

The First Horse Army on the Polish Front, 1920

L. Klyuev

Original Author's Note

This work was largely completed as early as 1926 and was intended for inclusion in the official history of the 1st Horse Army. For a variety of reasons the publication of that history was delayed.

Meanwhile society urgently demands publication of materials concerning the heroic history of our Red Cavalry.

In the present work I have, as far as possible, used our archival documents and a number of documents given to me by Comrades S. M. Budënniy, E. A. Shchadenko¹ and S. N. Orlovskiy.²

I have also used considerable Polish literature (most of which has not yet been translated into Russian). The work mainly deals with the operational activities of the 1st Horse Army, as its tactical work is very poorly reflected in the available documents. More work should be done on the tactical methods with regard to the operational background and I ask all the members of the 1st Horse Army to do that work.

(The activity of the political organs and the army services is not dealt with in my work, because a special work is to be devoted to that topic.)

L. Klyuev

Moscow, 20 September 1931

Pygmy Wars Introduction

Leonid Lavrovich Klyuev was Chief of Staff of the 1st Horse Army in this period, so was writing from first-hand experience.

Klyuev had a very unusual career: he was a fairly senior former Tsarist officer who was appointed to a very senior post in the 1st Horse Army, albeit a staff post not a command one. Budënniy, Voroshilov and Stalin all were firmly opposed to the use of *voenspets*, but it seems that Klyuev's work at Tsaritsyn impressed, as presumably did his humble birth and his joining the Red Army and Party early. He then managed to survive the Purges, even becoming a general in the Great Patriotic War. He seems to have been friendly with Stalin – but then so was Egorov, and that did not save him.³

I generally hesitate to use Soviet material from the 1930s, as it was already starting down the path of "correcting" history, but his work seems different. Firstly, it was composed largely by 1926, at a period when reliable history was still being written. Secondly, when presented with the opportunity to glorify Stalin, it does not take it, suggesting a focus on accuracy over propaganda.⁴ It is to be greatly preferred to Budënniy's later memoirs, which were criticised even in Soviet times for their extreme inaccuracy. Unlike that work, it does not avoid some of the more difficult times the Horse Army faced (Brody, L'viv, Zamość), but you have to know a bit about what was happening to recognise that they were much more serious than depicted.

The context for this publication was two paper wars. The first was between the Poles and Soviets regarding the 1920 campaigns. So this is a reply to the works of several Polish and French participants regarding the Ukrainian campaign, and specifically Arciszewski and Captain Biernacki, who it directly engages with.

But more vitally at the time, there was also a rift between the various parties of the Red Army seeking who to blame for the disastrous war with the Poles. So Klyuev seeks to clear the Konarmia from the accusation that Budënniy disobeyed Tukhachevski's orders to head towards Lublin and thus helped cause the disaster at Warsaw. This explains the large focus in the work on the timing of orders received.

¹ RMS member of the Konarmia.

² Secretary of the Konarmia RMS.

³ The only reliable way to survive the Purges does seem to have been membership of the 1st Horse Army.

⁴ Sadly his later book on the Tsaritsyn campaign does not share that feature.



Translation Notes

This is a fast and loose version, to enable readers to get a feel for the campaign. This text is not to be relied upon, as I don't actually read Russian, and I have aimed for readability.

Many of the relatively few original footnotes have been completely omitted, especially those that are just citations of Lenin or to Polish works (which are all in the list of sources anyway). Useful original footnotes have been included in the main text. All footnotes are therefore mine.

I have also removed all the references to the original order numbers, as anyone who can read those will be reading this in Russian anyway.

Names

Translating place names is always a thorny issue. In this case I have gone with the current name on Google maps, so mostly the modern Ukrainian versions. This makes them easier to find and tends to align closer with the Polish names than the Russian equivalents, which aids when reading works from Polish.

It does lead to anachronisms when Budënný is talking about Zamość in his orders, for example, but readers might not recognise Zamost'e as the same place, which is worse.

There is an appendix at the end listing those forms that are wildly different between 1920s Russian and modern Ukrainian.

People's names have been rendered relative to their ethnic group, so the Poles and French, in particular, have been returned to their original forms from the Cyrillic transliterations.

Ranks

I have translated Polish ranks into the nearest English equivalent.

I have kept the general style of Soviet ranks:

KomFront	Front Commander
e.g. KomFront-SW	Commander of the South-Western Front (Egorov)
KomandArm	Army Commander
e.g. KomandArm-Horse	1st Horse Army Commander (Budënný)
KomDiv	Division Commander
e.g. KomDiv-14	Commander of the 14th Division
KomGrup	Group Commander

For this period, division commanders were technically called *NachDiv* (literally, head of the division), but for simplicity's sake I have used *KomDiv*, which they had been before and were to be again in 1921.

It should be noted that the terms used in the original are not particularly consistent, with *KomDiv* appearing from time to time, and the titles of the front commanders being particularly varied.

Units

Soviet and Polish divisions were grouped into "Armies", which were then grouped into "Fronts". I have capitalised these when proper names to reduce confusion.

Likewise, I have been consistent with the official unit names, even when the original isn't. All Soviet infantry units of the time were "Rifle" but frequently the Russians forgot and wrote "Infantry".

Finally, the subject of this work is the First Horse Army, or the standard Soviet short form of *Konarmia*. The term "horse" implies mixed cavalry and infantry, which Budënný had. The mounted units inside that army had insignificant foot elements, and so were always titled "cavalry".



CHAPTER I

Emergence of the Polish Front

The Political and Military Situation at the Time the First Horse Army Entered the Polish Front

The war between the RFSFR⁵ and Poland in 1920 was preceded by a series of major political events abroad.

At the end of 1918, on the first anniversary of our great October Revolution, revolutions broke out in the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, which had huge consequences for the fate of our former western front.

Worried about the emergence of a proletarian republic of soviets in Russia and its revolutionary influence on Germany and the Baltics, imperialist France decided to create a powerful Prussia-Dnepr buffer in the form of Poland between Germany and Russia. The creation of this buffer was facilitated by the social groupings that were taking place at the time in Poland, which had just been formed under the Treaty of Versailles.

The imperialist war, which was waged to a large extent in Poland, had greatly destroyed its industry; and then German occupation would complete this destruction with the hope of turning Poland into its agricultural colony.

The industrial towns were occupied. Some workers had been evacuated to Russia, some had been forcibly sent to Germany for work. In the industrial centres only a small number of workers remained, in those branches of industry which the occupiers had not destroyed for military reasons.

In the newly formed Poland a class struggle broke out.

The workers, in spite of their small and dispersed numbers, in a number of industrial areas (the Dąbrowski Basin, Łódź, Warsaw, Lublin etc) created committees⁶ of workers' deputies, and in purely peasant areas (for example, in Tarnobrzeg) committees of peasants' deputies.

The movement of the peasant masses in Poland after the withdrawal of the Austro-German troops took place under the slogan: "Down with the Lords in the countryside, down with the rule of the landlords!"

Voting for the Peasant Party⁷ seemed to be enough for the masses in the countryside to defend their interests. At the same time, the peasants' religiosity (Catholicism) automatically pushed them into the arms of reaction.

Thanks to the prevailing situation and national upheaval, the Polish state was led by the Menshevik Socialist Patriotic Party (PPS) and its leader, Joseph Piłsudski, who had just been freed from the Magdeburg fortress by the Germans.

During the World War Piłsudski had been the organiser of the Polish legions in the Austrian army. The elements grouped around the legions and Piłsudski were representatives of the Polish petty-bourgeoisie and democratic intelligentsia. The Peasant Party also supported Piłsudski in the common struggle against the bourgeois-reactionary Democratic People's Party (the Polish Kadets).

Elections to the Constituent Sejm in February 1919, for these reasons, gave a peasant majority, but at the same time the peasant deputies were partly under the influence of the clergy, and partly under the influence of national demagogues. The Communist Party boycotted the elections to the constituent assembly.

⁵ The USSR was not formed until 1921 – Soviet Russia was the RFSFR at the time.

⁶ The original has "Soviet", which can equally be translated as "committee" or "council". I have not used Soviet as it suggests an allegiance to Russia that was not present.

⁷ The Peasant Party was to actually form after 1920, from a coalition of like-minded leftist parties.

The discussion about Polish politics then continues to use anachronistic terms and those relevant only to Soviet Russia – such as Menshevik and Kadet – and should not be regarded as an objective account of the time. While mostly a matter of interpretation, there are also quite a few errors of fact.



The bourgeoisie and landlords in the constituent assembly were represented by the Polish Mensheviks, who having power in their hands, cowardly handed it over to the bourgeoisie as soon as the latter succeeded in organising a police-administrative apparatus.

Bourgeois-gentry Poland became a counter-revolutionary policeman – an armed camp against Soviet Russia – guided by the powerful hand of French capitalism. France needed a strong bourgeois-capitalist Poland as its staunch ally against the defeated Germany and Bolshevik Russia.

Throughout 1918 and 1919, France was feverishly forming, supplying and equipping Polish legions in France, and rushing them to Poland.

The Polish bourgeoisie looked upon Russia as the main obstacle to the realisation of their plan for a great Poland. The class hatred of the Polish bourgeoisie towards the self-liberating proletariat and the Soviet Republic coincided with its aggressive drive towards the East.

These were the basic preconditions for the future clashes between the Polish and Soviet armed forces and the reasons why the Polish government was extremely intransigent towards the RFSFR in its first relations with the latter.

The end of 1918 and the whole year of 1919 was spent in intense preparations for a decisive fight with Russia.

During 1919 – owing to the material and diplomatic support of the Entente Powers,⁸ especially France – Poland succeeded in solving its many disputes on its Czechoslovakian and German borders and consequently now had a considerable quantity of available armed forces at its disposal.

The extremely complicated and confusing Ukrainian question was also temporarily resolved in its favour. The lengthy and stubborn fight of the Galician Ukrainians ended in complete success for the Poles. The defeated Galician army, after nine months of bitter fighting, was forced to flee its homeland at the end of the summer of 1919.

The fictitious Ukrainian Directorate, headed by the petty political adventurer Petliura, which had long ago lost all support of the broad masses of the Ukrainian people, ceded the Chełm area, Western Volhynia and Western Podolia to the White Poles. Taking advantage of this, at the end of November 1919 Polish troops entered the regions they had been gifted and spread along the Stucz river line and further along the agreed line, slightly east of Khmelnytskyi and Kam'yanets'-Podil's'kyi, to the banks of the Dnestr river.

These external political and military successes of the White Poles were bought at the price of the total subjugation of Poland to the influence of French capital. French influence was becoming more and more visible in the Polish government's policy towards Soviet Russia. But by the end of 1919 Soviet Russia had made considerable political and military progress: the armies of Yudenich and Kolchak had been defeated; and the operations against Denikin were already showing a turning point in our favour.

The new year of 1920 brought further political and military successes to the Soviet Republic. From January 1920 the liquidation of the White Guard armies was very rapid. By mid-February 1920 the remnants of the Volunteer Army in the Ukraine were finally defeated; in late March the White armies in the North Caucasus were defeated.

On 28 April the workers of Baku, following the successful advance of the Red Army in the Caucasus – which had defeated the remnants of General Denikin's armies – revolted and overthrew the bourgeois Musavat government, proclaiming the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan. The rich oil field area came into the possession of the Soviet republics.

These military successes were accompanied by diplomatic ones: at the beginning of February 1920 we concluded peace with Estonia; in the same month an armistice with Lithuania and Finland was signed. This freed up a considerable amount of armed forces for the Soviet Republic. But these military and diplomatic

⁸ This term comes from the so-called "Triple Entente", the informal agreement between France, the United Kingdom and Russia, to co-operate against the Central Powers just before WWI. In Soviet terminology it meant any nation which was to fight against the Central Powers – so including the USA, Japan, Italy etc.



successes did not change the RSFSR's conduct towards Poland. Soviet Russia, having defeated the counter-revolution, was striving for peaceful productive labour, and for the restoration of the industry and agriculture destroyed by the war.

A number of the Soviet armies turn to labour. In the spring of 1920 the main slogan of the Ninth Party Congress was the transition to a "bloodless front". From early January to April 1920, the Soviet government took all measures to avoid an armed confrontation with the Poles. The Soviet government proposed three times (on 22 December 1919, 28 January 1920 and 2 February 1920) the initiation of peace talks. On 27 March 1920 Poland agreed to open negotiations, in Borisov, situated in the northern part of the Russian-Polish front line, with a local truce in the area.

Borisov was chosen by the Poles because it was situated on the railway line from Moscow. Soviet Russia, with its relatively large number of troops, was not able to attack the Polish front, while in the south (the Ukraine) the Poles had large forces to break through our weakly defended Ukrainian front. Therefore the Poles did not agree to an armistice along the entire front. Soviet Russia offered to move the negotiations to Warsaw, Petrograd, Moscow or some neutral country. Instead of answering, on 26 April "the head of the Polish state" Piłsudski issued an appeal to the Ukraine, urging it to recognise Petliura, Poland's military ally. Behind Poland was the French General Staff, who had drawn up a plan of attack on Soviet Russia and supplied Poland with arms and equipment.

White Poland sought to create a Greater Poland within the borders of 1772; although France was not a supporter of Poland in this matter, the general situation in the form of the relative impotence of the Russian counter-revolution forced France to actively help the latter to fight the Bolsheviks. It saw its last chance with an armed attack by White Poland on the Soviet Republic. The French needed a strong Poland and a strong Russia of the Tsarist type, and they were ready to sacrifice everything for this purpose.

During the time of the armed struggle between the White Poles and Soviet Russia, there was another force backed by French capital – the remnants of the White armies, gathered in the Crimea under the command of General Wrangel. With France's help, Wrangel reorganised his army during the spring and summer of 1920, drawing to it a large part of the Red Army.

In breaking with Soviet Russia, gentry-Poland was protecting the interest of the upper bourgeoisie and landowners: in the Ukraine, where the population was from 75 to 87% Ukrainian, the Poles only numbered 4%, and many of them were rich, landowners or sugar planters. It was roughly the same in Belorussia.

The war with Poland started in difficult economic conditions, but Lenin said "With the occupation of Baku, we have an economic base on which we can revive our industry. Our transport and industry will get a great deal of help from the Baku oil fields."

At the same time we hoped to get a huge amount of bread reserves from the Kuban and Caucasus regions, "then we will have fuel for industry and bread for the people".

Assessing Poland as an enemy, Lenin said that this enemy:

... is able to cause us many serious problems. ... This war, is one of the links in a long chain of organised resistance by the international bourgeoisie. ... It represents a new attempt by the international bourgeoisie to strangle Soviet Russia, to overthrow Soviet power by whatever means necessary ...

We have a new plan, which has nothing in common with the truly comprehensive unified plan we had six months ago. We have the wreckage of the old plan, and this gives us a guarantee of the hopelessness of implementing this plan in terms of the international balance of power ...

Since it has come to war, all the interests of the country and its domestic life must be subordinated to war ...



The theatre of the struggle between Soviet Russia and Poland was a vast territory bounded in the west by the Vistula, in the north by the Western Dvina, in the east by the Dnepr and in the south by the borders of Ukraine with Novorossia⁹ and then the Dneestr (see Map 1).

The wooded swampy strip of the Pripjat River (Polesia) divided this theatre into two unequal portions – the larger northern part, the Western or Belorussian theatre, and the smaller part – the Ukrainian theatre.

The better rail network in the south, the earlier spring there, and the ease of supplying men and horses in the fertile expanses of Volhynia and the Ukraine forced the Polish command and government to choose the Ukrainian theatre as the main theatre to fight against the Bolsheviks. The political importance of Ukraine, which the Poles wanted as an “independent Ukraine” subordinated entirely to Polish influence, was also of great importance in resolving this issue.

The Polish historian Stanisław Kutrzeba, in his work “*Polska odrodzona*” (Poland Reborn), writes that the ultimate goal in the Ukrainian problem was to separate Poland from Russia with a buffer in the form of a vassal state of “Ukraine” – a fertile country, rich in coal, and blocking the routes to the Black Sea that are so important for Russia

Moreover, the movement of Poland into Ukraine was in the interests of France, which during the Second Ukrainian Republic had signed an agreement with Petliura transferring all Ukrainian railways and financial enterprises to a French capitalist group.

It should be recalled the large role foreign capital, mainly French-Belgian, had played in the exploitation of our Donets Basin.

Lenin, assessing the war with Poland in October 1920, considered Poland “too closely connected with the whole system of international imperialism”. He continued:

With Poland the Peace of Versailles has created a buffer state to shield Germany from confrontation with Soviet Communism, which the Entente views as a weapon against the Bolsheviks. Alongside Poland, and with the help of the Poles, the French hoped to regain the tens of billions of dollars that the Tsarist government had taken. That is why, when the war with Poland broke out, from which we were so anxious to not start, at the cost of big concessions, this war with Poland turned out to be a more direct war against the Entente than the previous wars. The previous wars were also wars against the Entente, but these wars were fought on Russian territory against the White Russian officers and peasants mobilized by them and these wars could not turn into wars that would have shaken the peace of Versailles.

That is the difference between then and the war against Poland.

The war against Yudenich, Kolchak and Denikin was also a war against the Entente and was a workers’ war against the whole of bourgeois Russia. And when it ended in victory and when we defeated Yudenich, Kolchak and Denikin, it was not a direct attack on the Peace of Versailles.

With Poland it was the other way round, and this is the difference between the war against Poland and the international importance of Poland.

Here it is necessary to cite the extremely important and correct assessment of the war with Poland given by Stalin in 1920.

The first campaign¹⁰ was undertaken in the spring of 1919. This campaign was combined, for it involved a joint attack by Kolchak, Denikin, Poland, Yudenich and mixed Anglo-Russian units in Turkestan and Arkhangelsk, with the centre of gravity of the campaign lying in Kolchak’s area. During this period Russia was at a critical juncture, as, cut off from its bread areas (Siberia, Ukraine, the North Caucasus) and from fuel (the Donetsk Basin, Grozny, Baku), it was forced to fight on six fronts. The Entente, seeing this, and anticipating victory, had *The Times* beating its

⁹ Novorossia, “New Russia”, is a Soviet era term for the southern Ukrainian provinces bordering the Black Sea.

¹⁰ This has to be understood in the context of Soviet history, where the various White attacks were thought to be centrally organised as three distinct, organised, “campaigns”.



kettledrums. Nevertheless, Russia came through that crisis safely, and its strongest enemy, Kolchak, was put out of action. The fact is that Russia's rear, and thus Russia's army, proved more resilient and flexible than the rear and army of its adversaries.

The second Entente campaign was undertaken in the autumn of 1919. This campaign was also combined, for it involved a joint attack by Denikin, Poland and Yudenich (Kolchak was thrown off the bill). The centre of gravity of the campaign lay this time in the south, around Denikin. It is at this time that the Entente for the first time begins to experience internal discord, it began for the first time to moderate its insolent tone, trying to speak out against open intervention, proclaiming the admissibility of negotiations with Russia and proceeding to withdraw its troops from the north: the rapid growth of the revolutionary movement in the west and the defeat of Kolchak obviously made the former policy of open intervention unsafe for the Entente. The Entente no longer dared to talk openly about overt intervention.

Russia at this period is again in a critical moment, despite the victory over Kolchak and the recovery of one of the bread areas (Siberia), for the main enemy, Denikin, stood at the gates of Tula, the main source of supply our army for cartridges, rifles, and machine guns. Nevertheless, Russia emerged from the crisis unscathed once more. The reason is the same: the greater resilience and greater flexibility of our rear, and therefore of our army.

The third Entente campaign opens in a completely new environment. To begin with, unlike the previous campaigns, this one cannot be called a combined campaign, for not only have the old allies (Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich) fallen away, but new allies (if any) have not yet joined, unless you count the ridiculous Petliura, with his silly army. Poland stands alone against Russia, so far, without any serious military allies. Further, the notorious blockade is broken not only morally and practically, but also formally. The Entente is forced to accept the necessity of diplomatic relations with Russia and tolerate the latter's official representatives in the West.

A mass revolutionary movement in the states of Europe, assimilating the slogans of the Third International, and the new successes of Soviet forces in the east, strengthens the rift within the Entente, raises the prestige of Russia in the neutral and marginal states, and makes the Entente policy of isolating Russia Utopian. Estonia, a born ally of Poland, is neutralised. Latvia and Lithuania, yesterday Poland's military allies, are today negotiating peace with Russia. Finally, Russia's internal situation at the time of the third Entente campaign had radically changed for the better: Russia has not only opened the way to the bread and fuel regions (Siberia, Ukraine, Northern Caucasus, Donets Basin, Grozny, Baku), but also reduced the number of fronts from six to two, so is able to concentrate its forces in the west. Added to this is the important fact that Poland is the attacking side, rejecting Russia's peace offers, and Russia is the defending side, which creates a huge moral advantage on Russia's side.

All these circumstances create a new situation, a new chance of victory for Russia, which had not been present during the previous periods of the first and second Entente campaigns against Russia. This largely explains the dejectedly sceptical tone of the imperialist press in the West when assessing the possible success of the Polish forces.

Speaking further about the character of the rear of the Polish troops, Comrade Stalin said:

The rear of the Polish troops differs considerably from that of Kolchak and Denikin to the greater advantage of Poland. Unlike the rear of Kolchak and Denikin, the rear of the Polish troops is homogeneous and nationally united. Hence its unity and steadfastness; its prevailing mood, the "love of the fatherland", is transmitted through numerous threads to the Polish front, creating national cohesion and firmness in the units. Hence the steadfastness of the Polish troops. Of course, Poland's rear is not homogeneous (and cannot be homogeneous) in a class sense, but the class conflicts have not yet reached such a strength as to break through the sense of national unity and infect the class-homogeneous front with contradictions.

Speaking further about the advance of the Polish troops outside Poland and their deepening into the regions bordering Poland, Comrade Stalin stressed that:



The Polish troops, moving away from their interior, are weakening their connection with it and find themselves in a milieu which is alien and, for the most part, hostile to them. Worse, this hostility is exacerbated by the fact that the vast majority of the population of the regions adjacent to Poland (Belarus, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine) consist of non-Polish peasants, who suffer the oppression of Polish landlords, so that these peasants regard the Polish offensive as a war for the rule of the Polish *pan*s,¹¹ as a war against the oppressed non-Polish peasants.

This in fact explains the fact that the Soviet slogan “down with the Polish *pan*s” finds a powerful resonance with the majority of the population of these districts, that the peasants there greet the Soviet troops as liberators from yoke of the landlords, that in expectation of the Soviet troops they rise at the slightest opportunity, strike the Polish troops from the rear.

All this cannot but create within the Polish troops an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity, cannot but destroy in them steadfastness of spirit, faith in the rightness of their cause, faith in victory, cannot but turn the national adhesion of the Polish troops from a positive factor into a negative one.

