this issue – See: S. Żbikowski, *Zarys historii Zachodniej Dywizji Strzelców*, L. Dubacki (edition of the author's manuscript), "Z Pola Walki" 1960, Issue 2, pp. 85-115; A. Zatorski, *Przyczynek do dziejów Zachodniej Dywizji Strzelców Armii Czerwonej w 1918 r.*, "Studia z Najnowszych Dziejów Powszechnych Wyższej Szkoły Nauk Społecznych" 1963, Vol. 5, p. 153 et al.; Z. Łukawski, *Przyczynek do historii...*, p. 122 et al. Some of these units are presented by: O. Łatyszonek, *Białoruskie formacje wojskowe 1917–1923*, Białystok 1995, pp. 119-121, 231. A rich source basis also available at RGVA, i.e. fond 1458: there are materials about the Western Rifle Division; fond 3856: in it there are materials about the 1st Warsaw Rifle Regiment; fond 8651: materials about the Warsaw Hussars Regiment; fond 8579: and in it materials on the Mazovian Uhlan Regiment.

³⁵ On the Eastern Front within the 5th Army – the Mazovian Uhlan Regiment fought, and most of the units of the 1st Brigade fought on the Southern Front. Several other units were assigned to the structures of the Western Front.

Regiment stationing for a longer time in Voronezh. The Soviet military authorities, however, incorporated it into the 3rd Voronezh Infantry Division, being part of the 8th Army. There, the Regiment received the number 104 and was directed to fight with the forces of Ataman Piotr Krasnov. Even before these decisions were taken, the exiled radicals managed to persuade some soldiers of the Lublin Regiment to move to the 2nd Brigade troops in Moscow³⁶.

Such cases like the one mentioned above were much more numerous. The dissonance between the CPC's ambitious organizing plans and Red Army command's actions resulting from needs of the hour was evident. Was it an incident resulting from the lack of coordination of actions between the Soviet civil and military authorities or their well-thought-out tactics? It is impossible to assess today. Official documents do not allow to discover the intentions of the people's commissars and their military subordinates. In the available memoir literature left by people involved in the process of organization of the Polish revolutionary formations, due to the "official" narrative mannerism, it is also impossible to reconstruct political, sociological and psychological decision-making processes. Therefore, the judgments formulated based on the analysis of available source facts are possible to be made. On this basis, it can be stated that the needs of the front were only a pretext to block the organization and further development of the Western Rifle Division.

Capt. Piotr Borewicz commanding the cavalry 4 Polish Revolutionary Regiment found about it at the end of December 1918. His efforts to separate this formation from the 24 Simbirsk Rifle Division and join the Polish

³⁶ A. Zatorski, *Przyczynek do dziejów...*, p. 153 et al.

division encountered a strong resistance from the Soviet military spheres. The Polish radicals pointed to the pre-revolution commanding staff, drawn into the Red Army by the Bolsheviks in the face of internal and external threats, as responsible for such policy. The attitude of these officers reluctant to the idea of expanding Polish revolutionary groups stemmed from their traditional anti-polonism. However, available facts clearly undermine this thesis. The political commissars, who were some kind of party guardians of the military structures of the Red Army, had a profound influence on the organizational issues at that time. Without their approval, the generals with a tsarist background could not undertake any independent initiatives in the sphere of which it is referred here. Since the decision to create the Western Rifle Division was made, based on the political decision, the further development of this formation depended on the will of the CPC. Confirmation of this assessment can be found not only in the described case of the Polish cavalry regiment. The example of this unit is of universal character. The reference to this particular case is primarily due to the fact that it concerns one of the largest, alongside the 1st Lublin Infantry Regiment, Polish military division, which was never incorporated in the structures of the Western Rifle Division, mainly for political reasons.

What may be surprising in this context is that, apart from ideological reasons resulting from the promotion of internationalism also in the creation of military divisions, the attitude of ethnic dissent, seemingly rather alien to the radical circles, had a significant influence on the blocking of expansion and, in the long run, the liquidation of the Polish division. It could even be

determined as anti-polonism. In this case, it was founded primarily on the lack of trust in Polish military servicemen in the revolutionary formations. Was this distrust justified or ungrounded and revealed to some extent secondary to the influence of irrational prejudices of the Russian Bolsheviks and Polish “luxembourgists”? Answers to these doubts can be found referring not only to the case of the 4th Polish Revolutionary Regiment, but also to several other divisions.

Determination of Cpt. Piotr Borewicz and his cavalrymen from the 4th Polish Revolutionary Regiment to get permission to supply the ranks of the Western Division of Rifles was so great that a bottom-up attempt to increase the Regiment’s headcount in order to be able to transform it into a Polish cavalry brigade. It was expected that the mere fact of the existence of such an entity outside the framework of the division would force an expected decision on merging. Trying to create the right political climate for it, in correspondence with a party military expert, for whom Stanisław Bobiński was recognized in the SDKPL, Cpt. Piotr Borewicz provided him with encouraging prospects. He wrote, among others, that the cavalry brigade, when incorporated into the division structure, would become “real support and strength in your management, as the Polish People’s Commissar”, and the core group of the Belgorod soldiers would always “defend the proletariat dictatorship in Poland in a fight to the death”³⁷. This, as well as initiatives and declarations of loyalty similar to it were not received, however, with a response expected by Polish military. This was mainly due to the fears of the political spheres, mainly the Soviets, but also the radical emigres

³⁷ RGVA, f. 1458, op. 1, d. 29, li. 280.

related to them, concerning sincerity of the declarations on fidelity to the revolution's forces.

After 11 November 1918, there were more and more signals justifying this lack of trust. At the same time, a general tendency was observed. These Polish military men serving in the Red Army in ethnically mixed units demanded a transfer to the Western Rifle Division. While those who were already in its ranks requested their units to be withdrawn from the Eastern and Southern Fronts and directed to the Western Front. Both of the groups wanted to be as close as possible to the areas of the reborn Polish state. On 21 November 1918, the commander of the 1st Brigade informed the staff of the Western Rifle Division in Moscow that "In the last days, after receiving news of the revolution in Germany, reports from Red Army soldiers and commanders have been coming saying that if the Brigade is not moved west, they will run away"³⁸. The typical in such situations lack of reaction and anticipation of civilian and military Soviet decision-makers on further development of events ultimately led to disorders in the unit. According to the "revolutionary logic" of that time, it was only after this fact that some remedial actions were taken. However, they did not meet the expectations of military rebels. Thus, a power solution was chosen. What is important, the repressions were not limited only to soldiers themselves, non-commissioned officers and lower-rank officers, but they equally affected the circle of military and political commanders. The Brigade commander Lt Roman Łągwa and the political commissar Jaśkiewicz were arrested. Both of them were originally intended to be brought before the Tribunal. Before further sanctions, they were

³⁸ This statement was originally provided by A. Miodowski, *Polityka wojskowa radykalnej...*, p. 243.

saved by the intervention of Polish comrades with strong authority in the central bodies reporting to the CPC³⁹.

In addition to such spectacular restrictive activities as those described above taken on a macroscale, the same program to restrain the expansion of the Western Rifle Division was simultaneously implemented with equal brutality and no less consistency, just on a microscale. The events in Voronezh were a representative example of the background actions. There were arrests of Polish military servants serving in the local railway protection formation who, in an ultimatum, demanded permission to be transferred to the Polish division⁴⁰. This mode of pacification of bottom-up initiatives created by the exiled military circles made it possible in the short-term to efficiently extinguish all the ferments, but in the long run led to revealing among military attitudes distancing towards the Bolshevik variant of the revolution. In the best-case scenario, the ultimate consequence of this disappointment was weakening, and most frequently the disappearance of loyalty towards the Bolsheviks and their SDKPL comrades. It was only after crossing this line by Polish military that it became justified to apply the principle of limited trust to them by the People's Commissars. Before that, there had been no reasons other than ideological and those against ethnic background.

The vast majority of those Poles who decided to join the ranks of the Red Army made it by choice, not by

³⁹ It considers S. Pestkowski from the People's Commissariat for Nationalities and S. Bobinski, who at that time was the commissioner for Polish military affairs at the headquarters of the Moscow Military District. They both intervened in the staff of the 9th Army in the framework of which the 1st Brigade of the Western Rifle Division operated.

⁴⁰ RGVA, f. 1458, op. 1, d. 29, li. 170.

coercion. The Belgorod soldiers were perfect example of this. Under the influence of indoctrination conducted since spring 1917, they succumbed to Bolshevism and internalized the views presented by the SDKPL and PSP Left party agitators. At the turn of 1918/1919, some of them unexpectedly rejected the revolution and got discouraged. This was connected with serious consequences for the process of further development of the revolutionary formations in exile, and, above all, influenced the perspectives of the export of the revolution to the grounds of the reborn Polish state.

The situation around the Western Rifle Division was an unequivocal signal of the inability of the current model and the direction of military actions taken by Polish communists. Awareness of this fact and its consequent striving to give new dynamics to the environmental and political developments became an additional impulse to intensify actions aimed at unification of the two main groups of the radical left. After 11 November 1918, in the preparation process of the SDKPL and PSP Left unification congress, the exiled and national centers of these parties could become equally involved. For obvious reasons, these actions were shaped by SDKPL activists. It was determined by the fact of their close relation with the RCP(b) leaders.

After the Warsaw unification congress and the creation of the Communist Workers Party of Poland on 16 December 1918, the structures of both groups in the Soviet state were merged. Here, the activists with a social-democratic background treated their new companions in an instrumental way. Even the external appearance of their equal status was not taken care of. *Inter alia*, the idea of convening a unification conference was abandoned and there was no election for the leadership of the exiled

CWPP faction. The former CEC SDKPL automatically entered the role, and in the release published on 9 January 1919 it announced itself as the CEC CWPP⁴¹. It urged the former sections and groups of both parties to unify the structures and announced that it would incorporate the leaders of the PSP Left in its line-up. It happened this way. At the end of January, the members of the Secretariat of the Section and the PSP Left Groups joined the management team of the exiled CWPP headquarters. It included in the original line-up: Stanisław Bobiński, K. Brodzki, Stanisław Budkiewicz, Jakub Dolecki, Felix Dzerzhinsky, Julian Leszczyński, and Józef Unszlicht⁴².

⁴¹ Actually, the Central Committee of CWPP.

⁴² W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, p. 175; Cf. J. Kasprzakowa, *Paweł Lewinson-Łapiński*, "Z Pola Walki" 1965, Issue 3, p. 99. The second of the cited authors also mentioned F. Piętaszewski in the CEC CWPP line-up.

Chapter IV

The second stage of forming the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia

The CWPP policy regarding the issue of the organization of the emerging reforms was still intrinsic. At this stage of its evolution, at least two opposing concepts clashed against each other. The first of them presupposed the necessity of fighting for the implementation of the revolution's objectives over the Vistula with its own forces, and, consequently, it promoted the idea of creating the Red Polish Army. Among the advocates of this option, there were serious differences of opinion as to where this army was to be built, i.e. whether in the country only at the moment of the outbreak of the revolution, or sooner in the exile. The contesters of both these variants, in turn, claimed that the armed force of the Polish revolution should become the "internationalist Red Army" created by the CPC in the "Land of Soviets".

In essence, the dispute concerned whether the political changes should be imposed from the outside by the strength of their own weapons, or the arms at the disposal of the Bolshevik peoples' commissars, or whether Polish "proletarians of towns and villages" should initiate them from the bottom up. In the latter case, this sovereign would, through the CWSD, have called for defense of the proletarian armed revolution. In fact,

however, these differences were of secondary importance for the future of Polish revolutionary formation, since the Bolshevik leaders in the Kremlin could only take binding decisions in this sphere. Those at the beginning of 1919 still did not have a fixed view on this subject.

The leftist radicals in exile, wanting to make it easier for the CPC to make this strategic decision, decided at the end of 1918 to search for an intra-environmental consensus. The first step towards the approximation of the opposing positions was made during the 3rd Conference of the SDKPL Groups in Russia. On the basis of the guidelines of the CEC of the CWPP Groups in Russia, adopted after the December unification congress of both currents of the radical left, it finally worked out a compromise proposal on the creation of Polish revolutionary formations. It assumed that the organization of the Red Polish Army would start in the homeland at the outbreak of the revolution. The military units already existing and created in the near future in exile would become its core. After entering the territory of the Polish ethnic area, the process of supplementing the divisions' staff and the construction of further formations from scratch would begin. In the first wave, to support the workers' armed uprising it was intended to direct the units of an exile origin.

Being aware of the weakness of these forces and the enormous effort that should be made expanding them to the size of the army, the authors of the discussed concept accepted the assumption that the Red Army would join the struggle with the Polish Army. The CEC of the CWPP Group in Russia recognized that the Bolsheviks and the Polish radicals would co-decide on the scope and character of its involvement in operations in Poland. It was mainly about the image issues, about creating, with

regard to to the national and international public opinion, the belief that in Poland domestic progressive forces made the revolution and fought to achieve its goals. To make this impression credible, it was necessary to limit participation in this struggle of the Red Army only to the border area.

After the occupation of Vilnius by the Red Army in January 1919 and the organization of the Western Front by the Bolsheviks ¹ the CWPP leaders in exile understood that the revolution spreading to the West of the Neman and the Bug River was quite close. Due to the above, already at the end of February, as soon as the CEC settled in the city over the Neris River, the first attempt to concretize the scope and character of the Red Army's participation in the struggle with the Polish Army and the eastern border of the Polish ethnic area was made. Addressing the matter to the leaders of the Bolshevik Party, their expectations were carefully formulated. It was suggested that

Military operations on the territory of Poland cannot take place without a series of political acts, the most important of which is the transfer of the leadership over the activities against the Polish bourgeois government to an organization created by the Polish proletariat²

Even the name of such an institution was suggested, described as the Polish Military-Revolutionary Council³.

¹ The decision in this matter was made on 19.02.1919. The front included: the 7th Army, the Western Army and the so-called "Red Army of Latvia". – More: A. Przybylski, *Działania wstępne w wojnie polsko-rosyjskiej 1918–1920*, Warszawa 1928, p. 17.

² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 4, d. 7, li. 2.

³ Staff proposals regarding its composition would come from the CEC of the CWPP Group in Russia, and their acceptance was

The CEC of the CWPP Group in Russia, acting as the representative of the national party's central office, thus, articulated the postulate of fundamental importance for the CWPP's image. Its implementation would mean that the group and its institutions would obtain external attributes of independence from the decision-making headquarters of the international revolutionary movement in Moscow.

The current status of the SDKPL, and from December 1918 the CWPP, was closer to the position of a Polish branch of the Bolshevik Party than a partner political power. In the field of military action, the formal autonomy of the CWPP could free it from the stigma of the “modern *targowiczanie*”⁴ reaching for power in the country under cover of the Red Army bayonets, and not as a result of the victory of “Polish proletarians of towns and villages” fighting in the ranks of the Red Polish Army. The Polish communists, formulating the aforementioned postulates, revealed concern for the external signs of independence, not for actual autonomy in the political and military sphere. In both cases, it was only postulated to create a kind of a dummy of the Polishness. This role would be fulfilled, on the one hand, by the Polish Military Revolutionary Council, and, on the other hand, by the Polish Red Army. In the first case, the dependence on the Kremlin would be determined by the simultaneous affiliation of a certain part of the CWPP's leadership to the RCP(b) and in the second – a numerous representation of Soviet military in the exiled revolutionary formations.

dependent on the decision of the Republic's Revolutionary War Council.

⁴ The term “*targowiczanie*” describing the members and supporters of the Targowica Confederation established by Polish and Lithuanian magnates in 1792, with the backing of the Russian Empress Catherine II is a synonym to traitors.

The success of the plans to create the Polish equivalent of the Red Army depended not only on the political decision taken in Moscow, with e.g. the Polish Military Revolutionary Council lending its name to it, but above all on the mobilization possibilities. In Russia they were very limited, and recruitment in the country at the time of the revolution took time and was not so sure despite the efforts made by the newly appointed Office of Agitation in the Military [pol. *Wydział Agitacji w Wojsku*] at the Central Committee CWPP⁵. Thus, if the appearance that at the outbreak of the revolution over the Vistula armed actions against the Polish Army would be taken by the Red Army of Poland was intended to maintain, it was necessary to find a source for supplementing it.

The idea was not new at all because it had been used to organize the Western Rifle Division. Its reproduction at a larger scale meant only reaching for a correspondingly greater number of recruits from other ethnic groups living in the Soviet republics. In this direction the proposals of the CEC of the CWPP Groups in Russia submitted to the Republic's Revolutionary War Council [RRWC, pol. *Rewolucyjna Rada Wojenna Republik*] were forthcoming. In the memorial presented in this case, a transformation the Western Division of Rifles into the Polish Armed Operative Group was sought. In favorable circumstances, it could become the nucleus of the Red Polish Army. This document was a reflection of the decisions made earlier by the Central Committee CWPP in this matter. Their essence was to expand the new Polish formations, reaching not only for the Poles serving

⁵ The commonly used name of this structure is "Wojskówka". As part of the CWPP, it was autonomous. The same was true of the external branch created in the form of the Communist Soldier Organization.

in the Western Rifle Division and scattered in numerous units of the Red Army, but also incorporate Russians, Belarussians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Jews⁶. In this way, the Red Army soldiers formally not taking part in the struggle to establish the power of Soviets in Poland would actually constitute the strength of Red units created in exile.

According to the exiled CWPP center, the concept of “internationalization” of the ranks of the future Red Army in Poland was justified not only by the limited mobilization possibilities, but also by the strong distrust towards Polish military. In the memorial of the CEC directed to the RCP(b), also personally to Vladimir Lenin, the assessment was made that only 1st Rifle Brigade can be treated as “the only large and reliable unit in Russia”⁷. The almost paranoid distrust of their own countrymen deepened the alienation of this political environment from their own ethnic background, thus, intensifying the dependence of Polish communists on their Bolshevik patrons. The exiled radicals felt that without their concealed or explicit support there was no possibility of intercepting power in Poland⁸.

However, the issue of delimiting the line of separation between the Lithuanian, Belarussian, Ukrainian and Polish ethnic areas was still open. Its course was to be determined by the operational zones of the Red Army and Polish forces under the names of revolutionary forces in the struggle with the Polish Army. In reference to this issue, the CEC of the CWPP Group in Russia drew the

⁶ The content of the memorial is recalled in: I. Pawłowski, K. Sobczak, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

⁷ RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 3, li. 40.

