



War in NORTHERN MAZOVIA 1920



In the second and third decade of August, northern Mazovia was the arena of fights between the Poles and the Soviets. At that time, towns and villages had to endure the brutal occupation of Soviet commissars. When battles were fought on the outskirts of Warsaw, two Soviet armies (the 4th and the 15th Army) charged on the right bank of the Narew and the Vistula. The forces of the former army had managed to reach Włocławek and Płock, but effective measures taken by the Polish 5th Army forced them to retreat. At the same time, the counter-offensive led by Józef Piłsudski from the Wieprz tipped the scales in favour of the Polish Republic.

COMMANDER IN CHIEF JÓZEF PIŁSUDSKI

Retreat always undermines the discipline of soldiers. Marching forward and attacking has a much more positive effect on their morale. This is why Piłsudski opted for a counter-offensive in the decisive battle. He wanted to increase the chance of success. He decided to take the enemy's hit on the outskirts of Warsaw and attack the flanks from the south near the Wieprz and from the north, in Mazovia, near the Wkra.

CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS OF THE SOVIET UNION VLADIMIR LENIN

Despite the fact that communists proclaimed the need for elective and collective power both in political life and in the army, in 1920 Soviet Russia was in fact ruled by Lenin.



The idea of the Commander in Chief had to be made more specific and put into a military framework. **Every move of individual troops had to be planned.** It was necessary to determine the routes of divisions, as well as the time and places where supplies needed to arrive. It required the preparation of thousands of orders. The work of staff members was coordinated by the chief of staff, who gained experience in planning great offensives when he served in the Austro-Hungarian army during the Great War.

In the beginning, Soviet forces were made up of volunteers, who formed red guards, and rebel regiments of the tsarist army. The Red Army, i.e. the armed forces of Soviet Russia, were not formed until the beginning of 1918. In the first years of its existence, its commander had to divide the troops and deploy them to numerous fronts of the civil war. The crisis was overcome by the end of 1919, when the "white" armies had threatened Moscow, and Kamenev could finally think about **deploying more divisions to the western front, against Poland.**



COMMANDER OF THE NORTHERN FRONT GEN. JÓZEF HALLER

80,000 soldiers

The Polish line of defence consisted of three big segments, also called fronts: southern, central and northern. 50% of all forces were subordinate to the commander of the last one. It shows the significance of the Northern Front, which served as a shield around Warsaw and a sword to the north of it. The command was entrusted to a very experienced officer, who was responsible for the 2nd Brigade of the Polish Legions during the First World War and then brought the Blue Army from France to Poland.

COMMANDER OF THE 5TH ARMY GEN. WŁADYSŁAW SIKORSKI

28,000 soldiers

The 5th Army assumed the northernmost defence positions. Its task was to keep the front line, which stretched from the middle of the Vistula near Modlin to the border with Prussia on the north. **Going around the left wing was associated with the risk of outflanking the whole front, cutting off communication with Gdańsk and losing Płock and Toruń.** The person responsible for it was General Sikorski, who had served in the Austro-Hungarian army and in the Polish Legions.



COMMANDER OF THE NORTH-WESTERN FRONT MIKHAIL TUKHACHEVSKY

105,000 soldiers

In 1920, two Soviet fronts, the Southern (whose forces fought in Galicia) and the North-Western, went up against Poland. The latter started a decisive offensive on 4 July, when it attacked less numerous Polish troops in Belarus. In 40 days, Red Army soldiers led by young Tukhachevsky walked almost 600 kilometres and **reached the outskirts of Warsaw.**

ДОВОДКА 4. АРМИИ ALEKSANDR SHUVAYEV

31,000 soldiers

The area to the north of the capital was attacked by the army whose task was to **outflank Polish positions and reach their rear areas.** Then the Soviets led by Shuvayev were supposed to get to the other bank of the Vistula near Włocławek and Płock and attack Warsaw from the west. It would be harder for the Poles to defend it from this side.

COMMANDER OF THE 10TH INFANTRY DIVISION (THE IRON DIVISION) GEN. FRANCISZEK KRAJOWSKI

5,000 soldiers

One of the strongest units of the 5th Army was the Iron Division that came to Mazovia directly from Galicia, where it fought the Horsearmy. Then it became the far-left wing of the entire Polish front, which stretched from the border with Romania to the border with Prussia. To relieve the inrush of the Soviets on Warsaw, this division attacked on 14 August. It was led by a general of Czech origin and this move was called the **counter-offensive from the Wkra.**

COMMANDER OF THE 3RD CAVALRY CORPS GAYA GAI

4,700 soldiers

In Mazovia, the Kavkor played a similar role to that played by the 1st Cavalry Army (the Horsearmy) in the Soviet Southern Front. The task of the 3rd Cavalry Corps was to go around Polish positions, attack exposed wings and constantly force defenders to retreat. By the end of the second decade of August, the Soviet cavalry reached Płock and Włocławek and tried to capture these cities. This formation, made up of soldiers who committed numerous atrocities, was commanded by Hayk Bzhishkyan, an Armenian also known as Gaya Gai.