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The highest tactical and strategic unit in the Polish army was the infantry division, composed of two infantry brigades (each of two regiments), divisional cavalry (no more than a regiment), a heavy artillery regiment (two battalions¹² of three 3-gun batteries), a light artillery regiment (the same composition, but with 4-gun batteries), two air squadrons (reconnaissance and fighter), an engineer battalion, a telegraph company, a telegraph construction company, a radio station, a field postal company, a railway company (not always), a sanitary battalion, two field hospitals, a field infirmary, a veterinary infirmary and transport columns (administration, armoury, hospital, stores, military workshop, food and logistics companies), a stage battalion, and a platoon of field gendarmerie (see Diagrams 2 and 3).

A division had a total of 12 battalions of infantry (6,000 bayonets), 144 machine guns, 24 light and 18 heavy guns. An infantry regiment consisted of three battalions (each three rifle and one MG companies). The regiment also had a technical company, telegraph section, telegraph platoon, machine-gun company and a team of mounted orderlies.

The regiments had an average of 1,500 bayonets and 36 machine guns.

In addition, each division had four reserve battalions (2,400 bayonets) and a reserve artillery regiment (12 light and 9 heavy guns) in the rear.

There were no permanent cavalry formations in the Polish Army. Cavalry regiments were attached to infantry divisions as divisional cavalry, or formed cavalry brigades and divisions with variable regiment composition.

The Polish army was equipped with the most diverse weapons: Rifles included [German] Mausers, Austrian Mannlichers, and French Lebed and Gra rifles manufactured in 1916-1918; there were French and German carbines in the cavalry; Maxim, Colt, Schwarzlose, Hotchkiss and other machine guns in the machine-gun units; and the artillery had Russian three-inch and English rapid-fire light guns; and French Schneider-Creusot and German Krupp howitzers and English long-range guns in the heavy artillery. The aviation was equipped with new French, English and Italian machines.

In general, the Polish Army was organised into powerful units, richly equipped with technical means at the expense of European capital.

The Polish Army was subordinated to the Supreme Command of the Allied Forces, represented by Marshal Foch. In March 1919 Marshal Foch dispatched a military mission to Poland, led by General Henrys, who brought with him a considerable number of officers, who were appointed to the Polish army as trainers and

¹¹ A *pan* was the general term used by the Russians for the Polish gentry.

¹² Technically, *divisions*, used as in Russian for units of artillery and cavalry between a company and a regiment.



commanders. In March 1919, Colonel Haller's newly formed divisions started arriving in Poland from France and join the Polish army.

The report on the military budget, which was submitted to the French chamber during the hostilities between Russia and Poland, shows that in February 1920, the French staff in Poland already consisted of 9 generals, 28 colonels, 63 battalion commanders, 296 captains, 496 lieutenants and sub-lieutenants and 2,120 non-commissioned officers.

The tactical training of the Polish army was uneven, and it mixed the methods of education and training of the various European armies from which the Polish army predominantly got its command staff and its first organisational nucleus.

The Polish historian Tadeusz Piskor wrote that the Polish soldier was poorly trained and badly clothed for the most part, but could be used successfully in the offensive, and sometimes even in defence – the most difficult tactical form of battle. The Polish Army gave the impression of being a well-functioning and well-managed army.

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So how were the Red Cavalry different from the Polish army?

In the Horse Army we saw representatives of the working masses of the most diverse nationalities. Apart from the Don and Kuban Cossacks – most of them cavalrymen of the old Tsarist regiments – there were Don and Stavropol peasants, Ukrainians, peasants from the central provinces, Volga Germans, and other national minorities of Soviet Russia, alongside Hungarians, Poles, Serbs, Latvians, etc.

The First Horse Army also had a strong proletarian nucleus of workers from the Donetsk Basin.

The link between all the Army personnel were the Party men, and the communist brain of the Horse Army was its Revolutionary Military Soviet,¹³ headed by Comrade K. E. Voroshilov and with KomandArm Comrade Budënyy. At the beginning of the cavalry operations on the Polish front there were 151 Party cells (in July there were 163), with 3,500 members and candidates, which constituted 17.5% of the combat numbers of the Army (by July this percentage had increased to 20%).

There was considerable political and educational work in the Army. The Political Department published the newspaper "Red Cavalryman" with the circulation of 10 000 copies; newspapers received from the centre were sent to the divisions; there were literacy schools, Party schools and mobile film shows. However, work in the masses was hampered by the incessant campaigning and fighting.

The bulk of the Red cavalry had not trained as cavalrymen – with the exception of the Cossacks and soldiers of the old army, the great majority of them had served in infantry before. Most of the fighters received their formation and combat training during the continuous battles against the counter-revolutionaries.

Naturally, with that composition, the Red cavalry could not claim a high level of tactical and combat training. However, being battle-hardened, and with revolutionary enthusiasm and faith in their commanders, the Red regiments had a large moral-political and combat superiority over the tactically better prepared units of the Polish army.

Both the higher and lower ranks of command were predominantly former sergeant-majors, other non-commissioned officers, and ordinary Cossacks and cavalrymen from the old service.

Qualified command staff, mainly members of the Red General Staff, were injected into the army for the first time during the Horse Army's time on the Polish front, in very small numbers. The political composition of the army was also strengthened there.

The Red Cavalry had horse artillery (a battalion of 12 guns per division), rifles, machine guns, sabres and revolvers. Lances were not favoured. The favourite weapon of the ranks was the revolver, which competed very well with the lance. Shooting from a horse (even on the move) has considerable value.

¹³ Hereafter, RMS. All Armies and Fronts had a three man RMS of the field commander and two commissars. All orders from a commander needed to be approved by a second RMS member, which will be important later in the campaign.



The divisions of the army had six regiments; on average there were up to 20 Maxim machine guns per regiment. The equipment and uniforms of the fighters varied considerably, due to the difficulty of supplying them from the centre of the Republic. Regiments had a large amount of transport – up to 400 wagons per regiment. The horses of the army were also very diverse. The attitude of the army to the working population was friendly.

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The concentration of our forces on the Western and South-Western Fronts actually began only in April 1920, and ended by the middle or even end of June. This phenomenon was explained by the Soviet government's desire to avoid an armed conflict with Poland due to the general situation on other fronts of the Soviet Republic.

The decisive operations against Denikin in the North Caucasus, which began in the middle of February 1920, ended by 1 April, but the newly formed Crimean Front began to draw in some of the Republic's armed forces.

The peaceful intentions of Soviet policy also affected its military preparations: while the enemy used January and February 1920 to finalise its reorganisation, the Soviet command took only strictly necessary measures to maintain the combat stability of its forces, using some of its forces to work on the labour front.

For these reasons, as well as taking advantage of better rail network and transports, the Poles managed to finish their concentrations ahead of time and go on a decisive offensive against Soviet Russia.

The plan of the Polish Command was as follows:

The Polish Commander, Piłsudski, considering the general political situation in the south of Russia, believed that a successful campaign by Polish forces in Ukraine would provide an opportunity in the further struggle between Poland and Soviet Russia to secure the south-eastern border of the Polish state by creating an "Independent Ukraine"; at the same time the stretch of unsecured border in the East would be greatly reduced and extend only to the Polesian marshes.

With this in mind, Piłsudski ordered his general staff to draw up a plan for the so-called "Kyiv Operation". The idea of that operation was to hold the positions occupied on the northern front and strike a strong blow in Volhynia in order to reach the Korosten' – Zhytomyr – Kozyatyn railway line with one blow, thus disorganising the rear of the Red Army. Then one group of troops was to advance eastwards along the Volhynian highway, energetically operating with part of its forces to the south with the task of either pushing back the Red 12th and 14th Armies to the Dnestr River (the Romanian border), or if those armies began an early retreat before Polish and Ukrainian armies, to cut them off from crossing the Dnestr River by striking on their flanks.

The latter task was to be accomplished by a strong cavalry group, moving it along the Fastiv – Bila Tserkva – Tsvitkove railway line.

When this operation was completed and the Soviet forces in the Ukraine destroyed, the Polish command, intended to concentrate the bulk of the Polish forces on the northern front, to strike at the mass of the Soviet forces there, and gain peace with a second victory. They intended to leave in the Ukraine only a barrier force of the Ukrainian Army, reinforced by a large part of the Polish cavalry and several infantry divisions.

The execution of the plan demanded extreme energy from the Polish forces in Ukraine: the actions had to be completed within 12 to 15 days, so that after the regrouping of forces it would be possible to start striking on the northern front around 20 May.

1. On the southern flank was the 6th Army (Commander, General Iwaszkiewicz; Chief of Staff, Colonel of the General Staff Kessler), consisting of Colonel Udovychenko's Ukrainian Forces Group and the 5th, 12th, and 18th Infantry Divisions.

That Army was aimed at Zhmerynka – Vinnytsia:



2. To the north of it was the 2nd Army (Commander, General Listowski; Chief of Staff, Colonel of the General Staff Przewłocki) consisting of the 13th, 15th and Ukrainian Infantry Divisions. With the development of operations, it was joined by the Cavalry Division (commander General Romer; Chief of Staff, Colonel of the General Staff Piskor).

The direction of action was towards Kozyatyn.

3. Next was the 3rd Army, of which Piłsudski took direct command on 22 April. This army consisted of:

a) General Rydz-Śmigły's group (Chief of staff, Major of the General Staff Kutrzeba) consisting of the 1st and 7th Infantry Divisions, the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, a heavy artillery group, auxiliary units, etc.

Concentrated in the area of Zviahel; its task was to attack along the Volhynian highway and north of it; to reach the Zhytomyr – Radomyshl area;

b) 4th Infantry Division, in the Olevs'k – Yemil'chyn area, was to advance towards Korosten' and occupy it;

c) Colonel Rybak's group (consisting of the 1st Podhale Rifle Brigade, the 41st Infantry Brigade and the 7th Cavalry Brigade) was concentrated south of Mazyr with the task of advancing to Ovruch, while its cavalry was to raid the bridges on the Irsha and Teteriv Rivers and to secure the junction at Korosten';

d) The Cavalry Division was concentrated in the Smoldyriv – Rohachiv area and aimed to raid the Kozyatyn junction. This group was to be supported from the north by the 4th Polish Army.

All the regrouping was to be completed by 24 April; the offensive was to start on 25 April. The Polish High Command then issued a new directive for the attack.

That order assigned a significant role to the Cavalry Division. The Polish command assumed that they would have to fight on two defensive lines: on the one they were currently occupying and on the Zhmerynka – Kozyatyn – Berdychiv – Zhytomyr – Korosten' – Ovruch line; on the latter line particularly strong resistance was expected from the Red Army.

To that end the advancing Polish units were to occupy Zhytomyr and Kozyatyn as soon as possible, in order to cut off the escape routes of the Bolshevik troops positioned north of the Zviahel – Zhytomyr highway and also to repel their forces standing south of the Shepetivka – Kozyatyn railway to the south.

The position of our armies on the South-Western front at the time the Polish forces began their decisive action was as follows (see Map 4).

The 12th Army was situated on the front from the Slovechna river (a tributary of the Pripjat) to Letichiv (about 250 km); it included the 7th, 44th, 47th, and 58th Rifle Divisions and 17th Cavalry Division with 8,500 bayonets and 1,788 sabres.

Further on to the Dnestr river (to the west of the Bar – Mohyliv-Podil's'kyi railway line) was situated the 14th Army; the 41st, 45th, and 60th Rifle Divisions with a total of 4,866 bayonets and 691 sabers, covering about 200 km of the front.

The decision to move the Konarmia from the Caucasus to the Polish front came during a direct discussion of 17 March 1920, between GlavKom<sup>14</sup> and KomFront-SW (Commander of the South-Western Front).

The actual order to move was given on 17 April by telegram, in which the Konarmia was ordered to leave Maikop, in marching order,<sup>15</sup> and to eliminate banditry<sup>16</sup> on its way. By 1 April it was to concentrate in the Berdychiv – Vinnytsia area. By this time the Polish army's plan of operations in Ukraine had been finalised.

The essence of this plan, as stated above, was to break the Red front in the Zviahel – Myropil' area and divide the Red Armies operating in Ukraine into two parts: their southern part, operating south of the Kozyatyn – Rivne railway, was to be pushed southward, and the northern part, occupying the area north of the Zviahel – Zhytomyr highway, was to cut off the escape route to Kyiv.

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<sup>14</sup> GlavKom was the Soviet term for the General Staff, under the Commander-in-Chief, Kamenev.

<sup>15</sup> That is by foot, not by train. There was considerable disagreement about this in the senior Soviet ranks at the time.

<sup>16</sup> "Banditry" is Soviet speak for Greens.



Just as the Polish armies began their offensive in Ukraine two divisions of the South-Western Front (the 44th and 45th Rifle) suffered mutinies from two separate brigades of the former Galician army, completely ruining the grouping of the 14th Army. The active mutiny of those brigades, under the influence of Petliura's agitation, and the banditry of kulak elements<sup>17</sup> in the rear of 12th and 14th Armies, created favourable conditions for the Polish army's offensive.

That offensive began on 25 April. The main blow was directed against the 12th Army, which was forced to retreat down the Korosten' – Kyiv railway line. An immediate threat to Kyiv was created. On 27 April a telegram to the Konarmia from KomFront-SW demanded the urgent redeployment of the 4th Cavalry Division by rail along the route Lozovaya – Poltava – Kremenchuk – Znamenskaya – Bobrinskaya, but GlavKom did not agree with this decision and gave the following directive to the South-Western Front on 29 April:

The main reason for the Konarmia being sent to the South-Western Front is to inflict such a blow on the Polish forces in Ukraine that the entire Polish-Ukrainian front is broken. In order to accomplish this task it is most advantageous for the entire Konarmia to strike at the right flank of the Polish-Ukrainian front occupied by the weaker Galician troops<sup>18</sup> and, having broken through it with a deep movement into the rear, in the general direction towards Rivne, to destroy the whole front. Under such conditions the present advance of the Polish front eastwards, towards Kyiv, seems advantageous to us, as it will inevitably lead to stretching the Poles' right flank, making it hang in the air. The orders given to the Konarmia correspond to the situation outlined, and require that you pay special attention to ensuring that its units are not diverted by any secondary tasks. When reaching the right bank<sup>19</sup> of the Dnepr River and approaching the front line, two strong infantry divisions should be subordinated to the Horse Army, to support it in its actions.

This telegram is important in the sense that it had a significant influence on subsequent actions, because thanks to it the Konarmia approached its area of action in an unbroken form.

On 6 May the 12th Army abandoned Kyiv under enemy pressure.

The capture of Kyiv was the culmination of the Polish offensive in Ukraine; subsequently the Poles were limited to the occupation of a small bridgehead on the left bank of the Dnepr River.

With the 12th Army retreating to the left bank of the Dnepr River, GlavKom was concerned about creating the most favourable conditions for the active manoeuvre of the Horse Army it was preparing. In particular, it proposed that the 12th Army throw its right flank across the Desna river and reach the Dnepr river, in order to threaten the routes leading to Kyiv from the north. It also proposed that the 14th Army organise in such a way that its right flank could hold the Kyiv – Cherkasy area, and to attack the enemy towards Odesa. This would give a situation where the Konarmia would be able to operate in the gap between the Polish armies and could defeat either of them by a flank strike, depending on the situation.

By the middle of May the Polish pressure had eased. Stretched out over a large front, and engaging in fierce fighting with the 12th and 14th Armies, they were forced to suspend their movement eastwards. The actions of the Polish army were also affected at this time by the determined actions of our Western Front, which resulted in the enemy pulling two infantry divisions from their Ukrainian Front northwards.

In the meantime, the Konarmia was finishing its more than 1,000 km march. Having crossed the Dnepr River at Dnipro, it began to approach the town of Uman' by 25 May. At this time the Army was counted as having 16,150 sabres, 362 machine guns, 48 guns, 5 armoured trains, 8 armoured cars and 15 planes. The political and moral state of the army was good, despite the 1,000 km distance.

In anticipation of the forthcoming decisive actions, the KomFront-SW gave the following order for his forces on 18 May:

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<sup>17</sup> "Kulak elements" refers to Ukrainians favourable to Petliura and the UNR, which many Greens in the Ukraine were.

<sup>18</sup> Actually UNR forces.

<sup>19</sup> "Right" and "left" banks are always given when facing the direction of flow. As the Dnepr flows largely south, the right bank is the western side.



In order to carry out the forthcoming combat mission, our forces operating on the right-bank Ukraine are to be divided into three groups:

- a) Around Fastiv, under KomDiv-45 Yakir, are the 44th and 45th Rifle Divisions and three detachments of the Dnepr Flotilla, with direct subordination in operational terms to the Front. The Group HQ is to be in Tsvitkove.
- b) In the Kozyatyn area is the Konarmia, with its main HQ in Kropyvnytskyi and the field HQ with its main forces.
- c) In the Zhmerynka area is the 14th Army, with its HQ at Pervomais'k.

The main bases for the Konarmia were in the Kremenchuk – Dnipro area.

On 23 May the KomFront-SW gave the following basic directive:

Kremenchuk, 23 May 1920.

The Poles in Ukraine are operating in two groups: the Kyiv and Odesa groups. They have a part of their forces on the left bank of the Dnepr, their main forces, including the combined Cavalry Division of General Karnicki (formerly of the Zaamurski Cavalry Regiment), of 10 cavalry regiments, and some Poznanian units, are concentrated in the area of Bila Tserkva, Volodarka, Tarashcha and Rokytne. The main forces of the Odesa Group operate on the front of the 14th Army between the Zhmerynka – Odesa railway line and the Southern Bug River. Units of the 1st Poznanian Division are stretched between the above-mentioned groups on the Tarashcha – Tetiiv – Bratslav line. The Romanians continue to stay passive. The armies of the Western Front, having broken through the enemy positions, continue to advance towards successfully Maladzyechna and Minsk. The main task of the armies of the South-Western Front is the destruction of the Polish army in the Ukraine. Taking advantage of the disunity of the aforementioned enemy groups and considering the fact that the main enemy forces are concentrated in the Kyiv region, which is at the same time the most important in a political sense, I have decided to deliver the main blow at the enemy Kyiv group. I order:

1. The 12th Army's main objective is to cover the railway junction at Korosten', and cross the Dnepr north of Kyiv with the bulk of its forces with an immediate objective of cutting the railway near Borodyanka or Teteriv, and prevent the enemy from retreating to the north. On the rest of the front it is to tie the enemy down with decisive actions and, at the first opportunity, assault the city of Kyiv on his heels. Operations are to begin on 26 May.
2. Comrade Yakir's group is to launch a decisive offensive in the general direction of Bila Tserkva and Fastiv, at dawn on 26 May along the entire front of the group, with the aim of drawing as many forces as possible of the enemy's Kyiv group into battle, in communication with the Konarmia on its left flank.
3. The Konarmia's main objective is defeating and destroying the enemy's manpower and capturing the bulk of the enemy's Kyiv group. At dawn of 27 May it is to launch a decisive offensive in the general direction of Kozyatyn, cutting off the enemy's Kyiv and Odesa groups. Enemy units encountered on your way are to be swept away with decisive attacks. It is to capture the Kozyatyn – Berdychiv area no later than 1 June and, having placed a screen facing Starokostyantyniv and Shepetivka, act in the enemy's rear.
4. The 14th Army is to ensure the success of the main strike group's operations, for which purpose it will concentrate its main forces on its right flank, and decisively seize the Vinnitsa – Zhmerynka area no later than 1 June. The operation is to begin on 26 May.
5. The delimitation lines are specified in my Directive No. 348.
6. In view of the secrecy of this directive, orders to the commanders are to be given in code and the combat tasks pertaining directly to each army and its neighbours given in the briefest possible terms.



7. Report on receipt of these orders.

South-Western Front commander, Egorov  
RMS member, Berzin  
Chief of Staff of SW Front, Petin

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Before turning to the Konarmia's operations on the Polish front, a brief description of the struggle for public opinion by both belligerent sides must be given.

In launching his offensive deep into Ukraine, Piłsudski issued a broadside appeal to the population of Ukraine. In it he tried to assure the workers and peasants that the stay of the White Poles in Ukraine was only temporary and that, having completed "the glorious struggle for the freedom of the peoples", the Polish soldiers would return home, handing over the administration of Ukraine to a genuine Ukrainian government and the protection of Ukraine's borders to the "legions of Ataman-General Simon Petliura". This appeal did not find any response in the masses of the population, especially as the actions of the Polish army were contrary to the assurances of its leader.

Its path in the Ukraine, as well as in Belorussia, was marked by atrocities against Red Army prisoners and violence. The Soviet Government of the Ukraine protested against these atrocities, and the robberies and beatings of civilians in the districts of Volhynia and Podolia occupied by the enemy. Not limiting itself to such offences within the theatre of military operations and to the support and fanning of banditry, the world counter-revolution, through its agents, carried out a series of attacks on our military strength also within the Republic. Thus, on 9 May, artillery depots at Khodynka in Moscow were set on fire and partially blown up; on 21 May, there followed a fire in Rogozhsko-Simonovsky district. The RMS of the Republic<sup>20</sup> responded to this provocative work of the enemy with the order of 10 May 1920, which gave categorical instructions to the troops about humane treatment of the Polish prisoners of war. In addition, the Russian and Ukrainian Soviet governments in their note to the Entente powers placed all moral responsibility for all the atrocities committed by the Polish Whites on them. Even before these acts of the Soviet governments and commanders, at the very beginning of the Polish offensive, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee<sup>21</sup> had made an appeal to all workers, peasants and honest citizens of Soviet Russia which explained the reasons for the Polish invasion, and on 6 May in an appeal to the Polish workers, soldiers and peasants the VTsIK solemnly declared that Soviet Russia did not want the war and was not willing to make war against the Polish people as such.

On 26 May the VtsIK published a further position on the Polish front:

All Party, Soviet and professional organizations must immediately launch the widest and most strenuous agitation throughout the whole country, not confining themselves to the cities, but reaching the deepest rural areas, with the aim of making clear to the whole population of Russia the meaning of our policy towards Poland, the history of our attempts to achieve peace, the objectives of the Polish attack on us and the historical meaning of our war with White-guard Poland.

Workers and peasants, both male and female, must understand and feel that the war against Poland is their war, a war for the independence of Socialist Russia, for its alliance with Socialist Poland and the proletarians of Europe and the whole world.

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<sup>20</sup> The top military authority of Soviet Russia, run by Trotski alongside the Commander-in-Chief (Kamenev in 1920).

<sup>21</sup> Hereafter the VTsIK, from its initials in Russian. This was effectively the ruling body of Russia.





## Chapter II

### The First Battles of the Konarmia on the Polish Front The Breakthrough of the Polish Front and the Consequences of that Breakthrough

The Konarmia's entry into operations was a turning point in the entire campaign in Ukraine. From 12 to 15 May GlavKom, in a joint meeting with the South-Western Front staff, established the starting points for future operations on that front. It was decided, that once the Konarmia had broken through the enemy, it was to be initially directed against their Kyiv group, and only then begin operations against the Odesa group.

Even before the Konarmia was actually engaged on the Ukrainian Front, active operations began to unfold on the sectors of the 12th and 14th Armies (Comrade Yakir's Group and the Dnepr Flotilla). But neither the Polish army nor the South-Western Front had begun serious operations so far.