⁸ The events that took place in 1920, in 1939–1941 and finally in the Polish People’s Republic era (1944–1989) proved this.

attention of the Soviet companions that the *ad hoc* “provisional boundaries” should be the final line of advancing the Red Army and had both strategic and political significance⁹. Detailing the above proposal, the borderline acceptable to the interested parties was suggested. The southeastern borderlands of revolutionary Poland were to be based on the Bug, and the north-eastern part should include the poviats of Bielsk, Białystok, or Sokółka, and parts of the former Suwałki governorate inhabited by Poles¹⁰. An interesting fact in this context that several units of the Western Front were making operational plans covering the Lublin region and the Białystok region. It meant that in the Soviet military and political circles of power, an option even more drastic than proposed by the CWPP regarding the limitation of the Polish ethnic area was considered. Ultimately, both sides considered this problem as secondary and decided to postpone taking binding decisions regarding the demarcation line.

Taking control over Vilnius by the Red Army in January 1919, after its episodic occupation by Polish troops¹¹, forced the People’s Commissars to react quickly to the CWPP’s desiderata regarding the organization of the revolutionary formations in exile. The military and political activity of the reborn Polish state in the borderlands was countered, on the one hand, by Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian revolutionary

⁹ RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 36, li. 6-7.

¹⁰ RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 24a, li. 21-22.

¹¹ From 4 to 6 January 1919, the Polish forces commanded by Gen. S. Mokrzecki attempted to control the city upon the Neris. In a clash with the 5th Vilnius Rifle Regiment being a part of the Western Rifle Division and regiments of the 1st and 4th Pskov Rifle Division, the Polish side failed. This episode of struggle for Vilnius and their subsequent phases discusses: A. Przybylski, *Bój obronny o Wilno*, Warszawa 1929, passim.

circles controlled from Moscow claiming to represent the interests of these nations. On the other hand, it was considered necessary to create such strong Polish revolutionary groups that the very fact of their existence would accelerate the “process of mass radicalization in Poland”. It was assumed that under these conditions, only a matter of time, there would be an outbreak of a civil war over the Vistula. At that time, there was a need for the “Polish military grouping” stationed at the borders of the revolutionary country to support the compatriots, because “it was impossible to expect in the near future that only the national forces could accomplish this historic task of seizing power by the Polish proletariat”¹².

The program of transforming the Western Rifle Division into the Polish Armed Steering Group was not easy to implement. Inconsistency in its implementation predetermined the failure of this initiative. Nevertheless, its authors managed to achieve at least half-successes, which already significantly strengthened the revolutionary formations organized in emigration. At the end of January 1919, the staff of the Polish division was transferred to Minsk. Important personnel and organizational decisions were also taken, including the ones on giving personal features to the unit’s “polonization”. After the dismissal of Włodzimierz Jerszow, its new commander was Roman Łagwa. Kazimierz Majewski became the head of the 1st Rifle Brigade, and from 15 February its staff’s headquarters were located in Vilnius. In the 2nd Rifle Brigade, this function was performed by Stanisław Kowalski, and its staff was located in Baranovichi. The headquarters of the staff of

¹² RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 13, li. 3-4.

the 3rd Rifle Brigade were in Lida and Władysław Dobrowolski became its commander¹³.

The 3rd Siedlce Regiment Rifle and 4th Warsaw Rifle Regiment participated in the January offensive in Kaunas and Grodno. The first of them was soon excluded from the structures of the 2nd Brigade and moved to the 3rd Brigade. The 5th Vilnius Rifle Regiment was excluded from the Division, and its order number was taken over by the Minsk Rifle Regiment¹⁴. Eventually, the daily order of 28 February 1919 defined the new structure of the Western Rifle Division, which was based on a scheme providing the existence of three brigades. Each of them was to consist of two regiments, the last of three battalions. From among the rifle regiments to the 1st Brigade were assigned: the 1st Warsaw and 2nd Lublin, to the 2nd Brigade: 3rd Siedlce and 4th Warsaw, and to the 3rd Brigade respectively: 5th Minsk and 6th Grodno. On the basis of the Warsaw Hussars Regiment and the Mazovian Uhlan Regiment, it was decided to create two cavalry squadrons consisting of four squadrons each. According to the plan, the 1st Squadron was to complete the 1st Brigade, and the 2nd Squadron to found the 2nd Brigade. All artillery units were to combine as parts of the Artillery Brigade. It consisted of three light artillery squadrons, a light heavyweight artillery squadron, a heavy artillery squadron, a howitzer squadron and an anti-aircraft artillery squadron. The 38th Air Division¹⁵

¹³ The previous and subsequent staffing of the command posts in the Polish revolutionary formations, which notably underwent frequent changes, are detailed in: W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, pp. 209-215.

¹⁴ RGVA, f. 3858, op. 1, d. 32, li. 287.

¹⁵ Ibidem, f. 1459, op. 1, d. 263, li. 27; Ibidem, f. 201, op. 3, d. 192, li. 42-43.

was assigned to serve as part of the division. It should be added that also this time, as it was in December 1918, the desiderata encountered the refusal to include the cavalry 4 Polish Revolutionary Regiment commanded by Cpt. Piotr Borewicz in the Division. By the decision of the Eastern Front command, this unit remained in the 24th Simbirsk Rifle Division.

The exception was made only for 198 cavalymen who received individual referrals to the Polish division. After separating this group, and due to losses in people suffered by the unit in the spring and summer of 1919, its Polish character disappeared. The staff supplements sent to the regiment definitively changed its ethnic composition. From May, only Russians were appointed as commander and commissioner¹⁶. Ignacy Pawłowski and Kazimierz Sobczak published different information on this subject in their book. It is my contention that the area of concentration of Polish revolutionary formations in the area of the Minsk, Baranovichi, and Lida triangle was directed to “the cavalry regiment of Piotr Borewicz, withdrawn from the 1st Army of the Eastern Front”¹⁷. In the light of available documentation and later historians’ studies, this information should be considered incorrect¹⁸. Most likely, the authors interpreted the fact of directing 198 cavalry to the Polish division as the transfer of the whole unit. The fact that the absence of Cpt. Piotr Borewicz in the commanding staff of the cavalry divisions of the Western Rifle Division denies it. It was impossible for him not to be among them, because on 24 January

¹⁶ Ibidem, f. 1458, op. 1, d. 29, li. 280.

¹⁷ I. Pawłowski, K. Sobczak, op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁸ W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, pp. 204-206

1919, he assumed the position of the cavalry inspector of the 1st Army fighting within the Eastern Front¹⁹.

A further stage in the implementation of the “military desiderata” of the Central Executive Committee of the CWPP Groups in Russia was the consent of the CPC to the organization of a political and military body that would exercise control over the Polish revolutionary formations. The organizational meeting of the Polish Military-Revolutionary Council [PMRC, pol. *Polska Rada Wojskowo-Rewolucyjna*] took place on 3 January 1919. Its head was Samuel Łazowert, and the post of the secretary was taken by Stefan Brodowski. The composition of the management team was completed by Adam Kaczorowski²⁰. The informal member of the Council was also the former commissar for Polish military affairs in the Moscow Military District, and the current commissioner of the Polish division Stanisław Bobiński. The four of them had an SDKPL origin. Thus, in the exile, so consistently, the key nominations of companions from PSP Left were omitted. In this way, it was not the first time that the limited confidence of the former Social Democrats to this “inferior category” of the CWPP members was manifested.

The same mechanism, with analogous background, was revealed in the relations between RCP(b) and their Polish companions. Nominations for positions in the Council were the best example. Support was only granted to the avowed supporters of the “Leninist optics” in the process of revolutionary changes taking place in the

¹⁹ The Regiment’s command was handed over to J. Wawiorski to the previous commandant of the Regiment School - See: W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, p. 206.

²⁰ In source materials and in literature, he also appears under his own name and name Sławiński.

“Land of Soviets”. Its secretary was chosen to guarantee “proved” loyalty to the Bolsheviks. Stefan Brodowski confirmed it by holding the position the secretary of the diplomatic mission in Switzerland on behalf of the CPC from May to November 1918. The head of the PMRC Operational Department, Adam Kaczorowski, also had similar “assets” as a functional activist of the Minsk RCP(b) structures. Also Samuel Łazowert and Stanisław Bobiński were counted among the same category of activists who stood unchanged in guarding the interests of the “Russian bastion of the revolution”²¹.

On the basis of the protocols of the Council’s meetings and analyzing its organizational structure, it is possible to find out what actions were considered as priorities and how the process of their implementation took place. Next to the Secretariat of the PMRC, four divisions were created within it, i.e. General (Administrative), Political, Recruitment and Operational mentioned above. Preparatory actions were also taken to create the Railway Department. Plans for its organization were related to the concept of using narrow-gauge railway lines for transporting in the westward direction soldiers who were to establish the Polish Army Operational Group.

The need to join it as quickly as possible against the Polish Army at the outbreak of the revolution over the Vistula led the Council’s leadership to create a special organizational unit that was to deal with logistic issues *ad hoc*. It was mainly about recognizing the technical condition of the tracks, obtaining the right amount of narrow-gauge rolling stock and providing them with

²¹ On 8.02.1919, the council members were supplemented by members of the CEC of the CWPP Groups in Russia, no less “loyal”: J. Unszlicht and J. Dolecki.

professional technical service. It was expected that the first of these tasks would be relatively easy to complete. As for the second of them, it was assumed that the obtained wagons and locomotives should be located in the regions of the anticipated concentration of the Polish Army Operating Group units on the territories of Belarus, Lithuania and the south-eastern part of Latvia²². In order to secure an appropriate number of railway posts, cooperation was initiated with the union movement operating in this industry. One of its former leaders, i.e. Stanisław Szymanowski, was planned as the head of the department. Earlier, however, he was supposed to “be taken” from the service in the Collegium for Prisoners and Refugees in Moscow. The CEC in the CWPP Group in Russia approached this issue with a special request for this institution, motivating it with the personnel needs of the “future Polish Council of People’s Commissars”. In its composition, specifically at the transport police station, Stanisław Szymanowski²³ was supposed to be its head. Not having a formal appointment yet, on behalf of Raś and its non-existent Railway Department, he started talks with the management circles of the former Union of Railwaymen. Marian Dągowski²⁴, Lucjan Niedźwiedzki, Adolf Siewnicki and Waław Grajek were invited to Minsk. The course of the negotiations turned out to be not very encouraging. It was of no much importance in the face of much more serious difficulties in obtaining the

²² By using the term “on the territories” the contemporary borders of the mentioned countries are referred to.

²³ During the Western Front offensive in the summer of 1920, he became the head of the Commissariat for the Military Communication of the Western Front.

²⁴ During the Western Front offensive in the summer of 1920, he became the plenipotentiary for Special Tasks of the Railway Department at the Military Revolutionary Union of the Western Front.

right amount of efficient means of transport. In the circumstances, the original plan of organizing the Railway Department was abandoned²⁵.

The activities of other organizational units outside the Recruitment and Political Departments never entered the planned and methodical stage of work. The main focus of the PMRC management was therefore necessarily focused on the actions of both departments. In practice, this meant, on the one hand, limiting the activity of this institution to indoctrinal activities aimed at deepening the level of Bolshevization of the Polish division. On the other hand, quite chaotic attempts were made to expand the network of recruitment points, whose task was to acquire those interested in serving in the revolutionary formations. In their creation, the Central Executive Committee of the CWPP Group in Russia involved all of the regional party units²⁶, which were recommended to provide their own premises for the needs of recruitment offices and support of their organizers. They were to propagate the sympathy for the Polish division in the diaspora circles, translated into the decision to join its ranks. The assistance in the form of supplying propaganda materials was to be provided by the Recruitment Department.

The development of the CEC initiative was to create two “stage points”, targeted at volunteers who want to join the ranks of the revolutionary outposts. One of them was organized in Vilnius for those willing to stay in the areas of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic [L-BSSR, lit. *Lietuvos-Baltarusijos Tarybinė Socialistinė Respublika*; biel. *Лімоўска-Беларуская*

²⁵ RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 8, li. 45.

²⁶ The decision in this matter was taken at the CEC meeting on 14 January 1919.

Савецкая Сацыялістычная Рэспубліка], while the other one was in Minsk, where volunteers from the Ukrainian territories and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic [RSFSR] were to be led. In total, it operated as part of the recruitment network, 30 points scattered from Vilnius to Orenburg and from Nizhny Novgorod to Odessa²⁷. High hopes for the improvement of the functioning of these points were associated with the Central Recruitment Office of the Polish Armed Forces Operational Group [pol. *Centralne Biuro Werbunkowe Polskiej Operacyjnej Grupy Armijnej*] established and operating in Vilnius. However, they were not realized due to some carelessness, which occurred because of the incorrect interpretation of the legal basis for the operation of the recruitment mechanism. The basic guideline was Order No. 115 RRWC of 21 October 1918 regarding the rules of recruitment of soldiers to the Western Rifle Division. Detailed recommendations of the executive nature of this decision were prepared by the Recruitment Department.

The first mistake made on the occasion of editing guidelines for the Central Office and its subsidiaries was the assumption that the created unit should have an elitist character. This meant that its ranks could only be supplied by those who met strict standards of social origin and professional preparation, and yet “manifested revolutionary political views.” Moreover, it was proposed that the recruitment action coordinated by the Central Office should give “the character of revolutionary agitation, calling for active participation in the armed

²⁷ According to W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, pp. 217-219, the activity of particular points is mentioned in the preserved documentation of the Recruitment Department of the Division Military-Revolutionary Council.

struggle for the establishment and consolidation of the Socialist Workers' Republic in Poland"²⁸. Time was to show that not many of the accomplices meeting at least some of these strict criteria were still in exile, and most of those who were stuck there did not convince propaganda platitudes, which mobilized volunteers to want to "bring to Poland liberation from the yoke of capital on their bayonets". There was no expected response to the calls included in appeals and on a mass scale in distributed posters, leaflets and press publications "to march to meet the native enemy, being the Polish counterrevolution"²⁹ under the banner of the elite Western Rifle Division.

What was the second mistake that had a devastating effect on the course of the recruitment action? In Order No. 115, there was a record defining the territories of origin for the interested in serving in the unit. It considered "people coming from Poland, Belarus and Lithuania". In the executive manual for the above-mentioned order issued by the Recruitment Department, referring to this issue, it was stated that "only Poles should be interviewed regardless of their religion and origin (...) permanent Polish residents speaking Polish". In practice, this meant that Belarusians, Lithuanians, Germans, Russians, Ukrainians and Jews were also allowed to join the revolutionary formation created in exile on the condition that they came from the former Congress, Galicia or the Poznan Province, while the Poles from former eastern borderlands were excluded. Volunteers born in the Lithuanian-Belorussian and Ukrainian Governorates, and in Russia were intended to be directed, for example, to the Lithuanian Division and respectively to similar Belarusian and Ukrainian units, or

²⁸ RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 42, li. 1; Ibidem, d. 43, li. 12.

²⁹ „Młot” No. 84 of 5.04.1919.

directly to the formations of the Red Army³⁰. This narrow interpretation of Order No. 115 was an expression of the “internationalist solidarity of Polish communists” with both the comrades from the L-BSSR and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In the first case, Polish volunteers were sent to the Lithuanian Division, while the second local CWPP activists supported by Ukrainian companions wanted to form a separate revolutionary unit made up of Poles. Actions in this direction were taken despite the strong opposition of the CEC advocating the concept of creating a “focalized Polish revolutionary impact force”³¹ based on the Western Rifle Division. In both cases, this resulted in a significant limitation of the possibility and mobilization and consequently became one of the most important reasons for the failure of the recruitment action.

These were not, however, the only reasons for the failure in this area. As for the Polish Red Army soldiers, the impediment to their transfer to the Western Rifle Division was the resistance of the Soviet commanders most often motivated by the needs of internal fronts. Sometimes, there was an ostentatious ignoring of order No. 115. In some cases, there were suspicions that the RRWC could have attached to it informal dispositions of executive nature allowing discretion in decisions taken by the generals and commissioners.

Everyday practice was in situations such as the one in the Kyrgyz Regiment, from whose ranks nearly half a thousand soldiers were not allowed to move to the Polish division. In Orel, the local military authorities did not even allow the creation of a recruitment point organized

³⁰ „Sztandar Komunizmu” No. 19 of 27.04.1919.

³¹ RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 33, li. 6.

by the Vilnius Central Office³². In turn, in the case of the diaspora, a significant limitation in obtaining volunteers from its circles were pacifist parties widespread as a result of the Bolshevik propaganda in the inter-revolutionary period. Poles from the Borderlands, on the other hand, felt the ethnic, cultural and ideological separateness of “from countrymen from CWPP”. They were also struck by this symbiosis of the activists of this party with “Moscow communism”, as well as the effects of enforced political changes in the social and economic sphere that were felt on the spot. Under the circumstances, even the formal support of the RRWC could not help in the recruitment activities carried out both in the ranks of the Red Army and in the centers of the Polish population in the Polish Borderlands and in the Russian territory. By mid-March, the ranks of the Polish division had grown by just 800 volunteers³³. Over the next three months, during the time the recruitment was continued, there was a comparable interest in the service in this formation.

The unsatisfactory effects of the actions of the Recruitment Department forced the PMRC to withdraw from the implementation of the original intentions. In practice, this meant the need to concentrate almost exclusively on the indoctrination activities conducted by the Political Department among the soldiers of the Western Rifle Division. A serious difficulty in their undertaking was the creation by the leadership of an exiled CWPP center of a twin name, but a narrowed-up field of activity of the Military-Revolutionary Council of the Western Rifle Division. The spice of the matter was added by the fact that the new PMRC’s people, i.e. Samuel Łazowert, Stefan Brodowski and Adam Kaczorow-

³² Ibidem, f. 446, op. 1, d. 77, li. 25.

³³ Ibidem, f. 446, op. 1, d. 11, li. 30.

ski, were at the head of this new institution. It was a signal announcing the resignation from the implementation of an ambitious plan to build the Polish Army Operational Group. No one officially admitted it at that time, but withdrawing from PMRC its management and involvement of the same people in another project meant trying to “silently change the tracks of its activity to a slightly narrower dimension”. That is what happened in practice.

The last meeting of the “old council” took place on 17 February 1919, and they were devoted almost entirely to matters of organizational transformation³⁴. After this date, most of the same people, concentrated in the same organizational units, would continue their previous activity just under a slightly more modest banner. From now on, the maintenance of posts and the arming of the Western Rifle Division became priorities. Both tasks were not easy. Circumstances forced the need to focus on the first of them, because there were symptoms of the breakdown of the “revolutionary morale” of some soldiers. This concerned those who wanted to return to their homeland at all costs.

