

“Opérations de la 1^{re} division de cavalerie polonaise contre les bolcheviks du 29 juillet au 18 octobre 1920” – Capitaine Moslard

Revue de Cavalerie – Mar - Apr 1928, p168

NB: I am no translator – this is a very rough and ready version, made for my own purposes, and in no way should be relied upon. All proper names are in the original format except those changed from the French common forms.

First Part

The Polish Cavalry – organisation of the 1st Cavalry Division and general notes on its composition

The events which are reported below took place in a period already distant. They carry no less interest for that from the point of view of a cavalryman. Since the operations led by the Polish cavalry in the summer of 1920 against Budienny's Horse Army, cavalry tactics have evolved greatly. Moreover, the terrain in which these operations took place presents peculiarities that French troops will not meet on their eastern frontier. But who is to say that they will never fight in that region? And isn't it profitable to learn what makes up the character and energy of a leader, the enthusiasm and disdain for death in the cavalry, even in a large unit of cavalry without instruction, without organisation, without supply, almost without a staff? The influence of the morale factor, in the fighting troops, appears with all its strength. This is a lesson for all times and for all places.

Well, from this point of view, how does the Polish cavalry of 1920 appear? Formed in haste, with elements drawn from three completely different armies (German, Austrian and Russian) without counting the volunteers with no military instruction, it offered no homogeneity, possessed no doctrine, knew neither the aptness nor the use of the different arms; it still thought that the art of war consisted of dying bravely.

Possessing perfected means of combat, it still wished to conduct the fight as before, when the machine-gun was unknown and a canon could only shoot every two minutes.

Above all, the generals and superior officers remembered too much that they had served in the Russian army, Austrian army or German army. They thought to strengthen their statements saying “In the Austrian army ...”, or “in the Russian army one does it so ...”. This way of thinking caused many problems.

The projected organisation of the Polish cavalry – wrongly it turns out – did not predict units larger than the brigade for times of peace. The division, said to be oversized according to the lessons drawn from the Western Front, had been divided up. It would however become necessary that day when many divisions of Bolshevik cavalry, having burst the thin cordon of troops south-east of Kiev, threw themselves onto the rear of the 5th and 6th Armies and forced a precipitous retreat of the frontier divisions.

It was at this time that the Polish 1st Cavalry Division was formed. It was composed of the 4th and 5th Brigades and was placed under the orders of General Rohmer. Its action was of short duration. At the start of July, worn out, it came to rest in the Zamosc region where, with reinforcements organised in haste and some other regiments, the reformation of this and, if possible, a second cavalry division was attempted.

About 25 July, thanks to the energy of General Durand, Director of Cavalry with the French Military Mission, of Colonel Loir and of General Kawecki, Inspector of the Polish Cavalry, the 1st Division was very nearly organised.

It was placed under the orders of Colonel Rommel [actually, Rómmel], originating from Russia, former commander of the Polish 1st Artillery Brigade and of the Polish 1st Legion Division. It was immediately pushed into contact with the enemy, on the Styr, to the north-west of Brody.

From 28 July, it grappled with Budienny's Horse Army. From that time it remained constantly in action, almost without a rest, up to the end of the hostilities.

A. The Headquarters



The staff was created in great haste. At the start it was composed of a dozen or so officers from all arms, all young and having for the most part no aptitude for service in the staff and no military experience. Their number grew progressively in the course of the operations and reached at the end the figure of 15 to 18, an excessive figure if one compares it to the people employed at the staff of our [French] divisions and the amount of work done.

The chief of staff was a captain, formerly an Austrian officer, who had successively occupied positions in the staff of the 6th Army and important functions in the 3rd bureau at GHQ. Intelligent, having good sense and military knowledge, he succeeded well enough. He achieved personally a great deal of work, but would have obtained more complete results if he had organised his departments, utilised their competencies and had demanded everyone work in their specified area, and work hard. For many days it was impossible to know who was the head of various departments; everyone did everything and nothing, according to their desire. Over time this changed; each department had a director, or many, but the directors changed too often.

B. Troops

1) *Brigades* – at the start, the 1st CD had three brigades: 3rd, 4th and 6th CBs. It then had two and back to three. Finally, it had two, the 6th and 7th. Its definitive composition was the following: 6th CB : 1st Uhlans, 12th Uhlans, 14th Uhlans, 2 horse batteries; 7th CB : 8th Uhlans, 9th Uhlans, 2nd Hussars, 2 horse batteries.

Each brigade was commanded by a colonel or a lieutenant-colonel with a staff of five or six officers. It constituted in reality a large unit of cavalry, possessing all the services permitting it to operate by itself.

2) *Regiments* – each regiment had 6 squadrons including a MG squadron and a technical squadron. The effectives varied greatly and went from 300 to 500 sabres. At some times certain were even reduced to 150 or 200. Each regiment was commanded by a colonel or a lieutenant-colonel, sometimes by a commandant, or even a captain.

The technical squadron was meant to have the specialists: telegraphists, sappers, liaison etc. In reality these specialists did not exist and the technical squadron fought like all the others.

The MG squadron varied in effectives a great deal. It had MGs on carriages (*taczenka*) or on pack animals. At the end of the campaign certain regiments had up to 15 or 18.

a) *Officers* – the officers corps was not very homogenous and with very little military instruction. The old officers had disappeared little by little and had been replaced by young people lacking experience. They came from the former Russian or Austrian armies or the Polish Legion. Very few came from the German army.

In certain regiments, the officers of the Russian army dominated. They were characteristically very brave and had a clear preference for fighting on horseback; consequently they paid a heavy tribute in losses.

One can say that all the officers were courageous under fire and undertook attacks with an absolute scorn for death. But very few had the indispensable knowledge to undertake combat in a logical way and to obtain the maximum results with the minimum of losses. Coming from where they did they had no idea of the control of their personnel, the necessity of organisation, of good functioning of the services and of the care of materials. For them, making war consisted solely of fighting and of dying bravely, if that was their fate.

b) *NCOs and troopers* – The NCOs¹ did not exist, so to speak. Their recruitment was very difficult because of the lack of middle class in Poland. Those which did exist had not serious military value and lacked military instruction in internal service matters as well as those relating to manoeuvre and campaigning.

The troopers were made up of i) those having taken part in the Great War in the Russian or Austrian armies (being the minority); ii) those having taken part in 1919 in operations against the Ukrainians and Bolsheviks; iii) reservists; iv) volunteers. This mixture naturally presented no homogeneity. All liked being on horse, all had previously used the horse as means of transport, but none had any military instruction or education.

Such troopers had need to be solidly supervised. We will see that they were not. Employed in small groups or in dispersed order, they showed repugnance to hold steady under fire from the moment that they were employed. At critical moments where the influence of officers could only be useful, they demoralised easily. This is the fault of young troops who have not had time to get used to the idea that they must follow their commander and execute the given orders without fail. The ease with which, during marches, troopers were

¹ *gradés subalternes*



allowed to leave the ranks to get food for themselves or their horses made them feel that in combat they were authorised to do likewise.

In the attack, on the other hand, even if the enemy was holding, all showed proof of a remarkable courage and energy, which became a real enthusiasm if the enemy bent under the shock and looked like abandoning the combat.

Also, towards the end of the campaign, the Polish cavalryman, veteran of 3 months of uninterrupted combat, exhilarated by success, became a good tool in the hands of its leaders. Very resistant, brave, making do on little, having concern for his horse, he would have been one of the best cavalrymen in the world if he had the necessary instruction.

c) *Armament* – This could not be more disparate. All cavalrymen possessed at least one arm: sabre, lance, rifle or pistol. Some had several.

The sabres were of all models from the French, Russian or Austrian sabre up to the yatagan [curved Turkish] with which one can only slash.