By 25 May 1920 the situation on the Ukrainian front appeared to the Konarmia command as follows.

The Poles in Ukraine are operating in two groups: the Kyiv and Odesa groups. They have a part of their forces on the left bank of the Dnepr, their main forces, including the combined Cavalry Division of General Karnicki (formerly of the Zaamurski Cavalry Regiment), of 10 cavalry regiments, and some Poznanian units, are concentrated in the area of Bila Tserkva, Volodarka, Tarashcha and Rokytno. The main forces of the Odesa Group operate on the front of the 14th Army.

The total combat strength of both Polish groups was determined by the South-Western Front to be 50,000 bayonets and 8,000 sabres.

According to Captain Biernacki, by 25 May the Polish forces operating south of Pripjat consisted of three armies, namely:

- The 3rd Army, composed of three incomplete infantry divisions and one cavalry brigade (1st Legion Infantry Division, Colonel Rybak's group, cadres of the Ukrainian 6th Division and the 7th Cavalry Brigade), operated from the mouth of the Pripjat to Bila Tserkva, covering Kyiv to the east and south.
- The 2nd Army, had two infantry and one cavalry divisions (the 7th and 13th Infantry and Karnicki's Cavalry Divisions), occupied the area from Bila Tserkva to Lypovets', and covered the Kozyatyn railway junction.
- The 6th Army, with only three infantry divisions (10th Brigade, 12th and 18th Divisions and Petliura's UNR<sup>22</sup> forces, not exceeding the strength of an infantry division), covered the Zhmerynka area.

The total strength of the armies was estimated at 120,000 men, including 60,000 bayonets and sabres, so the numbers from our Front headquarters were not exaggerated.

The sector of the Polish front where the Konarmia was advancing (according to Polish sources) stretched from Lypovets' to Skvyra and further to the village of Shamraivka on the Rostavytsia River (15 km east of Skvyra); it was mainly held by units of the 13th Infantry Division (from Lypovets' to Samhorodok) and the right flank of the 7th Division (three battalions and one battery), occupying the Samhorodok district.

South of Lypovets' was the 18th Infantry Division, and east of Skvyra was the 7th Infantry Division.

General Karnicki's Cavalry Division was sent to act on the right flank and rear of the Konarmia when the latter hit the area of the 7th and 13th Infantry Divisions. (General Karnicki had taken over the division from General Romer on 5 May. It was made up of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Brigades, being nine cavalry regiments, with a total of 321 officers and 8,946 rankers. Piskor gives its combat strength as 181 officers and 3,972 soldiers, 88 machine guns and 24 guns.)

The Polish positions on this front consisted of a number of strongholds and resistance centres. The strongholds were positioned in such a way that the entire space between them was under flanking

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<sup>22</sup> *Ukrainska Narodnia Respublika*, the official name of Petliura's Ukraine.



machine-gun and artillery fire. The positions had strong fortifications, reinforced with timber and wire fences.

The 13th Division sector had two sub-sectors; each occupied by one brigade (25th and 26th Infantry Brigades). Each of these sub-sectors consisted of two resistance centres with several strongholds in each.

The number of Polish units occupying the positions to be attacked by the main forces of the Konarmia on 28 May 1920, according to Polish data, was as follows:

- 13th Division – 300 officers, 6,926 bayonets, 187 sabres, 316 light machine guns, 127 heavy machine guns, 36 77-mm guns and nine 155-mm guns.
- 7th Division – 27th Infantry Regiment and two batteries of 7th Field Artillery Regiment – 40 officers and 1,200 bayonets.
- Cavalry Division – 3rd, 4th and 5th Brigades – 4,000 sabres and 24 guns.

In all, there were more than 8,000 bayonets, 4,000 sabres, 78 guns and up to 500 machine guns on a front of about 80 km (not counting the 15,000 rebels of *Ataman* Kurovski<sup>23</sup> who acted in that area, and the 18th Infantry Division).

As for the fighting qualities of the Polish troops, the 13th ID, and the 18th ID to the south of it, were considered the best in the Polish army. Both divisions had been formed in 1918 in France by General Haller, trained according to French regulations, and the regimental commanders were well acquainted with French methods.

The 13th Division occupied the Novofastiv – Dzyun'kiv – Lypovets' line from 13 May. When, at the end of May, Comrade Yakir's group began to press hard on the Polish Cavalry Division operating in the Tarashcha area in front of the front of the Polish 7th Division, and at the same time, in connection with the actions of the Dnepr Flotilla, the right flank of the Polish troops in the area of Trypillya was threatened. The Polish command had the idea of partially moving the southern section of its front further to the east in order to be able to concentrate the entire Cavalry Division in the area south-east of Bila Tserkva to the flank and rear of the advancing Red Army units, in anticipation of a Konarmia strike.

With the eastward advance of the right flank of the Polish 7th Division, their 13th Division was to move east on 28 May to the Ros' River line, which presented a considerable natural obstacle due to the number of lakes. However, due to the detection by Polish aviation of the Konarmia's movement from the Uman' area to the north-west (in the general direction of Kozyatyn), the 13th Polish Division abandoned this manoeuvre. The Polish 2nd Army command nevertheless lengthened the division's sector by 10 km, and so its left flank was now in Samhorodok, occupied by one company.

At the same time, on 28 May, by the order of the Polish high command, the Polish 2nd Army was disbanded and its administration was transferred to the Ukrainian Front. Its units were divided between the 3rd and 6th Armies, with the 13th ID included in the 6th Army, and the 7th ID and Cavalry Division in the 3rd Army.

Thus Samhorodok was the junction point of the two Polish Armies.

The order to stop the regrouping of the 13th Division on the Ros' river was not received by the 50th Infantry Regiment and its battery, situated in the Spychyntsi – Andrushivka area. At dawn on 29 May this regiment, out of contact with its division, without proper security measures, started to move to the Ros' line and was the first to be hit by the Konarmia.

At dawn on 26 May the Konarmia started to execute the Front's directive for an offensive on Kozyatyn, at the join between the enemy's Kyiv and Odesa groups (See Map 5).

The Horse Army deployed in two groups: the first in the general direction to Skvyra, the second to Pohrebyshche (towards Kozyatyn). Armoured trains 13, 72,<sup>24</sup> and 203 were deployed to Uman' Station and 63 and 82 to Znam'yanka Station. The weather was clear, but after the rainy season the roads were very muddy, so movement for cavalry was somewhat difficult.

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<sup>23</sup> A UNR affiliated Green, whose forces grew greatly as the Konarmia pushed various other groups in front of them.

<sup>24</sup> The text has #73 here, but all other references after that are to #72, so this appears to be a mistake.



The first task of the Army was to determine the disposition and composition of the Polish units operating against it, as the front-line information did not give a very clear picture.

The Army's aviation was used to construct the enemy's position, using a combat echelon (7 planes) which arrived in Uman' on 23 May. (There were a total of 15 serviceable planes in the Konarmia, of 13 different systems; at this time three required medium repairs and three major repairs.)

Prior to the first operations, aviation was only able to perform deep operational reconnaissance. By this time it had managed to establish the entire enemy front line from the Dnepr River to Vapnyarka and clarified its line of fortified units at Novofastiv – Dzyun'kiv – Lypovets'.

But the aviation was not prepared for any tactical reconnaissance of the enemy fortified zone, as there were no maps at the right scale, an insufficient number of active planes, etc.

From 26 to 29 May, during the period of its movement from the staging area the Konarmia had several battles with insurgent<sup>25</sup> regiments and bands, which had numerous machine guns (some of them even had artillery). These regiments and bands were annihilated with *panache*, but made it difficult for the Konarmia to fulfil its main tasks. Polish air reconnaissance forces discovered the movement of the Army from the very beginning (on 24 May the 4th Cavalry Division was attacked by two planes near the village of Yarovatka, but they fled after a short spell of Russian gunfire).

The Polish sources said:

[The Konarmia] is approaching with a wide front of about 40 km, which indicates its intention to find the Polish front, in order to immediately use its main forces to build upon any success achieved by any of the divisions of the first line.

The movement of the cavalry on a broad front was caused by the situation, as it was necessary to find the location of the enemy in order to carry out the primary task (by the evening of 28 May the army occupied an length of 50 km on the front). (See Map 6).

By the evening of 29 May the reconnaissance squadron of the 19th Cavalry Regiment engaged in battle near the villages of Haivoron and Berezna (8 km north of Volodarka township) with dismounted cavalry and light guns (they were three dismounted squadrons of the 10th Lancer and 2nd Light Horse Regiments, which were forward elements of the Polish Cavalry Division) situated behind the Berezyanka river.

After a short firefight, a unit of Polish cavalry (consisting of three squadrons of the 1st Lancers) attacked our reconnaissance squadron in mounted formation, but the enemy cavalry was driven back over the Berezyanka by a counterattack of the 20th Cavalry Regiment. Both sides drew their main forces into the battle, in which they showed great stubbornness (on the part of the Poles, three cavalry regiments with artillery took part in the battle).

KomBrig-1 of the 4th Cavalry Division reported that the Polish regiments had very good cavalry, well equipped, and with lances. Judging by the intensity of artillery fire, it was evident that the enemy had enough shells. Among the captured prisoners many were found to be inebriated.

In this hard-fought battle our units showed their full fighting ability and courage. At about 20:00 on the same day (29 May) another reconnaissance detachment of the same division, moving to Novofastiv, found enemy infantry in trenches there; the squadron swiftly charged the enemy trenches and cut down about 100 men in them (it was a company of the 3rd Battalion of the 44th Border Rifle Regiment)

By the night of 30 May the 4th CD occupied the region, 10 km north of Volodarka.

The 14th CD, which was moving in the second line behind the 4th Cavalry Division, did not fight on 29 May. The 11th CD, which was advancing to the left, was engaged in a bitter battle with the enemy occupying the village of Dzyun'kiv in the evening of 29 May. This village was situated on high hills, and the nature of the terrain (a river and two small lakes) made cavalry action against the village very difficult.

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<sup>25</sup> "Insurgents" is sometimes polite Soviet wording for Greens (as opposed to "gangs" or "bandits") or perhaps here refer to remnants of UNR units (those not crossing over to work with the Poles).



It was a strong centre of resistance with several rows of wire fences, occupied by a battalion of the 43rd Border Rifle Regiment with one light battery. The trenches were located on the heights east and north of the village. On the western outskirts of the village a second line of trenches had been prepared, also with wire fences.

The terrain was very uncomfortable (deep gullies, ravines, old trenches, woods).

The 11th Cavalry Division sent its 2nd Brigade to the front to capture Dzyun'kiv, while the 1st Brigade went around the village from the north and the 3rd Brigade advanced to the right behind the 2nd Brigade.

At 24:00 on 29 May the 2nd Brigade, after a firefight supported by artillery and armoured vehicles, decisively attacked the southern part of Dzyun'kiv village on foot. At the same time the 1st Brigade entered the village from the north in mounted formation. The enemy withdrew to its second line of trenches, but soon counterattacked the division from Dzyun'kiv to the south. During the night, fatigued by the hard fighting, the 11th Division positioned itself to the east of Dzyun'kiv. The Polish units showed great persistence, meeting the our attacking units with heavy machine-gun and artillery fire and throwing hand grenades.

The 6th Cavalry Division, advancing at dawn on the morning of 29 May in the direction instructed, met an enemy column of two companies of infantry and a battery, moving from Andrushivka to occupy the village of Zhyvotivka (they were the 5th and 6th Companies of the 50th Border Rifle Regiment, with the 7th Battery of the 13th Field Artillery Regiment).

This movement was a result of a order of the Polish Ukrainian Front to move the 13th Division to the Ros' River line; but the commander of the 50th Border Rifle Regiment did not receive the cancellation of that order, and moved eastwards to execute the now-annulled order.

The 1st Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division deployed quickly to attack, supported by machine gun fire and one horse battery. After a short battle, the Polish detachment was surrounded and almost completely hacked to pieces. The brigade, under the command of Comrade Chumakov, captured six French field guns, two trench guns and 60 wagons with ammunition, food and telephone equipment.

Moving on a wide front east of Medivka village, the brigade met two more companies of the same 50th Regiment which, after short fight, were also destroyed.

On further drive to Spychyntsi the 6th Cavalry Division met stubborn resistance from the enemy (five companies of the same 50th Regiment, moving with the regiment commander) near the village of Medivka. Having repulsed the first attacks of the 2nd Brigade, this detachment began to retreat northwards towards Spychyntsi.

Having noticed the retreat of the enemy, our cavalymen launched a swift attack and, having caused panic, put the enemy into a disorderly flight. Pursuing the enemy to the village of Andrushivka, the 6th Cavalry Division reached the main enemy defensive position. An attempt by the Poles to organise resistance by the remnants of the retreating units based around Andrushivka and Spychyntsi, with the help of an armoured train, failed.

At about 11:00 on 29 May, when the above-mentioned events took place in the Spychyntsi area, the right flank brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division was fighting for the possession of the defensive junction near the village of Hannivka. Around 13:00 that village was captured, and the Polish garrison (a company of the 43rd Border Rifle Regiment) was cut down.

By the evening of 29 May the 6th CD was securing its left flank with the help of its armored trains, which after capturing the village of Lypovets' Station<sup>26</sup> suppressed the fire of some Polish batteries near Skytka –

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<sup>26</sup> There are two towns called Lypovets' within 10 km of each other in Vinnytsia Oblast. This is the eastern one, and was generally referred to as Lypovets' Station.

This situation of the station being quite some distance from the town it is named for will reappear several more times. In other cases stations carry a different name than that of a surrounding town.

Luckily most stations have retained their 1920 names, even when surrounding towns have changed theirs.



Rososha and forced the Polish units to retreat northward to Pohrebyshche (the Polish armored train *Border Guard* also retreated there).

Thus, the energetic actions of the 6th Cavalry Division had created a gap in the Polish front, more than 15 km wide (from the village of Napadvka to the village of Hannivka). As a result of the combats above, the division captured eight guns (six 77-mm and two trench), 87 machine-guns, 60 wagons with ammunition and killed up to 2,000 men. The division's losses were negligible. It camped for the night north of Lypovets' Station.

On 30 May the Konarmia remained in the area it occupied, having a rest after being forced to fight following a 1,000-km march.

The Konarmia field staff arrived in Tetiv on the afternoon of 30 May (communication with the main headquarters was by telegraph through Monastyryshche Station; all other lines had been destroyed by bandits). The battles of 29 May had clarified relatively precise enemy groupings in front of the Army. It is true that the battles did not help the Army to discover yet about the disbandment of the Polish 2nd Army and about the regrouping connected with it, but the enemy 5th, 7th, and 13th IDs and 1st Cavalry Division were located.

During the battles in around Lypovets' and Samhorodok all the attention of our aviation was directed onto the battlefield, and our pilots detected every large movement of the enemy reserves.

Facing the Konarmia's front, the enemy occupied the following points: Vil'shanka – Yablunivka – Antoniv – Biliivka – Novofastiv – Dzyun'kiv – Bulai – Lypovets'. On 30 May, based on reconnaissance, the KomandArm gave a new operational order with the general task of capturing the Kozyatyn – Berdychiv area on 1 June.

To the right of the Konarmia, Comrade Yakir's 45th Rifle Division was tasked with seizing the Bila Tserkva – Fastiv area. On the left flank of that group was Comrade Kotovski's cavalry brigade, which acted in actual connection with the 4th Cavalry Division.

To the left of Horse Army was the Red 14th Army, whose right flank was near Haisyn.

The divisions of the Konarmia were assigned the following tasks:

- The 4th and 14th Cavalry Divisions, acting on the right flank of the Army, were ordered to break the enemy front north-east of Novofastiv, destroy the enemy, and move to the Prychepivka – Movchanivka line, with the aim of a further move to Skvyra.
- The 11th Cavalry Division, which acted as a bridge on the left flank of the right group, was ordered to destroy the enemy troops in the vicinity of Dzyun'kiv and move to the Rohachi – Novofastiv line, acting in connection with the 4th and 14th Divisions.
- The 6th Cavalry Division and armoured trains were given a demonstration mission near Lypovets' Station, making life easier for the 14th Army's right flank and distracting the enemy to the south from our main strike.

On 30 May the general situation on the Konarmia front remained unchanged, except the 6th CD continued to develop its success in the Spychyntsi area. The position of the Poles there deteriorated considerably.

Concerned by this, the Polish command decided on the night of 30 May to form a group of three battalions (the 40th and 44th Border Rifle Regiments) in the Pohrebyshche area under Colonel Szilling. That group was to attack from dawn on 31 May towards Spychyntsi – Dobzhok at the rear of the Red 6th Cavalry Division and, acting in conjunction with the neighbouring Polish units, close the breach in the Polish defence line between Napadvka and Hannivka created in the preceding two days.

At the same time, the sector of the Polish front attacked by the Konarmia was reinforced during 31 May by two cavalry regiments (Sawicki's 3rd Brigade, the 2nd and 12th Lancers) and two battalions of the 19th Infantry Regiment with two batteries of the 5th Artillery Regiment (of the 5th ID) which arrived in the Ruzhyn – Zarudyntsi area (north of Pohrebyshche) from Kozyatyn. General Karnicki's Cavalry Division was positioned near the village of Pustovarivka, 10 km south-east of Skvyra. Thus the reserves of the Polish line were significantly reinforced by 31 May.





At 06:00 on 31 May Colonel Szilling's detachment attacked the 1st Brigade of the 6th Division, occupying Spychyntsi. After a fierce battle, and losing two armoured vehicles, the brigade retreated to the east. Around 08:00 the 2nd and 3rd Brigades of that division, in combined formation,<sup>27</sup> attacked the enemy's defensive junction at the village of Napadivka (two battalions of the 45th Border Regiment, one light and one heavy battery of the 13th Artillery Regiment), supported by armored trains and an armored detachment. (See Map 7).

Around 13:00 the 3rd Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division managed to break through to Lypovets', which it briefly entered, but meeting barricaded streets and under crossfire from the barricades and houses was forced to retreat to the east.

In the evening Orativ Station<sup>28</sup> was captured by the 18th Infantry Division, temporarily cutting off our armoured trains, which had been operating between Lypovets' and Orativ Stations; but by the morning of 1 June our armoured trains had again re-captured Orativ Station, supported by the main forces of the 6th Division. After stubborn fighting, on 31 May the 6th Division had been forced to withdraw to the initial positions in the area of Plyskiv – Chernyavka– Lypovets' Station. Thus, with the help of Szilling's detachment the enemy had managed to regain the positions lost on 29 and 30 May to the 6th Cavalry Division. However the Polish command recorded that on 31 May that the 6th Cavalry Division had shown great courage and ability to manoeuvre both on foot and on horseback against the fortified positions under the heavy machine-gun and artillery fire. According to a Polish researcher, the scattering of the division over a wide front had forced it to fight two separated battles, thus weakening it in the breakthrough area at Spychyntsi and directing its main forces in a secondary direction towards Lypovets'.

As a result of persistent fighting on 31 May the 6th Cavalry Division (despite great resistance) fulfilled its task by tying up the enemy in its sector, relieving the 14th Army units at Haisyn, and most importantly, diverting the enemy's attention from the main strike of the Army.

At dawn on 31 May, one brigade of the 11th CD, supported by two of its batteries and an armoured detachment, seized the enemy stronghold at Bystryk (5 km south of Novofastiv) and completely destroyed its garrison (an infantry company of the 50th Border Regiment). Encouraged by this success, KomDiv-11 quickly pulled the whole division from Dzyun'kiv and attacked Novofastiv, the garrison of which (an infantry battalion with artillery) withdrew back after a hard-fought battle.

Developing the success, by 14:00 the division had occupied the village of Burkivtsi, destroyed the railway line between the stations of Ros' and Zarudyntsi, and advanced to the villages of Morozivka and Starostyntsi (heading towards Berdychiv).

Thus the 11th Cavalry Division had succeeded in a deep penetration of the enemy's defensive line.

KomDiv-11 wanted to consolidate his position in the occupied region and stopped any further south-western advance, instead aiming at the rear of the Polish units occupying Pohrebyshche, but the attacks were repelled by its garrison (about a battalion of infantry).

The approaching night stopped further fighting, and the division camped north of Pohrebyshche. The 4th and 14th Divisions remained in their areas during 31 May, preparing to break through the Polish front.

Around 16:00 on 31 May, three squadrons of the 81st Regiment of the 14th Cavalry Division went over to the side of the enemy; these were newly arrived units of Don Cossacks previously from Denikin's Army, which had been propagandised by former officers among their commanders. During their departure the commander of the 3rd Brigade and the assistant commander of the 14th CR were killed. The traitors, led by commanders Salnikov and Protopopov, addressed a provocative leaflet to our fighters, but the agitation was not successful. This was one of two cases of betrayal in Konarmia units on the Polish front.

At the same time as the Konarmia's actions, successful actions began to develop on the left flank of Comrade Yakir's group, which on 31 May occupied a number of points 15 to 20 km south of Bila Tserkva, from where the centre of the Polish 7th Division could be threatened.

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<sup>27</sup> I think this means partly on foot and partly mounted.

<sup>28</sup> Some 5 km west of Orativ town.





According to Polish sources, on 1 June their forces were as follows (on the Konarmia front and the left flank of the 12th Army): from Lypovets' to Novofastiv was the 13th Division with units of the 5th Division and General Sawicki's 3rd Cavalry Brigade; and from Samhorodok to Horokhuvatka (20 km to the south of Trypillya on the Dnepr) were the 7th Infantry and 1st Cavalry Divisions; then from Trypillya to Kyiv the so-called Vasytkiv group (consisting of the 5th Legion Regiment and 13th Lancer Regiment with artillery). Against the Red 14th Army there were units of the 12th and 18th Infantry Divisions (their junction was 15 km south-west of the Haisyn, at the confluence of the Sob River with the Southern Bug). The right flank units of the 18th Division occupied the area of Illintsi – Hordiivka – Popivka, maintaining contact with the 13th Division through Lypovets'.

While the Konarmia was creating initial positions for the implementation of its primary task, the Polish Front Command was in turn preparing for a partial attack against the Konarmia's right flank group.

As early as 31 May (before receiving information about the success of the 11th Cavalry Division's breakthrough) it decided to launch the combined Cavalry Division, assisted by the 27th Infantry Regiment (7th ID), from the Skvyra area to defeat units of the 4th Cavalry Division near Antoniv, then to reach the rear of the Reds by forced marches between Dzyun'kiv and Tetiv. On the basis of this, General Karnicki's division was to march from Pustovarivka to Antoniv (12 km south of Skvyra) in the evening of 31 May.

The command of the [Polish] 13th Division, decided to counteract the success of our 11th Division immediately, with the help of reinforcements which had just arrived (the 19th Infantry Regiment, of the 5th ID, and Sawicki's 3rd CB). For that purpose, a group of those units was set up in the vicinity of Zarudyntsi (20 km north of Pohrebyshche) by General Sawicki.

The main task of that group was to eliminate the breach and restore the situation in the area of Pohrebyshche and north of it.