Taking over the administration by the reborn Polish state in more and more eastward areas, by that time occupied by the German forces, meant that the regions of the Polish Division’s concentration were in the immediate vicinity of the borderline designated by the Bialystok agreement. The basic subject of the Polish-German military-political agreement concluded on 5 February 1919, was to regulate the conditions for the retreat of Heeresgruppe Kiev from Ukraine and the 10th Army from Lithuanian lands. The contract established a new Polish-German demarcation line. It left Grajewo and Osowiec on

³⁴ Ibidem, f. 446, op. 1, d. 27, li. 1-28.

the Polish side, going further south to the Narew River, then along the river to the area of Suraż, from there to Brańsk, from where it ran up the Nurzec and Leśna rivers to Mielnik on the Bug River, then the river to Neple, and then through Małaszewicze Wielkie back to the Bug River³⁵. In addition, the agreement provided that the taking over areas abandoned by the Germans by the Polish troops should take place from south to north. This process was supposed to be coordinated by the Polish officers of the liaison officer in agreement with the German commands. After two such officers was supposed to operate in Białystok, Grodno, Brest and Vawkavysk.

This “proximity of Poland” combined with the receding outlook for entry to the homeland under the red banners of the units in which its Bolshevized sons-of-war fought, put the loyalty of this military group to the revolution to the test. The CWPP activists delegated to work in the Political Department focused on maintaining it. In order to intensify the agitation, the Military-Revolutionary Council of the Western Rifle Division even began issuing in Minsk from 9 February 1919 a special press organ under the title “Chronicle of the Communist Soldier” [pol. *Kronika Żołnierza Komunisty*]. However, it was not possible for the agitated people to be treated seriously by the various channels of assuring the near-term transition of the Red Army, and with it the Polish division, to offensive operations in the west. The main Bolshevik forces were still entangled in fights on the fronts of the civil war. Nor was it any secret that even they struggled with supply difficulties in “war materials” necessary to continue the struggle. The well-known RRWC instruction

³⁵ A. Deruga, *Geneza umowy białostockiej z 5.02.1919 r.*, „Rocznik Białostocki” 1965, Vol. 6, pp. 59-106; cf. T. Machalski, *Na przełomie*, „Bellona” 1938, Vol. 5, pp. 833-892.

commanded to acquire effective weapons and abandoned ammunition in the areas of completed fights³⁶.

The situation was even worse in the case of the Western Rifle Division. The Operational Department, in cooperation with the General Department, trying to rebuild the reorganized formation, obtained “semi-legal channels” from the soldiers of the German 10th Army and, which was already a total aberration, even from the Belarusian peasants who created the “home arsenals” after demobilization and withdrawal from the front of the old Russian army.

Under these conditions, not only could there be no talk of offensive operations in the western direction, but as a result of the troops of the Polish Army taking over successive abutments in the borderlands at the beginning of March, the Red Army was forced to retreat. The above facts constituted a serious dissonance between what the propaganda of the CWPP and its military agendas proclaimed and what the soldiers of the Polish Division were actually witnessing. The proverbial cup of bitterness was full when the fear occurred that after the retreat of the main Bolshevik forces, going along with them to the East the chance of returning to the country would be definitely lost. Additionally, the destructive influence on soldiers’ morale was exacerbated by the difficulties in food supplying, already reduced on 26 February 1919, by order of the division commander and food rations³⁷. The intensification of indoctrination activities by the Political Department in such an emerging situation could no longer provide for discipline in particular departments. The anarchy of the military ranks in the 3rd Siedlce

³⁶ RGVA, f. 1458, op. 2, d. 534: Instructions of the Council of the Military Revolutionary Republic No. 34 of 15 March 1919.

³⁷ The daily allocation of bread was 40 dkg.

Regiment reached at some point such a level that, in fear of open rebellion, it was decided to temporarily disarm them³⁸.

This fact made a big impression on the tenants of the Kremlin Palace. The Soviet and governmental organs were simultaneously interested in this matter³⁹. The Commanders of the Polish Division blamed the existing situation on “politically immature volunteers” from Vitebsk, who just joined the ranks of the regiment. Some superiors with honesty pointed out that the primary cause of the insubordination of soldiers was allocations of bread causing starvation. The refusal to comply with orders was, therefore, a form of protest against this state of affairs⁴⁰. However, no one mentioned the influence that on the order to retreat on 5 March 1919 from Slonim, where the 3rd Regiment had recently been stationed preparing for the march in the opposite western direction, had on these soldiers.

Preventive actions conducted by the own forces of the Polish Division proved to be insufficient, as more troops rebelled. The progressive anarchization was revealed not only in the rank of soldiers, but also began to consider officers. The most spectacular expression of this was the “transition to the opponent’s side” of the commander of the 2nd Light Artillery Squadron, Walerian Gładysz⁴¹. The Bolshevik commissars disturbed by that were forced

³⁸ This was done with the forces of the 1st Warsaw Regiment.

³⁹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 4, d. 17, li. 17.

⁴⁰ In a broader context about the basis and scale of the desertion phenomenon in the Red Army: A. Smoliński, *Dezercje z Robotniczo-Chłopskiej Armii Czerwonej w latach 1918–1922*, „Przegląd Wschodni” 2007, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 675-722.

⁴¹ This fact is recalled in her publication by: W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, p. 212.

to use the “Chekists” to carry out preventive activities wherever there were even symptoms of disobedience.

The zeal of the Cheka officers sometimes caused an effect opposite to the expected. Such a situation took place on 7 March in Baranovichi, where, after the arrest of several “uncertain soldiers”, their colleagues from the 4th Regiment of Warsaw surrounded the staff of the 2nd Brigade to help the superior to help release the detainees. The failure to comply with the promises led to the repeated “siege of the Brigade’s staff” on 30 March. In reaction to this event pacification activities were carried out with the forces of the still loyal 1st Squadron Cavalry. Similarly drastic steps had to be made to suppress the rebellion in the 6th Grodno Regiment. The wave of anarchisation decreased in April, when the situation on the Western Front was successfully stabilized for some time⁴², and the units of the Polish Division could be identified with tasks related to the defense of positions in the immediate vicinity of the temporary borders of the reborn Poland⁴³.

The armed conflict between the Polish side and the Bolsheviks, although formally unspoken, flared up in mid-February 1919. The clashes took place in the areas abandoned by the German army evacuating from the Eastern Front. The Bolshevik forces following them tried to pre-emptively occupy the territories to which, along with Poland, the Baltic states, Belarusians and Ukrainians expressed their claims. Acting simultaneously on four sections extending from the Gulf of Finland to the Black Sea, they intended to move the borderline of the area

⁴² RGVA, f. 1458, op. 2, d. 165, li. 6-7.

⁴³ Between the reborn after 123 years of captivity of independent Poland and Bolshevik Russia, there was no state border recognized by both sides at that time.

covered by the revolution to the west. The forces of the 7th Army, part of the Northern Front, already in December 1918 took over 2/3 of the territory of Estonia⁴⁴. Somewhat more to the south the independent Red Army of Latvia operated, having the task to occupy the territory of the organizing Latvian state. On 16 November 1918, the unit of the Western Army⁴⁵ was ordered to enter the Lithuanian-Belarusian lands⁴⁶. The Red Ukrainian Army, struggling with the formations of Symon Petlura, was to enter Volhynia⁴⁷. All these operations were undertaken in agreement with the German side⁴⁸ and as far as it was in the existing conditions it was possible to synchronize the evacuation of German soldiers with the filling the abandoned posts with the Red Army soldiers.

With the outbreak of the revolution in Germany in November 1918, an additional reason behind the western operations was revealed. When planning support for the forces of the Red Army, the German comrades wanted to reach the border of this country in East Prussia as quickly as possible. Although the realization of this intention was hindered by the involvement of the majority

⁴⁴ Already in January 1919, the Estonian armed forces regained the lost areas.

⁴⁵ Its main core was the Western Rifle Division. The units of the Western Army took over from Germans' hands Minsk in December 1918 and Vilnius in January 1919.

⁴⁶ In the territories occupied by the Red Army, the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed on 1.01.1919 in Smolensk, transformed on 27.02.1919 into the Lithuanian-Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic [LBSRS] with authorities made up largely of communists of Polish descent.

⁴⁷ A. Przybylski, *Działania wstępne...*, p. 16.

⁴⁸ In November 1918, the People's Commissars entered into a secret agreement with the German command to directly take over the territory of the Ober Ost occupation by the Red Army. More about this and about the relations between the German side and the Bolsheviks is described by: G. Rosenfeld, *Soviétrussland und Deutschland 1917–1922*, Berlin 1960, passim.

of armed forces on the fronts of the civil war, on 12 January 1919, the Supreme Command issued commanding operation of the Red Army units to “penetrate deep to the rivers of Neman and Shchara”. Exactly a month later, this instruction was supplemented with an order requiring exploratory actions to cover further areas up to the Bug line. Thus, on 12 February the operation with a clearly sounding name: “Objective Vistula” [pol. *Cel Wisła*]⁴⁹ was launched. Since at the end of February 1919, the evacuation of the German army creating a specific buffer of security in the occupied territories between the Polish and Bolshevik forces was coming to an end, the moment of direct clash between the troops of both sides was inevitably coming. Only in its result the geopolitical status of the former Eastern Borderlands of the First Polish Republic was to be determined.

In the military dimension at the turn of 1918/1919, Poles were not able to stop the implementation of the revolutionary export program, as at that time the Polish Army was not sufficiently organized. In February 1919, its ranks were co-created by around 8,000 officers and 147,000 privates. The majority of this potential was involved in fights with Ukrainians in Volhynia and Halych Rus. For the units of the Western Army, thus, the Polish side could oppose a limited contingent, whose core was the Lithuanian-Belorussian Division commanded by Gen. Waclaw Iwaszkiewicz and the so-called Podlasie Group⁵⁰ fighting under the command of Gen. Antoni Listowski. In total, they included 12 battalions, 12 squadrons and 3

⁴⁹ G. Belov (ed.), *Direktivy Glavnogo Komandowanija Krasnoj Armii 1917–1920. Sbornik dokumentow*, Moskva 1969, No. 133, 151, 311.

⁵⁰ Eventually, it was renamed the Polesie Group [*Grupa Poleska*].

field batteries. In total, there were about 500 officer positions and 7,000 soldier positions⁵¹. These forces in mid-February 1919 were deployed along the line Kobryń-Pruzany-Zelwianka-Mosty. There, for the first time, they came into contact with the guards of the front troops of the Western Army operating from three main directions, i.e. from the regions of Pinsk, Baranovichi and Lida⁵².

From the moment when, on the one hand, the “*Cel Wisła*” operation was launched and, on the other hand, the command of the Supreme Command of 14 February 1919 decided to “quantitatively and qualitatively strengthen” the units of the Polish Army to the East from the Neman line, regular battles between the two armies were inevitable. They broke in the vicinity of the town of Mosty, where the Polish troops moved slightly east of the retreating German formations and prevented the Bolsheviks from routinely taking over abandoned positions. In the “Instructions for groups operating in the East” of 21 February [pol. *Instrukcja dla grup operujących na wschodzie*], the Supreme Command recommended the adoption of “an attitude of anticipation, with the intention of maintaining the current state of possession and transition to offensive action at a time when progress in the organization of the army gathering more power will enable (...)”⁵³.

The opinion of their political base had a significant influence on this restraint of Piłsudski’s military circles.

⁵¹ A. Przybylski, *Działania wstępne...*, pp. 18 and 20. Detailed information on the forces’ potential also in: A. Smoliński, *Jazda i artyleria konna Dywizji Litewsko-Białoruskiej oraz Grupy Poleskiej, a następnie Frontu Litewsko-Białoruskiego (luty – początek lipca 1919 r.)*, „Wschodni Rocznik Humanistyczny” 2004, Vol. 1, pp. 171-189.

⁵² A. Przybylski, *Działania wstępne...*, p. 20.

⁵³ Ibidem, pp. 21-22.

The PSP leading activists were not sure of the reaction of the radical faction within the group, let alone of the Polish lower class to the possible armed intervention of the Polish Army against the Bolsheviks. On the other hand, an important brake in this respect were federalist projects boldly articulated by the Piłsudski faction in PSP assuming the subjective treatment of the aspirations of Belarussians and Ukrainians. Regarding this first issue, it managed to marginalize the position of the party radicals, at least at the central level, quite quickly. As a result, the PSP was considered anti-Bolshevik in public opinion⁵⁴. Was it the way it was in practice?

The reluctance of the party of the Piłsudski milieu to the Bolshevik environment had its freshest roots in the negative experiences of mutual contacts in Russia in the year preceding the regaining of independence. In 1919 and the following year it was visible in the activities of the Union of Polish Socialist Parliament Members [pol. *Związek Polskich Posłów Socjalistycznych*] members. Soon after the inauguration of the works of the Legislative Sejm, the manifesto addressed to the most afflicted social wars was announced, in which there was a warning against the temptation to put hope in improving everyday existence in solutions proposed by the radical political agitators. In the opinion of the Piłsudski leftist, surrendering to this type of mood in a situation where in the existing geostrategic conditions there was the real danger of the Bolshevik troops entering Warsaw could lead the country to disintegrate and lose its newly regained independence. The moderation of

⁵⁴ G. Zackiewicz, *Polska myśl polityczna wobec systemu radzieckiego*, Kraków 2004, p. 131 et al. On the views of Piłsudski and also of activists from the PSP, the author of the work refers to on pages 42-68.

citizens in the social dimension, on the one hand, and the creation of a specific buffer in the form of an alliance with Lithuania and Belarus cooperating with Poland within the Alliance of Free Nations [pol. *Związek Wolnych Narodów*], on the other hand, in the opinion of those circles, guaranteed the consolidation of the independent existence⁵⁵.

The idea of isolation from Soviet Russia by a kind of cordon of security created by Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine was developed in the pages of the theoretical socialist organ *Przedświt* [Daybreak]. In the statement of the leading Piłsudski-ites activist and journalist Tadeusz Hołówko, the postulate of establishing the Ukrainian state and the “Lithuanian republic within the historical borders”, i.e. from Lithuanian and Belarusian lands, was formulated there⁵⁶. In this way Piłsudski’s left tried to concretize the idea of federalism, at this stage only in the verbal dimension⁵⁷. The author of the publication,

⁵⁵ The text of the manifesto at the forum of the Legislative Sejm was presented on 22.02.1919 by I. Daszyński – See: I. Daszyński, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z posiedzenia Sejmu Ustawodawczego w dniu 22.02.1919 r.*, pp. 133-134. Originally, its content was announced on 10 February in an extraordinary supplement to the Socialist press organism *Robotnik* and the following day in the journal "Naprzód" No. 36 of 11.02.1919.

⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that the proposal to organize Lithuanian and Belarusian statehood in this form preceded the official Vilnius proclamation of J. Piłsudski for two months. The position of these political circles against the aspirations of independence of Lithuanians and Belarussians took shape before the end of the Great War. This is presented, *inter alia*, by J. Lewandowski, *Obóz niepodległościowy wobec Litwy i Białorusi w czasie I wojny światowej*, „Annales UMCS” Sect. F, Vol. 54/55: 1999/2000, pp. 127-135. In a much broader way, this topic is discussed by: J. Lewandowski, *Federalizm. Litwa i Białoruś w polityce obozu belwederskiego*, Warszawa 1962.

⁵⁷ With time, the concept of federalism evolved taking the form of a “Promethean idea”. It was promoted by the *quasi*-international anti-communist based on J. Piłsudski’s close collaborators

knowing from the autopsy the Bolshevik mentality and the conditions in which they implemented their own *idée fixe* in Russia, believed that Poles should not seek to confront them. Why? Because it was not in the interest of the Polish state to annihilate their power in Russia. "In the place of the overthrown Bolsheviks, it is easy for a tsar to come, which will unleash a storm of reaction within Russia and push the nation's energy into new conquests". Therefore, the respect for geopolitics should lead Poles to abstinence in relations with the RSFSR. According to him, the aggression of the Red Army directly on Poland would justify an armed attack against the Bolsheviks. In the existing conditions, the action of removing them from the Lithuanian and Belarusian areas should be initiated by local Lithuanian, Belarusian and Polish people. Only when they took this type of action, the Polish Army could provide support for it. According to Tadeusz Hołowko, especially in the case of Belarus, the Polish side should "reckon with the fact that the Bolsheviks are based in the masses of people (...) who expect the Bolsheviks to receive the land of the Polish land gentry. The arrival of the Polish troops would be understood by those masses as a return to serfdom"⁵⁸.

(T. Hołowko, H. Józefski, S. Stempowski and others) and multiethnic emigration from former Russia, dispersed throughout the world. Financed by Polish governments (with the exception of the *Chjeno-Piast* group), it sought to unify the USSR and transform its republics into sovereign states. More on this is written: T. Snyder, *Tajna wojna. Henryk Józewski i polsko-sowiecka rozgrywka o Ukrainę*, Kraków 2008, pp. 20-22 and 70-74.

⁵⁸ T. Hołowko, *Stosunek państwa polskiego do jego sąsiadów*, "Przedświt" No. 1-2, 1919, pp. 10, 12-14. In relation to the analyzed issues, the following reflections are interesting: A. Deruga, *Polityka wschodnia Polski wobec ziem Litwy, Białorusi i Ukrainy (1918-1919)*, Warszawa 1969, passim. Searching for a full overview on the issue, i.e. taking into account other parties'

“Not all commanders, however, wanted to take into account the conditions outlined above. This applied not only to those of them who had grown out of the Legions and PMO communities. Even before receiving the instructions mentioned above, the operational group commander put forward proposals for offensive actions, guided by tactical considerations. Gen. Waław Iwaszkiewicz intended to reach the Shchara River line as more convenient for defense, while Gen. Antoni Listowski believed that the protection of Brest, so weak forces at his disposal, can only be ensured by repressing the enemy from the triangle between the Yaselda River and the Pina River and closing this exit corridor by occupying the eastern headland of the Pinsk peninsula.