The lances were the French model. The troopers were burdened with these often enough and carried them with the aid of a strap fixed some distance from the bottom which they placed over the foot and stirrup. Yet in hand-to-hand combat² (see combat of 31 August near Komarow) no trooper used this arm.

The rifles were partly Russian rifles, which took 5 cartridges. One could also find French or Austrian model carbines. The men carried these on their backs on shoulder straps, but also sometimes like a hunting rifle, the *grenadière*³ on the left shoulder, the barrel down and to the right. This manner of carrying the arm was popular because it allowed one to unshoulder very rapidly when shooting from horseback.

The pistols were French or German (*Mauser*) automatics or simply the Model 92 revolver. They were not much used because, in general, ammunition was lacking. They were more often in the officers' hands than in the mens'.

The machine-guns, on carriages (*taczenka*) or in pack-saddles, were mostly of the Austrian *Schwarzlose* type, some of the *Maxim* type. At the start there were very few (some units, like the 9th Uhlans, started without MGs), grew rapidly and at the end of the campaign some regiments with 200 or 300 sabres had 15 to 18 machine-guns.

Here is the place to pay particular attention of the *taczenka* which obtained, during the campaign, the favours of the Polish officers and troopers. The *taczenka* is made from a carriage – barouche⁴, generally – drawn by three horses and carrying the MG, the munitions and three men (driver, gunner, feeder). The MG is fixed so as to be able to shoot from the cart towards the rear and the flanks. These *taczenka*, in the country without roads where the use of armoured cars was almost impossible, were greatly appreciated because of their rapid deployment. They were much preferred to pack-saddle MGs, heavy to carry, slow to unload and put back in place. But they gave a low yield, the fire was not precise and they produced more of a morale than destructive effect. Moreover, they formed an object which was an admirable target for well-placed enemy machine-guns or small calibre canons placed close to the firing lines.

I never saw them used on actual visible objectives⁵ or submit the Russians to an accurate fire. They were of great service in the pursuit where the enemy was only offering weak resistance. In the terrain where one could go everywhere, they easily followed the attack squadrons, opened fire instantaneously and so accentuated the demoralisation of the enemy.

d) *Horses* – The regiments in general had excellent horses, be they from Poland, Hungary or Russia. They were of average size, but close to the ground, with good uppers and good limbs and were very easy to use.

² with the sense of combats that took place, not that lances would never be used

³ *grenadière* appears to be the metal band to which the strap is attached.

⁴ *calèche* - open, 4-wheeled, sprung, seat (with back) at the front, folding half-cover at the rear, with passengers facing each other.

⁵ The appears to be what it says – *Je ne les ai jamais vu employer sur les objectifs réellement visibles* – although the French grammar itself is a bit wonky (*vues?*) so there might be an error in transcription, but what I think he means is, that what was lacking was a specified objective and that the crews tended to merely spray bullets around in the general direction of the enemy.



Over the course of the three months, certain units rode close to 3,000 km without many wounds to the backs. That was no doubt a result of the attentive care which the Polish cavalryman gave to his mount and also perhaps the use of felt in preference to blankets. The number of horses made unavailable could have been reduced even more if the cavalry had used more regular gaits⁶.

The shoeing left much to be desired. The smiths – when they existed – were bad and did not have the correct tools. The nails were too large and split the horn. Most of the time, the trooper of an unshod horse obtained some shoes from no matter where and had them put on by the first smith he came to. Some horses went for hundreds of kilometres without any shoes; such a performance was possible because the marches mostly took place on sandy roads.

e) *Carts* – each unit had a variable number of carts, according to need and the initiative of the troops. All carts for food, baggage, munitions and wounded were four wheeled. They used military wagons (sometimes covered) and rudimentary peasant carts (four wheels and some boards) belonging sometimes to the body itself and sometimes to a peasant who, requisitioned with cart and horses, followed the columns for an indeterminate time.

Nearly every squadron had a French, Austrian or German model mobile kitchen. Those without carried the cooking utensils on a cart.

Meat and water wagons did not exist.

There was never any question of combat train and regimental train. In operations, all the carts followed the regiments, except a certain number forming what was called the Heavy Column. These remained with the 4th bureau of the divisions, sometimes 60 to 80 kilometres from the troops, and serving to conduct rations and munitions from the supply centres to the units.

f) *Artillery* – there was no divisional artillery. Each brigade had two batteries of four Russian 76[mm] guns.

The material, drawn by 6 good horses, followed pretty much everywhere. It had the faults of being relatively heavy, slow to unlimber and not capable of shooting fast. Moreover, certain pieces had been in service for a long time without resighting and their shooting lacked precision.

g) *Communication* – means of communication were lacking. For long periods the division had for means of communicating with the Army, the brigades and neighbouring units only the telephone and dispatch riders. These means were clearly insufficient given the distances. Then the division received a wireless, but it was heavy, badly harnessed, in bad state and not capable of any service.

Telephone service was rendered in the division and in each brigade by a platoon of 20 telephonists. In each regiment there were also sufficient telephones and a platoon of telephonists.

Towards the end of the operations, some liaisons by plane were successfully made between the Army and the Division.

C. Services

The cavalry division not being a unit predicted for times of peace, it had no particular services at its disposition. All the services functioned at the brigade level, the only large units organised for living and fighting independently.

Little by little the division received different services, incomplete it is true, but nevertheless of great use.

1) *Divisional artillery park* – Did not exist. The 4th bureau was charged with resupply of munitions. Each brigade had a munitions column which generally remained with the heavy column. It was not possible to repair arms or carts.

2) *Administration* – Did not exist at the division and was only with the brigade. In order to get one, that of the 7th Brigade was taken, composed of an Indentant, two or three officers and 15-odd men. But it did not have an automobile and its means were insufficient to ensure supply over great distances.

⁶ See “The Marches”



3) *Health* – Left a great deal to be desired. The division had a chief medical officer who had some orderlies and no stretcher-bearers. He had an ambulance and a hospital section poorly allocated with material and personnel. There was no comfortable carriage for the transport of the wounded.

A brigade had one or two doctors, an ambulance and a hospital section, the latter in a similar state to their divisional equivalents. The medical carts were small military wagons or peasant carts, not covered, furnished with more or less clean straw and in which the wounded were sometimes carried for several days.

The regiment had one or two doctors, some orderlies and the same medical carts as the brigade. There was a type of stretcher carried by two horses in tandem, in which one and sometimes two were placed.

The medicaments and bandages came from France. They were transported in good conditions, in wicker baskets. They were available in sufficient quantity.

Second Part

The Cavalry Division in Service

Formed in haste from disparate elements as mentioned above, the Polish 1st CD still represented a real force. With 2,000 to 2,500 sabres, it was precipitously thrown into the battle, then combined with a second division, then alone again. It finished the campaign combined as a corps with the 2nd CD.

At the start it received no orders. The command seemed not to know about it. It was told “beat Budienny!” and that was all. As for knowing about the means with which it was to do it, if it had enough rations, munitions etc, nobody cared.

It carried out this difficult task with courage and success. Little by little it took the initiative in operations. For two months it fought against Budienny - sometime outnumbered four to one – and forced him to retreat. Budienny gone, it remained facing the Bolshevik infantry only. The struggle then became a game for it. Forced to make war it finished by teaching it.

A. The enemy

For two months the 1st CD’s enemy was represented by the Horse Army of Budienny of which the composition and even the field of action have never been precisely determined.

Around 25 July, the Horse Army, surrounded by an aura of glory, had reached to the region of Brody. It was considered the best Bolshevik army. And one must consider that the Polish newspapers themselves, with their fantastic stories, had contributed to making Budienny a sort of legendary hero who it seemed senseless to attack. This ill-considered aura gave to Budienny’s name an undoubted moral force, to the point where for the Polish troops, knowing that the famous Bolshevik horseman was facing them, reduced their powers of resistance and made the intervention of an energetic leader become necessary to re-establish their shaken morale.