The position of the Konarmia division during the night from 31 May to 1 June was as follows: (See Map 8).

- 6th CD in the area of Pliskiv – Ochytkiv – Chernyavka;
- 11th CD in the Polish rear near Starostyntsi – Hopchytsya – Smarzhyntsi;
- 4th CD in the Rohizna – Rubchenky – Volodymyrivka – Orikhovets' area with detachments to the Berezyanka River; and
- 14th CD, behind the 4th CD in the Tetiv – Kashperivka area.

Throughout 1 June, stubborn fighting took place along the whole Konarmia front, except for the sector of the 6th Division, which was limited to a single reconnaissance.

At 01:00 on 2 June General Sawicki's group attacked the 11th Division's 3rd Brigade, which was spending the night in the village of Starostyntsi, and forced it to retreat to the village of Hopchytsya. There it was surrounded but, after a battle, broke through to the main forces of the division, losing four light guns.

By the morning of 1 June the remaining two brigades of that Division were grouped north of Pohrebyshche town. At 07:00 they first attacked the village of Starostyntsi, then Pohrebyshche, but without success. They were forced to retreat through Morozivka to Novofastiv, where the entire division joined up, and withdrew to Borshchahivka. As a result the all the success of the 11th Division on 31 May was eliminated.

At the same time, on the sector of the 4th CD the Polish Cavalry Division attacked our outposts at dawn on 1 June in Petrashivka and Biliivka, and pushed them back to the south-west.

Disturbed by this attack, the 4th Cavalry Division quickly assembled in the area of Rubchenky – Orikhovets' and attacked the Polish infantry who were advancing into that area. It was the 27th Regiment, which had to retreat behind the Berezyanka River with heavy losses. General Karnicki's division, after fighting the outposts of the 4th Cavalry Division, turned westward by virtue of the order given to it by plane for an immediate attack on Novofastiv together with General Sawicki's group.

We detected the movement and soon the entire 14th Cavalry Division joined the 4th Division. Around 13:00 in the region between the villages of Horobiivka and Rubchenky the Red cavalry came up to the Polish Cavalry Division.



Having numerical superiority and supported by armoured vehicles, the joint forces of the 4th and 14th Divisions attacked in mounted formation and, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy, driving him northwards. (See Map 9).

Both divisions vigorously pursued the enemy as far as the Berezyanka River, continuously attacking its rearguard. Having crossed the river at Antoniv, the Polish cavalry hurried to Shamraivka (20 km north of Antoniv).

By the evening of 1 June, the entire line of the river Berezyanka from the village of Berezna to Tokarivka was in the hands of the Red cavalry.

As a result of the battle described above, operations by the Polish cavalry were completely paralysed, and the danger that threatened the flanks and rear of the Konarmia was eliminated. The Army's right flank group gained a favourable starting position for further operations.

All day on 2 June the Konarmia divisions remained in their positions, conducting intensified reconnaissance. A reconnaissance squadron of the 81st Cavalry Regiment sent to Skvyra found no enemy in the area. When the squadron entered the town, it was met with enthusiastic cheers from the people of the town.

Attempts by the enemy to attack the 6th Division near the village of Kozhanka on 2 June were not successful; the enemy was driven back with heavy losses. The armoured trains *Death to the Directory*, *Rudnev* and *Red Cavalryman*,<sup>29</sup> operating from Orativ Station, were engaged in fire fights with enemy's batteries during the whole of 2 June, located in villages of Skytka and Rososha. General Karnicki's division, after the battles with the Red cavalry on 2 June, were resting in the area north of Bila Tserkva, incapable of serious action.

Heavy rain, which started during the night of 2/3 June, continued without interruption on 3, 4 and 5 June, completely ruining the roads and making air reconnaissance impossible for the Polish side: while it greatly hampered the actions of the Red cavalry. By 3 June the neighbours of the Horse Army on the right and left were as follows: Comrade Yakir's group (45th and 44th RDs) advanced to the Rzhyschiv – Rokytne – Ozerna line; the right flank of the 14th Army (63rd Brigade and 60th Rifle Division) was fighting hard in the Haisyn and Rudnytsa areas (west of Ol'hopil').

Due to the enemy's activity in the Haisyn district, the Konarmia was ordered by the Front to allocate at least one brigade to assist the 14th Army in capturing the Haisyn – Bratslav region, while the rest of the army continued to carry out its main task of capturing the Kozyatyn railway junction.

Taking into account the situation in front of the Horse Army, on 3 June the its commander gave an operational order, setting the task for the Army to reach the Berdychiv – Kozyatyn area without fail.

The whole Army (except for the 3rd Brigade of the 11th CD) was assigned for the main strike; its movement was as follows: the main strike mass was the 4th, 11th, and 14th CDs, with echelons back to the right and the left, and the 6th CD as the rearguard.

Sabotage detachments from the 11th and 14th Divisions were sent to blow up the railway track along the Popil'nya – Brovki Station<sup>30</sup>– Chornorudka section (the 11th CD unit targeting Chornorudka Station and the 14th CD unit the Popil'nya Station). This was to be done by the morning of 5 June.

The 4th and 14th CDs were to prepare for the capture of Kozyatyn railway junction and the 11th CD for a raid on Berdychiv.

The 6th Division was tasked with securing the operation from the rear (to the south-western side).

The 3rd Brigade of the 11th CD, with the armoured trains, (the same brigade tasked with liaising with the 63rd Rifle Brigade of the 14th Army near Haisyn) was assigned to support the whole Army operation from

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<sup>29</sup> The text has moved from numbers to names: the Osprey Publishing book *Armored Units of the RCW* gives #72 as *In Honour of Nikolai Rudnev* and #82 as *Death to the Directory* but does not give *Red Cavalryman* a number.

<sup>30</sup> Between modern Brovki Pershi and Yaresky.



Pliskiv – Lypovets' area. It was to tie the enemy to that area, disturb it by extensive maneuvering and prevent it from crossing the Kozyatyn – Khrystynivka railway line eastwards (to act in our rear).

The order shows that the Horse Army command had decided to capture the railway junctions of Kozyatyn and Berdychiv using all their means by 6 June, to deprive the enemy of supply routes and communications with the Odesa group.

But rainy weather somewhat delayed the execution of this order, with the consequence that the Konarmia remained in place during 4 June.

The overcast weather and rain also prevented the Poles from conducting aerial reconnaissance, which, to a certain extent, made it easier for the Konarmia to hide their grouping and preparations for the forthcoming decisive operation.

According to Polish sources, their positions by the evening of 3 June were: the 45th Infantry Regiment occupied the front from Lypovets' to Ochytkiv (7 km north of Lypovets' Station); the 25th Infantry Brigade of the 13th Division was defending from Ochytkiv to Bystryk; General Sawicki's group was from Bystryk to Samhorodok inclusive; the right flank of the 7th Division (the 27th Infantry Regiment) was between Samhorodok and Shamraivka; and General Karnicki's division was in the Shamraivka – Ruda area (10-12 km east of Skvyra).

From the [Polish] 13th ID's intelligence report of 4 June, it is clear that the position of the Konarmia's forces remained unclear to the Polish command until the morning of 5 June. The weather had deprived them of air reconnaissance, and military and unit reconnaissance gave almost no information, except unclear reports from locals about large masses of cavalry gathering in the forests in front of the Polish positions.

While the Konarmia was preparing for its decisive operation to break through the Polish lines, the Polish command, for its part, took a number of measures during 4 June to reinforce the left flank of their 6th Army, i.e. the Bystryk to Samhorodok section.

The units occupying Snizhna – Ozerna were replaced by two fresh infantry battalions with one artillery battery (19th Regiment). The cavalry brigade stationed at Snizhna was made up to three regiments (with the newly arrived 5th Lancer Regiment). At the same time, the Novofastiv – Bystryk section was reinforced with one battalion of infantry and a battery of the same 19th Regiment. One battalion of the 37th Infantry Regiment was deployed as a reserve in the village of Zarudyntsi.

General Karnicki's Cavalry Division moved to Pustovarivka with a guard on the Berezyanka River near Antoniv – Horodyshche. On the basis of the partial successes in the defensive battles, the command of the Polish 6th Army had concluded that from 4 June the Konarmia had suffered heavy losses during its operations, and was not able to conduct serious combat operations in the short term.

Only that can explain the optimism of the 6th Army commander in his report to the Front headquarters, where he said that "the Konarmia attacks, being the initial phase of the enemy's offensive on a broad front, were broken thanks to the heroic defence of the units of the 13th Division".

On the basis of such an assessment of the situation, the Polish High Command decided to switch to offensive action in order to decisively defeat the Konarmia and to occupy the line of Sob – Kalnyk – Orativ – Ros'ka River – Ros' River by units of the 6th Army. In the meantime, the right flank of the Polish 3rd Army was to support the 4th Army by occupying the Berezyanka River line from Samhorodok to Antoniv in the evening of 4 June, then move together with it to the Ros' River in order to link with the left flank of 6th Army; General Karnicki's division was to concentrate near the Berezyanka River in the Antoniv – Tereshky area.

By order of General Listowski, commander of the Polish Ukrainian Front, the entire Polish cavalry (the Cavalry Division and the 3rd Cavalry Brigade) were united under the overall command of General Sawicki on 4 June to act against the Konarmia.

The subordination of General Karnicki to his former subordinate, General Sawicki, led to a number of misunderstandings, and as a result, after some friction between the generals, on 7 June General Sawicki's brigade was separated out again. This incident could not but affect the coherence of the Polish cavalry,



which acted very passively during this period, apparently avoiding a decisive clash with the Red cavalry (with the exception of General Sawicki's 3rd Brigade, which was moving aimlessly around the junction of the 7th and 13th Divisions). On 9 June the entire cavalry was again subordinated to General Sawicki, and General Karnicki was summoned to Warsaw.

The 18th Infantry Division (south of the 13th) was to take part in an operation against the Konarmia, and concentrated about four battalions and appropriate artillery in the area of Lypovets' – Illintsi. Action was scheduled to begin at 04:00 on 6 June.

The whole day of 4 June passed quietly for both sides. Acting under the operational order of 3 June, the Horse Army commander decided, despite the inclement weather and muddy roads, to launch a major attack on the Polish defence lines at dawn on 5 June to overwhelm the enemy, especially as its positions had already been clarified by previous actions.

According to the plan outlined, three cavalry divisions were to deploy under the cover of the forests in the Shapiivka – Rybchyntsi – Kalenna – Orikhovets' area. The 6th Division, which was in the Army reserve, was concentrated in the forests south-east of the village of Hannivka. It was from these positions that the Konarmia launched its decisive offensive at dawn on 5 June, striking at the sector from Samhorodok to Novofastiv.

The breakthrough operation was initiated by Comrade Budënný, who went to the Novofastiv locations of the 4th and 14th Divisions, along with RMS member, Comrade Voroshilov.

The Polish infantry occupied a number of heavily fortified heights, the gaps between which were in the crossfire of artillery and machine guns. (See Map 10).

The 14th Cavalry Division, forming the right flank of the army, was the first to engage.

Exiting from the forests south of the village of Shapiivka, it struck at the Polish defensive positions at Samhorodok and Ozerna. The garrison of Samhorodok (1st Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment), armed with artillery, offered stubborn resistance until midday, but at about 14:00, supported by heavy machine-gun fire and armoured vehicles, the Samhorodok defence was beaten and its garrison was destroyed.

Later, after the 14th CD had launched its assault on Samhorodok, the 4th Cavalry Division launched its assault on Ozerna and the 11th Cavalry Division on Snizhna. After a short battle the Red cavalry, personally led by Comrade Budënný, forced the garrisons of both defence nodes to abandon their positions. (According to Biernacki, the garrisons of Ozerna and Snizhna consisted of two battalions of the 19th Infantry Regiment.)

To the north of Ozerna the 4th Division was attacked by General Sawicki's brigade. That brigade, supported by horse batteries, boldly went onto the attack, but under the heavy artillery fire of our own horse batteries and machine guns of the 4th Division the brigade was driven back with heavy losses.

The commander of the Konarmia, Comrade Budënný, who was in the area with one squadron, rushed into the gap between the Polish strongholds and completed the defeat of the Polish cavalry trying to counter-attack the Red cavalry. The KomandArm's self-sacrificing dash forward led to a general pursuit of the Polish cavalry.

Having broken through the Polish front, all three divisions of the Konarmia begin to advance rapidly, heading for Ruzhyn on their left flank.

As a result of the fighting on 5 June, the Konarmia captured 200 prisoners, four guns, twenty machine guns and large quantities of ammunition.

Pursuing on their heels of the remnants of the defeated units, by the evening of 5 June the Konarmia had reached the Rastovytsia River line, with the bulk of the 14th CD in Karabchyiv, the 4th in Yahnyatyn, and the 11th in Ruzhyn.

The 6th CD, which was the army reserve, did not take part in the battle and by the night of 5 June positioned itself to the east of Novofastiv.

Thanks to a properly planned and well executed combat mission, the Konarmia found itself in the enemy's rear.



Due to the fact that on both flanks of the breakthrough the enemy remained in place, the most threatening points for the Red cavalry were Kozyatyn on one side, and Skvyra and Bila Tserkva on the other.

This is how Biernacki assessed the breakthrough operation in his research:

It must be admitted that both the assessment of the situation and the conclusions drawn from the experience of 29 May had been successfully used and skillfully applied in the new plan.

The instructions contained in the order issued on 3 June led to desirable consequences. The formation of a strong group, the choice of a small area and the tactical position of the selected area were well suited for the offensive: it was at the junction of the two armies (3rd and 6th) and was edged on both sides by wide streams and a number of small lakes, which covered the flanks of the attacking group.

The site for the attack was also chosen well: it was at an angle to the enemy defensive line and immediately led the Konarmia, after breaking through the front, to the rear of the Polish positions and then directly to the area of Kozyatyn.

Both the plan of attack and its execution were successful, consistent and courageously executed.

The regrouping and taking up the initial position was skillfully carried out using night time, the fog, and the natural blind spots in front of the front of the Polish defensive line.

The [Poles] until the last moment were uncertain about and even ignorant of the preparations for the offensive. The Konarmia thus managed to exploit the moment for tactical surprise... .

From dawn on 6 June, the Konarmia continued to carry out its task of capturing the Popil'nya – Chornorudka railway line.

The 14th Division's right flank moved in two columns – one (with the 2nd Brigade) to Popil'nya Station and the other (1st and 3rd Brigades) to Brovki Station. (See Map 11).

Near Popil'nya Station, the division engaged in fighting with an armoured train *General Dovbor*, which hastily retreated to Brovki Station and further on to Chornorudka Station, but before it reached the latter, it was intercepted by units of the 4th Division. At Brovki Station, the 14th Division seized a train with food supplies and rifles.

By noon of 6 June, the 4th Division reached Vchoraishe (30 km north-east of Kozyatyn) and seized a brigade infirmary of the 13th Polish Division there.

The 11th Division moving to the left of the 4th Division, after fighting near Bilylivka, blew up the railway track and bridges and by the evening of June 6th reached the area of Kameni – P'yatihirka (25 km east of Berdychiv).

The 6th Division, moving a step back on the left and behind in the army reserve, by the evening of 6 June reached the area of the village of Ruzhyn, conducting intensified reconnaissance towards Kozyatyn.

Thus the first stage of the operation to reach the Berdychiv – Kozyatyn area was successful; the Berdychiv-Kyiv railway line in the Fastiv – Kozyatyn area was broken, and the enemy, influenced by our break into the rear, began to show signs of confusion and made incoherent attempts to restore its position on the defensive line.

This is how Biernacki describes the actions of the Polish command:

While the plans of the commander and the actions of the Konarmia on 6 June are marked by a certainty of the objective set and consistency of execution, despite the difficult conditions, the decisions of the Polish command bear traces of nervousness and disorientation in the situation. Polish forces kept trying to restore the former front, looking for the enemy only in their immediate areas and not risking more daring actions in the deep rear. The result of this was blows at nothing, delaying any pursuit by the Cavalry Division, and expending its forces on unnecessary marches.





Meanwhile, the Konarmia on that day managed to get deep into the rear of the Polish front, interrupting the railway connection between Kozyatyn and Kyiv and taking positions suitable for further operations.

The almost total absence of communication between the Konarmia field staff, its main HQ (still in Kropyvnytskyi, well to its rear) and the South-Western Front staff, and with the neighbouring Armies made it very difficult not only to receive further orders in time, but also information on the general strategic situation on the entire front, depriving the Konarmia command of the elements necessary for making further decisions. The data from our own reconnaissance was very incomplete on the morning of 7 June. An air reconnaissance of the raid did not yield any particular results (during the raid there were eight short-range and six deep-range flights – the last ones were performed as an additional task to communication between the raiding cavalry and the main army headquarters; the aerodrome was at Potash Station, 250 km from Zhytomyr). This information confirmed previous information, from prisoners, about the enemy grouping in defensive positions in front of the Konarmia front and added only that some sort of Army headquarters was located in Zhytomyr – in fact, it was the headquarters of the Ukrainian Front.

With so little information on the general situation on the front lines, the Konarmia commander decided to act in the spirit of the Front's basic directive and issued the following order for the Army on 6 June:

During 7 and 8 June, seize the railway junctions of Zhytomyr and Berdychiv with the aim of destroying the rich stockpiles there and damaging the means of transport and communication.

With this operation the Horse Army command wanted to provide the rear for itself, allowing it to manoeuvre against the Polish 3rd Army, which was occupying the Kyiv area.

Following those objectives, the 4th CD was assigned to raid Zhytomyr and the 11th Division to Berdychiv; the 6th and 14th Divisions were to remain in support behind along the Fastiv – Kozyatyn railway line to ensure the operation from the rear.

The Army spent the night of 7 June quietly in the areas occupied, preparing to carry out its tasks. The enemy remained passive. On the 7th, at dawn, the 4th Division moved in two columns from the Brovki – Nekhvoroshch area to Zhytomyr. At 18:00, after a short battle with the local garrison, Zhytomyr was in the hands of the Red cavalry. At the station and in the city a rich military booty was captured – ten carriages with English shells, a train with horses in it, two carriages with machine guns and so on.

Up to 5,000 Red Army men and up to 2,000 commanders, Red Army men<sup>31</sup> and political workers were released from captivity. Having blown up the station (using the carriages of shells), switching yards and railway tracks, destroyed communication equipment, and blown up the ammunition stores, the division withdrew in the evening eight kilometres to the north-east of the city, where it spent the night. The Polish Front HQ had managed to evacuate to Zviahel three hours before the 4th Division entered the city.

The 11th Division left at dawn of the same day, 7 June, and by 16:00 approached the city of Berdychiv. The enemy put up a very stubborn resistance on the outskirts of the city. But attacking from the north, after stubborn street fighting, the division captured the city and the freight station. The enemy withdrew to the south and settled into a fortified position on Lysa Hora.

As well as destroying the station and the tracks, the 11th Division blew up at the station a rich storehouse of ammunition, with up to a million rounds of different calibres, and withdrew for the night 8 km northeast of Berdychiv.

During this operation the 14th and 6th Divisions served as a barrier to the south and east, remaining on the Fastiv – Kozyatyn railway line.

The enemy tried every means to regain the lost positions and wrest the initiative from the hands of the Konarmia. On 8 June it brought infantry to Popil'nya Station from Fastiv; and infantry tried to advance on the 6th Division position, and cavalry units from Kozyatyn Station. But both attempts led to nothing.

Here is how Biernacki characterizes these operations:

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<sup>31</sup> The original does actually repeat the "Red Army men" in both groups.





The actions of the Horse Army on 7 June have the character of an unusually brave venture to the rear of the enemy in unknown and difficult conditions.

The execution of these operations as well as the acceptance of the decision, from the point of view of the riskiness of the whole operation, is the proof of the high level of the command and the excellent fighting qualities of the units themselves.

The purpose of these actions was to destroy the basis from which the Polish units could begin to oppose the Konarmia during its turn to the east, when it would, according to the general order of the South-Western Front, begin its operations to defeat the Polish 3rd Army. Not only did the Konarmia completely disorganize the whole chain of command of the Ukrainian Front at the most critical moment, breaking for some time its communications with the subordinate units, but it also caused a loss of spirits in the Polish rear, which would have a huge impact on events for a long time to come.

In the 7 June operation, the Konarmia fully achieved its objective. It disorganised the rear of the Polish front, made it impossible for the enemy command to direct operations, and caused panic in the entire area north of Kozyatyn, thus providing itself with the time it needed to act against Kyiv.

While the divisions of the Konarmia were making their breakthrough and reaching the enemy rear in the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv area, the 12th Army and Comrade Yakir's group were beginning to develop their own active operations.

As early as 6 June Yakir's group led a strong attack on Bila Tserkva and occupied it, advancing the reconnaissance units of Comrade Kotovski's cavalry brigade to Fastiv.

The 7th and 58th Rifle Divisions begin to develop operational actions against the Kyiv bridgehead. But the greatest success was achieved by Comrade Golikov's strike group, which formed the right flank of the 12th Army.

On 4 June that group had started crossing the Dnepr River slightly north of the Teteriv River mouth, knocking out some Polish units (the 6th Legion Infantry Regiment and the 7th Cavalry Brigade, comprising the 17th Lancer Regiment and the Tatar Horse), which were operating to the north of Kyiv. On 7 and 8 June Golikov's group continued to develop its success on the right bank of the Dnepr River near Hornostypil.

The developed breakthrough of the Konarmia in the Kozyatyn area, and the successful actions of Golikov's group on the right bank of the Dnepr River allowed KomFront-SW to set broad objectives, with the aim of completely encircling the enemy Kyiv group.

On 8 June, KomFront-SW gave the following directive to his armies:

KomandArm-12, -14, KomGrup-Yakir. Copy to KomandArm-Horse.

On 8 June 1920 the Konarmia units, having broken through the enemy front in the general area of Vchoraishe – Zhytomyr, are fighting in the areas of Zhytomyr – Berdychiv. To achieve success in connection with the actions of the Konarmia I order: First, to KomandArm-12 the task given in my directive of 6 June,<sup>32</sup> to be executed scrupulously and with all your energy. Redeploy units of the main strike group non-stop, day and night. Do not allow the enemy to evacuate Kyiv; cut off the last road from Kyiv to Korosten' around Borodyanka – Irsha by 12 June at the latest, using your mounted units. Second, KomGrup Yakir is to undertake a decisive offensive not later than 10 June to capture the Fastiv – Kornyn area; and is to cut the Kyiv – Zhytomyr highway with cavalry units as soon as possible. Third, KomandArm-14 is to begin resolute execution of his Army's main task given in my directive of 25 May this year.

Signed: Egorov, Stalin.

Meanwhile, reconnaissance of the 6th and 14th Divisions of the Konarmia during the night of 7-8 June found out that the enemy had begun to group its reserves on the flanks of the breakthrough, with the aim

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<sup>32</sup> That directive to the 12th Army was to expand the seized bridgehead on the right bank of the Dnepr alongside a simultaneous attack on Kyiv



of closing the Konarmia's exit to the south. According to the reports of the same reconnaissance, it became clear that the enemy had positioned itself around Ruzhyn and Pavoloch with strong units.