The Supreme Command initially responded negatively to these proposals, sticking to the letter of its own directive. In this situation, Gen. Antoni Listowski decided to conduct the action on his own, while Gen. Waław Iwaszkiewicz again turned to the Supreme Command pointing to tactical benefits. Eventually, it succumbed to these pressures, but the final decision depended on

reasons, it is worth referring to the most characteristic scientific publications of our “Eastern neighbors” at that time. The stereotypical approach to the issues of interethnic relations found its perfect reflection in the prepared “fast” biased collection of “documentation” reflecting the attitude of “lords’ Poland” to the Belarusians in 1919. – See: K. Jezovitev, *Belorussy i poljaki. Dokumenty i fakty iz istorii okkupacii Belorussii poljakami v 1918 i 1919 godach*, Kovna 1919, passim. It is worth paying attention to the place of publication of this publication. For more on the attitudes of Lithuanians in this context, wrote: P. Łossowski, *Polityka Litwy w kwestii białoruskiej w latach 1918–1924*, [in:] W. Balcerak (ed.), *Polska-Białoruś. Zbiór studiów i materiałów*, Warszawa 1994, p. 44-58. In a broader context about the genesis and rides of animosity between Poles and Lithuanians: K. Buchowski, *Litwomani i polonizatorzy. Mity, wzajemne postrzeganie i stereotypy w stosunkach polsko-litewskich w pierwszej połowie XX w.*, Białystok 2006. In particular see chapter 2.

whether Gen. Antoni Listowski's group would be able to cooperate with the left wing in the direction of Byeń with the units of Gen. Waław Iwaszkiewicz. However, under the influence of the report on the spontaneous occupation of Byeń on 24 February by the department of Maj. Dąbrowski, Supreme Command agreed not to partial, but total shift of the front to the line the Shchara River. As a result of the actions taken on February 27, Drohiczyn was occupied, 1 March – Slonim, 2 March – Janów, 5 March – Pinsk and on 6 March, Byeń was finally taken over⁵⁹. The Supreme Command, despite the approval of the accosted plans by Gen. Waław Iwaszkiewicz and Gen. Antoni Listowski, continued to uphold the decision to adopt a defensive stance and on 4 March, so still in the course of the actions, ordered to abandon further advancing to the east, arguing on the general war location and the lack of reserves.

Armed actions ceased for several weeks. The front line remained unchanged until the Vilnius expedition, whose design began to take shape at the end of March 1919⁶⁰, and began to be implemented from 16 April. The main task, which was the occupation of Vilnius, was carried out by a grouping of Col. Władysław Belina-Prażmowski in the strength of 9 cavalry squadrons and a horse artillery platoon, and the infantry group of Gen. Edward Rydz-Śmigły composed of three infantry battalions⁶¹. The

⁵⁹ A. Przybylski, *Działania wstępne...*, pp. 23-26.

⁶⁰ M. Wrzosek, *Wojsko Polskie i operacje wojenne lat 1918-1921*, Białystok 1988, p. 341 et al.

⁶¹ The course of these activities is illustrated in detail by the following documentation: J. Borzęcki, *Wyzwolenie Wilna w kwietniu 1919 roku w świetle dokumentów Adiutantury Generalnej Naczelnego Dowództwa*, "Przegląd Wschodni" 2006, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 839-865.

units of Gen. Józef Lasocki⁶², Gen. Stefan Mokrzecki and Gen. Antoni Listowski were attacked Luninets.

It turned out then that the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the Western Rifle Division were on the main directions of the strikes of the three mentioned groups of the Polish Army. In the first fratricidal clashes, which took place in the area of Lida and Baranovichi, the units of the Polish army showed greater strength. After the occupation of Lida, Navahrudak, Baranovichi and Vilnius, regular fighting for several weeks ceased. There were only local clashes. The next phase of Polish offensive operations, on a larger scale, took place at the end of June. A grouping led by Gen. Stanisław Szeptycki with the cooperation of the Wielkopolska Army [pol. *Armia Wielkopolska*], including the 15th Uhlans Regiment under the command of Lt Col. Władysław Anders and part of the “Blue Army” of Gen. Józef Haller attacked in the direction of Vileyka, Maladzyechna and Minsk. In the area of the second city mentioned, there were fights between the troops of the 3rd Brigade and the 2nd Infantry Division of the Legions⁶³. As in the case of the April clashes of the other two brigades, the above-mentioned formation of the Polish Armed Forces was victorious.

Almost in parallel with these successive failures of the Polish Division in the battlefields, the process of transforming it into the 52nd Rifle Division began in

⁶² S. Kozicki (ed.), *Bój pod Lidą*, Warszawa 1930, passim.

⁶³ Detailed data on the course of fighting on the Polish-Bolshevik front in 1919 are available in numerous publications. Worth recommending are, among others the following works: G. Łukomski, B. Polak, M. Wrzosek, *Wojna polsko-bolszewicka 1919-1920*, Koszalin 1990; A. Czubiński, *Walka o granice wschodnie Polski w latach 1918-1921*, Opole 1993 (chapters 4 – 6); M. Wrzosek, *Wojny o granice Polski Odrodzonej 1918-1921*, Warszawa 1992.

April⁶⁴. In the middle of July, already fighting as a regular formation of the Red Army, it took part in an unsuccessful attempt of the Bolshevik forces to pass to counter-attack from the foreground of Minsk. The 3rd Brigade's tasks were fulfilled so badly that at some point it was in danger of being surrounded. Saving itself from this threat, it retreated towards Oshparov, and then to the Horoshky-Voroszilovo line. The attackers managed at some stage to break the defensive positions and the relatives were close to the total annihilation of the brigade. It was supported by the troops of the 17th Rifle Division. The 2nd Brigade, operating on the left wing of the decimated 3rd Brigade, also failed, retreating after short fights from the Zaslav region to starting positions in Minsk. The counterattack turned into a retreat. Until 8 August, the entire 16th Army and the 52nd Rifle Division fighting in its composition withdrew to the east, showing only locally stronger resistance. The finale of this struggle was the loss of Minsk.

Although officially much was spoken and written about the heroism of the Polish Red Army soldiers, showed in the course of the struggle with the Polish Army, in practice they did not stand out from the other units of the 16th Army. Taking into account the situational context, i.e. closeness to the homeland and the fact of struggling with “the armed forces of bourgeois Poland”, the comrades of the CWPP and those located in the Kremlin expected much more from them. Both

⁶⁴ A lot of knowledge about the conditions of the almost permanent process of organizational transformations in the Polish revolutionary formations, including the back scenes of “transformation” of the Western Rifle Division into the 52nd Rifle Division, is provided by the Russian-language study: A. Cichoński, *Istorija polskich rievolucijonnych vojsk i 52 Strielkovej Divizii. Chronika 1917–1920*, Moskva 1936, passim.

expected that the threat of moving away from the country by the invading Polish Army would rise to the peak of bravery, mobilizing Russian units to a more decisive option on the occasion. This gravitation towards the native land, however, manifested itself with all its strength during the March rebellion, and not in the struggle with countrymen. This only reinforced the anxiety of political superiors for the state of the “revolutionary morale” of the Polish Red Army soldiers.

Without giving up the human potential of several thousand, however, it was not intended in the current situation to continue to bear the risk of keeping it on the Western Front. The future of the Division was to be resolved on the fronts of the civil war. The practical implementation of the decision to move it was delayed until December. During this time, it participated in the retreats in the east of Minsk occupying defensive positions on Berezina, and at the final stage of these struggles in the Polotsk region. At the end of 1919, the Polish-Bolshevik front was run in the following manner throughout its entire length: Ushitsa (the left tributary of the Dniester) - Ploskirov - Sluch (right tributary of Pripyat) - Uborc (the right tributary of Pripyat) - Ptich (the left tributary of Prypiat), and further north through Babruysk, along Berezina, followed by Lepel and Polotsk to Dyneburg.

The failures on battlefields and earlier collapse of the recruitment action, unexpected ferment among the already mobilized and difficulties with obtaining weapons for them coincided with the information coming from the country about the fading outlook for the local explosion of the revolution. This prompted the exiled center of the CWPP and its Kremlin promoters to officially announce in mid-1919 the decision to withdraw from forming the

Polish Army Operative Group. While the CWPP counted on the inevitability of this step, in the case of the transformation of the Polish division into a regular unit of the Red Army, this caused some surprise to some activists, meaning the organizational changes initiated by the order of the Russian Military Revision No. 27 of 9 June 1919, and finally ordered by the commander of the Western Front by order No. 329 of 4 July.

As a result, the armed arm of the CWPP, after completing vacant military and officer positions by military Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian, was reorganized to the multi-ethnic 52nd Rifle Division⁶⁵. The three existing brigades received a new numbering. From now on, they were marked as 154, 155 and 156 respectively. In the case of individual regiments, the use of non-locational terms was waived and the numeration typical of the Red Army standards was introduced. And so, accordingly, the current 1st Warsaw Regiment became 460th, 4th Warsaw – 464th, 2nd Lublin – 461st, 3rd Siedlce – 463th, 5th Minsk – 466th, 6th Grodno – 467th. The numbers 462, 465 and 468 were reserved for the regiments that were planned to complete the structures of reorganized brigades⁶⁶.

The implementation of the above changes undermined the sense of all organizational efforts so far and *de facto* determined that the revolution over the Vistula was supported by the external force which the

⁶⁵ As part of the internationalization program of the division, the Polish communists were also removed from the command positions in the division. For example, the place designated for the commander of the 2nd Infantry Division of R. Łagwa was taken by I. Raudmec, followed by J. Sablin.

⁶⁶ RGVA, f. 1458, op. 2, d. 534: Orders No. 112 and 117 of the commander of the 52nd Rifle Division, dated on 30.06.1919 and 6.07.1919, respectively.

Red Army was from the Poles' perspective. A possible armed uprising in the country was to take place without the participation of even rudimentary Polish revolutionary groups. Image wise, it was not, according to some of the CWPP activists, the optimal solution, since it entailed them serious obstacles in building relations between the "revolutionary power" imposed by force of the foreign arms and the society in the future.

It seems that the factor determining the choice of this option by the Bolshevik People's Commissars was the uncertainty as to the loyalty of the greater part of the soldiers in the Polish Division. Among them, only a small percentage were communists⁶⁷. An average of 60 to 200 members of the CWPP or the RCP(b) served in each regiment. The previously used half-measures referred to above, as well as the appointment of the Western Front commissioner Romuald Muklewicz⁶⁸ as the chairman of the Field Committee for the Fight against Desertions did not guarantee, according to the Kremlin decision makers, that the Polish communists would be able to stop the disintegration of the Western Rifle Division.

The organizational changes described above did not concern only the Polish division and were not taken under the influence of fears over the consequences of the collapse of the "revolutionary morale" of its soldiers. Rather, they were part of a larger project, which was realized out of necessity. In its framework, the formal

⁶⁷ RGVA, f. 3856, op. 1, d. 15: Political dossier of the 460th Regiment.

⁶⁸ Activist from PSP Left who in 1917 co-founded the structure of the AMP subordinate to the Central Committee. It is worth mentioning these biographical details, as they probably could have played a role in undermining the faith of the Russian Bolsheviks in the effectiveness of the independent CWPP attempts to "heal" the situation in the Western Rifle Division.

separation of the L-BSSR Army⁶⁹ was also liquidated, transforming it into the 16th Army, being one of many components of the RSFSR armed forces.

The reorientation of the current CPC military policy only to a limited extent forced the failure of plans to expand the Polish revolutionary formations. The main reason for this was the unfavorable geostrategic situation that developed in mid-1919 under the influence of offensive operations conducted by the Polish Army in the Lithuanian-Belarusian and Western Ukrainian territories⁷⁰. Thus, the loss of these bridgeheads to the invasion of Poland at the end of April and the social moods⁷¹ not giving hope for an outbreak of the revolution over the Vistula undermined the legitimacy of not only expansion of the Red formations but also their further existence as a separate organizational structure.

⁶⁹ Earlier it was referred to as the Western Army. In both cases part of this formation was the Western Rifle Division.

⁷⁰ In the spring of 1919, as part of the ongoing Polish-Bolshevik struggle on the Lithuanian-Belarusian front, there were also direct clashes between the units of the Western Rifle Division and the units of the Polish Army as a result of which the Polish revolutionary groups suffered heavy losses.

⁷¹ The level of radicalization dropped, among others, in connection with the liquidation of the CWD progressing across the country

Chapter V

The conditions of the liquidation process of the Polish revolutionary formations in Russia

The loss of its “armed arm” in exile by the CWPP and the turmoil caused in the country in the structures of “Wojskówka”¹ after the arrests of its management representatives in March became an impulse for an internal party discussion on modifying the current political line of the group in the military sphere. At that moment, the leeway in this area in the emigration realities was very limited. The June decisions of the RRWC marked the consolidation in the state of dispersion of Polish soldiers in the multiethnic melting pot of the Red Army for a longer period. The only advantage for the CWPP resulting from this fact was the guarantee that on the fronts of civil war, the military will gain further combat experience and would be subject to such strong indoctrination that they would lose the last remnants of sentiment towards their home country. Strengthening in them the internationalist identity created some hopes for the future. Given the more favorable situation, it was possible to open the way for the reconstruction of Polish military structures in exile in a new form. Having an

¹ The popular name of the Department of Agitation in the Army operating at the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CWPP.

“armed arm” from the perspective of some party activists was still of paramount importance. They wanted to create the germ of the Red Polish Army even before the inevitable explosion over the Vistula revolution was inevitable.

These circles were convinced that the communist regime in the Polish realities should be established by the force of arms. By opting in this way “to preserve the wins of the revolution”, it was not forgotten, however, to take care of the image issues. The political pragmatist required it. Due to the historical problems in the relations of Poles and Russians, it was impossible to let communism be imposed by the force of the bayonets to the latter. The antagonism that had grown between the tsarist empire and pre-revolutionary Poland would be automatically transferred to the post-revolutionary reality and could influence the perception of the new system by the Poles and their relations with Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians in future “internationalist Europe”. The easiest way to avoid all these dangers was to provoke a situation in which the military support of the Polish revolution would be granted by the Polish Red Army, supported by the Soviet units, but operating no further than by the Neman-Bug line.

Not all CWPP activists were satisfied with the scenario promoted by the top leadership of the party. For some time the leading representative of the opponents became Julian Marchlewski. He and his supporters were of the opinion that before the establishment of the communist system in Poland, a transitional period would be needed, a time of peaceful coexistence between Soviet Russia and the Second Polish Republic. In his opinion, it was worth paying any price for this room without even refusing to give back to the Polish side of Minsk. What were the

benefits to be expected in return for this generosity? In the opinion of Julian Marchlewski

Poland, after entering into peace in the East, having a secure economic bond through Silesia with Saxony and Berlin, will develop in economic terms. In effect, the Polish proletariat will be strengthened, and the class struggle will take place under optimal conditions. Silesia will become a bridge connecting Polish and German communists. The political school for Polish workers will become the rule of their own counter-revolution, just like the Denikin rule for Southern Russia. It is impossible to establish the Soviet rule in Poland with the forces of the intervention army, nor can the force of arms be introduced into the communist system against the aspirations of the people. (...) entering the Red Army into Poland will be ruinous for communism in Poland².

Gaps in this reasoning the opposing party pointed out at the meeting of the CEC of the CWPP Group in Russia on 9 July 1919. Julian Leszczyński was most aptly referring to the idea of using Silesia as a keystone between the Polish and German proletariat and questioning the chances of the Warsaw authorities to establish administration in this area. In his opinion, neither international tendencies favored it, nor could the plebiscite be guaranteed there. The inability to meet one of the key assumptions of the criticized concept disqualified it as a whole automatically. The final conclusion was even more overwhelming. The member of the extreme radicals group³ assumed that without external support “it is impossible to count on the fact

² Cited after: W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, p. 253.

³ Among them were J. Leszczyński, S. Łazowert, K. Cichowski, J. Unszticht. The group's mentor was F. Dzerzhinsky.

that the Polish proletariat would win with its own strength, or be supported by the Russian Red Army, or the Polish [army] would suppress it”⁴.

Julian Marchlewski’s reply hit the most sensitive string of the party supporters of the Polish-Soviet brotherhood of arms, which were intended to be sealed by marching together to Warsaw⁵. The accusation was openly made to them that they pursued a “revolutionary war policy” in attempting to implement these plans. In a private letter to his wife, referring to the plans of his antagonists, he went a step further. By giving vent to the emotions that bore him, he wrote “the radicalism, revolutionary nature of these heads of bunkers may still cause a lot of poverty”⁶. In retrospect, we read these words almost like a prophecy. Earlier in his defense against such accusations, Józef Unszlicht swore that no one in the party conducted a “revolutionary war policy”, let alone against the native country. He regretted that among his companions there are also those who preach the view that “Polish communists want a war with Poland and they try to engage Russia in this war at all costs”⁷.

Real actions taken both before and after the liquidation of the Western Rifle Division denied the verbal declarations. In the first period, as soon as the first signals about preparations for its reorganization and

⁴ RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 1, li. 27.

⁵ After the speech of the previous speaker, no one, however, deluded themselves any longer that the Red Army would stop on the Neman-Bug line.

⁶ Cited after: W. Gostyńska, *Rola Juliana Marchlewskiego w tajnych rokowaniach polsko-radzieckich (czerwiec-lipiec 1919 r.)*, “Z Pola Walki” Issue 2: 1966, p. 35. In a broader context, the relations between both parties are presented in another (several hundred pages) publication by this author – See: Eadem, *Stosunki polsko-radzieckie 1918-1919*, Warszawa 1972, passim.

⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 4, d. 18, li. 51.

transformation into the regular unit of the Red Army appeared, a series of measures to stop this process were initiated. The promoters of the concept of the “revolutionary war” against Poland in the Central Executive Committee of the CWPP Group in Russia on 14 May 1919 authorized Stanisław Bobiński and Samuel Łazowert to edit a dispatch to Joseph Stalin with a request to block plans to “divide the Western Division”. The order to withdraw from the 2nd Cavalry Squadron of the Western Front was taken as the first step taken in this direction⁸. However, this and similar initiatives did not bring any effect, as the Russian comrades were determined to implement their “unification” intentions towards the Polish division.

In such circumstances, the Central Executive Committee did not resign from further efforts to save the “armed arm” of the CEC and was forced to cooperate in the process of its liquidation, including closing the recruitment offices operating in the party premises. It came so much easier that some members of this body revealed discrepancies in the assessment of the benefits that the party could have achieved by sustaining the existence of the Western Rifle Division. The fiasco of the recruitment action to this formation, and at the same time the limited effects of indoctrination activities carried out in the country among the soldiers of the Polish Army, brought doubts about the realness of the implementation of the project to create in the foreseeable future the Red Polish Army. The necessity of involving the main Red Army forces in support of the revolution in Poland seemed unavoidable in these circumstances, and if it did not break, in its “promotion” in the entire territory, not only by the Neman-Bug line. At that moment, the second

⁸ RGASPI, f. 446, op. 1, d. 1, li. 8.

option seemed most likely, which meant no more or less the necessity of conquering the country with external forces. It was only after gaining military control over it that it was possible to establish revolutionary orders and to create the Red Polish Army, to with Polish Red Army soldiers as its Polish elite.