There is no doubt that this extraordinary effect on the morale of the Polish army was justified by the success obtained. Budienny was the man who, in June, at the head of his *harka* of 10,000 horsemen had broken by surprise the Polish front at Bielaja-Cerkow and had thrown himself on the rear of the army occupying Kiev; was everywhere and nowhere at the same time, had spread terror with his passage, had fallen on the GHQ of the Army Group from the south to Zytomir and had forced the Polish armies to retreat hundreds of kilometres.

This moral force of Budienny (events would test it later) resided above all in the effect of surprise that he knew how to produce and in the dreadful cruelty he showed. But it was increased by the lack of education and military instruction of the Polish officers and soldiers and by the lack of organisation and experience of the staffs.

Budienny, who one likes to compare to the great generals of Napoleon, was nothing more than a former NCO in the Tsar’s army who had been noted in the Great War for his *sang-froid* and bravery going on rashness. He was, at the time, about 30 and had never had a course at any military school. He was surrounded, it was said, by remarkable staff officers such as a certain under-lieutenant Zotow, who busied himself principally with the operations, and General Makowski, former teacher at the War School in Petrograd.



He was a convinced communist and was himself watched by communist commissars. He praised highly the beauties of the communist regime the principles of which he seemed to barely observe when it applied to his person. Budienny's staff lived copiously and well. Good vodka and generous quantities of wine were not missing from his table. When, in September, Under-lieutenant Victor, of the 9th Uhlans, went to see him at Koreeg, he was received with great pomp; the table was well served and he was given as he left a lovely sabre, a chased silver dagger and a pistol of excellent make. He would take back besides an autograph from Budienny. During the course of the meal no-one sought to commit the fault of trying to convince him of the beauties of the communist ideology and, at his depart, he was embraced by Budienny himself.

1) *Composition of the Horse Army* – The Horse Army was composed as a rule of four divisions of cavalry (4th, 6th, 11th and 14th), two or three divisions of infantry, some armoured cars (gun and MG), even at the start some tanks of a special model but of no appreciable worth.

The Russian infantry divisions that the Polish 1st CD found most often in front of themselves were the 24th and 44th. Of the rest, Budienny seemed to make little use.

The cavalry divisions of Budienny's army as a rule were made up of 3 brigades of 2 cavalry regiments and an artillery group; the armoured cars seemed to be given, when their use was possible, to one division or another. Each division had effectives varying from 1,800 to 3,500 horsemen.

The 4th and 6th seemed to always have more effectives than the others; each regiment was made up of 6 squadrons of variable number (between 80 and 100) and some machine-guns, also of variable number; the MGs were all on carriages like the Polish *Taczenka*; they were very mobile, but their fire produced only a moral and not destructive effect. The artillery group seemed to be composed only of two batteries of four 76[mm] guns.

The officers and men came from all corners of European and Asian Russia. From the start of the Kiev offensive there were a number of former Tsarist officers serving under the Red Flag, said to be propelled by reawakened patriotic sentiments against the Polish imperialist ambitions, but in reality more by material necessity or fear of reprisals. In general, it was difficult to distinguish the officers from the troopers.

The horsemen formed a bizarre ensemble with cossacks enrolled more or less by force, neighbours with pure communists, convinced idealists who generally held all the ranks, bandits of all sorts, rubbish of the suburbs of Petrograd, Moscow or some other place, loving war under any emblem, because it was a chance to murder and pillage. Everyone, officers and troopers, was watched by the commissars including some Jews. They had on their sleeves or their headgear a large red star.

The cossacks formed a doubtful element in the mix. When the situation became bad, they easily passed in whole units to the Polish side, and asked to fight in the Polish ranks, on the conditions of being dressed, equipped and sent to Wrangel afterwards.

The cossack was indeed hostile to communist ideas; he is an owner; for him patriotism is to his cottage and his land. From when they felt that Wrangel menaced their property, when they learnt that the communists requisitioned their grain and their animals to the point of leaving their family in destitution, they no longer wished to fight.

The 14th CD had a large proportion of cossacks; so about 10 September, whilst it was holding the line of the Bug, in the vicinity of Hrubieszow - Keylow, it fell under suspicion, and it was relieved to be put in reserve. The 6th on the contrary, had a large proportion of communists; it was it that showed the most valour, and so it was particularly liked by Budienny.

The dress, equipment and armaments were very rudimentary and very disparate. Each horseman was nonetheless pretty much dressed, equipped and armed. The dress often resembled that of peasants, which caused it sometimes to be said by the Poles that peasants were fighting in the enemy ranks. The armament was a sabre, a rifle or carbine of whatever origin, sometimes a very short rifle with which it was easy to shoot from horseback.

The horses displayed no serious value. They were in general cossack horses or little country horses with long manes and tails; some had a bit of a silhouette, being normally those captured from the Poles.



The harnesses were very simple. They were often a simple saddle resembling a cossack saddle and from which were suspended some sort of bags in which the horseman carried the little linen he possessed, his dish and his blanket and certain objects he had acquired in the course of his travels.

The artillery was of a variable quality following that of the divisions. It was very good in the 4th and 6th; the shells worked well enough.

Budienny's infantry was made up normally of the 24th and 44th IDs; they were each 3 brigades of 2 regiments. These units were the same worth as the other infantry divisions, that is to say almost no value; the men were badly shod, badly dressed, badly equipped; but on the contrary well enough armed with rough rifles, of recent Bolshevik manufacture.

There were a large number of machine-guns, but badly served.

Each division represented a force of 2,000 to 3,500 men; but Budienny did not worry very much about the infantry, who, at the end, became easy prey for the Polish cavalry.

Was Budienny a leader of men combined with a great tactician? Leader on men? Perhaps. Tactician? No. The proof is in the fact that with four divisions of cavalry and two divisions of infantry, he was not able, in three months of combat, to destroy the Polish 1st CD, who often fought alone against him.

The Bolshevik cavalryman, cossack or not, is generally good; he is a horseman from birth; he has inherited the traditions of the former Russian cavalryman; he has made war for six years, be it against the Germans and Austrians, be it against Denikin, Judenicz, Kolczak or Petlura. Knowing the terrain as an expert, and using it well, he is very good at reconnaissance, shoots well from the saddle, manoeuvres well, even individually, has energy in attack, above all when the enemy is fleeing, but he demoralises very quickly when events turn bad. He ignores completely [or, knows nothing about⁷] combat on foot, or the use of cold steel, except when it comes to traitorously massacring prisoners or helpless people.

The squadrons and regiments used the terrain perfectly and the manoeuvre formations appropriate to the situation; in combat, they showed proof of flexibility, knowing to place themselves in ambush, profiting from lucky situations that presented themselves (troops not taking care, convoys badly escorted), but avoiding as a rule combat with an adversary well disposed to fight. They were fond of people who fled, but if the enemy looked as if he would resist, they seemed surprised and sometimes stopped in mid-attack (combat north of Komarow, 31 August). The bulk [of the unit] basically avoided engaging; using above all demonstrations with machine-guns and artillery, and when the enemy was fleeing, the cavalry rushed in *lava* and, firing from horseback with great audacity, looked to take the enemy's flanks. They hoped thus to increase the panic and force the enemy to abandon material which they would collect afterwards. The cossacks even shot at point-blank range, and were elusive in their excessively dispersed formations (the combat of 8 August near Antonin, where the colonel commanding the division was obliged to defend himself with pistols; the combat of 14 August at Cholojow, where the commander of the 1st Uhlands was killed).

In summary, the war that Budienny's cavalry conducted was more a partisan war where the units, regiments, brigades, rarely divisions, were operating with a great liberty of action, looking to make a bold blow provided it did not cost too much. It avoided true combat, and its units were rarely co-ordinated together in a manoeuvre conceived and executed under the direction of a true commander.