Due to the prevailing situation on the flanks and rear of the army and lacking a strong link with its neighbours and the Front, the Konarmia command decided to pull the entire army east of the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv line.

### **Actions of the Polish Army**

With no communication with the Front (which was interrupted by the Konarmia raid on Zhytomyr), the 3rd Army commander took the decision on 7 June to concentrate his forces in the triangle formed by the Dnepr, Irpin' and Stuhna Rivers. He ordered the 7th Infantry Division to immediately abandon its positions and retreat to Fastiv to take the line from Vasylkiv through Skytok (15 km north-west of Vasylkiv) and further along the Irpin' to the Zhytomyr highway; simultaneously, the so-called Vasylkiv Group was to withdraw to the Stuhna River, and Colonel Rybak's group to the western bank of the Dnepr river, taking it from the mouth of the Irpin' to the mouth of the Stuhna.

In the meantime the command of the Polish Ukrainian front, given the situation at the time, ordered on 8 June that the 3rd Army immediately start to retreat from Kyiv, instructing it to take up positions on the Teteriv River on the line Berdychiv – Zhytomyr – Orane (25 km west of the Teteriv River mouth), from where the army would move to the Uzh River.

On the morning of 8 June the Polish 3rd Army began to regroup. Units of the 7th Infantry Division retreated from the Skvyra – Bila Tserkva sector to Fastiv, but under the onslaught of the 45th Rifle Division were forced to retreat further to Plesets'ke (15 km north-west of Vasylkiv).

On the left flank of the Polish 6th Army the Polish Cavalry Division, under the command of General Sawicki, was placed with the mission of covering the left flank of the army and organising vigorous reconnaissance to the north and east.

On the same day (8 June) fresh units arrived at the disposal of the Polish Front (almost the entire 3rd Legion Infantry Division at Shepetivka Station and a reserve infantry brigade at Zviahel).

### **Actions of the Konarmia**

By the evening of 8 June, the Konarmia was concentrated in two groups, as ordered. The 4th and 14th Divisions were in Kotelnaya – Brovki Station and the 6th and 11th in the area of Chervone – Bilopillya (25 km east of Berdychiv). While the 6th and 14th were already in the above-mentioned areas on 7 June, the 4th and 11th retired to them for a focused location of the whole Army in one "fist" (see Map 12).

At 08:00 on 8 June, the outposts of the 6th Cavalry Division occupying the railway line (south of Bilopillya) were attacked by two brigades of Polish cavalry (from General Sawicki's division), moving in two columns.

Owing to the superior numbers of the Polish cavalry, the 2nd Brigade of the 6th Division was initially forced to retreat northwards (to Bilopillya), but at about 14:00, with the approach of the 1st Brigade, and then units of the 11th Cavalry Division, there was a brisk counterstrike. The Polish cavalry quickly fell back, losing two guns, six machine guns and two regimental banners. The remaining divisions of the Konarmia concentrated in their areas without interference from the enemy.

Thus by the evening of 8 June the Konarmia had all its forces concentrated in one area north-east of Kozyatyn. Attempts by the enemy to break it up, taking advantage of the scattering of its forces, led to nothing on 8 June; on the contrary, General Sawicki's division was defeated and driven back to Kozyatyn.

During the night and the whole day of 9 June, KomandArm-Horse was unable to establish communication with either his main headquarters or with the Front and his neighbours, so he was forced to rely on his own reconnaissance data (on that day the 14th Division managed to ascertain the retreat of units of the Polish 7th Division to Fastiv).

Having fulfilled the first part of the directive – to destroy the Polish front in the Kozyatyn area and secured its rear for further action with a strike against General Sawicki's division – the Konarmia decided at dawn on



9 June to begin the second part of the directive: to advance towards Kyiv in order to cut off the retreat of the Polish 3rd Army.

This decision was influenced by the telegram from the Front HQ given above, about the movement of Comrade Yakir's group to Fastiv.

Not yet knowing about the occupation of Fastiv by KomGrup Yakir, KomandArm Budënyy decided first and foremost to occupy that point, intercepting the enemy's possible retreat to Kozyatyn and thus achieving a separation of the Polish forces – the 3rd and 6th Armies – operating in the Ukraine. This was the most important objective of the Konarmia's actions. On the night of 8/9 June he gave an operational order, which contained instructions for action against Fastiv.

According to that order, the army was to move at dawn on 9 June in two separate groups. The first consisted of the 6th and 14th Divisions, which immediately moved from their quarters towards Fastiv; the second consisted of the 4th and 11th Divisions, which moved to the Khodorkiv – Mostove area.

With additional orders to secure the left flank of the 14th Cavalry Division during the action against Fastiv, the 4th Cavalry Division was ordered to send a strong detachment in the direction of Brusyliv, and to secure the right flank of the 14th Cavalry Division. To help it take over Fastiv at dawn on 10 June it sent one brigade along the northern bank of the Unava River to Kvitneve.

One squadron of a Special Purpose Regiment<sup>33</sup> was sent to blow up the railway bridge over the Teteriv river near Teteriv Station,<sup>34</sup> and it successfully accomplished its task.

On 10 June the advanced units of the 14th and 6th Divisions made contact with Kotovski's cavalry brigade near Romanivka village, and with the 45th Rifle Division near Fastiv. As a result, the 6th and 14th Divisions withdrew back to their original positions that day. The 4th Division's reconnaissance sent towards Brusyliv did not find any enemy there.

The rapid development of events in the Kyiv area gave rise to a number of instructions and directives from the South-Western Front. On 10 June a new directive, was received, which set the following tasks for the armies of the Front:

The 12th Army, not later than 11 June, is to seize the Radomyshl' – Makariv area, at the same time securing the right flank of the strike group, strengthening it by means of units of the 24th Division being relocated; and to have in mind a further main attack on Korosten'.

KomGrup Yakir was tasked with taking the Brusyliv – Khodorkiv area no later than 11 June.

KomandArm-Horse, acting according to the situation in front of the Army, and in any case without ceasing pursuit of the enemy, should immediately secure his rear in the Radomyshl' – Khodorkiv area in case the main mass of the enemy Kyiv group might break through along the Zhytomyr highway. Be sure to destroy the Korosten' railway junction and communicate with the units of 12th Army and the Yakir group.

On the same day the Konarmia command proposed, by radio to the Front, that the Konarmia be sent to Brusyliv, with the aim of striking at Borodyanka, to block the routes of the Polish 3rd Army to the north-west.

In reply to this proposal the commander of the South-Western Front, in a radio-telegram to the KomandArm-Horse dated 10 June said:

The 12th Army will take Radomyshl' – Makarov on 11 June. Your help to the east is no longer necessary. Immediately turn to the west and occupy the Zhytomyr – Kozyatyn area. If necessary, take command of the 45th Rifle Division. Report execution urgently by radio.

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<sup>33</sup> The First Horse Army, as well as the four Cavalry Divisions mentioned up till now, also included a sizeable "Special Purpose Brigade". This was the elite of the Army, generally kept in reserve.

<sup>34</sup> In modern Piskivka.



In view of the above, late in the evening of 10 June KomandArm-Horse gave a new operational order, for the Army to move back to the area of Kozyatyn – Zhytomyr.

This order outlined that the enemy occupied the Kozyatyn – Berdychiv – Zhytomyr – Radomyshl' line and that Comrade Yakir's group, acting to the right of the Army, had reached the Unava River line in the area of Mala Snitynka – Fastiv – Dmytrivka, with Kotovski's brigade near Romanivka (west of Fastiv Station) and that the 12th Army acting to the left had by this time reached the line of Chechelivka (10 km east of Haisyn), Ladyzhyn, Pepelyukha (40 km southwest of Ol'hopil'). The Army was charged with the following task: "to disrupt the enemy on the Berdychiv – Zhytomyr line and eliminate the enemy group operating in the Kozyatyn area."

To carry this out, the divisions were dispatched as follows:

- The 14th was to begin moving at dawn on 11 June to the area of the town of Korostyshiv (30 km east of Zhytomyr); then on 12 June, leaving in Korostyshiv a unit to monitor the Kyiv highway, the rest of the division was to move to the area of Levkiv (10 km east of Zhytomyr) by the evening of 12 June;
- The 4th Division, on 11 June, was to move to the area of Kotel'nya (on the Huiva River – 30 km south-east of Zhytomyr) and, if necessary, support the 14th Division.
- The 11th Division was sent from the Berdychiv area to Chervone;
- The 6th Division was directed to the area of Nekhvoroshch (the old grouping before the march to Fastiv).

On the same 10 June the commander of the Polish 3rd Army, located in the triangle of the Dnepr – Stuhna and Irpin' Rivers, received a categorical order from the commander of the Polish Ukrainian Front to withdraw immediately from that area, pushing Budënný's cavalry in front of him. This led the 3rd Army to begin retreating westwards as early as 23:00 of that day, taking the Kyiv – Korosten' line as the axis of retreat.

Following a personal directive of the Polish Commander-in-Chief of 22:30 on 9 June, who assumed that the Konarmia would move to the south-east in order to block the retreat of the 3rd Army from Kyiv, the Front ordered the Polish cavalry to follow Konarmia on the morning of 10 June, in order to prevent it from acting against their 3rd Army, using all means.

On 11 June, fulfilling its orders detailed above, the 14th Cavalry Division occupied the area of Korostyshiv without contact with the enemy; only a side detachment sent along the Kyiv highway to Tsarivka (east of Korostyshiv) was shelled by an enemy vehicle. But on the way the division captured an enemy telegraph company. The 4th Division, also without coming into contact with the enemy, reached Kotel'nya.

Only the 6th and 11th Divisions, at about noon of 11 June, engaged in combat with General Sawicki's division, which after hard fighting was pushed back to Berdychiv. That division had been sent by the Polish command to hinder the Konarmia in its actions against the Polish 3rd Army, as noted above (see Map 13).

Biernacki wrote:

The day of 10 June was a turning point in Konarmia's operations in Ukraine. The decision taken by the commander of the Konarmia in the evening to operate to the west, completely independently, diverged from the task given to it by the Front in its operational plan (to surround and destroy, together with the 12th Army, the Polish 3rd Army) and caused in the end a whole series of failures for the Konarmia ...<sup>35</sup>

Having unexpectedly encountered units of Comrade Yakir's group acting alongside him, which had occupied the area of Fastiv and were moving successfully northwards, it would have been most advantageous, acting in accordance with the Front's instructions, to immediately turn to the north-east and take a central position in relation to the only two remaining lines of possible

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<sup>35</sup> Klyuev argues that the decision of 10 June was carried out in the spirit of the SW Front directives, which only began to direct the Konarmia against the enemy's Kyiv group on 11 June. Given that the purpose of this book was to glorify the 1st Horse Army, I do not trust his assessment: Budënný was prone to deliberately interpreting situations to suit himself (as he would do later in this campaign). From the start the plan was to get behind Kyiv.



retreat of the Polish troops (the Kyiv – Zhytomyr highway and the Kyiv – Korosten' railway). That position which would have ensured absolute dominance over those lines. At the same time it would have been necessary to establish communication with the northern group of the 12th Army operating in the Ivankiv area.

On 11 June, at Chervone, the Konarmia had a great tactical success over the Polish Cavalry Division, which ensured itself further freedom of action. The same Biernacki assesses these actions as follows:

From a tactical point of view, the result of actions for the Konarmia that day were favourable. From a strategic point of view, the results of Budëny's wrong decision began to appear, which led to the complete failure of the operation – so thoroughly thought over, and so far successful, of surrounding and destroying the Polish 3rd Army. Meanwhile, that army, seeing the road to Korosten', which Budëny was to have blocked, was entirely free, and the Zhytomyr highway, threatened only by weak units of the 45th Rifle Division, crossed the Irpin' quietly and unhindered and on 11 June 11 reached the Zdvyzh River line with its vanguards, where it would not meet any strong enemy, as a result of the Konarmia withdrawal to the west.

Meanwhile, the KomFront-SW came to the conviction on 11 June that neither the 12th Army nor Yakir's group would be able to conduct an encirclement of the enemy's Kyiv group, and therefore on 11 June he gave the Konarmia a new task:

Two divisions are to immediately occupy the Radomyshl' – Zhytomyr area, conducting intensified reconnaissance towards Berdychiv. Allocate a detachment to capture Korosten', and the rest of the Army's forces are to move quickly towards Kyiv, in order to surround and capture the enemy Kyiv group, acting in concert with the 12th Army.

On June 11 and 12 the 1st Horse continued to move to Zhytomyr – Berdychiv (that latest Front directive reached the field headquarters by plane only at midday on 12 June).

On the same day the Konarmia command had the idea of making a deep raid in the direction of Starokostiantyniv to reach the rear of the entire Ukrainian Front, about which the KomandArm informed the KomFront-SW by radio. That decision was a result of assessment of the situation in connection with the information about the retreat of the Polish 3rd Army from Kyiv to the north. At that moment the Horse Army command considered it impossible to prevent the Polish 3rd Army from retreating to Korosten', so it put forward its plan of a deep strike against the rear of the Polish 6th Army, which would undoubtedly have caused a defeat of the entire Polish Ukrainian Front.

On 12 June the 4th Division recaptured Zhytomyr.

In the day of 12 June the Konarmia reached the Hnylop'yat' River in the Shums'k – Troyaniv – Berdychiv area almost without fighting (except for a small clash near Zhytomyr).

Around 14:00 on 12 June the KomandArm-Horse received a new order from the Commander<sup>36</sup> cancelling all previous directives:

Kremenchuk, 11 June 1920 to KomandArm-Horse.

Having sent a security unit to the north, the enemy's Kyiv Group, under cover of four armoured trains, is breaking through along the Kyiv – Korosten' railway line. There is a fierce fighting in the area of Borodyanka. The nearest two divisions should be sent to Radomyshl' and Irsha instead of Kyiv.

Having received no answer from his KomFront, and to execute the directive received via the Front to prevent the enemy's Kyiv group from breaking through on the highway to Zhytomyr, on the evening of 12 June the KomandArm-Horse ordered the 14th CD to send a single detachment to Radomyshl'; the 6th and 11th Divisions, from dawn of 13 June, should continue operations in the Berdychiv – Kozyatyn areas: the 4th Division, left near Zhytomyr, was given the task of supporting the 14th Division, if necessary.

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<sup>36</sup> Presumably the Commander-in-Chief.



The Polish forces in Ukraine on 11 June were in these positions:

- The 3rd Army was retreating from the Kyiv area, in three columns, aiming for Korosten'.
- The 6th Army had begun its retreat, relying on Kozyatyn as the pivot point.
- Weak garrisons held Berdychiv and Zhytomyr.
- A newly arrived brigade of the 6th Infantry Division was at Korosten'.
- Trains with the 1st Reserve Infantry Brigade had begun to reach Zviahel.
- The 3rd Legion Infantry Division had begun arriving at Shepetivka Station.
- The Cavalry Division had been assigned to act against Budënný's cavalry.

Due to the withdrawal from Kyiv, a large gap was created between the Polish 3rd Army's left flank, stretching to Radomyshl', and the 6th Army's right flank, which barely reached Kozyatyn. The gap was occupied only by the weak garrisons of Berdychiv and Zhytomyr, and the Polish Cavalry Division operating in the area. Concerned by these circumstances, the Polish Front decided on 11 June to create an independent group of up to 2,500 bayonets in that gap, with the task of holding the Berdychiv – Zhytomyr line until the newly arrived 3rd Legion Infantry Division and 1st Reserve Brigade could occupy it. The command of that group was entrusted to Colonel **Herbert**; it was made up of march and guard companies.

On 12 June, the previous decisions of the Polish command were fundamentally changed.

First of all, the High Command abandoned its decision to have the 3rd Army on the line of the Teteriv, ordering it to retreat to the Uzh River line, with forward units on the line of Korosten' – Zviahel.

The 6th Army was to withdraw its left flank on the Sluch River to the Lyubar area; the Sluch River sector from Zviahel to Lyubar was to be occupied by the 1st Reserve Brigade. The task of that brigade was also to cover the concentration of the 3rd Division, which was to arrive in the Polonne – Myropil' area.

At the same time the Polish 6th Infantry Division, whose units were already occupying Korosten', received a categorical order to defend that important road junction at all costs, even in the event of its encirclement.

Here is extremely interesting assessment of the Red cavalry and our Front command's actions on 11 and 12 June by Biernacki:

Being under the influence of new messages, coming from west of Kyiv, and supposing that the Polish 3rd Army was about avoid encirclement, thanks mainly to the Konarmia's direction towards Fastiv, the Front command started to get nervous and gave new orders to the Horse Army's commander, aiming to cut off the Polish troops retreating from Kyiv.

Thus it first ordered the seizure of the Khodorkiv – Brusyliv area, then the Radomyshl' area, with a *de facto* link to Comrade Yakir's group on the Radomyshl' – Fastiv line. Then, again under the influence of the further movements of the Polish 3rd Army, the Front issued an order instructing the Konarmia to move even further west, to Zhytomyr, to occupy Korosten', with a simultaneous offensive towards Kyiv by two divisions.

Since the previous directives, while causing unnecessary manoeuvres, could have still resulted in obvious benefits, in the form of the occupation of a convenient starting position to flank the retreating Polish army and to seize the Kyiv highway, the latter order was totally inadequate to the new situation and led to the scattering of the Konarmia's forces, thus putting it in danger of being destroyed in parts.

The operations of the Konarmia on 12 June were strategically flawed; they lost the opportunity for strikes at a perfect distance from the main objective (encirclement and destruction of the Polish 3rd Army).

This assessment is basically correct: the command of our South-Western Front did not set a clear and definite task for the Konarmia in connection with the possible retreat of the Polish 3rd Army from Kyiv to the west.





Not having a firm line of communication with the Front, the Konarmia command committed the same mistakes as the Front, and paid too much attention to securing its rear from the Kozyatyn area. Nevertheless, the Konarmia's proposal of 12 June – to strike the rear of the Polish 6th Army – was the most appropriate to the situation, and would have completely defeated the entire Polish army in Ukraine.

At dawn on 13 June the KomandArm-Horse received from KomDiv-14 comprehensive information about the enemy, which enabled him to orient himself more fully about their position.

To the Chief of Field Staff, Konarmia. Reconnaissance report of the 14th Cavalry Division, Korostyshiv, 12 June 1920, at 24:00.

Reconnaissance units have discovered: the enemy has restored the bridge over the Bilka River near Tsarivka. Three of the enemy's armoured vehicles move along the highway between Kyiv and Zhytomyr, reaching Tsarivka, where, according to locals, an enemy cavalry regiment with infantry units are located. Prisoners from near Korostyshiv tell us that Polish units, which previously operated in the region of Brovary – Boryspil, passed yesterday at 22:00 through Kyiv and after passing Sviatoshyn, were concentrated on the road on the right bank of the Irpin' River, retreating towards Zhytomyr.

The retreating Polish units had about 2,000 cavalry and 4,500 infantry with ten 4.5-inch cannons (with enough ammunition) and four 3-inch guns; two columns of trucks and light cars of 30 vehicles each and unknown number of wagons. The Poles are retreating in order. Artillery moves in the middle and cavalry on the sides. At the very rear are units of the UNR 6th Infantry Division. The Poles often use radio telegraphs and carrier pigeons for communications. The chain bridge in Kyiv has been blown up.

The retreating Polish units know that they are surrounded, but think they will hold out until help arrives, which they expect from Zhytomyr. If no help arrives, they will surrender to the Russians. In Zhytomyr on 10 June there was an enemy infantry battalion awaiting the arrival of more similar units.

KomDiv Savitskiy

Around noon on 13 June the KomandArm-Horse received the following order from KomFront-SW expressing his views on the KomandArm's proposed raid on Starokostiantyniv.

The movement to Starokostiantyniv is totally irrelevant to the situation and unacceptable, I order you immediately execute the task specified by directive No 437, with two divisions sent to the Kyiv area directed by forced marches and the shortest roads to Radomyshl' – Irsha.

Further combat tasks for the troops of the whole Front will be given after the liquidation of the enemy's Kyiv group. Your attention should now be drawn to the operational direction Zviahel – Rivne. The radio station of the Army field headquarters may only be shut down with special permission from the Front headquarters each time. It is necessary to establish that the duty of the respective operational staff is to record the directives received from the Front headquarters no later than half an hour after receipt.

On receiving this please specifically notify by radio where you intend to set up your HQ.

KomFront Egorov. RMS member Stalin. Chief of staff of the SW Front Petin.

Meanwhile, the reconnaissance detachment of the 14th Division (3rd brigade), sent to Radomyshl', met strong resistance from the enemy there in the evening of 13 June. All attempts by the brigade to dislodge the enemy and force them to retreat were unsuccessful. At about 23:00 an enemy detachment of infantry, cavalry and artillery pushed our detachment past Tsarivka and forced it to retreat to the Teteriv River near Koziivka.

The enemy unit was the vanguard of the 7th Division, making up the southern column of the retreating 3rd Army.

The whole day and night of 13 June passed without any fighting in the remaining divisions of the Konarmia.



In view of the situation and the last categorical order of the Front of 23:00 on 13 June, the KomandArm-Horse gave an operational order setting new tasks for the Army:

As soon as possible seize the area of the Korosten' railway junction, destroying the enemy group retreating from Kyiv on the Zhytomyr highway and along the railway to Korosten'.

At the same time the army was ordered to retain the Zhytomyr region.

To accomplish this task, the Army was divided into two equal groups. The first one, consisting of the 4th and 14th Divisions under the command of the RMS member Comrade Voroshilov, was to promptly seize the railway junction at Korosten'; the second one, consisting of the 6th and 11th Divisions, under the command of Comrade Budënnny, was to defend the Zhytomyr district.

The position of the Polish troops was as follows. Korosten' and Zviahel were prepared for defence and were occupied by strong garrisons of the Polish 6th Division and the 1st Reserve Infantry Brigade; there was only a weak garrison in Berdychiv; the Cavalry Division, still south of Berdychiv, was heading for Zviahel. The Sluch River from Zviahel south to Rohachiv was occupied by the 101st Regiment of the First Reserve Infantry Brigade. Trains with the 3rd Legion Division had started arriving in Shepetivka, with their advance units heading for Myropil' on 14 June. General Romer headed the group of Polish troops concentrated in the area of Zviahel – Lyubar (on the Sluch River).

In the area of Malyn (on the Irsha River), the main forces of 3rd Army still moved towards Korosten' on both sides of the Kyiv – Korosten' railway. In the Radomyshl' area its lateral vanguard was the 7th Division.

The Red 12th Army, along with the Yakir group, tried to take the Polish 3rd Army from the north-east, south and east: the right flank of the 12th Army was advancing from the Obukhovichi – Ivankiv line in the general direction to Malyn; from the east and south-east direction the Yakir group was advancing; the 44th Rifle Division had by 14 June reached the Teteriv River south of the Kyiv – Korosten' railway.

At the front of the 14th Red Army, on 13 June the enemy left the town of Haisyn, and the Army began to gradually advance behind the retreating enemy.