The group of extreme radicals, however, did not share this line of thinking. They were determined to save the separateness of the Polish Division. The last chance to achieve this goal was to give it the formal status of a “special tasks unit”. In fact, the Division already had it from the moment when it was deployed on the borderline of the then L-BSSR and Poland. This special task, which it had in fulfilling circumstances in both the military and propaganda sense, was to support the revolution over the Vistula. In the first half of 1919, until its outbreak, not only that it did not take place, the Polish Army successfully launched an offensive against the Bolshevik forces by moving the temporary border far to the east.

The realization of the intentions of the CWPP activists paying homage to the idea of a “revolutionary war” could not take place. What was the reason? In the course of truce negotiations conducted by Julian Marchlewski in Baranovichi, Bialowieza and Mikashevichy, the Polish side not only decided to suspend military operations to enable the Red Army to regroup and to deal with the Volunteer Army commanded by Gen. Anton Denikin⁹. Most probably, even earlier during the brief stay of the

⁹ This step was justified by the political considerations, as post-imperial Russia was not afraid of recognizing Poland's independence and territorial aspirations. This aspect of mutual relations, but also their wider context, is shown in: A. Juzwenko, *Polska a “biała” Rosja (od listopada 1918 do kwietnia 1920 r.)*, Wrocław 1973, passim.

said “negotiator” in Warsaw¹⁰, it also received a bonus in the form of withdrawing the Kremlin from maintaining the status of the Western Rifle Division as a “special tasks unit”¹¹. Even if there is no reliable source certifications confirming this assumption, which is understandable due to the matter of the issue, the effects of actions undertaken by the RRWC speak for the interpretation presented here. By analyzing them, we gain the possibility of indirectly pointing to their causes.

The reason for the resignation of the Bolshevik commissioners from maintaining the special status of the exile formation could be the pressure of the Chief of State, who even before the right phase of the negotiations

¹⁰ He stopped in the Polish capital on his way from Berlin to Petrograd and, using his political contacts, he undertook initial truce negotiations on his own initiative. With the approval of the RKL and after personal consultations with V. Lenin, he continued these talks in Baranovichi, Białowieża and Mikashevichy. The first chronological publication that comprehensively addresses the subject of Polish-Bolshevik peaceful negotiations remains the publication by Piotr Wandycz – See: Idem, *Secret Soviet-Polish peace talks in 1919*, “The Slavic Review” Issue 3: 1965, pp. 425-449. Cf. A. Juzwenko, *Misja Marchlewskiego w 1919 roku na tle stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, [in:] H. Zieliński (ed.), *Z badań nad wpływem i znaczeniem rewolucji rosyjskich 1917 roku dla ziem polskich*, Wrocław 1968. The issues are presented also in: A. Nowak, *Polska i trzy Rosje. Studium polityki wschodniej Józefa Piłsudskiego (do kwietnia 1920 roku)*, Kraków 2001, pp. 307-326, 378-420. The materials reporting on the course of the talks were published in the monograph entitled: *Tajne rokowania polsko-radzieckie w 1919 r. Materiały archiwalne i dokumenty*, W. Gostyńska (ed.), Warszawa 1986, *passim*.

¹¹ W. Gostyńska, *op. cit.*, p. 23 et al. In a broader context, this issue is discussed by: A. Leinwand, *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna wobec wojny Polsko-Radzieckiej 1919-1920*, Warszawa 1964, pp. 85-87 and: A. Nowak, “Lewa wolna”, *albo o spiskach Piłsudskiego z Leninem*, “Arcana” 2007, Issue 2-3, pp. 184-204; Cf. the original approach to this problem in the contemporary British monographic study: K. D. Croll, *Soviet-Polish relations 1919-1921*, Glasgow 2008, pp. 91-101.

had the right to expect a “goodwill gesture” from them. There are many indications that it was meant to solve the problem of the “special tasks unit”. From the CPC perspective meeting this condition due to the difficult location in which the Red Army found itself in the spring of 1919 did not have to seem too high a price. After having been able to concentrate the main forces on the Southern Front, so many divisions from the Western Front had to be moved. Therefore, the price of inclusion of the Polish Diversion on the list of transferred groups, even with its simultaneous “unification” with the regular forces of the Red Army, was not too high at any given time. The implementation of such a variant did not mean giving up on the human potential gathered under the Polish red banner, but only a different form of its development. An expression of approval for Józef Piłsudski’s expectations could have come much easier since the March rebellions in several departments of the division undermined in a substantial way the legitimacy of continuing the existence of this one-ethnic unit.

The extreme radicals from the exiled center of the CWPP, realizing that they could not stop the “unification” process, were only lobbying for leaving the 52nd Division of Rifles in the structures of the Western Front. Józef Unszlicht showed particular activity in this sphere, hoping that due to his close relations with representatives of the Soviet military circles he would be able to convince RRWC members to his own interests. He and his supporters, trying to strengthen their own voices, appealed for help to the Polish Bureau of Agitation and Propaganda. The common forces were intended to influence the highest Soviet party, government and

military factors to stop the relocation of the Division¹². In the late autumn of 1919, when all these actions did not bring any effect, further efforts were discontinued until spring 1920.

In the winter, the activity of the CWPP exiled center in the military field was limited to supporting the companions from the country in carrying out a propaganda campaign in the units of the Polish Army stationing east of the Neman-Bug line. Such activities were undertaken both under their own name, as well as through the satellite structures and inspiration of the so-called grassroots initiatives. The several following examples show the nature of these actions, as well as the goals that were to be achieved in this way. The whole would be complemented by an indication of the measurable effects of this type of engagement and the impact on the scope of their contraction of Polish force structures.

In the distributed at the turn of the years 1919/1920 in the borderlands "Open letter of Polish Communists in the Red Army to soldiers of the Polish Army" [pol. *List otwarty komunistów-Polaków w Armii Czerwonej do żołnierzy Armii Polskiej*], there was a call to abandon their own ranks and enlist in the Soviet revolutionary formations. Already in the very form of this agitation material, there was an element of manipulation calculated to obtain greater sympathy and resonance among addressees. How appealing must have seemed the idea of soldiers addressing directly soldiers with words of "sincere" care and comfort. Not in some party appeal, but in a much more intimate "letter". Confident readers, by this way, in a smart way were told who their friend was

¹² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 4, d. 45, li. 21-22.

and who the enemy was and how they should act towards both.

The most important one of these suggestions was already included in the first sentence. It was encouragement for desertion. It was suggested that the phenomenon of leaving the ranks of the Polish Army had already taken on and that any subsequent move of this kind would in no way be reprehensible. It is rather a continuation of the misery of the "matters officers" that was inadequate and should be stigmatized.

It is a shame that, being a force, you continue to let yourself use for a hangman's work and do not use the weapon that you have in your hand, to protect yourself and your interests. Fighting with the Bolsheviks, you commit the greatest crime, because the Bolsheviks are the same workers' and peasant's nation as you, who only came to mind earlier, rushed away their generals, bourgeois and heirs and took power in their own hands¹³.

The cited excerpt should be regarded as a typical instruction showing the recipients of the letter, whom they should perceive as an enemy and against whom the weapons held in their hands should be returned. According to the proposed alternative way of perceiving reality, the imprint of the enemy should be transferred from the Bolsheviks to Polish "generals, bourgeois and heirs", and at the latter weapons should be pointed. Therefore, the Polish soldier had a choice to desert and join the ranks of the Red Army, or the rebellion and grassroots "democratization" of the Polish Army. In both variants, whether in the ranks of the Red Army or the

¹³ *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, N. Gašiorowska et al. (general eds), Vol. 2: listopad 1918-kwiecień 1920, W. Gostyńska et al. (eds), Warszawa 1961, pp. 456-458.

rebellious Polish divisions, he should turn against the internal “class enemy” and not against external aggression.

The call to unleash a civil war and support for the “brotherly help” of the Polish revolution in the Red Army was the main message of the letter invoked. All the limits of hypocrisy were exceeded, however, suggesting to his addressees that

Polish officers will not tell you openly what the war is about. They lie to you that the war is for the freedom and independence of Poland, where everybody will be good. The officers lie, because they screwed themselves and they screw the working people in the country. (...) Enough of letting the bourgeoisies use the working people as cannon fodder, enough of splitting brother’s blood¹⁴.

It is significant that the CWPP cells conducting indoctrination activities in propaganda materials prepared and distributed not only turned to the general military, but if necessary, directed their enunciations to specific divisions. This perception of a certain slice of reality on a microscale and the publicizing of events taking place at this level evoked an impression among agitated people that their problems are known and close to agitators. The very fact of noticing and noting them, for example in a leaflet, suggested that Polish communists could really care about their solution. What remained unchanged at every level and with every form of indoctrination is a recipe for all existential problems in the form of saying obedience to the “forces of the old order” and the necessity to implement the revolution’s slogans.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

To illustrate the issue discussed here, the appeal which appeared at the end of 1919¹⁵, *inter alia*, addressing the soldiers of the 33rd Lomza Regiment can be referred to, saying:

Companions, we heard that once you had refused to obey, you did not want to go to the position, bleed with your folk blood for the lordships' cause. By the command of your command, you were surrounded by gendarmes and forced to return to the front. You want to come to us because you feel that our Red Army is fighting for the liberation of the working people. But there are those among you that believe the fibs told by the officers saying that the volunteers who are taken will be shot. Do not believe those scammers! Everyone – mobilized and volunteers with arms in hand, come to our side, join us. Together we will end the fratricidal fight. With our help, you will get rid of your oppressing officers and generals, bourgeois and courtyardists. Go ahead comrades. To the common revolutionary ranks¹⁶.

Analyzing the content of the appeals, two reflections arise. First of all, the efficiency of the intelligence centers' work and the mobility of the CWPP printing facilities in the borderland areas should be highly appreciated¹⁷.

¹⁵ J. Ciapka wrote about this formation in a broader context in the brochure: J. Ciapka (ed.), *Zarys historii wojennej 33 pułku piechoty*, Warszawa 1929; A. Cz. Dobroński, *33 Pułk piechoty*, Pruszków 1994.

¹⁶ *Dokumenty i materiały...*, Vol. 2, pp. 458-459. A lot of interesting information on the conditions of communist activity in the area of eastern Mazovia in the period and in the following years is provided by J. Kowalczyk, *Komunistyczna Partia Polski w okręgu łomżyńskim 1919–1938*, Warszawa 1975.

¹⁷ The quoted leaflet was published in a circulation of 30,000 copies. It reached, therefore, not only the soldiers of the 33rd Lomza Regiment, but also many others. In the latter case, it fulfilled only the propaganda task, without the elements of personalization, it

Secondly, it is worth noting the fact that the content of verbal communication was carefully refined, especially in the psychological dimension, i.e. taking into account the mental specificity of the groups.

Realizing that the calls for rebellion or desertion bring limited response, at least the pacifist sentiments among the Polish Army soldiers were aimed to strengthen. It was hoped that, as in the workers' milieus, it would be possible to activate some military part to participate in the anti-war campaign. An incentive to follow this path was an example of the Baltic states, in which it was not possible to obtain sufficient social support for the concept of war with the Eastern neighbor¹⁸.

In one of the many appeals of the CWPP distributed at the turn of 1919/1920, there was a call for active service soldiers to support efforts to reach an agreement with the RSFSR.

The government of Paderewski and Piłsudski, the government of the hangmen of the working Polish people, does not want to make peace with Soviet Russia, so it must be forced to do so. And in the first place, it can and should be forced by the soldiers of the Polish army. Polish soldiers, join your brothers from Polish cities and villages into one voice, into one heart, into one revolutionary organism. Together with them, demand: Peace with Soviet Russia! (...) Think about what is expected of you, if the war continues. Stop being blind tools in the hands of the Polish reaction. You are stronger than it is. Shake your hand with

was to suggest that the CWPP was close to the problems of soldiers, was informed about them and had proposals for their solution.

¹⁸ On the socio-political conditions of these pacifist sentiments among Estonians: J. Lewandowski, *Historia Estonii*, Wrocław 2002, pp. 182-186.

the proletariat of Russia reaching out to you. Demand an immediate peace with Soviet Russia¹⁹.

Under these dramatic and overcrowded concerns about the threatened peace, there was an encouragement to de facto disarmament, and thus surrender to the Bolsheviks. In the context of future Polish experiences, those distant by only a few months, the assurances of the proponents of the idea of self-determination sounded particularly glorious: "Russia wants to liberate the oppressed world of the whole. The Red Army does not violate Poland. It defends the victories of the workers' revolution against the attacks of the counter-revolutionism. The working people of Russia want peace with the working people of Poland"²⁰ .

It was true that the "working people of Russia" did not want to participate in the war against Poland. However, it was also a fact that those who exercised power on his behalf looked at it differently. Their verbal declarations announcing the "struggle for the preservation of peace"²¹ between the "Land of Soviets" and Poland were synonymous with the announcement of a "revolutionary war" against the western neighbor. There were only two important issues, the moment of the beginning of aggression and to what extent the Kremlin's decision-makers would like to use civilian and military circles of the left-wing in exile.

As for the second doubt, the situation began to clarify already at the end of 1919. Left to itself, deprived of support from the political base, being the CWPP in exile,

¹⁹ *Dokumenty i materialy...*, Vol. 2, pp. 475-477.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ The phrase "struggle for peace" contains a logical contradiction. Fighting (war) is the opposite of the peace.

the 52nd Rifle Division was moved to the Southern Front. This was also a consequence of the decision of the Political Bureau at the Central Committee RCP(b) taken at the turn of October and November.

The main division forces arrived from Orsha to the operational areas of the 14th Army in the first days of December 1919. The various units were deployed in Starobelsk, Svatove, Jewsug, Novy-Ajdar, Nykolajevka, Novaya Pokrovka and on the Borowaya station. With exhausting battles on the Western Front and sick soldiers affected by sickness, the Command of the 14th Army gave a month leave to repair health. Due to the intensification of the typhoid epithelium, which affected about 40% of the headcount of the division, this period lasted up to three months²².

Treatment and convalescence were hampered by supply difficulties. The most lacking was the lack of food. Political commissar of the 463th Regiment (formerly the 3th Siedlce) reported that “If the epidemic lasts longer, only miserable remnants can be left from the regiment”²³. The situation was to be saved temporarily by conducting a requisition campaign in nearby villages. However, it inflamed relations with the local peasants.

Despite the intensification of indoctrination activities and assurances from the headquarters declaring that in the unit “in political terms the mood is exquisite” and “the battle spirit, impressive enthusiasm prevails, and soldiers are concerned only with the lack of footwear and uniforms”, in fact attitudes became more and more

²² J. Podsiadło, *W szeregach rewolucyjnego Pułku Czerwonej Warszawy*, “Z Pola Walki” 1958, Issue 1, p. 155.

²³ RGVA, f. 3863, op. 1, d. 1, li. 1.

defeatist²⁴. They deepened due to considerable mortality among the sick.

At the beginning of spring 1920, personal conditions in particular regiments decreased significantly. For example, in the 460th Regiment 872 soldiers fit for service remained, respectively 460 in the 463th, and in the 464th the most – 1236²⁵. The unit therefore required supplements. The decision on this matter was not taken for a long time due to the prolonged recuperation of the soldiers and the reorganization of the structures of the Southern Front. It was made in January separating the Southwest Front and the Caucasian Front²⁶. Originally, the 52nd Rifle Division was included in the 8th Army assigned to the latter. For a short time, in March 1920, some of its troops went to the Caucasus region²⁷. Contrary to previous decisions, they did not join the 8th, but the 9th (Cuban) Army. The situation turned out to be so dynamic that already at the turn of March and April the main division was moved to Ukraine and incorporated into the 13th Army fighting at the Southwest Front²⁸.

The concentration point was set in the areas between the mouth of the Dnieper and the Boh to the Black Sea. The various regiments were deployed in mid-April in Mielovoye, Kochkarovka, Kostroma, Aleksandrovka, Belayevka, Osokorovka, Grushevka, Nikopol and Nowa

²⁴ Ibidem, f. 3863, op. 1, d. 1, li. 3 and 19-20, and also 36.

²⁵ W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, pp. 368-369.

²⁶ The formal decision in this matter was made on 10 January 1920.

²⁷ It considers the 460th and 465th regiments. Directing Poles to this region is a tradition from the tsarist times.

²⁸ The 52nd Rifle Division was incorporated into the so-called of the Perekop military grouping of the 13th Army. It had the task to attack against the Crimea. The grouping also included the 15th (Latvian) Division, whose commanders were entrusted with the leadership in the action.

Kamionka²⁹. The choice of this area was related to the plan of including the division into actions against the Armed Forces of the South of Russia, commanded by Gen. Pyotr Wrangel, concentrated at that time on the Taurid Peninsula.

At the moment when the Polish Army troops took a march to Kiev, three brigades of the 52nd Rifle Division were forcing the lower Dnieper trying to master the bridgeheads on its left bank. Thus, they moved away from the main theater of military operations. It evoked an understandable dissatisfaction that was also given to the Polish part of the officers' staff. The moods of rebellion, or repeating the situation in March 1919, were compounded even more by the transition of the 12th and 14th Army within the Western Fronts to counterrevolution in the west. Reports on the occupation of the Red Army by the successive borderland cities were each time accompanied by ad hoc rallies convened, during which, apart from celebrating the victories, they were demanded to transfer the division within the South-Western Front to one of the two armies marching to Poland. From the moment of joining the West Front's offensive operations in July, these demands gave way to calls for the re-incorporation of the division into its membership. Political commissioners used these congregations each time to conduct indoctrination aimed at extinguishing emotions, but in any case they ended with a disputable question regarding the date of dividing the division into clashes with the Polish Army.

Concerned about this situation, the political commissioners from the 460th Regiment even appointed a council devoted to this problem. One of its participants

²⁹ *Graždanskaja vojna na Ukraine, 1918–1920. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov v 3-h vol., 4-h knigach*, Vol. 3, Kiev 1967, p. 46.

reported on the course of his dispute with soldiers concerning this issue. "A division consisting mostly of Poles often raises the problem of returning to their homeland. Speakers say that more could be beneficial, contributing to the deepening of the revolution in Poland".

Not without significance was the fact that in this way of thinking not only to the army ranks, but also their superiors, mostly belonging to CWPP. One of them, Piotr Borowski, who was the commander of the machine gun division, publicly formulated a demand to take firm actions to force the RRWC to direct the division into the Western Front. In the hope of obtaining a stronger support for this postulate, preparations were made to organize the general meeting of all Polish military from the 460th Regiment. It was hoped that this would be a legitimation to take more decisive steps in order to settle the whole matter positively³⁰.