The idea of manoeuvre did exist sometimes however, at the start of an action of grand scope for example. So, when Budienny wanted to attempt a raid, he did not engage lightly; he looked for an open door, and, if it did not exist, the weakest point in the line where he was able to create one with little expense. In order to open the passage quickly, he chose the least guarded place and that which seemed the most favourable for using surprise. He concentrated his forces against the objective at night; he was fond of woods to hide in, like bandits; at the start of the day, his artillery opened a furious fire, and he ran, armoured cars in front if the terrain permitted it, he passed and the raid started, each division having a particular objective to which it directed itself and which it attacked in the manner it knew. He kept, on the whole, a division as reserve, generally the 6th in which he had the greatest confidence. The operation continued thus for as long as possible up to the day when the need to rest was felt, or indeed when munitions ran out. When a division on the road met an enemy body prepared to fight and knowing how to manoeuvre, it looked for another free route, or even greeted it with a hasty retreat.

⁷ *ignore* has both senses



This is how Budienny fell on staffs, supply centres, transports, ambulances; he spread terror everywhere, burning hospitals, finishing off the wounded and giving little quarter to prisoners who hampered him in his rapid march. He was always the protector of the peasants from who he asked only some food and sometimes horses; he got on perfectly with the Jews, in who he found precious auxiliaries, but, on the contrary, he suppressed everyone who presented an aristocratic character, or even simply bourgeois. He was accompanied by a type of revolutionary tribunal composed of communists who, installed in the towns, arrested, judged and quickly executed suspects. Thus at Rowno, in August and September, nearly 200 people of the bourgeois or intellectual class, suspected of hostility to Bolshevik ideas, were shot.

Was Budienny attacked?⁸

Whilst the bulk of the forces hid in the woods; the battlefield seemed empty; the machine-guns remained in favourable spots and the artillery shot to stop the enemy's progress. But the brigades or regiments did not forget to strike a solid blow. Whilst you were fighting thus against the machine-guns and artillery, misfortune for your convoy trailing behind or your colonel not watching out; they were sure to be attacked by machine-guns and rifles at first and then removed (the 2nd division to the north of Brody, 3 August, lost its artillery, radio and a certain number of horses this way).

After some hours of combat, the resistance became more serious, the number of machine-guns grew, the artillery shot more violently, then on your flanks appeared cavalry and machine-guns who, from the shelter of cover, shot and threatened to cut your retreat. If at this moment you broke from combat and retired, skirmishers left from woods, hedges and houses, always slipping progressively ahead around the flanks trying to get you to speed up, and coming with unusual daring to shoot you from short distance (combats of Antonin, 8 August, Radziechow, 13 August, Cholojow, 14 August).

But in these circumstances, where retreat bordered on panic, Budienny showed himself inferior as a manoeuvrer; he did not know how to exploit success. The bulk of the troops did not intervene; it seemed that he had a fear of engaging in true full battle, battle which could decide the fate of the two adversaries. He only did it when he was truly obliged (31 August, near Komarow, he was encircled not knowing how he was to get out; he sought to free himself by charging with a brigade of the 6th Division, who, moreover, surprised to not see the Polish cavalry about-turn at their arrival, stopped clean in mid-attack). In a word, Budienny sought above all to influence the morale of the enemy so as to have in front of him only someone who had turned his back.

Combat on foot was not well regarded in the Horse Army.

Fire was furnished by machine-guns on carriages and troops firing from the horse; they dismounted only in exceptional cases. The troopers were not even trained in the use of the sabre (combat of a Bolshevik brigade against a Polish brigade, 31 August, near Komarow, where no Pole was wounded by a sabre).

As for the infantry, it was treated as the poor sibling. In his great raids, Budienny left it in the rear to assure his communications, to hold the two sides of the door open, and never looked to assist it if it was in a bad position. Manoeuvres with cavalry and infantry together were rare.

Sometimes this infantry remained 40 or 50 kilometres to the rear of its cavalry and it was possible to get between the two elements of the Army which remained with no liaison between them (combat at Tyszowce, 30 August, where the 1st Uhlans moved at night to fall on a type of park organised by the communists, amongst them a commissar for trophies, and where were assembled all the trophies taken in course of the raid on Zamosc and Lublin; the 1st Uhlans found 4 canons there).

Despite its faults however, the Horse Army, with its 8,000 to 10,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry, was a serious adversary for the Polish 1st CD who also had numerous faults.

B. The units and services of the division in the different phases of the battle

1. *Headquarters* – In the course of the operations which continued almost continuously for three months, the staff of the division – the colonel principally – showed proof of good sense, energy and self-confidence, but his influence was felt rather in the conception of operations than in the conduct of combat itself. As for the functioning of the various services, no-one attached any serious importance to them.

⁸ More dodgy grammar in the original, this may well be “Had Budienny attacked?”



Generally, he ordered an attack every time he could, without worrying about the strength of the enemy. These attacks were well conceived, with a clear, simple idea of manoeuvre, but often they were launched against an enemy and situation not sufficiently known because nothing was done to learn about it.

The attack released, it seemed to the staff that its role was finished; it did not try sufficiently to learn what had happened, to follow the events of the battle in order to profit from any good situation that allowed, with the help of reserves, to exploit success and obtain for little cost a real decision and great results.

The subordinates conducted the attack without feeling the need to inform the colonel of what happened, except however if the situation became bad.

At the start, the division commander did not even keep a reserve, or yet, if he had one, he threw it immediately into the fray, as if he had a hurry to free himself as soon as possible from the burden of conducting the action; or yet again he let it become rapidly absorbed by the commanders of the subordinate units engaged, without having personally given the order (combats of Cholojow, 14 August).

The result of such conduct was the impossibility of doing anything about an accident, or to fully exploit an initial success. Yet, in certain cases, the influence of the divisional commander made itself strongly felt (attack on Korosten, 9 October, where success was complete thanks to his energetic intervention).

2. *Reconnaissance and exploitation of information* – No-one, neither staff nor troops, attached to reconnaissance the importance that it merited and did not truly seek to learn about the enemy; battles were fought in the clear blue.

The 2nd bureau did nothing to determine on an exact and continuing basis the composition and situation of the units against which it was fighting; so it was very difficult to establish in a precise manner the enemy order of battle. There information often replaced reality. Almost nothing was known about *decouverte*, as much the *decouverte* of exploration, as that of security or operations, and reconnaissance service.

During marches, stops or engagements, the headquarters rarely ordered the information to be sent in and the points to be reconnoitred. It left this to the care of the commanders of the subordinate units who often did nothing under one pretext or another (troops tired, enemy presence, etc). Only at the end did this situation change. Lots of reconnaissance parties were sent, sometimes far too many, but unfortunately without giving them a precise mission, without indicating what information was desired, the place where they should operate and where to send the information found. In general, one did not reconnoitre with officers. Lots of reconnaissance detachments, squadrons with MGs, sometimes even regiments were preferred. Large detachments were liked which was a waste of forces and reduced by too much the effectives of units when they went into action.

The units sent operated badly; their leaders did not try sufficiently to conquer difficulties to reach their targets; they did not know how to use terrain, either for moving or observing; they used the roads, in more or less compact groups, without scouts out in front.

The information they gave was almost always of little worth; information from a peasant was given the same importance as that which had been obtained by a personal observation of the leader of a reconnaissance and the troops that accompanied him.

The source of information was almost never indicated; everything was given as certain, and often no-one thought to verify anything thought doubtful.

Sometimes, in critical periods, the colonel in command used information known later to be false as the base for ordering an action (13 August, at Radziechow, in the afternoon, several pieces of information indicated that the enemy had completely cut our line of retreat; based on that, the colonel ordered a disengagement in particularly tough conditions. During the night, it was learnt that the information was false).

The accounts given were generally badly drawn up, no-one knew the four questions: Who? When? Where? How?