We had failed to encircle and destroy the Polish 3rd Army, retreating from the Kyiv district; the enemy had already opened the road to Korosten' by 12 June. However, the command of the SW Front did not lose hope of capturing the 3rd Army on the road between Kyiv and Korosten' by means of quick decisive actions. To this end, on 13 June the KomFront decided to disband Comrade Yakir's group and use it to reinforce the 12th Army on one side and the Horse Army on the other.

This decision was expressed in the following order:

To KomandArm-1 and -Horse. Copy to KomandArm-12 and -14.

In order to eliminate the enemy Kyiv group as quickly as possible, and in order to develop further combat missions to the armies of the South-Western Front, I order:

1. The 44th RD is to be attached to the 12th Army, with the commander of the 44th immediately establishing contact with Kotovski's cavalry brigade and temporarily subordinating himself to the 1st Horse with the task of taking the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv – Kozyatyn area and making contact with the armoured trains and the 3rd Brigade of the 11th Cavalry Division in the Pohrebyshche – Lypovets' area.
2. The 45th RD is to send a detachment to pursue the enemy Kyiv group, and then carry out the tasks of the commander of the 1st Horse.
3. From the moment the 44th RD is attached to the 12th Army the commander of the group, Comrade Yakir, is to return to his direct duties as the commander of the 45th Rifle Division.

KomFront-SW Egorov, RMS member Stalin.

This order was received by the Konarmia field staff on the afternoon of 14 June.

That was the general background against which Konarmia's operations unfolded on 14 and 15 June (see Map 14).



Thus KomandArm-Horse was given two infantry divisions at his disposal, one of which was to occupy the Kozyatyn – Berdychiv area that was constantly disturbing the Red cavalry. The whole Konarmia, plus the 45th Division, was freed for action against the Polish 3rd Army.

Biernacki in his work considers that:

This order did not meet the requirements of the situation. The 44th RD, actively pressing on the rear of the middle Polish column, had moved after a number of rearguard battles to the Teteriv River to the south from the Kyiv – Korosten' railway line, being in permanent contact with the enemy. By continuing to operate in that direction, it could strongly influence the outcome of the anticipated battle with the Polish 3rd Army. There was no threat from Berdychiv and Zhytomyr at that time.

Similarly, no offensive action could be expected at the time from the Polish 3rd Army, which was still retreating.

What was required was a gathering of all available forces for a joint strike against the Polish 3rd Army. These were the remaining manoeuvres, with which one could still expect to inflict a decisive defeat on it.

But the moment was missed by the command of the South-Western Front.

To perform its allocated task, at dawn on 14 June Comrade Voroshilov's shock group moved in the direction of Korosten' railway junction, in two columns on a broad front (up to 25 km). The 14th Division (right column) moved to Radomyshl', and the 4th Division (left column) to Horbuliv (22 km north-west of Radomyshl').

To support the strike group operation, at dawn on 14 June, the 11th Division was moved to the region of Korostyshiv with the guards to the Vilya River.

The Army's vehicle units monitored the highway to Zviahel and Berdychiv.

The 6th Division, with the field staff, remained in the vicinity of Zhytomyr. At about 13:00 on 14 June, advanced squadrons of the 14th Division engaged the enemy at Starosil'tsi (20 km before Radomyshl'). By 17:00, after attacks on foot and horseback, the enemy was repulsed to higher ground north of Starosil'tsi where it remained. By 18:00 about a regiment of cavalry and some infantry arrived to reinforce it. The enemy launched a counterattack and drove the 11th Division out of Starosil'tsi village. After a fierce firefight the enemy was broken by 20:00. His units fled in the direction of Radomyshl'. The 1st and 2nd Brigades of the 14th Division pursued the enemy to Seredinka (5 km south of Radomyshl'). During the pursuit up to 100 prisoners were captured and 150 men killed. During the night of 14 June the division settled down to the south of Radomyshl', and the left shock group column of the 4th Division on 14 June reached the appointed area (Modeliv – Horbuliv – Hannopil') unhindered and camped overnight.

At dawn on 15 June the main forces of the Polish 7th Division came up from the east in two columns towards the position of the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the 4th Division (at Modeliv and Horbuliv). A prolonged fight ensued. The 27th Infantry Regiment, with artillery, attacked the 2nd Brigade's position near Horbuliv from Torchyn; at the same time, the Polish 3rd Lancer Regiment, supported by infantry, attacked the 3rd Brigade of the 4th Division near Hannopil'. The 1st and 2nd Brigades, supported by two batteries of the 4th Horse Artillery Battalion in open positions, engaged the enemy in a fierce firefight.

The Polish artillery quickly gained an advantage over ours and forced it to withdraw from its position. At this time, KomDiv-4 quickly pulled the 3rd Brigade from Hannopil', which by this time it already had beaten the lancer regiment acting to its north, and threw it to bypass the right flank of the 27th Regiment. This manoeuvre was initially successful, but a counter-offensive of the 26th Regiment, which was behind the right of the 27th IR, forced the 4th CD to leave the village of Horbuliv at 10:00 and retreat in the general direction of Chernyakhiv. During the retreat the 4th Division lost some of its transport units.

In this battle the 4th Division suffered heavy losses.

The Group commander, Comrade Voroshilov, who was with the 4th Division, immediately ordered the 14th Division to hurry to support the 4th Division and informed the KomandArm about the group's situation,



asking for support. While the events related were happening with the 4th Division, the 14th Division moved to Radomyshl' at dawn on 15 June, where a bitter battle with a flank rearguard of the Polish 7th Division took place. At about 10:00 the enemy was knocked out of Radomyshl' and started to retreat to Horbuliv; the 1st Brigade pursued it. At 14:00 on 15 June, the commander of the Voroshilov group received an order to move the whole division to Horbuliv. At 16:00 the division moved, but because of the very tired horses and bad roads (the rains keeping them poor) had to stop for the night in the area of Chaikivka (8 km to the east of Modeliv and Horbuliv).

KomandArm-Horse, having received the report from Comrade Voroshilov, immediately sent the 3rd Brigade of the 6th Division towards Horbuliv and ordered that two brigades of the 11th Division move to the Starsil'tsi area, leaving one brigade as a guard in the vicinity of Korostyshiv.

By 24:00 on 15 June the 11th Division reached the village of Pylypovychi (8 km southeast of Horbuliv), where it spent the night.

The night of 16 June passed quietly at the Army's front.

By the evening of 15 June the army had linked with the 45th Rifle Division near the village of Tsarivka on the Kyiv – Zhytomyr highway.

On the same day (15 June) an Army radio station intercepted an operational order for the Polish 3rd Army, dated 12 June, from which the Konarmia HQ learned that the Polish 3rd Army was retreating from the Kyiv area to Korosten'.

It was retreating in three groups: the right column of Colonel Rybak (3rd Composite Division), covering the main forces of the Polish army from the north, had to break through in the general direction to Ovruch; the middle column (1st Legion Division, 2nd UNR Division, army staff) went along the Kyiv – Korosten' railway line; the left column (7th Infantry Division) went from Vasylkiv to Radomyshl' – it was covered to the south by a strong flank unit.

During the retreat much materiel could not be preserved: the Poles burned it and spoiled it – the main focus was on preserving the army's manpower.

Because of the rain and severe fatigue to the horses, on 16 June the Konarmia stayed in the Radomyshl' – Chernyakhiv – Zhytomyr area it occupied, while the strike group returned to the army.

On the same day the Konarmia made contact at Huta-Rudnya<sup>37</sup> (20 km south of Teteriv Station) with the left flank 44th Rifle Division of the 12th Army.

To secure the left flank of the Konarmia, the KomandArm ordered the 45th Division to move from the Popil'nya – Brusyliv line to the Ivnytsya – Nekhvoroshch line (south of Zhytomyr).

On the morning of 16 June he sent a report to the Front, which asked for to be supported by pushing forward the dozing units of the 12th Army to the Korosten' – Zhytomyr – Berdychiv – Kozyatyn line. He reported that after the liquidation of the enemy at the railway junction in Korosten' the Konarmia would concentrate in the Hrusky – Pulyny area (35 km north-west of Zhytomyr).

In the same report he stated:

The Konarmia is experiencing a severe shortage of food and forage, the same shortage is felt in ammunition. Because of the continuous rain and the lack of petrol the armoured vehicles are not working.

These reasons forced the KomandArm to give his divisions a rest on 16 June, exhausted by continuous campaigning and battles (see Map 15).

The situation of the enemy in front of the Konarmia's front on 16 June as thought by its commander was follows, according to Captain Biernacki:

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<sup>37</sup> This village (or perhaps villages) no longer exists. It was midway between Spirne and Komarivka.



To the west was the Polish 2nd Army, consisting of two infantry and one cavalry divisions.<sup>38</sup> From the northeast was the Polish 3rd Army with 21,000 bayonets, 3,000 sabres, 360 machine guns, 60 light and heavy guns, several armoured trains and armoured cars and a large number of planes.

Having such a complete picture of the enemy made it much easier for the Konarmia's commander to launch another attack on the Polish 3rd Army, but the state of his divisions did not allow him to profit from his position.

In fact, by the evening of 16 June the Polish 3rd Army had managed to capture the following areas:

- The southern column, after fighting near Horbuliv, reached the area of Toporyshche (35 km north of Zhytomyr) and overnighted there;
- the middle column occupied the line of Khotynivka to Zlobychi (10 km south-east of Korosten'), and its rearguard was in Chopovychi; a connection with the southern column was maintained by the 3rd Lancer Regiment positioned at Rudnya-Shlyakhova. The cavalry brigade was on the march to Luhyny (17 km north-west of Korosten' Station);
- the northern column moved in a north-western direction and reached the line Obykhody – Loznytsya – Buda Kleshchevskaya<sup>39</sup> – Nedashky. By the evening of the same day it had reached the Uzh River in its section. The group's headquarters were in Ovruch.

On that day the Polish Front finally decided to accept the new positions of the 3rd Army and the 6th Infantry Division (General Romer's group) with a line on the Uzh River; the northern column was to occupy the section from Khabnoe<sup>40</sup> to Didkovychi; the middle column, Didkovychi to Bardy, with reserves near Korosten' and Luhyny; the southern one, Bilka – Nemelyanka, establishing contact with the Zviahel garrison. The Polish Cavalry Division moved to the area of Prutivka – Dovbysh (40 km south-east of Zviahel, on the eastern bank of the river Sluch) to reinforce General Romer's group.

A Polish researcher assessed the period of action of the Konarmia just noted above as follows:

The need to give the Konarmia divisions a rest to on 16 June greatly worsened its situation.

At this time, the main column of the Polish forces was only 10 km away from Korosten', which made it impossible for the Russian cavalry to stall it there. Units of the latter were located in the Chernyakhiv – Radomyshl' area, 40 km from the main action, partly connected in their actions with the left column of the Polish 3rd Army.

With the end of the day, the last opportunity for the Horse Army to at least partially fulfil its task of cutting off the retreat routes of the Polish 3rd Army alongside units of the 12th Army disappeared.

The Polish 3rd Army by that time had managed to get to its right flank on the line assigned to it, escaping from the attacks of the Russian 12th Army's "strike group" and, approaching Korosten', could easily cover it with its left flank from the south.

At the same time it established contact with the 6th Infantry Division, which was already occupying a section of the new front to the north of Zviahel.

One cannot but agree with the conclusions of the Polish historian.

The Konarmia already had in the morning of 13 June information about the movement of the Polish 3rd Army to the north-west (from the report of the commander of the 14th Division). However, it did not take any measures to redeploy its core in the direction of Brusyliv to the rear of the enemy Army. The fear at the

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<sup>38</sup> The 2nd Army had been reformed on 19 June from what was largely General Romer's group (3rd Legion ID, 6th ID, 10th Infantry Brigade, the Cavalry Division, and an aviation squadron) under General Raszewski, with Romer returning to his duties as commander of the Polish 6th Army.

<sup>39</sup> No longer marked as such, it was just east of Loznytsya.

<sup>40</sup> Modern Poliske, or very close by, where there was a crossing (perhaps the same as the modern one on the P02).



time for its rear from Kozyatyn was not grounded; the Polish Cavalry Division had received a serious blow from the Konarmia on 11 June and was capable of little active action. The decision taken was half-hearted and indecisive, and as a result it moved its forces into battle piecemeal. This was further exacerbated by the commander of the [12th] Army strike group. The enemy took advantage of that by counter-attacking our divisions separately and preventing us from striking with a concentrated mass.

On the basis of the directive received from the South-Western Front, KomandArm-Horse gave an operational order on the morning of 17 June demanding relentless pursuit of the retreating enemy, flanking it to the south.

According to that order, the divisions were to move out by the evening of 17 June: the 4th and 14th Divisions on both sides of the Zhytomyr – Korosten' railway to Toporyshche (30-40 km north of Zhytomyr), the 11th Division in support, behind the 4th and 14th Divisions, to the Chernyakhiv area, and the 6th Division, on the highway to Zviahel (25 km north-west of Zhytomyr).

KomandArm-Horse ordered the 45th Rifle Division to have its forward units, moving in carts, occupy the line of Zhytomyr – Kozyatyn by the evening of 17 June and that the division, having a reserve behind its left flank, should conduct enhanced reconnaissance towards Berdychiv.

On 17 June the Army carried out the movements indicated to it, except for the 14th Division, which, did not receive the orders in time, and so continued to remain in the same area (15 km west of Radomyshl').

Meanwhile, the command of the Polish Ukrainian Front was given an intercept on 17 June of a report of the Konarmia chief of staff, which showed that by 20 June they would move to the area of Pulyny – Khoroshiv (40 km north-west of Zhytomyr). Using that information, the Polish command immediately decided to prepare an operation to attack and break the Konarmia in the specified area.

The execution of this operation, ordered on 17 June, was entrusted to General Romer's temporary group concentrated in the area of Zviahel. This group was to include two infantry regiments and four batteries of the 6th Infantry Division, and the 3rd Legion Division; in addition, Romer was to command the Cavalry Division, which was to move to the Dovbysh – Prutivka area.

The section of the River Sluch – from Baranivka northward to Yemil'chyn on the Ubort – was to be occupied by two infantry regiments of the reserve brigade at that time. That grouping should be completed by 18 June.

On 18 June General Romer gave an operational order with initial positions for the offensive, which was to begin at dawn on 20 June.

- The 6th Infantry Division was to advance from the Andrijevychi area (on the Zviahel – Korosten' rail line) in the direction of Sokoliv – Davydivka – Khoroshiv.
- The 3rd Legion Division was to go from Rohachiv to Pulyny – Ivanovychi.
- The Cavalry Division was to go from the Huta-Yustynivka – Olizarka area with two brigades to Khoroshiv and one to Davydivka (this division was moving from Kozyatyn to Rohachiv on 18 June).

On the night of 18 June the Konarmia received a new Front directive, which gave it the task of providing vigorous assistance to 12th Army with the liquidation of the enemy in the Korosten' sector and capture the Zviahel area no later than 20 June. The same directive ordered the 12th Army to advance to the Ovruch area no later than 20 June. The 14th Army acting to the left of Konarmia (which by this time had finally captured Haisyn) was ordered to continue relentless pursuit of the enemy and reach the Zhmerynka – Vinnytsia region by 19 June.

To execute the Front directive, at 04:00 on 18 June KomandArm-Horse gave an operational order in which three divisions (4th, 11th and 14th) were to advance in the general direction to Yablunets' (in the middle of the Korosten' – Zviahel rail line) to bypass the Korosten' rail junction from the west and simultaneously threaten Zviahel from the east, while the 6th CD advanced directly on the highway to Zviahel, in the Pulyny - Adamivka area.





The 6th Division (the left flank) was assigned to reconnoitre towards Berdychiv and Zviahel. The latter was to be scouted by a whole brigade, with strong detachments to blow up bridges to the north-east and south of Zviahel near Vershnytsia and Dubrivka.

On 19 June the same order tasked the divisions to reach the Korosten' – Zviahel railway and station, with the 4th, 6th and 11th Divisions north of the rail line (northern bank of the Uzh River) in the Yanushpil – Kryvotyn – Moklyaky – Naraivka area; and the 14th Division to move behind the centre of the army in the Bilka – Baranivka<sup>41</sup> area (on the southern bank of the Uzh river).

Before issuing this order, the commander received information that the Kozyatyn – Berdychiv area had been cleared of the enemy, and ordered KomDiv-45 to accelerate movement to the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv line to ready for further movement westwards.

On 18 June the Polish Front in Ukraine again intercepted information about the position of the Horse Army and its intentions to advance on Korosten' from the west. At 16:30 on 18 June it issued a new operational order, in which the 3rd Army was given the task:

Delay the enemy offensive at its start positions from Korosten' to Baranivka Rudin inclusive, in order to enable the encircling group (General Romer) to leave the its mustering areas to flank the enemy.

Anticipating that the Konarmia would move through the area of Sushky – Bilka – Ryasne – Nedilyshche, the Polish command ordered that area be sealed off with a particularly strong group.

General Romer's group was tasked to:

strike from the south-west into the flank of the enemy attacking the 3rd Army.

The 3rd Army's command ordered two infantry regiments (20th and 65th) with four batteries to move to the Nemelyanka area and take over the Barashi – Nedilyshche – Bilka section (along the Uzh River) with two infantry regiments (1st Legion, 12th Infantry and a battalion of the 7th Artillery Regiment).

At the same time the Polish Cavalry Division was heading for Rohachiv.

By the evening of 18 June, the Polish 3rd Army's retreat was over, and it took its positions on the Uzh river. Biernacki says:

The Konarmia found itself facing a new Polish battle line, and it needed to think of preparations for a new breakthrough. At the same time the rear of the Army was threatened by the now organised actions of a large Polish force.

It was obvious that the Polish 3rd Army had managed to get itself out from under the attacks of the 12th and 1st Horse Armies and had started to fortify, putting itself in order in the strong wooded and swampy valley of the Uzh river.

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This concluded the operation of the pursuit and encirclement of Polish 3rd Army; it failed because of insufficient leadership on the part of the South-Western Front, which gave the Horse Army a number of contradictory orders, and because of a number of mistakes on the part of the Konarmia command, which, having some information about the retreat of the Polish 3rd Army as early as 13 June, could not use its advantageous position and was not active enough, spreading its forces over a large area, unreasonably fearing for its rear from Kozyatyn. In addition, the encirclement of the Polish 3rd Army failed due to the inept actions of the 12th Army's strike group, which had also spread its forces over a large front.

Here is how the Polish General Staff (i.e. Biernacki) assessed the results of the Konarmia's actions during the period of operations after the breakthrough of the Polish front:

Despite repeated significant tactical successes and a number of favourable circumstances, the Horse Army did not fulfil its task.

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<sup>41</sup> This Baranivka was just south of Sushky, across the river from Oleksandrivka.



The Polish 3rd Army, encircled to the north, managed to get out of the critical situation unhindered, meeting opposition from Budënný's cavalry almost nowhere. In the meantime, the task of that cavalry was to cut the retreat routes of the Poles and close the ring that surrounded the Polish 3rd Army against Yakir's group, together with the units of the Russian 12th Army. Under those circumstances, a decisive engagement was required, which could have resulted in the complete destruction of the 3rd Army.

Looking at the actions of the Konarmia in the first period, it is clear that they were conducted smoothly and according to the Front's instructions. It was not until the morning of 10 June that it first strayed from that path, i.e. at the moment of approaching Fastiv and meeting Yakir's units there instead of the main enemy forces.

This mistake was caused first of all by the South-Western Front, which indicated this manoeuvre as early as 7 June, instead of directing the Konarmia immediately more to the north.

Because the start of the withdrawal of Polish forces from Kyiv was late compared with the deadline given [to the Horse Army], there was still enough time to correct the mistake made.

Depending on the situation, it required blocking the remaining routes of retreat of the Polish 3rd Army, occupying a central position between the two remaining lines of communication, which could be used by the Poles, namely between the Zhytomyr highway and the Korosten' railway line. Then take the decisive offensive along with units of the 12th Army and the Yakir Group. This would have forced the Polish army to fight with an inverted front in extremely unfavourable conditions. It would have been attacked from the south and the north, with the Dnepr River behind it, and a formidable opponent, which undoubtedly Konarmia was, in front of it. However Budënný did not make use of such favorable circumstances in order to successfully complete the tasks entrusted to him by the Front.

He left the enemy the initiative of action, not remaining in the Fastiv area, from where it was easier to prevent the enemy from leaving the occupied zone. The path to the retreat of the Polish 3rd Army remained open, and contrary to the general guidelines of the Front and the rules of tactics and strategy he decided at that moment to retire to his original positions, leaving the quantitatively and qualitatively weaker 12th Army against the much stronger Polish 3rd Army.

The Konarmia's turn to the west left the Polish troops free to retreat. The advance of the weak Russian 12th army could not serve as a great obstacle. And so it turned out. In the days when the Konarmia moved towards Berdychiv and Zhytomyr – exhausting its horses, shooting away their limited stocks of firepower in the battles with the Polish cavalry – the Polish 3rd Army moved towards Korosten', completely undisturbed from the south and from the west, from where it should have met its main resistance.

However, the commander of the South-Western Front quickly oriented himself to the situation and ordered Budënný to move immediately in order to cut off the enemy's retreat routes.

But for the Konarmia the situation appeared to be much worse. By this time, the Poles had managed to withdraw from most of the attacks of the 12th Army, and there was a communication gap between the Russian operational units. This made joint action much more difficult. The possibility of encircling the enemy was greatly reduced.

But still there were still a chance of success. The KomandArm-Horse did not take it, and the Front command was not able to direct the movement of his subordinate cavalry units, prescribing the dispersion of their forces, which did not fit the situation.

Every hour it changed its plans of action, giving the Konarmia new tasks that did not correspond to the situation. And then there was the constant loss of communication between the South-Western Front and the Konarmia. This caused not only a number of misunderstandings, but also the late arrival of orders, which were sometimes received at a



time when they were already completely irrelevant. Meanwhile, the enemy achieved its objective. His flank guard not only covered the retreat of the main forces, delaying the movement of the Konarmia, but, taking advantage of the scattering of its units, inflicted a number of defeats on the separated divisions of the Russian cavalry.

However, despite a number of mistakes and a failure to make full use of the situation, the final results of the Konarmia's actions during this period were of great, and it can safely be argued, decisive importance for the further development of the operations of the Russian armies on the South-Western Front.

The Konarmia interrupted the operational link between the Polish 3rd and 6th Armies; destroyed their storage depots in the Berdychiv – Zhytomyr area; cut off communication with the command of the Ukrainian Front, and thus wreaked havoc on the command and paralysed the possibility of giving the quick and energetic orders so necessary in such a situation. All this caused panic in the Polish rear, which also greatly affected the morale of some of the Polish units at the front. The Polish command, unaccustomed to the conditions of manoeuvre war, was unable to quickly and successfully assess the situation and take appropriate preventive measures.

Thus the entire Polish front in the Ukraine was shaken.

The result was the clearing of the territory occupied during the conduct of the offensive.