Paradoxically, however, all these actions, instead of bringing it closer, distanced the prospects of realizing the hope of the protesters. The original decision of RRWC to move the unit to operations on the front of the civil war was dictated by the fear of the loyalty of Polish Red Army soldiers in the case of armed operations against the homeland. The signal that undermined this trust was the wave of disturbances and desertions, which occurred in the division in March 1919 almost parallel to the Polish offensive undertaken by the Polish Army on the L-BSSR areas. Reports reaching Moscow that after more than one year break again there was a ferment among the same military group made it difficult for the group of Józef

³⁰ RGVA, f. 3856, op. 1, d. 5, li. 84-85.

Unszlicht to effectively lobby for the transfer of the 52nd Rifle Division to military operations in the west.

These efforts were weakened by frictions within the CWPP exiled center, as well as between it as a whole and the party headquarters in the country. The contradictions among the Polish communists, echoing in the RRWC, were, for some of this group, the unwilling idea of continuing the existence of ethnic groups, an additional argument in blaming military projects of one of the CWPP factions. For these reasons, and because of entering the decisive phase of the Polish-Bolshevik war, obtaining a positive decision regarding the relocation of the Division was postponed for several months.

These months turned out to be crucial not only for the future of Polish revolutionary groups. At the turn of July and August 1920, the newly formed Temporary Polish Revolutionary Committee [TPRC, pol. *Tymczasowy Komitet Rewolucyjny Polski* the so-called "*Polrewkom*"] proclaimed the creation west of the Curzon line of the Polish Socialist Soviet Republic³¹. Unable to dispose of the Polish personnel at the 52nd Rifle Division, the TPRC was forced to accept the fact that the militia of the Polish revolution would be the People's Militia. It was planned that its local divisions would be subordinated to the administrative departments of individual Military-Revolutionary Committees. Striving to make the whole division mobile, the overall management of its components was intended to be centralized in operational terms. In this case, the role of the coordinating center could be strengthened with the personnel of the TPRC

³¹ The boundaries of the Polish Soviet Socialist Republic were to roughly coincide with those that were settled at the Vienna Congress for the Kingdom of Poland – "Goniec Czerwony" No. 11 of 19.08.1920.

structure with the “Vilnius soldiers”³², or more likely, one of the cells of the Military-Revolutionary Council of the Western Front³³.

The ambitions of some representatives of the “Bialystok government”, however, went much further. The strategic objective of the political project carried out in the occupied territories, apart from provoking (forcing) the outbreak of the revolution, was to build the Red Polish Army from scratch. The keenest advocates of this idea were, in particular, those CWPP activists who in the second half of 1919 so strongly opposed the transformation of the Western Division of Rifles into a regular unit of the Red Army, and when they objected to the transfer of the 52nd Rifle Division to the Southern Front. West³⁴.

In the summer of 1920, this environment gained a powerful ally in the person of F. Dzerzhinsky. Because of his position in RCP(b) and his position in the structures of the “security apparatus” he had sufficient means of pressure to obtain the consent of the highest civil and military factors to create Polish revolutionary formations. Even though the 52nd Rifle Division could become their haven, this option was not taken seriously, although no one excluded the possibility of including it in the framework of the Red Polish Army in the undefined future. The head of the Cheka in the role of the organizer of this new armed force was Józef Unszlicht. The official

³² It is about the CWPP emigres activists coming from the interior of the RSFRS via Vilnius. A very large group of them arrived in Bialystok on 9.08.1920. The following activists significant in the party’s hierarchy arrived on that day: S. Bobiński, S. Heltman, B. Zaks, S. Łazowert, S. Mertens, S. Pilawski, T. Radwański and J. Dolecki.

³³ However, this issue was never resolved.

³⁴ Before to January 1920, it was referred to as the Southern Front.

proposal in this matter was submitted to him on 7 August. However, due to his leg injury and forced by the situation a few-week stay in Lida, it was not possible for the nominated nominee to perform his duties. Until the end of treatment and convalescence, Stanisław Budkiewicz was to coordinate the organizing activities³⁵.

The units created were initially to be based on volunteer recruitment. The recruitment campaign was intended to be carried out in two directions, i.e. on the Polish regions occupied by the Red Army soldiers and among prisoners of Polish origin imprisoned in camps located in the area of the Soviet republics³⁶. In the case of the latter, it was intended to prefer military workers' origin and ultimately reach for the "better peasant element". The plans were also to organize a "school of red commanders" for the most promising Polish Red Army soldiers³⁷.

On July 30, 1920, F. Dzerzhinsky, who was staying in Vilnius, informed Vladimir Lenin about entering the phase of practical implementation of the project of establishing the Red Polish Army agreed between the two Bolshevik leaders. Its first units were to be built in Minsk³⁸, and Roman Łagwa was appointed as the commander³⁹. They had to work with them as deputy

³⁵ F. Dzerzhinsky delegated this obligation to him as early as 9.08.1920.

³⁶ A. J. Leinwand, *Indoktrynacja jeńców polskich w bolszewickiej Rosji 1919–1921*, "Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2001, Vol. 36, pp. 95-108. See also: S. Alexandrowicz, Z. Karpus, W. Rezmer (eds), *Zwycięzcy za drutami: jeńcy polscy w niewoli (1919–1922). Dokumenty i materiały*, Toruń 1995, passim.

³⁷ RGASPI, f. 76, op. 1, d. 1260, li 1.

³⁸ Ibidem, d. 1234, li. 1.

³⁹ His deputy for political affairs was S. Budkiewicz – See: RGASPI, f. 68, op. 1, d. 12, li. 25.

Wacław Gruszecki (former military inspector in the Western Rifle Division) and Antoni Roszkowski, who was to lead the Staff⁴⁰. Obtaining permission from the central political and military authorities did not provide a sufficient guarantee that the plans of an exiled CWPP center in this sphere could be implemented. It was necessary to ensure at the level of political leadership of the fronts that appropriate instructions regarding securing the organizing process from the logistics and supply side were issued.

Due to the temporary exclusion of Józef Unszlicht from organizing activities and a much weaker position of Stanisław Budkiewicz who replaced him, this time F. Dzerzhinsky, responsible for security and military issues, had to take care of it personally. In this matter, on 12 August, he turned to the prominent member of the Military-Revolutionary Council of the Western Front, Ivan Smilga, with a demand to provide the “forming units of the Polish revolutionary army with all kinds of supplies”. Permanent monitoring of formal, legal and organizational activities was necessary.

The most significant confirmation of this was the matter of preparing the decree establishing the 1st Polish Red Army. The ineffective bureaucratic machine combined with the reluctance on the side of a certain part of Bolshevik decision-makers towards the idea of organizing this formation led to a delay not only in the announcement of the decision, but also in its drafting. And this time, it did not do without the intervention of the head of the Cheka, who demanded clarification on

⁴⁰ RGASPI, f. 68, op. 1, d. 15, li. 2-6. In fact, Wacław Daszkiewicz was responsible for these duties by September; only in September and partly in October A. Roszkowski vel Rożkowski and Trzeciak since 20.10.1920.

this matter on 14 August⁴¹. The strength of the voice of F. Dzerzhinsky can be proved by the fact that a few hours after sending a signal to Moscow, i.e. on the same day, the RRWC issued an instruction to the subordinated authorities to join in the formation of the 1st Polish Red Army. This decision was formalized by the order signed by Sergeant Kamenev, Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army.

A dozen or so hours later, on 15 August, the commander of the Western Front concretized this order by issuing the order invoking the first two regiments of that army⁴². It considers the 1st Rifle Regiment, which was intended to form in Minsk, as a reserve unit⁴³, and 2nd Rifle Regiment, which has been in existence for several days in Bialystok, as a component of the active army⁴⁴. The second of these units began to be organized even before obtaining formal decisions as a territorial volunteer formation. This initiative was supported by the TPRC, and it also planned to create smaller divisions of Red Army soldiers deployed in poviat centers. There, their political and administrative background was to be the local Military-Revolutionary Committees, in the period preceding the obtaining of formal consent for the establishment of Polish revolutionary forces.

By Order No. 9 of 11 August, the Bialystok “government” initiated the recruitment of volunteers from the “workers’ and farm-hands’ circles”. This action

⁴¹ RGASPI, f. 76, op. 1, d. 1260, li 1.

⁴² In addition to M. Tukhachevsky, the order was signed by the Chief of Staff of the front Szwarc and J. Unszlicht, responsible for the affairs of the Polish Red formations in the Revolutionary Military Council of the Western Front – See: RGASPI, f. 68, op. 1, d. 12, li. 25.

⁴³ The commander was P. Sztark.

⁴⁴ Commonly referred to as the 2nd Bialystok Rifle Regiment.

was to be coordinated by the appointed military commander of the city over the Biała River Mieczysław Łoganowski⁴⁵. The indispensable propaganda support in gaining volunteers was expected to ensure that the official TPRC publication, *Goniec Czerwony*⁴⁶, edited under Tadeusz Radwański's direction. Since 17 August, next to the title vignette appeared on the constantly placed slogan-call. The first of them was: "Under the arms of Polish workers! Join the ranks of the Red Army!" And the second one located lower: "Defend your working fatherland against the international rash of capitalist exploiters!"⁴⁷

It is worth devoting more attention to both calls and a few sentences of the commentary. In the final part of the first of the quoted words, the term "Red Army" was used without specifying that it was its Polish counterpart. Was it an unintentional editing mistake or a deliberate choice? It cannot be determined today. More circumstances argue for this second alternative, for example, because the title vignette in the cover of these slogans was published many times, until 20 August, the moment of ceasing to publish the magazine. Concerning the image issues,

⁴⁵ The first head of the military command of Białystok was a Russian named Shipov.

⁴⁶ Before the official TKRP body appeared in the city over the Biała River, the local military authorities managed to publish four issues of preceding it "*Wiadomości Białostockie Komitetu Wojenno-Rewolucyjnego*" [News of the Białystok Revolutionary Committee]. It was published in two identical language versions, i.e. in Polish and Yiddish.

⁴⁷ The broader context of the initiation of this agitation action is important. It was initiated after the order of general retreat from Warsaw issued by the general command of the Western Front from 16 to 17 August. The recruitment propaganda, therefore, lasted only 4 days, because on 20.08.1920, the last issue of "*Goniec Czerwony*" appeared, and on 22 August, members of the TKRP left Białystok.

indicating the armed forces of the neighboring state, as the target location of volunteers' recruitment, was a serious mistake on the part of Polish communists, and with far-reaching consequences. Above all, however, it was a manifestation of extreme arrogance, because it ignored the sense of Polish ethnic separateness cherished for 123 years by some circles of the left. For most recipients of international calls, internationalism was a completely abstract concept, in contrast to the sense of national identification. If they were to defend their own "working homeland", i.e. the one located in the center of Europe, they expected that they would be able to do so under the banner of the Red Polish Army, not in the ranks of the RSFSR armed forces. Apart from certain exceptions, even for most of the regular members of the CWPP, this issue was not without significance. Due to the above reasons, the failure of the recruitment action should not be seen only in the limited space and time of its conducting, but it equally pointed to ill-considered propaganda activities.

The editors of *Goniec Czerwony* were not limited in their actions to contain more or less thought-out propaganda slogans on their pages. They were accompanied by the editor-in-chief Tadeusz Radwański, whose texts were extended in form and serious in the content, and Feliks Kon, responsible for propaganda matters in the TPRC. Both of their comments intensively supported the recruitment action. In one of such publications, the latter attempts to frustrate with the "object" of indoctrination and create the impression that he turns to each of the workers individually: "Take the weapon in your hand and save your homeland. It is thanks to you that Poland will now gain real

independence”⁴⁸. All these calls remained essentially unnoticed⁴⁹. Thus, in Białystok, the regiment was formally established, its command was established in persons from the communist community⁵⁰, a “recruitment” apparatus⁵¹ functioned, but in relation to the example of forces and means, a much smaller group of volunteers was recruited than expected⁵². Unable to rely on the local community, the organizers of the Białystok Red Rifle Regiment were forced to return to the idea of mobilizing Polish communists in the RSFSR. Earlier attempts to “promote” their service in the ranks of the regular Red Army formations and in the party-state administrative structures were always unsuccessful. This time Józef Unszlicht, who was piloting this case, addressed Vladimir Lenin directly, counting that by this way the CWPP would regain at least some part of its own human potential. This is the most important military

⁴⁸ “Goniec Czerwony” No. 11 of 19.08.1920.

⁴⁹ Similar reactions to the reactions in the Białystok region emerged in the eastern Lesser Poland [*Małopolska*]. See: M. Klimecki, *Republika Rad w Małopolsce Wschodniej. Epizod wojny polsko-sowieckiej 1919–1920 r.*, “Rocznik Przemyski” 2004, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 45–58. A wider presentation of this episode of the Polish-Bolshevik war was presented by the author in the monograph published two years later – See: Idem, *Galiczyjska Socjalistyczna Republika Rad. Okupacja Małopolski (Galicji) Wschodniej przez Armię Czerwoną w 1920 roku*, Toruń 2006.

⁵⁰ The commander was B. Laskowski coming from the Vawkavysk area, and for his deputy M. Lewin, a graduate of the gymnasium of from Suwałki, was appointed. – See: RGVA, f. 4497, op. 1, d. 11, li. 21–22.

⁵¹ The organizing action in Białystok was coordinated by the military commandant of the city, and at the level of local military command stations – See: *Ibidem*.

⁵² It was a group of about 200 volunteers. Laconic information on the few who joined the revolutionary formations at the Biała River can be found in the publication typical for the Polish People's Republic era: A. Antoniuk (ed.), *Białostoczcianie w rewolucji październikowej*, Białystok 1987, pp. 1–12.

point of view, i.e. Polish soldiers and officers serving in the 52nd Rifle Division. Presenting this request, the author emphasized that at a given moment the Polish Red Army soldiers are the only real mobilization base for the 1st Rifle Regiment in Minsk and the 2nd Rifle Regiment in Bialystok⁵³. Before making a decision on the possible transfer of the Polish division from the South-Western Front to the Western Front, the Bolshevik leader consulted on this matter with the party responsible for the military sphere and the top military circles. Negative opinions prevailed. The decisive blow to the efforts of Polish communists, however, was made by Joseph Stalin, definitely blocking plans for the dissolution of the Polish division.

At the outbreak of the Polish-Bolshevik War, the 52nd Rifle Division was still in the area of the Perekop Isthmus. The task of the group, which consisted of was to secure the region of the Dnieper estuary against a possible counter-offensive from the Southern Armed Forces blocked in the Crimea. They were not only defensive actions. The units of the 13th Army were preparing for the decisive stage of the Crimean offensive and on 10 May an order was issued to take it. It is noteworthy that the staff planners, including the 52nd Division, made part of the group to perform the most important part of the operation⁵⁴. It must be admitted that the fact of not utilizing both the military and propaganda sense of Polish revolutionary formation in the course of armed operations carried out in Poland was difficult to be rationalized. This evoked understandable irritation in the CWPP circles. The supporters of the “revolutionary war” against Poland using the revolutionary formation created in exile

⁵³ RGASPI, f. 68, op. 1, d. 12, li. 23.

⁵⁴ I. Korotkov, *Rozgrom Vrangel'a*, Warszawa 1952, p. 48 et al.

continued their efforts to change this situation as soon as possible. Delaying the decision to re-deploy the Division into the Western Front was officially explained by the difficult situation in the area of Crimea. To return, however, it should be noted that at the turn of April and May 1920, the Armed Forces of the South of Russia commanded by Gen. Pyotr Wrangel conducted defensive actions, and managed to pass on the offensive against the Soviet 13th June only after the necessary reorganization and reinforcement. During almost five weeks, when the Polish offensive continued for Kiev and then, when the forces of the Southwest Front broke out, the 52 Rifle Division Departments remained idle at the back of the main theater of military operations. Even in the face of such a great military threat, which occurred at the turn of April and May, the leadership of the RRWC did not decide to reach for the unit.

The same was true with the consent to mobilize Polish communists staying on the territory of the RSFSR. The Organization Bureau of the RCP(b) responded positively to the prompt in this matter of Polish companions only in mid-July. In practice, it was only at the end of this month that the first conscripts began to come to Moscow to the point of recruitment⁵⁵. While the initiative remained on the Polish side during this phase of the war, and therefore from the psychological point of view, the Bolshevik military commissars may have been concerned about the extent to which the Division's soldiers were loyal to the victorious Polish Army, it is after its retreat

⁵⁵ Men aged 18 to 40 were mobilized. A fairly extensive list of people not covered by this regulation was prepared at the same time. For example, the communist railwaymen were included only in August – See: RGASPI, f. 68, op. 1, d. 9: Letter from Z. Dzerzhinska to the TKRP of 14.08.1920.

that this type risk disappeared. Then, why did the Polish Red Army keep on the sidelines of the most important war, to which they themselves and their political backing in the form of the CWPP had been preparing for years? Firstly, political considerations may have been involved. After the revolts and desertions that took place in the departments of the Western Rifle Division in March 1919, the level of the pro-Bolshevik indoctrination among the soldiers and part of the officers was insufficient in the Kremlin. The actions undertaken by the military agendas of the CWPP, aimed at improving the situation in this respect, did not bring satisfactory results and even worse did not promise a significant change for the better. If, therefore, even this formation could not become the core of the future Polish Red Army, it would have been expected that the units created in the future over the Vistula would deserve even less trust. This reasoning led the Bolshevik leaders to conclude that it was necessary to fundamentally modify the plan proposed by the CWPP to provoke the outbreak of a revolution in Poland taking into account that it was granted only limited military support by the Red Army. The low “revolutionary morale” of the Polish Red Army soldiers and the inadequate “level of mass radicalization” in the country determined the choice of a completely different variant of “establishing the power of the Councils” in this part of Europe. It was considered necessary to reach for the instrument of the “revolutionary war” and it was decided to lead it only with the Red Army forces. Its activity in this situation could not be limited to the Neman-Bug line, but it had to reach the borders of the Weimar Republic. So it was decided not to wait until the Poles themselves make an attempt to change the system and only then to give them “brotherly help”, but to impose this change on the strength of the

bayonets of the Red Army. When carrying out such a project, several thousand Polish military servants in exile revolutionary formations could, under certain conditions, become even the proverbial ballast. It was therefore necessary to find a convenient opportunity to get rid of it. The optimal possibilities in this respect were created by the internal front, where unwanted Polish comrades could end their lives. Used previously for the benefit of the battlefields “in the interests of the revolution”.