Often the time was omitted, or even the place; there was no indication what the enemy was doing, if he had stopped, if he marched, what direction he had taken, etc. Negative reports were not understood [or, ignored⁹]. Finally, the observers did not know to keep contact with the enemy. During a march on the enemy's trail,

⁹ again, *ignorer* has both these senses.



insufficient importance was given to indicators and to information the locals could give. During combat, subordinate units reported rarely; they were happy to go into action as if they were completely alone. But were these faults not general and a reflection of the Polish mentality which was still imprinted with individualism?

3) *Security* – As in the reconnaissance, security was often left to the initiative of the subordinate commanders.

A. *On the march* – In the movement orders of the division HQ there was never any question of vanguards or rearguards; sometimes they spoke of flank guards. A regiment or squadron was sent to cover a flank, but without giving it a specific mission.

a) *Vanguard* – The commander of the leading brigade generally detached as a vanguard a regiment of cavalry and a platoon of artillery. Given the opponent, there were only advantages in having the artillery in the van; a battery was needed there in place of a platoon.

The regiment in the van generally marched too close to the column; it did not disperse enough to search the terrain; the different echelons, point, head and body, were not clearly separated; patrols were only rarely sent to the flanks.

The march was made at the same speed and in the same manner as the column, without taking the terrain into account. The protection offered by such a security detachment was flimsy indeed.

When contact was established, the vanguard did not deploy sufficiently to reconnoitre and determine properly the contours of the enemy; it seemed to think that its mission was completed and it remained inactive.

With combat commenced, the vanguard and body often formed just a long and thin column stationary on the road which exposed it uselessly to enemy artillery, fortunately very rare (combat of Olyka, 16 September, where the column remained thus immobile on the road and thus was taken to task by the enemy artillery. A displacement of some hundreds of metres to left and right would have allowed the units to shelter in the small and well-defined valleys).

The regimental commanders did not know the role in combat of a true vanguard. For example, they did not worry to secure the column debauching from a valley, from a village or from a bridge, etc. (11 August at Radziechow, the van of the 9th Uhlans stopped in a village, without pushing any patrols out ahead, towards the woods which were 1,200 metres to the East. All of a sudden, cossacks left the wood, installed a machine-gun behind a small isolated house 400 metres from the village, machine-gunned the head of the 9th and the staff of the division, whilst some skirmishers sought to outflank [them?]. During the course of the first engagements, the vanguard did not inform the command sufficiently. They forgot that they were working for those behind them.

b) *Rearguard* – In a march towards the enemy, very often no rearguard was used. It would have still been a good idea for police work, chasing looters and dawdlers.

In a retreat march, it was not distinct from the bulk of the column, the different parts did not exist. It marched in any odd fashion without taking the terrain into account, without using breaks or natural obstacles and sometimes exposing itself in dense formation to enemy artillery and machine-gun fire.

c) *Flank guards* – Were not sent in a permanent manner by the division's commander; when they existed, their mission, their itinerary was not clearly defined. Normally, they also took no account of terrain, but marched at their own desire without worrying about the position of the column. They served no use. (3 August, when the head of the column of the cavalry division, carts included, was marching from Barania to Grzymalowna, a squadron was sent to cover the left flank; the column marched at the walk, however the flank squadron marched at the trot in front of it, without any liaison with the troops that they were covering. The Bolsheviks let it pass and then attacked in the flank and rear.)

B. *In quarters* – In the orders for quarters, there was never question of forward posts, nor of cantonments in the first line, even if the terrain clearly indicated it: cantonments behind lines of water for example. Security was left to the desires of the subordinate unit commanders.

Normally, the brigades were quartered in one or two villages, sometimes situated two or three kilometres from the enemy; each kept guard as he understood it, sometimes not at all; no police post, no exit point, no



assembly point, no password, no orders in case of alert; only some horsemen keeping guard in the streets as much for watching the horses as the enemy. No reserve, and no forward-post patrol.

C. *In combat* – From the moment that contact was established, there was never a question of security service. One stopped to see what the enemy was going to do, or one just continued the march as if still far from the enemy, with the protection of a simple vanguard, up to the moment when shooting forced one to stop. During combat, the initiative in sending security patrols was left entirely to brigade commanders who often did nothing; this negligence was all the more culpable in that one was fighting almost continually against cavalry and in covered terrain. (Combats of Radzwehow, 13 August, Cholojow, 14 August, where the most incredible rumours circulated about what was happening on the flanks and the lines of retreat. Raid on Korosten, a 100 kilometres inside enemy lines, 9 and 10 October, in the course of there was several hours fighting without the slightest cover.)

4) *Marches* – Before treating the matter of the march of columns and their formation, it is necessary to say some words about the manner of marching whilst separated or in small detachments (speed and choice of terrain).

Rankers, NCOs and a good number of officers, above all those coming from the Russian army, had no notion of the regulation gaits and the good use of terrain, which alone allow good work to be done and impose on the horse only the minimum fatigue. Scouts, dispatch riders, laggards, sometimes even whole platoons and squadrons, as a quick gait knew only the trot as extended as possible. The horse could forge on¹⁰, extend his neck to the maximum to try and increase his speed, but no-one worried; the horseman continued even to push it and whip it with his naigka or some stick picked up along the route. One trotted at full speed on paved roads, pebbles and marshy ground, thus imposing a considerable fatigue on the horse which fatally, after a relatively short time, could ruin the most resistant.

The officers let this happen under an indifferent eye, not seeming to take into account the drawbacks of this way of doing things.

a) *Formation of columns* – This is solely a matter of the formation of brigade columns. When the division marched in one column, the brigades were so far from each other as to be considered separate.

In the orders for a movement, there was never a question of the initial point or the distance between the different elements of the column, but only an order of march, an itinerary to follow and the departure time. Each regiment assembled as it wished, and where it wished, generally in column by 2 or by 3, even on the village roads where it was quartered, causing a traffic jam, without great importance, it is true, in that country where one was able to pass anywhere. In general, the carts formed behind each regiment, but they were sometimes formed into a brigade convoy which was never properly supervised.

In certain cases, the artillery was placed too far from the head of the brigade and so was too slow to enter combat. I note that the horsemen started to saddle too soon before the order to advance.

b) *Marches close to the enemy* – The columns, often late at the start of operations, finished by leaving on time, but the horsemen and carts missing at the start, would rejoin at full speed, overtaking the columns.

Generally, the separate elements left too great a distance between themselves at the start, which sometimes grew on the way. On the whole, the right side of the roads was used, but this rule was not always respected; some units marched in the middle and some on the left. The normal gait for the body of the columns was the walk; at the start an infantryman's walk, 4 or 5 kilometres an hour; which exhausted the men and the horses, but which finished by stretching out and becoming normal. In some cases, above all at night, it would take 10 hours on horseback to go 30 kilometres. The troopers paid no attention to what was happening and did not worry to keep their distance.

Finally, march discipline did not exist. Horsemen stopped by themselves, where and when they wanted, on any pretext, without anyone saying anything: so, after some hours of march, one could see a good number of horsemen alone and in small groups leave the column, hurry at the trot to the houses bordering the route, dismount, water the horses and go into the cottages of the peasants to get something. They would remain there thus, five, ten, fifteen minutes and then regain the column at high speed, across whatever terrain. Sometimes an entire unit would stop without having received an order. This way of doing things was deplorable. Men

¹⁰ I think this must be a typo in the original



used to leaving the ranks have a tendency to do the same thing in combat, when the situation is more critical; he could find an excuse in the fact that few or no regulation stops were made in the course of a march, and that he feared not being fed that night.

Other scenes of disorder were produced when the columns stopped; the men hurried to the peasants' houses, taking by force oats and hay for their horses and food for themselves. These habits of another age were shocking, but to lose them required a good supply organisation, organisation that did not exist to speak of.

They had as a consequence not only an enormous wastage of all sorts of foodstuffs, the ruin of certain villages, but they grew in the peasants an irritation, a stubborn resentment.