The Konarmia, from the moment it arrived on the Polish front, was like a spring that pushed two Russian armies – the 12th and the 14th – with little fighting ability.

Those armies were able to move forward only because the Konarmia forced the Polish troops to leave their southern positions, after which those armies could occupy new areas almost without any fighting, thus reaching the [Western] Bug River in August. The whole burden of the operation to the very end lay on the shoulders of Konarmia.

Here is how Colonel Kléber, with the 2nd Polish Lancer Regiment, evaluated the result of Konarmia's actions during this period:

First, the results were purely strategic: the 3rd Army, finding itself cut off and surrounded, with destruction in its rear, ordered the evacuation of Kyiv and retreated to the Teteriv River. The [Front] command in Ukraine, fundamentally disorganized by the Zhytomyr strike, was unable to control the actions of its armies, which, by executing uncoordinated retreats, increased the already wide gap in the Polish front. In addition to these strategic results, Budënný had deeply affected the morale of the Polish troops. It was in his breakthrough that lies one of the most important causes for the Polish armies being brought to the walls of Warsaw and L'viv. Finally Budënný prepared the Red Army's general offensive north of the Pripjat, not only by diverting the enemy's forces and attention, but also by taking the initiative completely.

If for almost two months the Polish High Command found itself deprived of the ability to control the retreat of its troops, if it was only in mid-August, by the time of the battle near Warsaw, that it firmly put its hands on its units and brought order to their disorganised ranks, then the cause of such a difficult, one might say desperate situation must be sought in the actions of Budënný's cavalry.

Agreeing in general with the conclusions of Polish researchers, it is necessary, however, to emphasise that the moment the Konarmia broke through the Polish forces at Skvyra should be considered the beginning of the defeat of the Polish armies on the South-Western Front.

From that moment the Polish forces, squeezed from the north-east by the Western Front and from the Dnepr River on the South-Western Front, began to rush back to the west, trying to hold on to any convenient river and forest-marshy defensive lines successively, in order to stop the onslaught of the heroic Red Army units.



As to the reasons for the insufficient defeat of the Polish 3rd Army in its retreat from Kyiv, they are largely due to the actions of the command of our South-Western Front, which, being insufficiently focused on the retreat of the enemy Kyiv group, by the report of Comrade Yakir (that the enemy group was leaving for Kozyatyn), concentrated its attention on the Berdychiv area.

In this connection we must consider the directive of the South-Western Front of 10 June, instructing the Konarmia Commander that his help to the east was no longer needed.

Meanwhile in a radio proposal Comrade Budënnny then insisted on moving towards Brusyliv.

It was clear that the staff of the South-Western Front was nervous and did not have a firm decision or overestimated the strength of 12th Army and the Yakir group.

On 12 June, after having assessed the overall situation and the information about the move of the enemy group from Kyiv to Zhytomyr, the Konarmia's commander suggested that the South-Western Front should push all his army against the rear of the Polish 6th Army, because he thought that his move against the Polish 3rd Army was too late, and hitting the Polish 6th Army would lead to a complete defeat of the entire Polish front in the Ukraine, already shattered by the retreat of the Polish 3rd Army.

However, a significant part of the failure to encircle the Polish 3rd Army should also be ascribed to the Konarmia command, which spread its forces too thinly on 14 and 15 June. A mass attack on Radomyshl' and north of Radomyshl' could have been a considerable success and was quite achievable.



## Chapter III

### Konarmia Operations in The Korosten' – Zviahel Region

Fulfilling its operational order, the Konarmia entered its designated area on 18 June without enemy interference, except for the 14th Division, with which communication was temporarily lost; that division then remained in the Chaikivka – Modeliv – Horbuliv area (35 km north-east of Zhytomyr); it was only on 19 June that it moved into its designated area. The area where the Konarmia was to operate was rugged terrain with large forested areas and a number of streams and rivers, with heavily marshy valleys. It was also full of strong trenches. In particular, the area between the upper reaches of the Uzh and Ubort Rivers, already strong in its natural defensive properties, had many trenches built during the imperialist war, which should have greatly affected the possible actions of the Red cavalry; frequent rains made the roads there even more difficult to use. Of the rivers, the Sluch was a significant obstacle in the path of the Konarmia, despite its many fords, due to its flow and natural properties. In general, the area was not suitable for large cavalry forces: almost all the battles that took place there were conducted dismounted and only rarely mounted or combined.

Since the breakthrough of the Polish front, the Konarmia had had difficulty operating: its rear support – transports and bases – were too far behind it; the Army bases were urgently transferred from Kropyvnytskyi to the Bila Tserkva – Fastiv area, and it was only when the army reached the Rivne – Dubno area that the base moved closer to the Army, to Zhytomyr – Berdychiv – Kozyatyn. The Second Section and divisional wagon trains were routed to the army from the Uman' district to Zhytomyr. The Konarmia therefore had to conduct operations in the Korosten' – Zviahel area, and partly later in the Rivne area, in very difficult conditions, with neither bases nor a near army rear to meet its needs (see Map 15).

Communication with the Front headquarters was maintained exclusively by radio, and with its main (or rear) HQ by radio and pilots; only occasionally by wire, which made it very difficult to transmit timely Front operational orders to the Army field headquarters.

*Konarmia action on 19 June.* Around 10:00 the advanced units of the 4th, 6th and 11th divisions were engaged in a bitter battle with Polish troops entrenched on the Uzh River line, around Sushky – Symony and eastward (these were units of the Polish 6th Infantry Division; the 12th IR at the Bilka – Nedilyshche site, 20th and 65th IRs at Barashi – Symony).

Our units fought hard with the enemy up to nightfall, but could not break their front, and so retired to their initial positions.

Only two brigades of the 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions were actually involved in the action, with extremely limited ammunition supplies and with the units being very tired after the long march.

Late in the evening of 19 June, a telegram was received from the KomFront-SW:

Korosten's fate can be considered resolved. To complete the combat task, no more than one division should be left in the Korosten' area, and the remaining cavalry units should immediately occupy Zviahel and continue to act according to the directives given earlier.

KomFront-SW indicated with that telegram the main direction of the Konarmia was to Zviahel and west of it.

However, from the morning of 20 June the Konarmia continued to carry out the task assigned to it by the previous order, and a long period of fighting by counter-attacks began on the entire front of the Army. As mentioned above, at dawn on 20 June, General Romer's group, consisting of the 3rd Legion Infantry, 6th Infantry, and Cavalry Divisions, was to launch a decisive offensive to the flank of the Konarmia, operating from the Andrijevychi – Sokoliv front, which led to a counter battle on 20 June. As dawn broke, the 6th and 11th Divisions attacked to break the enemy's position at Symony; that move was met by a counter-attack by General Romer's group, which, after a hard, long battle with heavy losses, was forced to retreat to its original positions.

While the left Konarmia group fought hard in the region of Symony, the 4th Division fought all that day and into the night fiercely against the enemy in the Sukhovolya – Synyavka area, holding back the attack of Polish units, which were on the right flank of the 3rd Army. At about 20:00 of the same day the 21st Cavalry



Regiment of the 4th CD attacked and repulsed the 1st Infantry Regiment of the 1st Legion ID on Sushky village. During this pursuit many enemy were killed, ten machine-guns, lots of rifles and cartridges were taken; the 21st CR lost only 40 men killed and wounded. On 19 and 20 June the Konarmia had to fight in very hard conditions with almost complete lack of grain forage and rifle cartridges.

For the reasons given above, overnight on June 20 the Konarmia had to withdraw southwards, away from the enemy position over the Uzh River, and camp there.

On 21 June the enemy took heavy casualties from our machine-gun and artillery fire and mounted attacks, but during the night of 22 June it continued to attack the left flank of the Army and slightly pushed back the outposts of the 6th CD (this was the part of the 3rd Legion ID, advancing from Rohachiv).

In the evening of 20 June a report was received that Kozyatyn had been abandoned by the enemy and occupied by Kotovski's cavalry brigade.

In this connection the 45th Division was ordered to move as soon as possible to the Adamivka – Tartak – Chudniv – Krasnopil' line (40 km north-west and west of the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv line) and contact the 8th Cavalry Division of Comrade Primakov at Kalinivka; that division was on the right flank of the 14th Army.

The 14th Division by the night of 20/21 June had marched to the Kropyvnya – Kraivshchyna – Katerynivka area (25 km south-west from Korosten' Station but on the west side of the Korosten' – Zhytomyr railway) and did not take part in the battle.

After the fierce battles on 19 and 20 June the KomandArm-Horse telegraphed his KomFront about the difficult situation of the Army, which was bearing the brunt of the battle with Polish troops, because the neighbouring armies were advancing too slowly and were far behind.

The KomFront responded by ordering the 45th RD to increase their movement to capture the Shepetivka railway junction. The Konarmia was reassigned the task of capturing Zviahel. At the same time, the KomFront expressed dissatisfaction with the Konarmia's frontal attacks on the Uzh River.

On 21 June at 02:30 the KomandArm-Horse gave a new order, not very different in the formulation of tasks to divisions from the previous order: the divisions were required to undertake appropriate manoeuvres to destroy the enemy in front of them, acting decisively and in close contact with each other.

The Army, instead of changing its attack towards Zviahel, was still forced to fight to seize the crossings over the Uzh River. It was opposed by units of the Polish 2nd and 3rd Armies.

Throughout the day of 21 June the Army fought a hard battle with the enemy, attacking its left flank. In the fighting at Kyselivka (30 km east of Zviahel) a *divizion*<sup>42</sup> of the 34th CR (6th CD) in mounted formation, together with dismounted units of its brigade, completely destroyed two Polish battalions of the 12th and 65th Regiments of the 6th ID. By the night of 22 June the main units of the 14th CD, which had not taken part in the battle on the day before, reached the area of Sushky on the Uzh. An armoured column of the Army which was moving on the highway Zhytomyr – Zviahel, reached Bronyky (17 km SE of Zviahel) on 21 June, where it scattered an enemy squadron.

The Konarmia, as it stubbornly sought to capture the crossings over the Uzh, in the evening of 21 June received a report that the 12th Army had taken Korosten'. Due to this, KomandArm-Horse set his divisions a new task: to force the Sluch on the section Zviahel – Horodnytsya (to the north of Zviahel) on the heels of the enemy.

The main objective was to cross the Uzh and then move to the area between the Ubort' and Sluch Rivers to the north of Zviahel.

At dawn on 22 June the Army started to execute those orders.

After heavy fighting with units of the 3rd Division (9th IR), the 4th CD dashingly attacked the enemy on the Ubort' River near the village of Kulishi in the evening of 22 June and crossed to its western bank in pursuit of the enemy.

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<sup>42</sup> A *divizion* was two squadrons.





The 6th and 11th Divisions in the evening of the same day engaged in fierce fighting with the enemy for the crossings on the Sluch near Chyzhivka and Oleksandrivka (just north of Zviahel). The battle lasted until late at night, but with no success.

The 14th Division did not take part in the battles; on 22 June it remained near Sushky and Barashi on the Uzh (35 km east of Zviahel).

On 23 June the 4th Division continued to advance along the Ubort to the north and fought hard with the enemy, who occupied strong trenches with wire barriers on the Yemil'chyne – Seredy line (40 km north-east of Zviahel). All that day the 6th and 11th Divisions also fiercely attacked Zviahel from the east and southeast. As a result the 6th Division managed to break into the city from the north at 15:00. However, intense artillery fire forced the division to leave the city and its suburbs and retreat three kilometres to the north-east. The enemy infantry, in turn, launched a counter-attack. The division was under a continuous fire of heavy batteries, rifle and machine-gun fire; the fight lasted all day.

As a result of the persistent battles on 23 June the enemy was forced to clear the right bank of the Sluch from Zviahel north.

An attempt by the Konarmia to capture the bridge near Zviahel over the Sluch leading into the city was met with hurricane fire from batteries and armoured trains from Zviahel Station, under the cover of which the enemy burnt the bridge. During the retreat the 3rd Brigade of the 6th Division hacked down up to 400 enemy men.

Throughout the night of 24 June, the enemy fired artillery at our positions on the right bank of the Sluch River.

On 23 June the 14th Division moved to the left flank of the army around Bronyky – Hul's'k (15 km south-east of Zviahel). The 45th Division was urgently sent to reach the Sluch in the Rohachiv – Myropil' zone (south of Zviahel).

The flank units of the armies neighboring to the Konarmia – the 12th and 14th Armies – were at that time (June 23) the 12th on the line Radohoshcha – Ushomyr – Kraivshchyna (30 km east of the Ubort'), and 14th on the line: Kalinivka – Vinnytsia (45 km south of the city of Berdychiv). Therefore the Konarmia was once again several marches ahead of the neighbouring Armies (2 to 3 for the 12th, and 5 to 6 for the 14th).

Given the situation at the time and taking into account the difficult material situation of his divisions – lack of food (especially bread), forage and ammunition – the Konarmia's commander decided to temporarily switch to an active defense, securing the eastern bank of the Sluch. In that connection, at noon on 23 June he gave new orders, giving the 4th Division (right flank of the Army) the previous task of capturing the Yemil'chyne – Seredy area (on the Ubort' River) in order to protect the Army to the north and to link with the left flanking divisions of the 12th Army. The remaining divisions – 6th, 11th, and 14th – were to ensure the army's possession of the right bank of the Sluch on the Chyzhivka – Rohachiv section (north and south of Zviahel).

These orders did not give active tasks to divisions, and fighting on 24 June took place only on the flanks of the Army. On the right flank the 4th Division, together with an approaching brigade of the 44th Rifle Division energetically knocked the enemy out of the trenches near Yemil'chyne. Many soldiers were cut down; the remnants of the enemy fled to the north of Zviahel, discarding their weapons and transports. On the left flank of the army the 14th division passed on to the offensive at Hul's'k and Tal'ky at about 20:00 in an attempt to cut the Sluch, but the enemy met our offensive with heavy MG and rifle fire and repulsed all the attacks.

There were no significant changes in the army's position on 25 June; the divisions made reconnaissance checks of the crossings over the Sluch and had a rest from the ceaseless marches and combats.

The enemy carefully observed all our movements on the right bank of the Sluch. The only heavy fighting was on the right flank of the army near Yemil'chyne and Seredy, where the 4th Division again engaged in a bitter struggle with the enemy, who had been heavily reinforced. The enemy units of the 3rd and 6th IDs forced the 4th CD and 44th RD to retreat. Only in the evening of the day, after stubborn counterattacks with



the help of horse artillery, was it possible to dislodge them from the fortified positions near Yemil'chyne and Seredy, from where they were forced to retreat to the north-west.

During the fighting of 24 and 25 June the units of the 4th Division killed up to 500 enemy soldiers and took as many again prisoner. Besides that, the remnants of the 5th Company of the 9th Legion Infantry Regiment – consisting of 72 men with a platoon leader and three machine guns – voluntarily surrendered to the 4th Division during the night of 24 June. All in all, seven guns, 36 machine guns, and many rifles and ammunition were captured. Reconnaissance and combat revealed that six regiments of infantry were operating in front of the division (the 7th, 8th, 9th, 12th, 16th, and 20th from the 3rd and 6th Polish IDs) and three cavalry regiment (3rd, 9th, and 11th Lancers).

The stubborn battles of 22-25 June forced the Konarmia command to change the direction of its main strike to the south of Zviahel, for which on the evening of June 25 new orders were given. It stated that the Army units should force the Sluch River near Hul's'k and Tal'ky (10-15 km south from Zviahel) on 26 June, and then turn north to take Zviahel, destroying the enemy group there. On the same day an order was received from the KomFront that demanded the compulsory defeat of the enemy group in Zviahel, in order to continue moving to Rivne. At that time it was also found out that cavalry units of the 14th Army were approaching Starokostiantyniv (on the upper reaches of the Sluch).

In his new orders the KomandArm-Horse tasked the 4th Division with securing the Army's operation for the capture of Zviahel to the north, for which the division was to take the area between the Sluch and Ubort' on the Zviahel – Korosten' rail line. The main strike was entrusted to the 6th and 14th Divisions, which at dawn on 26 June were to cross the Sluch river near Hul's'k and Tal'ky. The 11th Division (less one brigade, left for a demonstration attack towards Zviahel) formed the Army's reserve, advancing behind the 6th Division. The 45th Division, which was on the left flank of the army, was tasked during 26 June with forcing the Sluch at Rohachiv and Myropil', then on 27 June capturing the railway junction at Shepetivka (see Map 17).

In the afternoon of 26 June the units of the 6th and 14th Divisions engaged in a fierce battle, now with Polish Cavalry Division, for possession of the crossings of the Sluch at Hul's'k and Tal'ky. By the night of 27 June, despite the bitter resistance of the enemy, those crossings were captured by the 6th and 14th Divisions. The enemy was pushed back to the west, with heavy losses. An attack of the 9th Lancer Regiment against the 6th Division, which had occupied Hul's'k, was counterattacked in mounted formation, with one enemy squadron being completely cut down and the rest dispersed. The 4th Division was supported by Konarmia's heavy artillery battalion (under the command of Artillery Inspector Comrade Kulik) until late in the night, fighting with the enemy at Chyzhivka – Zhadkivka<sup>43</sup> on the Sluch river, thus diverting the enemy's attention from our main assault.

The 45th Division by the night of 27 June had forced the Sluch in the section Virlya to Baranivka (40 south of Zviahel, between Rohachiv and Myropil').

From dawn on 27 June, the 6th and 14th Divisions continued to press the enemy on the left bank of the Sluch, pushing it westwards. To support those divisions, units of the 11th Division at dawn on 27 June, under cover of fire from heavy and light batteries of the Army located facing Zviahel, crossed the river near Lubchyt'sya (on the southern outskirts of the city), bypassing the city to the west. The 6th and 11th Divisions together took Zviahel in the afternoon of 27 June with an energetic strike. The enemy took heavy losses and retreated along the road to Korets' (towards Rivne).

A pursuit of the retreating enemy continued until evening. By then the Konarmia had reached the line of the Tserem River in the sector of Dubrivka to Yarun' (10 km west of Zviahel).

After nine days of constant fighting Zviahel was taken, and Sluch was cleared of the enemy. The Konarmia had opened the road to an important railway junction of the enemy, the town of Rivne.

The shift of the Army's centre of gravity towards Korosten', on the Front's orders, drew the Army into prolonged battles with the enemy, who occupied the Ubort' and Uzh Rivers. That delayed the operation to capture Zviahel by a whole week.

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<sup>43</sup> More or less the modern Zviahel suburb of Druzhba.



## Conclusions from the Zviahel Operation

The Konarmia operation to capture Zviahel should be sharply divided into three periods:

- The first period from 18 to 21 June, during which the Konarmia shifted the centre of gravity of the strike more towards Korosten', in the wooded marshy area of the upper reaches of the Uzh and Ubort' Rivers which were uncomfortable for cavalry action.
- The second period from 22 to 25 June, when the Konarmia tried to take Zviahel from the north, in the Chyzhivka – Oleksandrivka area.
- The third period, 26 and 27 June, when the main strike was transferred to the south of Zviahel, in the area of least enemy resistance, distracting the enemy's attention with attacks on the town of Zviahel and north of it.

The unsuccessful first two periods greatly delayed the Konarmia's operation to seize Zviahel and dragged it into unnecessarily protracted fighting from June 19 to 25, which largely played into hands of the enemy, who had time to regroup in front of the 12th and Horse Armies. Apart from the delay, the Army suffered unnecessary losses during the hard-fought battles with the enemy, fortified on the Uzh River.

Because of the protracted operation, the element of surprise was not fully available in the strike near Hul's'k and Tal'ky, which also increased our losses in crossing there.

Insufficient assessment of the situation and the desire to align with neighbouring armies led to an unsuccessful choice of the initial main objective and an incorrect deployment.

A sufficient blocking unit in the direction of Korosten', for joint actions with 12th Army, and a swift strike of the main mass of the Konarmia in the vicinity of Rohachiv (10-25 km south of Zviahel) would have given us the left bank of the Sluch in the area of Zviahel and to the south and would have opened the way to Rivne much earlier for the Konarmia.

That manoeuvre would have forced the Polish 3rd Army to abandon the Ubort' and the wooded and marshy area between the Ubort' and Sluch Rivers and retreat to the Sluch.



## Chapter IV

### The Konarmia's Operations at Rivne

The new and considerable success of the Konarmia, of capturing Zviahel and occupying the western bank of the Sluch from Zviahel to Myropil', raised the question of setting new objectives for the South-Western Front, which were expressed in its directive of 27 June as follows:

- *KomandArm-12* was tasked with capturing Mazyr and Olevs'k no later than 28 June. He was instructed "to force the Sluch River on the Sosnove – Berezne line and, no later than 3 July, together with units of the Konarmia, seize the Kostopil' – Rivne area, after which "vigorously develop a blow, bypassing Sarny" in the general direction of Stepan' – [Stary] Chortoryis'k.
- *KomandArm-Horse*, in pursuit of the enemy, should take Shepetivka Station area on 29 June and, no later than 3 July, the Rivne area.
- *KomandArm-14* was told to capture Starokostiantyniv and Khmelnytskyi no later than 29 July, and continuing the offensive move forward to deliver a devastating blow to the enemy's Dnestr group without letting it get back to the Polish border.

After capturing Zviahel, on the evening of 28 June the Konarmia, was ordered at 12:00 on 27 June to head to the Korchyk River in order to secure the left bank of the Sluch River. Reaching the line it met stubborn resistance from the enemy, which were trying to hold the Korchyk. In the vicinity of Korets', at about noon on 28 June, units of the 4th Division met firm resistance from units of the 3rd Legion Division, which occupied the eastern outskirts of the town. Attacking in mounted formation, supported by artillery fire, the division pushed the enemy out and forced it to retreat to Rivne (see Map 18).

On the same day, 28 June, squadrons of the 19th CR of the 4th Division shot down two enemy aeroplanes with gunfire. The engine of one of them was 280 hp and turned out to be intact, and one pilot survived.

Near Kylykyiv the 6th Division engaged in a fierce fight with units of the Polish Cavalry Division. As a result of a long dismounted battle, by the evening the division had dislodged the enemy from their positions and forced it to flee. The division captured four guns in full harness, which were immediately fired at the enemy. Further south, near Berezdiv, during the evening of 28 June, the 11th Division met stubborn resistance from the enemy; it was pushed out and also fled after a swift attack.

The 14th Division, which was moving on the left flank of the army, captured the Krasnostav area by the evening of 28 June, without contact with the enemy. The 45th Division occupied Polonne, continuing to move towards Shepetivka.

From 29 June to 1 July the Konarmia remained in the occupied region, putting itself and its horses in order and strenuously preparing for the task of capturing Rivne. The horses were over-tired, they needed a halt and increased feed: the divisions replenished their food and combat supplies from the Army bases. By order of the RMS and Army staff the railway bridge over the Teteriv River near Chudniv was restored and by the end of the Rivne operation trains were running to Polonne Station and further on to Shepetivka. The rear Army HQ, institutions and bases were established in Zhytomyr – Berdychiv – Kozyatyn. Around Zviahel, an Army forward base was located and motor transport was set up along the Zhytomyr to Zviahel highway.