Even today, on the threshold of the second decade of the 21st century, researchers are not able to reach the documentation that can confirm or even substantiate the above-stated presumptions. In this situation, it is easy to defend the thesis of Marxist historians that the focus on the Southern Front⁵⁶ of the Polish division was decided by the unit’s combat values. The very process of the destruction of its soldiers first in the course of the Eastern-Ukrainian campaign, and physically in the region of Perekop, was paradoxically the result of their heroism and devotion to the cause of the recuperation. It was for its ideals that they willingly decided to sacrifice their lives. However, nowadays, having the specific baggage of experience, can the findings of historiography of the People’s Republic of Poland be so unreflectively trusted? Publications whose authors, either by choice or coercion, drew up a politically correct picture of the past? The answer is no! What can be done then in order to get closer to the truth about the real reasons of moving 52 Rifle Division to actions on the South-Western Front and

⁵⁶ When the division was directed to this area of military operations, the Southern Front still existed. In January, it was divided into the South-Western Front and the Caucasian Front. The 52nd Division, except for a short episode in March 1920, when some of the units entered the Caucasus, fought in the composition of the 13th and the 6th Army in the South-Western Front.

conditions of its subsequent annihilation in a situation where there are no access to classified parts of files created by the CPC, the RCP (b) and the RRWC? Are assumptions supposed to be enough? Not exactly. The researcher of the past even in this situation has certain workshop instruments, e.g. in the form of a deductive method and this silence of sources⁵⁷, which enable him to establish historical facts indirectly. Even if only on the basis of circumstantial evidence or analogy. Reaching for these tools, we shall first analyze the story about the losses in people that the 52nd Rifle Division suffered in the South-Western Front. Reading the reports written by soldiers and officers, in which opinions about the task and the technical side of the command were reflected, one can get the impression that during the period of division in the structures of the 13th and 6th Army, much was done for the re-polonization of the Division. Of course, it is impossible to prove that it was planned and deliberately implemented, but the mere fact that the historian is directing his thinking in this direction is due to the fact that Soviet history knows a few similar cases, when “planned” for example for political and economic reasons, all the legions were sent to certain death. Why, then, in this case not consider this option, especially since there are indications for it? In the simplest terms, it is considered that due to the extraordinary fighting qualities of the soldiers of the 52nd Rifle Division, they were burdened with such difficult and thus exposing the tasks to large losses⁵⁸. However, if we read in more detail in the accounts of those who served in this unit before and after 4 July 1919 and we trace the available documentation of the achievements of individual troops

⁵⁷ In this case, probably stored in the Lubyanka archives.

⁵⁸ S. Żbikowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-115.

in their struggle with the Polish Army on the Western Front and the Armed Forces of Southern Russia⁵⁹ on the Southern Front⁶⁰, these combat assets were mediocre at best. The individual components of the division were more likely to be in retreats than to show heroism, defending the positions appointed by the leadership. Therefore, this explanation can be rejected. It was rather something completely different. For some reasons, and some of them were mentioned above, the division was tasked and conducted in such a way that significant losses in people could not be avoided. The classic examples of this type of situation were the inclusion of the unit in the so-called Right-bank strike group, which on the night of 6 – 7 August 1920 had to cross the Dnieper and derive a counterstrike from the Brzezice region to take control of the bridgehead on the left bank of the said river. After completing this task, however, it turned out that the main forces were not able to develop the attack against Gen. Pyotr Wrangel's army. In the current situation, the 52nd Rifle Division and the 15th and the 51st divisions cooperating with it remained alone on the captured bridgehead and had to bleed off fighting several assaults of the "Wrangel-ites" trying to push them into the Dnieper currents. The most severe losses hit the supply team, and vacant posts were filled with Russian officers⁶¹. On the other hand, the soldiers who managed to survive were returned in autumn again to the attack at

⁵⁹ Initially, these forces were commanded by Gen. A. Denikin, and then after his resignation in April 1920, they fought under the orders of Gen. P. Wrangel.

⁶⁰ On 10.01.1920, it was divided into the South-Western Front and the Caucasian Front. After the episodic period of assignment to the latter, the 52nd Rifle Division fought on the Southwest Front.

⁶¹ S. Żbikowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-115.

Perekop⁶². The task of the 52nd Rifle Division was to strike the northern edge of one of the Perekop peninsulas, and after reaching this goal, carry out operations on the isthmus between the Krasne Lake and the Syvash Bay⁶³. An additional obstacle to overcome was the so-called old Turkish shaft with elements of permanent fortifications. In the order of the commander of the 6th Army, dated November 6, 1920, the division was ordered to take the next day at 10.00 pm for the attack on enemy positions. In order to carry out the breakthrough in the fortifications, the 154th Brigade (formerly the first one), which focused the largest percentage of Poles, was directed to its enlargement, the 155th (formerly the 2nd one). The Russian command of the division also gave up artillery preparation. The cavalry regiment was separated from the division, at the commanding officer's disposal. The composed mostly of Belarusians and Russians 156th Brigade (formerly the 3rd)⁶⁴ remained in reserve. Due to the losses incurred earlier and anticipated in the course of the current struggles, on 7 November they reached the supplementary division of 2,500 Red Army soldiers. They were mainly Chushes and Tatars, but also the native Russians. What happened in the course of several days of fighting in the

⁶² Meaning the isthmus leading to the Crimean Peninsula.

⁶³ Syvash also known as the Putrid Sea or Rotten Sea, is a shallow sea basin, separated from the sea by the narrow Arabat Spit (Arabat Arrow, about 115 km long) from the Sea of Azov. Both basins are connected only by a narrow spit lying in the north of the peninsula. Syvash strongly cuts the northern coastline of the Crimea, creating a system of land, peninsulas and islets.

⁶⁴ The cavalymen and the 156th Brigade, due to the losses suffered by two avant-garde brigades, also had to be included in actions against the "Wrangel-ites". As a result, they also suffered huge losses. In the case of the latter group, they amounted to 60%. – See: S. Żbikowski, op. cit., pp. 85-115.

area of Perekop can be described as a hecatomb. Data on losses incurred by both brigades on the first day of attack are not available. It is known, however, that in the second they amounted to 10% of personal conditions. However, much more intense fighting took place on the first day of attack, which lasted continuously 18 hours. Against the attackers, the “Wrangel-ites” used artillery at that time. Probably the losses were even bigger. However, if their level from 9 November is considered, then after two days of attack they were at least 20%. The situation was even worse on the third day of struggle, when the staff of the 154 Brigade decreased by 40%. However, it was still less than the losses of the 155 Brigade on the fourth day of the attack, when they reached the level of 50%. In total, the ranks of both “Polish” brigades decreased in the course of several days of fighting fought close to the Crimea by nearly 80%, and in the case of some regiments, up to 90% of the exit levels. In practice, this meant the annihilation of the 52nd Rifle Division. Its structures, after the de-mobilization of surviving soldiers from older years and subsequent additions, were soon transformed into the 1st Division of Border Protection Armies. In this way, the ethnic composition of the former Western Division of Rifles at the end of 1920 changed so drastically that it definitely lost the original features of Polishness⁶⁵.

Thus, the next chapter in the history of Polish military circles, in this case their left wing, which became active in Russia as a result of those revolutionary changes begun in March 1917, was closed. In the collective dimension for the Belgorod soldiers who formed the core of the exiled revolutionary formations, it was the

⁶⁵ Ibidem, pp. 85-115.

most tragic finale. The mere fact of losing life on the battlefield would not be extraordinary in the case of front soldiers, were it not for the fact that were sacrificed at the proverbial “altar of the revolution” by those who on their red banners had the motto of subjectification of the “ordinary privates masses”. In autumn 1920, the current political goals of the Bolshevik leaders took precedence over high-flying declarations, which had been trusted by several thousand Polish military men four years earlier. In the area of Perekop, it turned out that just as once for the “tsarist generals”, then for all the Bolshevik political commissars, every soldier, including Poland, was only “cannon fodder”. Soldiers from the 52 Rifle Divisions, and especially from its brigades: 154th and 155th, learnt about this in the literal sense on the first day of the offensive directed against the remains of the Southern Armed Forces in the Crimea. They were sent to attack without previous support of their own artillery. By the time they reached the trenches of the first line of defense, their ranks became decimated by the opponent’s batteries. It is puzzling that after such a traumatic experience that happened to the deceased fellows, so few CWPP activists perceived the instrumental way in which the Bolsheviks treated soldiers from the exiled revolutionary groups. And how few of those who saw this thought it over and broke ties with the international communist movement controlled from Moscow. The consequences of this omission were to be borne in the late 1930s by disappearing in the Lubyanka torture chambers this time under the guise of an “ideological deviation”.

Returning to the issue of the efforts of Polish communists to obtain a resettlement cadre on the ground. The Red Army should add that the only thing

that Józef Unszlicht managed to obtain as a result of the actions taken at the turn of August and September were personal decisions about a small group of commanders, including Vladimir Gruzel, who was assigned to fill the position of the political commissioner in the staff army and Adam Jabłoński, who was entrusted with the leadership of the Political Department⁶⁶.

Roman Łagwa, who helped those efforts, attempted to obtain a release for another group of commanders and political commissars from the 52nd Rifle Division, who were not directly involved in the fight against the Armed Forces of Southern Russia⁶⁷. This new direction of the actions of the commander of the 1st Polish Red Army was a consequence of the inability to recruit an enemy on the western side of the Curzon line, nor to “reclaim” him from the ranks of the Red Army. He assumed organizing activities based on the concept of building the army “from above”. As part of the implementation of this project, it was first decided to complete commanders at army level, then divisions, regiments, etc. Finally, the structures created in this mode were planned to include volunteers recruited in the entire country controlled by the Red Army and Polish military with the 52nd Rifle Division⁶⁸. The above organizational plan created in agreement with the commander of the Western Front, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, was formally approved only at the stage of conducting the reverse struggle after the unsuccessful attempt to flank and occupy Warsaw. The RRWC made

⁶⁶ The first of them was a mason from Warsaw who had been the political commissar of the 52nd Rifle Division to date. The second was the leading representative of the left-wing AMP, and directly before the transfer to the 1st Polish Red Army found himself in the structures of the Political Front of the Western Front.

⁶⁷ RGVA, f. 18, op. 2, d. 14, li. 6-8.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, f. 4497, op. 1, d. 1, li. 1.

the decision on this matter on 20 September. The political moderator of the activities that led to overcoming the reluctant resistance of the group of Bolshevik decision-makers to Joseph Stalin, led by Józef Unszlicht. In the military and organizational dimension, the authorship of this project should be attributed in its entirety to Roman Łagwa.

As a result of strategic decisions that took place as a result of the September Battle of Neman, these plans could no longer be implemented. After the end of August, when the evacuees of the TPRC evacuated to the east reached Minsk⁶⁹, its chairman uttered several significant words that should be considered a summary of the CWPP's actions and its political and military agendas in 1920: "The defeat of the army is equal to the political defeat". Developing this idea, he pointed to the "Polish revolutionary forces", which, he believed, would pay the highest price in the form of a deep alienation on the national political scene for the role they agreed to play in the ending conflict⁷⁰.

After the defeat at the Battle of Neman, the actions of the military have evidently descended second plan. The Kremlin leaders ostentatiously withdrew from promoting the not-so-well-accepted projects for the expansion of

⁶⁹ It took place on 23.08.1920. By the way, it is worth adding that the evacuation of the TKRP took place at a very fast pace. Suffice it to say that Białystok, in which the "Polish revolutionary government" was located, the 1st Infantry Regiment of the Legions units had seized only a day earlier, on 22.08.1920. More about this last episode, in the historiography known as the Battle of Białystok, is presented by its direct participant in: W. Broniewski, *Pamiętnik 1918-1922*, Warszawa 1987, s. 199 et al. see also: A. Borkiewicz, *Walki 1 Pułku Piechoty Legionów o Białystok*, Białystok 1987, pp. 3-13

⁷⁰ The words are referred to in: A. Leinwand, *Tymczasowy Komitet Rewolucyjny Polski*, "Biuletyn Akademii Wojskowo-Politycznej im. Feliksa Dzierżyńskiego" 1956, Issue 3, p. 56.

Polish revolutionary formations. Delegates to the 1st Polish Red Army uniformed were again transferred to units of the Red Army, in which they had previously served. It is noteworthy that this decision was justified somewhat two times, namely the need to familiarize the Soviet command circles with the Polish issue. It was to share the experience gained during the campaign in Poland to avoid mistakes made in August 1920. The transfer of this knowledge was anticipated not only in the parent divisions, but also during special meetings. The first of them was held on 11 September 1920 in Lida⁷¹. The decreasing importance of military issues in the actions of Polish communists was evidenced by the fact that Roman Łągwa was the head of the Military Department at the Polish Office. Persons who had been active since 1917 on the military level, but in the party hierarchy, which is not a deceiving figure. Others would seem natural candidates for this function, i.e. J. Unszlicht, or especially F. Dzerzhinsky⁷², were not interested in its takeover.

On 23 August 1920, the structures of the 1st Polish Red Army entered the decay phase and it was even before they were finally organized. A group of 176 uniformed soldiers was sent to Minsk during the evacuation of the 2nd Rifle Regiment being formed in Białystok under the supervision of the TPRC. Out of this number, just 35 arrived, with only 21 privates among them. The latter

⁷¹ Z. Dzierżyńska [Dzerzhinska], *Lata wielkich bojów*, Warszawa 1969, p. 394 et al.

⁷² The head of the Cheka decided to concentrate on the activity in the Military-Revolutionary Council of the Western Front, which he had been a formal member from as early as 09.18.1920. By decision of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) on September 20, F. Dzerzhinsky was called off to Moscow – it is mentioned in: Z. Dzierżyńska [Dzerzhinska], op. cit., p. 399.

number was the best measure of the failure of the recruitment action conducted by Polish communists west of the Curzon line. These several dozen soldiers and their superiors were incorporated into the 1st Rifle Regiment. After moving to Babruysk⁷³ and then to Roslavl⁷⁴, its ranks grew slightly joined by Poles from regular units of the Red Army at the end of August⁷⁵. This happened despite the decision of the central political and military authorities to divert the inflow of these soldiers. In the described situation, the heaviness of the Bolshevik bureaucracy delaying the circulation and decision-making in the Kremlin. The momentum was initiated on 1 September 1920, by the organization of the 1st Cavalry Regiment near Minsk⁷⁶, and a few days later a light artillery division⁷⁷. According to official data reflecting personal conditions as of 12 September 1920, in all units of the 1st Polish Red Army, “about 1,000 people” served. They were, as stated, “persons delegated to serve in this formation” of Polish nationality and Russians who spoke Polish, as well as Polish volunteers and prisoners of war⁷⁸. For the needs of this “army”, even the Formation

⁷³ The evacuation was started on 10.09.1920.

⁷⁴ The further stage of the evacuation was started on 20 October 1920. The 1st Cavalry Regiment, existing in the initial form of the organization, also entered the vicinity of Roslavl. The commander of this reserve formation belonging to the 1st Polish Red Army was Władysław Kolankowski – See: RGVA, f. 18, op. 2, d. 14, li. 332.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, d. 13, li. 5.

⁷⁶ It is located near the station Koidanova at the Minsk-Baranavichy railway line.

⁷⁷ The former military commander of Białystok M. Łoganowski was appointed to the position of commander. The formation that existed in the initial organization form from 20.10.1920 was also moved to the area of Roslavl. – More: A. Kochański et al. (ed.), *Księga Polaków uczestników rewolucji październikowej 1917-1920. Biografie*, Warszawa 1967, p. 262 et al.

⁷⁸ Cited after: W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, p. 351.

Board of the 1st Polish Workers' and Peasants' Red Army operated for some time. From the perspective of time, one can get the impression, and the more insightful contemporaries saw it in September 1920, that the more high-word statements Polish communists made to define some kind of institutional existence, the greater was the probability it was merely for image and propaganda purposes only. It was so also in this case. At the national level, after the order to retreat from Warsaw, there were no potential mobilization possibilities on which Polish revolutionary units could be developed. As for the human resources available for their needs in exile, after the blocking of the flow of Poles from the Red Army in the first decade of September, this recruitment source became inaccessible. There were still prisoners of war. The condition for using this potential was to carry out an effective indoctrination action. It was even taken, but the expected results were not achieved in this field⁷⁹.

Then, what was the RRWC driven by, being aware of these conditions and at the same time making the decision to establish the Formation Board of the 1st Polish Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on 12 September? The first explanation that could be considered in this context was the fact that there was always hope for a strategic turn in the confrontation between the Red Army and the Polish Army in the Battle of Neman⁸⁰. These were probably the grounds for this decision not compatible with the new trend of the Soviet military policy. However, after the defeat of the leaders, the Bolsheviks were consistently heading towards the liquidation of the existing formations and counteracting

⁷⁹ RGASPI, f. 76, op. 1, d. 1310, li. 2.

⁸⁰ T. Kutrzeba (ed.), *Bitwa nad Niemnem (wrzesień-październik 1920 r.) – studia taktyczne*, Warszawa 1926, *passim*.

the formation of new Polish revolutionary groups organized under the auspices of the CWPP. The second less sympathetic explanation of this disharmony in the actions of the Soviet institutions in the military field would be an indication to the organizational chaos resulting from the lack of synchronization of activities between the party-government and military authorities. Indirect confirmation of this can be acknowledged by the fact that by the decision of the Russian Federation of Soviet Socialist Republic of 13 September, a kind of dual power was created over this “army” of 1,000 soldiers. The Moscow Formation Board of the 1st Polish Workers ‘and Peasants’ Red Army was assigned the same competences as the Polish Bureau Military Department⁸¹ led by Roman Łagwa operating in the front zone⁸². The third insight, which should be mentioned in a slightly wider context, takes into account the possibility of taking up targeted actions aimed at provoking competence and ambition conflicts in the circles of Polish communists attempting to continue the implementation of their own military projects in the exile by the political and military centers of power in the RSFSR. This way it was easy to remove the chances of their implementation without the risk of being burdened with the responsibility for the fiasco of organizing activities. In this situation, all its odium would fall upon the conflicted factions within the CWPP. A clue that made this assumption credible was recommending by the RRWC to managerial positions in the Formation

⁸¹ Subsequently in Minsk, Babruysk and Roslavl.

⁸² The Polish Bureau itself in this organizational and personnel shape operated almost until the end of September, and its military agenda lasted a bit longer, until 17.10.1920, when its competences were taken over by the Formation Board of the 1st Polish Workers' and Peasants' Red Army - See: RGVA, f. 18, op. 2, d. 14, li. 423.