The stage were generally very long, on average 35 to 40 kilometres a day, sometimes 50 or 60; one often marched four or five days in a row, without the horses showing the signs of excessive fatigue.

c) *March in proximity to the enemy* – Close to the enemy, the march formation did not change; the column continued to advance tranquilly on the road in a long ribbon, without worrying to use the terrain to hide from enemy view, to spread formation to avoid losses as the result of an accident, or use the appropriate formations to ease the execution of later manoeuvres.

This manner of things only presented in this instance relative inconvenience because the enemy lacked activity and had no planes, balloons or long distance artillery. It would have been completely different if the adversary had been a good army supplied with all the means of modern combat.

5) *Quarters* – In the paragraph on Security, it has been said that there was no question of forward posts or cantonments in the first line in the divisional orders.

Near or far from the enemy, as after combat, quartering always took place in the same fashion (cantonment or bivouac). Each brigade had one or two villages, rarely three. The HQ staff quartered with one of the brigades.

When a cantonment was shared between units, no-one was in charge of separating the parts from each other, and the setting up of camp operated at random.

Settling into cantonment took place quickly, the men left by themselves in small groups to the houses at random; they sheltered some of their horses and left others in courtyards and gardens. When there was nowhere to stay, everyone stayed outside, without large problems besides, as men and horses were very resistant.

The packs and arms were put no matter where and without order. If it was necessary to saddle at night the operation was certainly very tiresome, all the more as there was a lack of lighting.

In most cases, the cantonments were chosen so close to the enemy that he, if he had been more active, would have been able to bombard or attack by surprise without anyone suspecting.

Despite all, no preparation was made to deal with any event; cantonment on alert was unknown; the men undressed and the horses were unsaddled.

Hygiene did not exist and, after quartering for a prolonged period, the villages became a repulsive mess.

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6) *Combat* – Engagement orders were generally made in a simple and clear fashion. Sometimes however it would have helped if the orders were a little more detailed, to bring out more the manoeuvre plan of the commander, and to set for each unit a well determined mission. It is true that the idea of manoeuvring was absent from time to time, above all at the start.

The commander was content then to give an itinerary to each brigade, without saying exactly what he wanted of it; he did not always keep a reserve so as to be able to intervene at a desired moment in the battle. There again he placed too much on the lower commanders to conduct the whole of the combat. So it happened many times that an initial success was not able to be exploited or where the commander of the division was incapable of preparing for accidents.



A) *Approach march* – Approach march did not exist as such.

When the first elements of the security screen made contact and units arrived in the potential artillery and infantry fire zone, the column continued its march on the route, coming to collide with the security screen, without dreaming of changing formation and without utilising the terrain.

From when the vanguard stopped and engaged in combat, all the long and thin column stopped on the road and waited, offering a remarkable target to enemy artillery. These had got into the habit of shooting onto the roads, and in these conditions they often achieved results, which could have been avoided if the unit commanders had known their job better and used initiative and good sense.

Under fire, the same errors were repeated.

B) *Offensive combat* – Sometimes, the attacks were well conceived with audacious and sound manoeuvre plans. They were executed by the troops with spirit, energy and an absolute scorn for death; so they always obtained an appreciable and quick initial success. Unfortunately, this success was never fully exploited because initiative and will was lacking. The commander did not move around the battlefield enough, he left events to happen without keeping up to date. When the enemy dropped off, he learnt about it too late and was incapable of manoeuvre or giving orders for the pursuit. As for those involved, they felt that the initial success was sufficient recompense for their effort, and that once this effort was accomplished, they felt the need to regain their breath (combat 20 August near Zoltance: about the middle of the afternoon, the 14th and 4th Bolshevik Cavalry Divisions were completely beaten and fleeing to the north; a vigorous pursuit by all the division would have destroyed them, but one watched the enemy flight; when the pursuit could be started, it was too late; a brigade of the 6th CD vigorously counter-attacked the flank of the 6th brigade, which was obliged to retire. Everything had to be done again. Combats to the north of Komarow, 31 August, after the success of the morning, the enemy was not vigorously pursued, even though almost completely surrounded. Things were let slip away little by little in place of manoeuvring; that night, when it was hoped to see a large number of the convoy between the hands of the 6th Brigade, a counter-attack was made into the rear and the left– which had not been covered – and stopped all action. It was thought very good that they had not been completely rolled over by the enemy.)

1) *Attack on horse:*

a) *Against cavalry* – Only once did cavalry fight cavalry, 31 August, to the north of Wolica-Sniatycka-Komarow, with a combat between a brigade of Budienny's 6th CD and the 7th Brigade, in the course of which it appeared that neither the Bolsheviks nor the Poles were prepared to fight with steel. The Polish commander, whose attention had been attracted elsewhere however, was a little surprised; he did not judge the situation with the desired speed and did not take the only logical decision in this case: to attack at maximum immediately so as to have the moral ascendancy over his adversary and leave him no freedom to manoeuvre.

During the mêlée and pursuit, neither Bolsheviks nor Poles (save some individuals) used their bladed weapons. As concerns the sabre, the men never used the point. From this point of view instruction was all to be done.

b) *Against infantry* – Most often, an attack against infantry started by combat on foot, supported by the machine-guns and artillery. This did not last long, and was continued by a charge *à la arme blanche* [ie with sabre or lance] even if the enemy possessed numerous machine-guns.

These attacks were always full of spirit and vigour, however they would have been still better if the units had manoeuvred. At the start, the attack formations on horse were too dense; the attack was made in a battle order of one rank, instead of as skirmishers, and without profiting from the terrain; the charge was launched from a great distance and suffered sizeable losses on the way from fire. At the end of the operations, these errors disappeared; all the attacks were then crowned with success and losses almost nil. (Charge of the cossacks east of Tyszowce, 2 September: 100 prisoners, 1 MG, 2 light wounds only. Charge of a squadron of the 1st Uhlans near Laszczow, 3 September: 80 prisoners, 7 MGs, belonging to two different regiments of the 44th ID, 2 or 3 wounded. Charge of the 4th Uhlans at Niemelanka, 5 October: 90 prisoners, 7 MGs, no losses.)

It appeared impossible that one could thus attack on horse with success against infantry so well supplied with machine-guns. This is explained by the superior morale that the Polish cavalry had acquired over the enemy infantry from the time of the first combats, and by the little valour of the Bolshevik infantry, who were not true soldiers and who did not stand their ground. The actions, it is true, were often facilitated by the covered



terrain which allowed the charge to be started from a short distance, to always obtain surprise and the morale effect.

2) *Combat on foot* – At the start was not employed, but certain units, who had suffered from badly conceived charges on horseback, finished by adopting it.

a) *Dismounting* – Was facilitated by the adoption of the formation of column by threes, but by contrast was hampered by the lance which the trooper did not know what to do with (he did not have a lance hook in his pack).

In general, two out of three men dismounted, and the second horseman of each row, who remained on horseback, had three horses and three lances. This ensemble was, despite everything, mobile enough.

The normal formation of assembly, line of columns by squads, was unknown; the troopers assembled in any manner around their leader, with a terrifying noise, even in the presence of the enemy (night of 7 August, at Kulikow, the enemy with machine-guns was some 500 or 600 away from a deployed artillery platoon and the staff of the division; the 14th Uhlans were ordered to dismount and go in front to cover the artillery; they executed their movement under enemy fire; however the combatants on foot remained standing and grouped in a single disorderly mass around the regimental commander, whilst the machine-gun bullets some metres from there were hitting the horses; after some minutes, happily, the machine-guns stopped firing.

Reconnaissance of terrain was unknown.

b) *Approach march* – This was made in made in whatever formation, often in a group, without any care to use terrain and avoid losses. It was not always sufficiently supported by the machine-guns and the artillery. The horsemen moved forward individually without caring about the others. The use of a combination of fire and movement was not known. Machine-gunners in firing positions, saw their advancing colleagues under enemy fire, and did not fire under the pretext that they were not themselves under fire.

c) *Opening and use of fire* – Was left to the initiative of the individual. The leader's action was useless, no-one had any idea of manoeuvre, of giving the range or an objective. There was no liaison between different units.

d) *Use of machine-guns* – The machine-guns, *Taczenka* or other, were employed at random, without looking to obtain maximum results from the fire. One ignored flanking [fire?]. The men went on their own initiative to take position without knowing what they had to do, and without knowing the situation. In the advance, they sometimes forgot to follow up.

The fire was always bad; the men rarely shot at a well determined target for which they knew the distance; they sprayed the terrain, seeking mainly to impress the enemy from afar.

Thus used, the machine-guns, despite their imposing quantities, caused few losses in the enemy; it normally shot at sparrows¹¹, which often produced, it is true, sufficient morale effect to make the enemy flee.

e) *Use of artillery* – The artillery was organic to the brigade. It was never used as divisional artillery, even if it was used to prepare a break-through on somewhat organised positions. The brigade used it as it saw fit, but generally badly. No concentration of fire, but nearly always shots with a single gun or platoon. It was very rare to see the two batteries in use at the same time; 20 shots from one gun were preferred to the same number of shots fired in a concentrated way over four guns.

This method can be criticised, but at a pinch it can be excused by the small quantity of munitions. A slow but persistent fire made the enemy decide to retreat more often than a violent but short fire. Besides, there was no counter-battery fire, and pieces could remain for a long time in the same place without fear.

Placement of batteries was often chosen randomly with no concern to hide them from view; sometimes batteries were deployed some hundreds of metres from the enemy (in the course of the raid on Korosten, 9 October, at 2100, a canon was deployed 250 metres from Bolshevik infantry).

This method of working would have had grave results with some adversary other than the Bolsheviks.

As a rule, artillery did not prepare the attacks; it supported them only. It could be faulted as very slow to deploy and not being able to shoot quickly. Perhaps it was also badly served. Against mobile targets such as

¹¹ *du tir aux moineaux* – I imagine this is an idiom but it is in none of my dictionaries



cavalry, it normally shot with little effect. Each battery had a telephone which was well used to regulate the fire.

In placement during an action, the batteries did not keep sufficient liaison with the cavalry units. It hesitated to follow and, when it did follow, it moved far too slowly. The crew needed some serious practise.

3) *Pursuit* – Pursuit lacked energy.

In place of vigorously pursuing the retiring enemy by manoeuvre to prevent him reforming, to cause losses and to ceaselessly harass him, there was a tendency to wait for him to cede ground himself so one could move forward. In these conditions, success escaped. At the moment when the pear was ripe, one did not know how to cook it. (Combats of Zoltance, 19 August, and north of Komarow, 31 August.)

C) *Defensive Combat* – In defence the defects of organisation, instruction and military education of the units is shown more clearly than in offence. It did not require much to make morale falter in the same cavalry who showed themselves energetic and brave in attack.

1) *Combat on foot* – Combat on foot, already not highly considered in attack, was still less used in the retreat. Retirement was usually covered by machine-guns, *taczenka* preferably, and the men in skirmisher formation, or even in dense formations. The men shot from horseback or simply watched as spectators under enemy fire, whilst the column they were covering had moved before proceeding. No serious use of terrain, no manoeuvre.

2) *Use of machine-guns* – Same observations as for the offensive.

3) *Use of artillery* – The artillery was generally provided with cavalry support. It often remained in position until the last moment and in this way avoiding falling into Bolshevik hands; luck alone prevented catastrophes.

Its efficiency at retarding the enemy was slight, because it never had really good targets to fire at: the enemy generally moved using cover for shelter, and in well spread formations, and was almost invisible and consequently invulnerable.

4) *Organisation of terrain* – Did not exist.

5) *Conduct of combat* – Normally, the commander again left his subordinates to conduct the fight. In certain cases he did not even know what was happening, and combat took the form of a set of individual actions more or less disconnected, in the course of which there was no account paid to terrain.

Sometimes, the divisional reserve, when it existed, was absorbed bit by bit by the brigade commanders, who addressed themselves directly to the commander of the reserve units to obtain reinforcements. The result was that after some hours of combat the divisional commander no longer had anything under his control and was incapable of re-establishing a situation (combat of Cholojow, 14 August, where at 1200, there was no longer any reserve at the moment when the enemy outflanked us to the right and pushed forward with armoured cars. The regiments of the 1st Brigade took off and general retreat followed).

Breaking off of combat in retreat was not done by echelons and there was no resistance on well chosen choke points in the terrain. The rearguard formed a single block, which fought no matter where right up to the time that the enemy scouts and machine-guns gained the flanks, menacing the line of retreat. Then everyone left in one go. Often the colonel commanding the division persisted in staying at his command post up until the moment the cossacks arrived and shot at almost point-blank range. He therefore saw only one small corner of the battlefield and was not capable of directing the combat as a whole, or taking units to favourable points for the continuation of the fight.

Still, it must be recognised that in some particularly critical cases, the presence of the division's colonel in the rearguard, his energy, his *sang-froid*, had alone allowed a catastrophe to be avoided. (Retreat from Barania to Grzymalowka, 3 August; at the time that the Bolsheviks attacked with violence and surprised the whole division's column in the woods, it was the colonel alone who by his will-power and bravery, prevented the retreat from transforming into a true panic.)

There was no question of counter-attacks; yet in many cases they would have given considerable results.

7) *Liaison* – In general, one can say that liaison at all levels left much to be desired, be it because the unit commanders did not take account of its importance, be it because the means of providing it were absent.



a) *Liaison of the Division with the Army* – This existed rarely during operations, above all because the Army was always a long way away and the means of liaison were not present. The cavalry division indeed only had telephones and riders.

With marches of 40 kilometres per day on average, the telephone could only be expected to work some hours after arrival in quarters; besides, the Army itself did nothing to ensure liaison.

As for using riders, it did not appear possible to use them in a permanent fashion over such large distances.

The solution resided in the adoption of quicker and less costly means. At the end of the campaign, the division was provided with a defective, heavy and badly maintained wireless which provided no service.

Once or twice in the course of operations, liaison was made by plane in excellent conditions.

b) *Between the Division and the Brigades* – In combat, it was assured by use of dispatch riders, or directly by the presence of the division's colonel with the brigade's commander.

There was need that this be done more rigorously, that the divisional commander demand more frequent accounts from his subordinates.

Information concerning the actions and the situation of the enemy did not arrive often enough and did not permit the commander to orient himself precisely to events.

In quarters, liaison was made in good conditions by telephone. In passing, it is necessary to pay tribute to the devotions of the telephonists, above all the telephonists of the 7th Brigade.

c) *Between the brigades and the artillery regiments* – In combat, this took place by liaison agents in favourable conditions, but it could have been improved.

In quarters, it took place by telephone or riders.

As concerns artillery, serious progress had been made, but it was not yet sufficient.

d) *With neighbouring units* – Did not exist to speak of. (31 August, near Komarow, a lack of liaison between the division and the 13th ID prevented the complete destruction of the Bolshevik 6th CD, Budienny's train and the capture of the great chief himself.)

8) *The services* – Concerning services, it will mainly be a question of administration.

a) *Service of the artillery. Supply in munitions* – There was no divisional or brigade artillery park, so it was impossible to repair arms and carts. Broken carriages were abandoned and replaced by carriages taken from peasants, or repaired by chance using whatever means were available, with civilian workers.

Each brigade possessed a munitions column which dealt with the supply of infantry and artillery weapons under the direction of the 4th bureau of the division. At times, this supply left something to be desired as a result of a lack of liaison between the divisional staff and the 4th bureau who, as a rule, were always far to the rear. In the case of a breakdown in communications it was indispensable that the 4th bureau showed initiative in trying to obtain orders from the commander.

b) *Administration. Ration supply* – Was often defective at the start of the operations. For many days the men lacked sugar, coffee and bread, foodstuffs coming exclusively from the rear, without anyone reacting seriously to prevent this state of affairs.