Board people from outside the circle responsible in the CWPP for military activities. With the exception of Waław Daszkiewicz, who was entrusted with the leadership of the Registration and Approval Department⁸³, the other representatives of the top management of the board were new people, not yet associated with the emerging revolutionary formations. Their presence in the party structures of the radical Polish left also had a short record. Before 13 September 1920, they served in regular units of the Red Army. Mikołaj Marszan, clearly perceived as a “trustee” of the RRWC, became the head of the newly established institution. His deputy was Emeryk Rożen, and the management of individual departments was assigned, apart from the mentioned Waław Daszkiewicz, to Stefan Uzdański, Adolf Czapski, Aleksander Steślicki and Stanisław Wojtkiewicz⁸⁴. In the official and organizational dimension, the Formation Board was to constitute an autonomous structure within the framework of the All-Russia General Staff⁸⁵. This dependence on the staffs, generally rather unwilling to distinguish ethnic formations from the Red Army, was for the Polish moderators of this concept a one-off signal that the time of their activity in this sphere was coming to an end.

The liquidation process of the Polish revolutionary groups was carried out in a methodical manner. Even the appearances were kept so that the dissonance between the actual role of the newly created institution and the organizational function described by its very name did not seem too ostentatious. Therefore, the intention was to

⁸³ The personnel department was called in this intricate way.

⁸⁴ The aforementioned four headed respectively the Departments of: Organization, Mobilization, Supply and Communication with the 1st Polish Red Army.

⁸⁵ RGVA, f. 18, op. 2, d. 14, li. 175.

form a new Polish unit in Moscow. Initially, it was supposed to be a battalion, however, it was realized that in the propaganda- image dimension it would appear extremely poorly and even against the backdrop of a thousand soldiers exiled “army”. In connection with the above, it was announced at the end of September that it would be a regiment⁸⁶. The originators of its creation were to transcend, at least on paper, the Military Department of the Polish Office. By the end of October and November only a company could be formed⁸⁷. The failure of these actions was not only a derivative of a too shallow mobilization base, but it resulted from the fact that certain members of the Board of Formation focused on disintegration activity, or speaking simply liquidation of the 1st Polish Red Army. The circles surrounding Roman Łagwa and their political mentor Józef Unszlicht protested against the very imposition and effects of the personnel policy pursued in this formation by the Board. The head of its Registration and Approval Department, Waclaw Daszkiewicz, supported by Emeryk Rożen, moved commanders and commissars whose careers were related to the Western Rifle Division and the formations on which it had grown up, to the reserve. The vacancies, if decided to be filled, were manned only with people having the RRWC recommendation⁸⁸. These actions proved to be so “fruitful” that after only a few weeks, not only the Military Department of the Polish Bureau ceased to exist, but it was possible to announce that for the “objective” reasons

⁸⁶ It even was given the name: the 1st Polish Reserve Rifle Regiment. Formally, it was created on 29 September 1920. It should be added that of the same name the 1st Rifle Division was stationed in Roslavl. This one, in turn, was part of the 1st Red Army formed by R. Łagwa.

⁸⁷ RGASPI, f. 143, op. 1, d. 100, li. 1-2.

⁸⁸ Ibidem, li. 27-29.

organizing activities on the creation of the 1st Polish Red Army were halted. Soon Mikolaj Marszan could tell its commander Roman Łagwa⁸⁹ and the staff subordinate to him that on 17 October 1920 he took over “commanding of all the Polish units”⁹⁰. This way the path to the complete liquidation of the separate Polish revolutionary army established on 15 August 1920 by the order of Mikhail Tukhachevsky was opened.

The dismantling of its organizational structures lasting until 30 October was led by a special commission headed by Stanisław Dziatkiewicz. The Formation Board of the 1st Polish Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army, within its tasks, also entered the phase of organizational transformations that would eventually lead to its liquidation. In anticipation of this moment, it was transformed on 11 November, 1920 into the Board of Formation of Polish Red Units⁹¹. It had the task of administering remnants of the “army” detachments stationed in Roslavl and the Moscow “regiment” liquidated on 11 November⁹². In the next stage of organizational transformations already carried out on 20 November, this institution was modified to the name of the Formation Board of the Red Communards Units and, therefore, the situation was also somewhat different. There were also staff changes, Hipolit Ejsmont was entrusted with the function of the chief of staff ⁹³, and the management of the various departments was entrusted

⁸⁹ On 27 October 1920, he was appointed the commander of the 5th Rifle Division.

⁹⁰ RGVA, f. 18, op. 2, d. 14, li. 423.

⁹¹ W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, p. 353.

⁹² In total there were under 1500 soldiers – See: RGASPI, f. 143, op. 1, d. 100, li. 37.

⁹³ Until 23 December 1920, this position was temporarily occupied by Waclaw Daszkiewicz.

to: Ludwik Wróblewski, Konstanty Witort, Iwan Jefimow, Aleksander Steślicki and Józef Kozłowski⁹⁴. Created on the basis of the remains of the 1st Polish Red Army, the units of the Red Communards had the character of internationalist formations, thus, trying to erase its originally ethnic features. On the one hand, it was connected with the long-term plans for the Bolsheviks to utilize the human potential left by Polish revolutionary formations. It also stemmed from the pressure of the authorities in Warsaw who were already protesting in the initial phase of the Riga negotiations against the maintenance of “collaborative” Polish units in Russia. In parallel with the internationalization of the Red Communards, they dislocated. They were moved from Roslavl, located in the province of Smolensk to the eastern part of European Russia, and deployed in three groups near Ufa and Perm⁹⁵.

To close the discussion on the destructive actions taken against the existing revolutionary Polish groups and their organizers, it should be added that in addition to the previously mentioned Soviet institutions the so-called Polish Department of the Political Board of Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army [pol. *Polski Wydział Zarządu Politycznego Robotniczo-Włościańskiej Armii Czerwonej*]. Its activity consisted of coordinating the action of psychological and propaganda preparation of soldiers for the internationalization of the divisions in which they served. In this way, indirectly, this body joined the process of disintegration of the 1st Polish Red

⁹⁴ Those mentioned were respectively managing the following Departments: Organizational, Mobilization, Personnel, Supply and Political – See: L. Žarov, *Internacionalisty v bojach za vlast’ sovietov. Trudiasčijesja zarubiežnych stran – učastniki bor’by za vlast’ Sovietov*, Moskva 1967, p. 581 et al.

⁹⁵ W. Najdus, *Lewica polska...*, pp. 355-356.

Army, and then the remaining units. Directly, this action was carried out by the Political Departments being part of the structures functioning in the subsequent embodiments of the Formation Board. After the internationalization of the remains of the “army” in exile, i.e. the Reserve Rifle Regiment, the Reserve Cavalry Regiment, the Light Artillery Squadron, the Engineer Battalion and the so-called 1st Model Battalion, the role of the Polish Department of the Political Board of Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army dramatically changed. At this stage, already under the leadership of Feliks Kon, this body supported actions aimed at stopping the progressive decline in the number of soldiers in the units of the Red Communards. The outflow of people intensified due to the repatriation agreements concluded during the negotiations between the Polish side and the RSFSR and dependent republics⁹⁶. In search of men supplies, they began to look again with hope at the POWs camps. The indoctrination and recruitment action, however, brought about partial results. The only thing that was achieved was rebuilding the original personal staff. As a result, in April 1921, 1526 served in all of the above mentioned units of the Red Communards. In this number, 1176 were referred to as Poles, and the remaining 350 mostly as Jews⁹⁷.

When the Bolsheviks ratified the Treaty of Riga on 16 April 1921, the internationalized Polish revolutionary formations functioning on the Soviet ground had to

⁹⁶ A broad view of the issue of Riga agreements can be found in the work: J. Kumaniecki, *Pokój polsko-radziecki 1921 r. Geneza, rokowania, traktat, komisje mieszane*, Warszawa 1985, passim.

⁹⁷ RGASPI, f. 143, op. 1, d. 100, li. 37. Among the above-mentioned 350 militaries with a non-Polish origin, along with the most-represented Jews, there was a small percentage of representatives of other nations.

modify their organizational structures and profile. Before Moscow elaborated on it and specific decisions were made in their case, serving in units of the Red Communists, the Polish people began to melt into the daily rhythm of the existence of the Soviet society. In the group determined to remain in the RSFSR and the dependent republics there were many people interested in stopping further service and taking up professional activity on a civilian basis. Those of the communards who did not like the prospect of staying permanently outside the country were leaving the ranks of the mother units and using the possibility of repatriation returning to their homeland⁹⁸.

The fate of the Red Communard who did not decide to demobilize and stay in the RSFSR, nor they took advantage of the possibility of demobilization combined with repatriation to the country, was settled in the first half of 1921. Serious impact on the pace and direction of decisions taken in their case the animosities that emerged between a part of the Soviet military spheres and the exile political and military organs holding over the internationalized Polish revolutionary formations. In the first phase of conflict, there was a friction between the command of the Priuralia Military District and the

⁹⁸ *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, N. Gąsiorowska et al. (general eds), Vol. 3: kwiecień 1920-marzec 1921, W. Gostyńska et al. (eds), Warszawa 1964, p. 551. In parallel with the repatriation, the process of exchanging prisoners of war was carried out. The complex conditions of its implementation by the Polish side are widely discussed in: Z. Karpus, *Jeńcy i internowani rosyjscy i ukraińscy w Polsce w latach 1918–1924. Z dziejów militarno-politycznych wojny polsko-radzieckiej*, Toruń 1999, passim; the broader context of the Polish-Soviet relations after March 1921 is presented in: J. Kumaniecki, *Po traktacie ryskim. Stosunki polsko-radzieckie 1921–1923*, Warszawa 1971, passim.

Management Board of Forming Red Communards Units. The former, ignoring the political significance of the existence of these formations, resorted to the argument of a drastic drop in their numbers, to undermine the legitimacy of maintaining the state of alienation of these divisions from the structures of the Red Army. Without waiting for the results of the efforts undertaken in Moscow to change the status of the autonomous units of the Red Communards, the commander of the district was ordered to subordinate them. He started by prohibiting divisions' commanders to communicate with the Formation Board operating in Moscow⁹⁹. The implementation of further-reaching intentions was objected to by the same RRWC management board. In trying to stave off the inflamed conflict, this body decided on 29 March 1921 to transfer the continuing service of the communes to the Caucasus.¹⁰⁰ The beginning of the second phase of the conflict resulted in activities undertaken jointly by the Formation Board and the Polish Office in Moscow. Both organs protested in line with the RRWC order. The first parallel addressed the Council to the Council, in which he proposed two alternative solutions to the problem of Polish communists. The first proposition suggested the liquidation of the units in which they served and the incarnation of uniformed ones from them to the regular formation of the Red Army. The second of the presented solutions was to merge the existing non-full red Communard units into one smaller, but full-time, strengthened human and Polish conscripts that have been supplying the ranks of Red Army soldiers so far. Relative recruitment of the recruits to the 1st Division of

⁹⁹ RGASPI, f. 143, op. 1, d. 100, li. 23.

¹⁰⁰ It was about the Anapa area. The decision in this matter was made personally by S. Kamenev – RGVA, f. 18, op. 2, d. 4, li. 3-4.

the Border Protection Armies¹⁰¹. At the same time, it postulated organizing military courses for Polish soldiers, thanks to which, apart from the technical preparation of candidates for commanders, emigrant political factors could gain “an opportunity to learn more about people and lead a more rational human resources management in the future”. As indicated, the choice of this option required the establishment of a formal and legal guarantee of the independence of Polish communes from the military and party authorities in the place of their stationing¹⁰². In response to these objections, the RRWC changed the decision of 29 March and, by order of 8 June 1921, ordered the dismantling of the Reserve Rifle Regiment, the Reserve Cavalry Regiment, the Light Artillery Squadron, the Engineer Battalion and the so-called 1st Model Battalion. The Formation Board was also dissolved¹⁰³. The liquidation activities were carried out in July and August. The Communard staff were scattered across regular units of the Red Army between Minsk and Samarkand¹⁰⁴. Some of them were directed to the

¹⁰¹ It is a formation formed on the basis of the remnants of the 52nd Rifle Division.

¹⁰² RGASPI, f. 143, op. 1, d. 100, li. 18 i 22.

¹⁰³ The decision of June 1921 regarding the future of the Polish revolutionary formations was preceded by activities of the central party-government authorities of the Land of Soviets ordering the Polish political structures in exile initiated several months earlier. This process was started with the RKL's decision of 24 August 1920 on the dissolution of the Liquidation Commission for the Kingdom of Poland. On the way, the Polish Commissariat and the Polish Bureau were dismantled, and finally, in the second half of 1922, the last institutional Polish relic on the Soviet ground, namely the Polish Section of the People's Commissariat for Nationalities was liquidated.

¹⁰⁴ RGVA, f. 4497, op. 1, d. 11, li. 200, 215-216.

Smolensk Red Communards School Military¹⁰⁵, whose commissioner until March 1921 was Bolesław Korfeld¹⁰⁶, and Poles dominated then in the group of listeners.

¹⁰⁵The three-year military school had its own banner with inscriptions in Polish and the image of a hat with the Red Army star and two crossed swords. In March 1921, students of the school, organized in the the 2nd Collegiate Brigade of the Red Communards Military School, took part in the suppression of the Kronstadt Uprising.

¹⁰⁶In 1909, being a student of the gymnasium in Kielce, B. Korfeld took part in the assassination of the governor of the governorate gendarmerie, for which he was sentenced to life-time penal servitude in 1911 in the trial of members of the Kielce PSP RF. From 1912, he was active in the Bolshevik faction of the RSDLP. In May 1918, he joined the ranks of the SDKPL, fighting also in the ranks of the Red Warsaw Revolutionary Regiment. At the beginning of 1919, he was directed to Minsk to operating at the Western Rifle Division – the Polish Combined Courses for Red Commanders of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army [*Polskie Połączone Kursy Czerwonych Dowódców Robotniczo-Włościańskiej Czerwonej Armii*]. After completing the course in recognition of achievements, he was appointed deputy commissioner and then commissioner of this specific military school. In August 1919, he commanded students fighting with the Polish Army on Minsk. On 17.03.1921, Korfeld died during the suppression of the Kronstadt Uprising commanding one of the regiments of the 2nd Collegiate Brigade of the Red Communards Military School.

Conclusions

The interception of the instruments of power in Russia by the Russian Bolsheviks directly strengthened the position of the Polish branch of the Bolshevik Party and, as a result, enabled the process of gradual broadening of its activity's framework in the political and military sphere. The disintegration activities carried out since the spring of 1917 in the Polish Rifle Division and then in the Polish Corps changed their character in the autumn – from defensive and aimed at inhibiting development of these formations to offensive and aimed at their total annihilation. Similarly, the actions of the SDKPL were shaped in relation to the Polish military movement operating in the Russian army.

In addition to the disruptive actions aimed at destroying the Corps formation, also the ambitions to organize Polish revolutionary groups within the Russian territory emerged in certain circles of the radical left wing of the emigration. This idea was always received with internal resistance from fanatical supporters of the internationalization of the revolutionary armed forces organized by the Bolsheviks in Russia. The temporary limitation of the lobby's influence resulted in the creation of the Western Rifle Division, and finally in an attempt to organize the Polish Red Army. It is a fact, however, that in this area, due to the lack of internal consensus within the environment, as well as the limited mobilization

capacity¹ and inconsistency of the CPC regarding the organization of ethnic revolutionary groups, the Polish radical left did not achieve more spectacular successes. Invariably, the disorganization of all non-revolutionary military structures remained a much more important sphere of the activity. In the years 1917-1918, these were mainly three Polish Corps, and after their disintegration two Polish Rifle Divisions, i.e. the 4th and the 5th, and smaller units in the regions of Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and the Caucasus².

The simultaneous undertaking of the disintegrative action by the SDKPL and PSP Left in the Polish Army, due to objective reasons, was impossible. First and foremost, the limited personal and organizational potential would not allow it. The implementation of the CWPP's military plans entered its culminating phase only at the beginning of 1920. It combined typical subversive and intelligence operations conducted at the back of the opponent's forces with classic elements of the psychological

¹ The mobilization potential indispensable for the creation of Polish revolutionary formations was steadily decreasing as a result of human losses incurred during the civil war in Russia and as a result of the ever-emerging fatigue of war and the consequent pursuit of repatriation. It is noteworthy that these attitudes were noticed not only among those already demobilized, but also within the ranks of Polish soldiers remaining in active service.

² See: H. Bagiński, *Wojsko Polskie...*, pp. 411-419; *Krótki zarys dziejów polskich formacji wojskowych na wschodzie (II Korpus, III Korpus, 4 Dywizja Strzelców, 5 Dywizja Strzelców, 5 Dywizja Syberyjska – Oddział Kaukaski)*, anonymous compilation., Warszawa 1921, pp. 85-96 (the part entitled: *Krótki zarys dziejów Polskiej Centrali Wojskowej na Kaukazie i Brygady Polskiej*); J. Rogowski, *Dzieje Wojska Polskiego na Syberji*, Poznań 1927, passim; D. Radziwiłowicz, *Polskie formacje zbrojne we wschodniej Rosji oraz na Syberii i Dalekim Wschodzie w latach 1918-1920*, Olsztyn 2009, passim; Z. Lech, *Kaukaska brygada wojsk polskich*, "Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny" 1988, Issue 3, pp. 168-175; Z. G. Kowalski, *Polska Oddzielna Brygada na Kaukazie*, "Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny" 1995, Issue 1-2, pp. 153-162.

war. The latter was intended, on the one hand, to create the view that the real society's enemy, including militaries, is its own elite, and on the other hand, to present the Bolsheviks and their army not as aggressors, but those who want to help neighbors in a fairer arrangement of internal relations.

The limited effects of these actions among the soldiers' ranks resulted from the wide involvement of state services in countering and combating communist agitation, but they were, to a considerable degree, a derivative of the rationalized assessment by Poles of the threat coming from the East. The experience of 123 years in captivity under the partitions was too fresh to induce even the catchiest demagogy to indoctrinate people so that they would be ready to give up just regained independence in favor of another form of subordination. For the CWPP, the consequence of the military defeat of the Red Army in confrontation with the Polish Army in 1920 and the signing of the Peace Treaty of Riga in 1921 were far-reaching program, organization and personnel changes combined with temporary resignation from the creation of Polish revolutionary formations in Russia. The Polish communists returned to this idea almost a quarter of a century later, when in the spring of 1943, with the consent of Stalin, they began organizing the Polish 1st Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division [pol. *1 Polska Dywizja Piechoty im. Tadeusza Kościuszki*].

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