Supply in meat and vegetables was met by exploitation of local resources, most often individual exploitation, because the men took what they needed themselves, without paying anyone.

Supply in forage – Was met solely by individual exploitation of local resources. Each horseman, arriving in quarters, went into the peasants' sheds, taking for his horse such oats and hay as he needed for his horse, without anyone saying anything. These supplies were generally not paid for; sometimes one gave the peasants a receipt, sometimes nothing at all, and in the morning of departure a crowd of people gathered, men and women, claiming their due.

This method, as has been indicated in the paragraph on marches, was deplorable; it was indispensable that it be made to stop soon, if one wished to avoid the complete ruin of certain villages, and the growing hostility of the peasants for whom patriotism is limited to the corner where they possess something.



In the Polish cavalry which often operated very far in front of the other armies and moved very rapidly, it was certainly indispensable to live off the country, because the means of transport were not sufficient to assure daily supply of food for many thousands of men and horses. But it was still possible to organise the exploitation of local resources under a responsible officer in each unit, brigade, regiment or even squadron, and to not leave it to the desires of each man.

Third Part

Results obtained and general considerations

The action of the 1st CD in the course of these three months of particularly tough campaigning, not just the fact of the enemy as much as the excessively painful material conditions in which the units had to live, is not well known, as much in military as in civilian circles.

One must not forget moreover that the men had been thrown into battle, knowing only how to mount a horse, without even receiving a passing military instruction, and were incapable of being formed between the hands of their leaders into a true combat instrument; that the officers, mostly young, coming from three different armies, had never received a good, unified, solid military education, concerning the conduct in combat of troops formed in a truly modern fashion. And yet, they all went gallantly to the attack each time it was asked of them, without counting the enemy, who sometimes outnumbered them four to one. They hurried towards him without looking back, with an absolute scorn for going to their death, energised by their patriotism, and above all by the division's colonel, whose energy, bravery and *sang-froid* in all circumstances was a good example for all.

I do not want to end this study without rendering particular tribute to that superior officer that had one day been brusquely pulled from his infantry division to be thrown at the head of a scarcely formed cavalry division. The burden was hard for him, because he had never had the honour of being at the head of a cavalry unit; he was distinguished solely leading the artillery brigade of the 1st Legion Division, and the 1st Legion Division itself.

He had, for commanding cavalry, only some general tactical notions acquired during the Great War, his good sense, his spirit of sacrifice and his tenacity. In several days he learnt the situation and, without hesitation, with confidence in success, he attacked, without worrying about numbers, every time occasion presented itself.

He was everywhere the situation seemed critical, leading the rearguard in the retreat, at the head of the vanguard of one of his columns in a forward march; certainly, sometimes it was not his place, and he could not see the whole but only a small corner of the battlefield and it was thus impossible for him to direct all the action; but his courageous attitude strongly impressed all those around him, increased their energy, raised their defiance. I never saw the least sign of worry on the figure of that soldier that one can give the name of *beau soldat*. By his *sang-froid*, his bravery, his energy and the good example he gave everybody, he often saved the situation.

The day he launched his division into battle, the Bolsheviks were stunned; they asked who had arrived; after some days, they thought English and French cavalry had come and thus explained the change produced, "Oh! with the Polish cavalry, it was fine to fight, but now that the English and French cavalry of Colonel Rommel is here, it is no longer the same." The enemy himself was obliged to render homage to the worth of their new adversary in who it did not seem possible to find the Poles that they had bowled over and chased over several hundred kilometres a few weeks previously.

From the first combats that they gave with Budienny, at the end of July and start of August, the 1st CD quickly took moral superiority. Budienny was still at the height of his glory, but over several combats he lost the initiative in the operations. Slowly, he was demoralised and lost confidence in his lucky star. Before admitting to be vanquished he again tried some large operations, hoping his good fortune would return, but his luck had turned: the attack on Lwow, the two attacks on Zamosc which failed, at the end of August and start of September; the cossacks who, dreaming of Wrangel's advance on their villages, did not wish to fight and deserted. In brief, towards the end of September, Budienny's star had completely waned, and the man in



whose name everybody had trembled, who, at one time, had been able to imagine himself see the paving stones of Warsaw twinkling under the hooves of his ugly little horses, shamefully fled, at high speed, looking for refuge at the Dnieper and in the Ukrainian plains where he would wait a more favourable occasion to recommence his misdeeds. This occasion would offer itself a month later. He carved out for himself then an easy and considerable success, taking a large part in the annihilation of Wrangel.

But in this wild flight, in the course of which it seemed that he had only one care: to save his skin, he completely lost interest in the two unfortunate divisions of infantry attached to his Horse Army.

Both, the 24th and 44th, left completely to themselves, were attacked by the 1st CD and piece by piece destroyed.

If, in the months of June and July, the Polish infantry had had to retire in front of the Bolshevik cavalry, in his turn the Bolshevik infantry fled wildly in front of the Polish cavalry. A simple exchange of courtesies, one says; above all the effect of superior morale in combat, which, following circumstances, changes sides.

The Polish cavalryman who, in many meetings, beat Budienny, who he considered a redoubtable adversary, took confidence in this; this confidence grew more when he found himself facing only Bolshevik infantry who, badly dressed, badly commanded, were not real troops and from the first engagements offered no resistance. At this moment, there was scarcely time to employ machine-guns and artillery; one attacked on horseback, at the gallop, sabre high, across lightly covered terrain which marvelously suited manoeuvre and surprise; and prisoners and material of all sorts flooded in. It was two sotnias of the cossack brigade who, 2 September, near Tyszowce, captured 100 prisoners and a machine-gun; a squadron of the 1st Uhlans who, 3 September, made 80 prisoners and took 7 machine-guns belonging to two different regiments of the 44th ID...

The success continued up to the end of the hostilities, which finished with a veritable triumph.

In a raid on Korosten, 100 kilometres inside Bolshevik lines, executed 8 to 12 October, the Cavalry Corps (1st and 2nd CDs) completely destroyed the important station of that town, making the railways from Korosten to Sarny, Zwiahel, Zytomir and Owrucz all unusable, captured 3,500 prisoners, nearly 50 machine-guns, 14 canons including those of armoured trains, 80 wagons of all sorts including one containing more than 5 million roubles, destroyed 3 armoured trains and nearly completely annihilated 3 infantry brigades belonging to the Bolshevik 7th ID. The Cavalry Corps escaped a concentric attack, mounted on Korosten by the Bolshevik command with three infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade, and returned to Korzec having only one officer and a few men killed, 30-odd wounded, all brought back to their own lines; in five days it had traveled 250 kilometres.

At this time, the morale of the Polish cavalry was at a height, there was great confidence in it, and one had a clear image of two or three divisions of cavalry properly organised, it was possible to start on it with great chance of success.

The Polish 1st CD, despite the errors it committed, could be proud of its exploits; not only had it caused the enemy numerous losses, but it had beaten Budienny, and in beating Budienny it had saved Lwow, perhaps also Warsaw, the geographical and moral objective that the enemy tried hard to reach with forced marches and from where it sought to dictate the peace and install its own political regime.

Unfortunately, everything costs in war as elsewhere, and the success of the 1st CD had been dearly bought.

In three months of combat its losses were 72 officers, of which 40-odd were killed, and 1,200 men.

Such sacrifices were enormous; they could have been considerably reduced if time had permitted good instruction of the officers and the men before sending them into the fire, if each had been properly persuaded of the importance of his role in the unfolding of the great, bloody drama in the course of which Poland was able to inflict on its enemy one of the greatest defeats that history has recorded.