The position of the Polish front was as follows.

As a result of successful actions of the Konarmia at Zviahel, General Raszewski's [2nd] Army was forced to retreat behind the Horyn' River, occupying it with units of the 3rd Legion Division and the Cavalry Division (the first on both sides of the road to Rivne, the latter south of it around Ozhenyn and Mohylany); the 6th Infantry Division remained detached on the left flank of the Army, losing contact with the Army HQ on 1 July. Attempts by the 2nd Army to regain the initiative for action led to nothing (fighting from 28 June to 1 July). Biernacki gives the combat strength of that Army as 14,000 men on 1 July.

By the evening of 28 June, the gap between the left flank of the Polish 6th Army and the right flank of the Polish 2nd Army had already reached 80 km, and the 2nd Army was still 50 km behind the 6th. In this gap there was only General Szymański's group of the 10th Brigade of the 5th Infantry Division, near Izyaslav, which had broken away and was unconnected to its Army. The Polish 3rd Army continued to occupy the line



of the Horyn' River on 1 July, with the 1st Legion Division on its right flank south of Olevs'k. The Polish 6th Army at the same time occupied the area of Letychiv with its left flank (13th ID), with Colonel Szilling's detachment (44th Infantry and 6th Lancer Regiments) near Starokostiantyniv.

In the situation the 6th Army commander, General Romer, decided to remove his best unit, the 18th Infantry Division, from the front and send it through Starokostiantyniv to Rivne in order to increase the chances of victory for the Polish 2nd Army in a decisive battle with Konarmia, assisted by that division.

According to Arciszewski, General Romer reckoned that his division would reach the site of the decisive battle before the Konarmia had time to force the Horyn'.

On 30 June the 18th Infantry Division started to move from the Letychiv area to Starokostiantyniv (its combat strength is given as 4,000 bayonets by a Polish source).

On 1 July, immediately after the 145th Regiment of the 18th ID arrived in Starokostiantyniv, General Romer formed a detachment from it and the 1st Battalion of the 4th Podolian<sup>44</sup> Rifle Regiment under Colonel Hohenauer and gave it the following task: "Do not hesitate to strike at the enemy's group near the town of Hrytsiv in order to defeat it to the north-east, and after finishing that task, concentrate between Hrytsiv and Starokostiantyniv, in order to become the basis for the concentration of the 18th Infantry Division." The movement of that group to the Hrytsiv area in the evening of 1 July led to a fight with Kotovski's cavalry brigade and further fighting with the 45th RD, which was moving on the left flank of the Konarmia and occupied Izyaslav on 2 July.

Meanwhile the Polish Front command, despite the partial setbacks to its armies, decided to take advantage of the stalemate on the Ukrainian Front and the advanced position of Budëny's cavalry to attack it from the north, west and south, trying to defeat it with a concentrated offensive. The following forces were to take part in this operation on the Polish side: from their 3rd Army, the 1st Legion Infantry Division, which was operationally transferred to the 2nd Army and positioned by 1 July in an area one march north of Horodnytsya on the Sluch; the entire 2nd Army, consisting of the 3rd and 6th Infantry Divisions, Cavalry Division, 1st Reserve and 10th Infantry Brigades and the 1st Cavalry Brigade; and from the 6th Army, General Krajowski's 18th Infantry Division, which was being relocated by rail from Letychiv to Starokostiantyniv on 30 June.

Due to the lack of coordination in the actions of these divisions – which were part of three different armies, scattered over a large area – this operation did not give the Polish command the desired results right from the beginning; some divisions had no contact with their armies – this mainly applies to the 1st and 6th IDs.

A directive of the Polish Ukrainian Front, sent in the evening of 1 July, for action against Budëny's cavalry was as follows:

The general situation of the Front's troops is unknown. Whether the 6th Infantry Division has stayed near Korets' or moved slightly northwards is unknown.

Regardless, the 6th ID and 1st Legion ID are to launch attack from the Storozhiv area (12 km northeast of Korets') at dawn on 2 July to attack Korets' or Zviahel.

Budëny at 18:00 on 1 July had the intention of forcing the Horyn' River on 2 July, to capture Rivne on 3 July; whether the actions of the 1st and 6th IDs will change that decision is impossible to foresee. In case the enemy fails to attack the Horyn' on the night of 1/2 July or at dawn on 2 July, we should add Captain Wolff's group to the advancing 3rd ID and Cavalry Division on 2 July before the attack starts in order to support the right flank of the troops engaged at Korets'. Despite the fatigue, the main forces of the 3rd Infantry Division are being sent to the area of Korets' and Kylykyiv, the Cavalry Division is being sent through Hannopil' to Berezhiv.

Taking the crossings over the Horyn' River, even with a small force, might stop all the enemy attempts. A lack of involvement by the main forces of the 3rd Infantry Division, at least two

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<sup>44</sup> These units are often called "Highland" in English, as Podolia is in the Carpathian Mountains.



infantry regiments and cavalry division, and in the actions of the 1st and 7th Infantry Divisions will weaken their strike.

The offensive should not be reduced to a demonstration but should be conducted as a real attack, even if only with a reduced force. Postponing the action may have unfortunate consequences. The Front staff is sending a motor convoy to the 3rd Infantry Division in Babyn to help transfer the troops to Korets'.

The Front draws attention to the need for seamless combat communications between the operating groups. The commander of 2nd Army, at dawn on 2 July, is to move to the location of the headquarters of the 3rd Infantry Division, from where he will be able to direct the actions of his Army.

As can be seen from the above directive, the Polish Front hoped to prevent the start of an offensive by Buděny's Konarmia, setting up a very complex operation to stop him. In the meantime, on 1 July, events took place at the front of the 3rd Infantry Division and the Polish Cavalry Division, of which the Polish Front staff were not yet aware. On the morning of 1 July, units of the Polish 3rd Legion Infantry Division, following their orders, launched a brisk counter-attack against our 4th Cavalry Division in the area of Korets'. This raid (according to Polish documents) involved two infantry regiments – the 7th and 9th – and five batteries. To the west of Korets' town, a fierce firefight took place, which lasted until late in the evening. The 1st Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division approached from the south from the afternoon to support the 4th Cavalry Division. The enemy suffered a heavy defeat and hastily retreated to the Horyn' river, discarding artillery and transports on the road. The 4th CD captured two guns with harnesses, 40 machine guns, 1,000 shells and about 1,000 prisoners; up to 600 Poles were cut down during horseback charges and pursuit. Polish sources confirm this defeat, but are silent about the losses.

By nightfall, the 4th Cavalry Division had positioned itself in the Richky – Hannivka – Holovnytsia – [Velyki?] Mezhyrichi area.

The other two brigades of the 6th Cavalry Division were fighting till the evening of 1 July against the Polish Cavalry Division which started to move from Mohylany to Hannopil'. They drove it back to the Horyn' River.

The Polish 6th Infantry Division, at Sosnove (about 30 km northwest of Korets'), did not fight the 4th Cavalry Division on 1 July, and probably didn't even scout for it. That division only received orders to join in the actions with the 3rd Infantry Division on 3 July, and remained completely passive on 1 and 2 July.

Thus, the Polish Front's orders were almost impossible to execute; the units of General Raszewski's Polish 2nd Army were seriously beaten and started to retreat to the Horyn': the 1st and 18th IDs, which were supposed to operate on the extreme flanks of 2nd Army, from the north and south, were still three to four marches away. In the meantime, in order to execute the South-Western Front's latest directive, the Konarmia's commander gave operational orders in the evening of the 1 July, seeking to use the advantageous position of his divisions for an attack on Rivne. Those orders assigned the following tasks to the divisions of the Konarmia:

- a) The 4th Cavalry Division, at dawn on 2 July, was to advance to the area of Andrusiiv – Syniv – Fedorivka – Rusyvel' – Braniv – Svitanok and serve as the rear of the Army's operation on Rivne; it was to conduct a constant demonstration offensive in the general direction of Rivne and seize intact the crossings over the Horyn' River in the Tuchyn – Hoshcha – Simoniv sector. For this operation the heavy artillery battalion of the Army was attached to the division. A reconnaissance mission was to be performed in the direction of Sosnove – Rivne- Mykhalkivtsi; a strong detachment was to make contact with the left flank of the 44th Rifle Division of the 12th Army. After the Konarmia shock group reached the city of Rivne, the 4th Division was to immediately force the Horyn' River and occupy the Velykyi Zhytyn – Malyi Zhytyn – Horodyshche – Radyslavka area, where it would make contact with the main Army forces (see Map 19).
- b) The 6th Cavalry Division was to concentrate in the region of Hannopil' by 03:00 on 2 July, and at dawn force the Horyn' River near Ostroh; continuing the attack and reconnaissance in the direction of Buhryn – Zdolbuniv, by the evening of 2 July it was to take the Ozhenyn – Brodiv district; at dawn on 3 July it would continue the offensive to bypass Rivne from the southwest and take the Karpylivka – Yasynyvychi





area, reconnaissance was to be sent to the Stubla River line, from its inflow into the Horyn' River to where it crossed the highway to Mlyniv.

- c) The 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions by 03:00 on 2 July were to concentrate in the region of Khorostok – Zhukiv – Volytsya – Lysyche (close to, but slightly south of the 6th Cavalry Division area), then move to the crossings over the Horyn' near Ostroh, which would be seized at dawn on 2 July (jointly with the 6th Cavalry Division). Then a swift attack: the 11th Cavalry Division along the main Ostroh – Varkovychi road and by the afternoon of 2 July was to capture the Bilashiv – Khoriv region (10 km north-west of Ostroh); and the 14th Cavalry Division by the afternoon of 2 July was to take the settlements bordering Ostroh to the south-east, covering the operation of the 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions from that direction and maintaining close contact with the 45th Rifle Division (attached to the Konarmia) in the area of Slavuta – Izyaslav. At dawn on 3 July the 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions were to launch a quick offensive to the north for the joint capture of Rivne, with the 11th Cavalry Division to the southwest (in the area between the roads from Mlyniv and Dubno to Rivne) and the 14th Cavalry Division from the south and southeast (along the railway line Zdolbuniv – Rivne).
- d) The 45th Rifle Division assigned to the Konarmia (Comrade Yakir) was ordered on 2 July to move its cavalry brigade (Comrade Kotovski) to Starokostiantyniv for joint action with the right flank units of the 14th Army; the main forces of the division were to take a decisive offensive in the general direction of Sosnivka and Dubno, and take Dubno on 4 July.
- e) The Reserve Cavalry Brigade<sup>45</sup> of the Konarmia, making up the Army reserve, was to be concentrated near Korets' on 2 July.
- f) The wounded and sick were to be sent to Zviahel.
- g) The forward army base (ammunition and food supplies) was to be moved to the area of Zviahel by 2 July.

Once again, the Front had ordered the whole burden of the operation to fall on the Konarmia, as the adjacent 12th and 14th Armies were moving very slowly and uncertainly and by 5 July had only reached: the 12th Army to the line Perha – Olevs'k, on the Ubort' River – Horodnytsya (the nearest division, the 44th, was still three marches east of Rivne) and the 14th Army on the Yuzefpil<sup>46</sup> – Letychiv line (two marches east of the Starokostiantyniv – Khmelnytskyi line).

The persistent fighting in the Rivne area by the Konarmia at the end of June, and its unsuitable terrain for cavalry operations (forested and marshy), made GlavKom instruct the KomFront-SW of the desirability of moving the Konarmia further north, bypassing Rivne. In his reply telegram of 2 July, the KomFront-SW pointed out that there was not enough time for the proposed regrouping, because on 3 July he had been asked to have his units on the line of Sarny – Rivne – Khmelnytskyi – Kam'yanets'-Podil's'kyi, as a starting point for a further offensive. The KomFront went on to give his thoughts on further action, which were as follows:

- After capturing the Rivne area, the advanced units of the Konarmia should seize the crossings over the Ikva and Styr Rivers near Dubno – Lutsk and move further, bypassing Kovel and Brest, in the general direction of Lutsk – Volodymyr – Chelm – Luków.
- A shock group of the 12th Army would operate in the direction of Kovel – Brest.

Finally, to support the entire operation from the south, the 14th Army would strike in the direction of L'viv – Tarniv.

The action of the units of Konarmia and the Polish 2nd Army developed, following the orders of the respective commanders, as follows.

The 4th Cavalry Division, with the Army's heavy artillery battalion, following the orders of 2 July, moved at dawn towards the crossings over the Horyn' river (along the road to Rivne) and on the Svitanok – Fedorivka

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<sup>45</sup> This is not the Special Purpose Brigade, but a short-lived body, presumably of recently arrived reinforcements that were fed into the main units over the coming weeks.

<sup>46</sup> Likely just south of Tereshpil' in Vinnytsia Oblast.



line caught up with several battalions of Polish infantry, being transported by trucks on the road to Rivne. These were units of the 3rd Legion Infantry Division, retreating after the battle on 1 July to the crossings of the Horyn' River. Under fire from the batteries of the 4th Cavalry Division, these Polish battalions were forced to dismount in a hurry on the heights near Vytktiv – Terentiiv, and suffered heavy casualties from our shells.

Fearing a quick capture of the crossing of the Horyn' by our cavalry, about midday on 2 July the commander of the Polish 3rd ID ordered his entire group to retreat to the western bank of the river. Despite the fact that the 8th IR, which had not taken part in the battle on 1 July, was deployed to the western bank in advance, the retreat of the Polish infantry was made in very difficult conditions, under heavy fire of our artillery, both heavy and light, which concentrated on the retreating Polish columns. Until late in the evening of 2 July, units of the Polish 3rd Infantry Division still managed to hold the crossings over the Horyn' River in the Tuchyn – Hoshcha – Simoniv sector. By dawn on 3 July the eastern bank of the Horyn' was in the hands of our 4th Cavalry Division.

While the actions described above were taking place with the 4th Cavalry Division, the main strike group of the Konarmia, consisting of the 6th, 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions, moved in three columns at dawn on 2 July to carry out their tasks. At about 16:00 on 2 July the 6th, 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions reached the line Stadnyky – Mohylany – Voloskivtsi – Staryi Kryvyn, meeting almost no enemy, and only at the railway bridge near Brodiv did the 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions meet with fierce resistance – from Polish cavalry units supported by three armoured trains. A fierce fire fight ensued.

At 17:00 one of the 6th Cavalry Division's brigades crossed to the western bank of the Horyn' near Stadnyky and reached Ozhenyn Station, cutting off the retreat from Brodiv Station for two of the enemy's armoured trains. But, with the help of those armoured trains, dismounted units of Polish Cavalry Division managed to retain the Chernyakhiv – Brodiv district. Despite the fierce attacks of our brigade and fire from the batteries of the 6th and 11th CDs, at night the units of the 6th CD were pushed back to the eastern bank of the Horyn'. The crossings over the river around Stadnyky and Mohylany remained in enemy hands.

Meanwhile the shock group of the 14th Cavalry Division, moving on the left flank, at about 17:00 pushed the enemy out at Kryvyn Station, repelling them to Ostroh. At about 23:00 units of that division, under strong enemy gun and machine-gun fire, crossed the River Horyn' in the region of the villages of Solov'e<sup>47</sup> and Netishyn and occupied Hrytskiv farm<sup>48</sup> on the western bank of the Horyn'. Because of the lateness of the hour and darkness, the units of the division had to halt for the night in the occupied region. Captured prisoners established that facing the 14th Cavalry Division were units of the Polish 1st Reserve Infantry Brigade – the 105th IR and one battalion of the 106th IR with one light battery and three cavalry squadrons. (Polish documents instead show that the crossings near Ostroh were held by the 1st Reserve Infantry Brigade of the 101st and 106th Regiments. Those regiments were weak and not very stable in combat. Meanwhile the 105th regiment was part of the 10th Brigade, acting to the south of the 1st Reserve IB.)

At dawn on 3 July the 6th Cavalry Division left a small blocking unit in front of Mohylany, and sent the bulk of its units to the crossing near the village of Solov'e. There the enemy put up a stubborn resistance, but was broken at about noon, and our units, on the heels of the retreating enemy, broke into Ostroh. The destroyed regiments of the Polish 1st Reserve Infantry Brigade retreated to the west from Ostroh on the road to Varkovychi, pursued by advanced units of our cavalry.

After capturing Ostroh the Konarmia strike group settled for the night as follows: the 6th Cavalry Division at Khoriv – Ploske, the 11th Cavalry Division at Hroziv – Hrem'yache – Mikhailivka (both divisions situated to the west of Ostroh) and the 14th Cavalry Division in the southern suburbs of Ostroh – Slobidka – Novoye Mesto.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, on the night of 2 to 3 July the Polish Cavalry Division, fearing this southern diversion, left the crossings of the Horyn' near Mohylany – Brodiv and withdrew somewhat to the north, to the line of

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<sup>47</sup> No longer given as a separate village. It was between Netishyn and Vil'bivne.

<sup>48</sup> Where the nuclear power plant now is.

<sup>49</sup> Now a suburb of modern Ostroh, across the Viliya River



Kolesnyky – Novosilky. It seems to have lost contact with the Konarmia, which did not notice this retreat. On the evening of 3 July that division abandoned the line, and instead moved to near the village of Taikury (15 km southeast of Rivne). This last retreat was ordered by the Army commander, who on the afternoon of 3 July was convinced that it was impossible to hold onto the Horyn' and that it was necessary to retreat back from that river to defend the immediate approaches to Rivne.

While the Konarmia strike group forced a crossing of the Horyn' near Ostroh, the following events took place on the Konarmia's extreme flanks on 3 July.

From the morning of 3 July the 4th Division, supporting the Konarmia operation from the north, continued a protracted demonstration battle on the banks of the Horyn' in the Tuchyn – Hoshcha area, with units of the 3rd Legion Infantry Division facing it.

By the evening of 3 July the Konarmia field headquarters arrived at Korets' town; the reconnaissance of the HQ liaison squadron had managed to ascertain the enemy's movement to the north of Korets' around Sosnove. These were regiments of the enemy 6th Infantry Division. (According to Biernacki the 6th ID, with the 14th Lancer and the 2nd Light Horse Regiments, received a belated order from the 2nd Army to attack Korets', dated 1 July, early in the morning of 3 July. However, when already on the march, it received a new order from its commander to move to Oleksandriya and therefore turned back to Sosnove and from there moved west, without coming into contact with the Konarmia.)

Two brigades of the 4th Cavalry Division were ordered to eliminate the enemy 6th ID's offensive, leaving one brigade to cross the Horyn' at the Tuchyn – Hoshcha sector. The 2nd Brigade moved without delay to carry out the order, but when it reached Velyka Klets'ka it turned back without contacting the enemy. The 3rd Brigade of the division was late in moving out and stayed in place. So the threat to the Konarmia's rear from the north was therefore eliminated by the enemy itself.

Things were different on the left flank of the Army, with the 45th Rifle Division. On 2 July the command of the Polish 6th Army decided to widen the scope of the counter manoeuvre it had conceived and, reinforcing Colonel Hohenauer's group with the 6th Lancer Regiment, ordered that group to Izyaslav in order to further strike at the flank and rear of the Reds concentrated around Rivne. The entire 18th Infantry Division was also to operate in the same direction (see Map 20).

These orders led to a clash between units of Comrade Kotovski's cavalry brigade, reinforced by the 400th Rifle Regiment, and Colonel Hohenauer's group. The Poles were successful and took Hrytsiv, while Comrade Kotovski's brigade lost two guns and fell back to Velyki Puzyrky.

On 3 July the commander of the Polish front in Ukraine set the following tasks for his armies:

1. The 2nd Army, reinforced by the 1st Cavalry Brigade, was to defend the Horyn' River, and the Rivne area in particular.
2. The 3rd Army continued to perform its previous task, directing the 1st Legion ID to the Levichi – Rudnya-Stryi<sup>50</sup> area, from where it could link up with the 6th Infantry Division at Sosnove. The aim of that advance was to continue to form a group for a strike in the direction of Rivne.
3. The 6th Army, staying in its current positions, was to strike with the 18th ID towards Slavuta, securing its left flank; General Szymański's group was to aid that strike, being in contact with units of 2nd Army.

It can be seen that despite the impossibility of holding on to the Horyn', the Polish command continued to persist in its decision to break up the Konarmia, tying it up from the front and attacking both flanks at the same time. As a result of these regroupings in the Polish 6th Army, on 2 and 3 July there was a persistent counter-battle between the Polish 18th Division, advancing in two columns on the Hrytsiv – Verbivtsi and Velyki Puzyrky front, and units of the 45th Division with Kotovski's cavalry brigade.

After crossing the Sluch at Rohachiv – Romanivka,<sup>51</sup> the 45th Division moved towards Shepetivka – Polonne and on 1 July took the following positions: the 135th Brigade approaching the crossings on the Horyn' at

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<sup>50</sup> Neither of these towns exist now. They were 4 km NE and 2 km NW of Mochulyanka respectively.

<sup>51</sup> Map 17 shows this division crossing between Baranivka and Miropil'. Rohachiv and Romanivka are far too far north.



Tashky – Izyaslav, fighting fiercely with the enemy occupying the crossings; Comrade Kotovski's brigade seized the eastern part of Izyaslav and after the 405th Regiment (135th Brigade) approached the town, it moved to Puzyrki to act against the Starokostiantyniv group from the north in connection with the 8th Chervonnyy<sup>52</sup> Cavalry Division, which was moving on Starokostiantyniv from the south (from the 14th Army); the 133rd Brigade had reached the Izyaslav – Dan'kivtsi – Markivtsi line; the 134th Brigade was in reserve (almost one march behind) in the Novolabun' – Velyka Berezna area. On the Polish side, the Horyn' River line from Slavuta to Izyaslav and southward was occupied by General Szymański's 10th Infantry Brigade, which at that was not in contact with any of the Polish 2nd and 6th Armies.

Following KomandArm-Horse's orders, on 2 July, units of the 45th RD (134th RB and Kotovski's CB) engaged in a counter-battle with units of the Polish 18th ID, which had left Starokostiantyniv on 1 July in two columns, the left column (145th IR and 6th Lancers) on the road to Lysyntsi – Verbivtsi, and the second column (49th IR) through Velyki Matsevychi to Hrytsiv; the 144th and 42nd IRs followed these units in a second echelon. By the evening of 2 July, the Kotovski Brigade, with the 400th Rifle Regiment attacked the enemy on the march at Lysyntsi and Hubcha, and was initially successful. But the rapidly deploying enemy, supported by artillery, repulsed the cavalry brigade and the 400th RR at Velyki Puzyrky. That withdrawal cost two guns, and the 400th RR suffered heavy losses (up to 80% of its strength).

At the same time our 134th Rifle Brigade, moving from Novolabun' to Hrytsiv, was engaged in a bitter battle with the enemy's 49th IR, also advancing on Hrytsiv. After a fierce battle the enemy captured the town. Developing its success, by the evening of 3 July, the enemy had reached the line of Dan'kivtsi – Bilopil' – Rozhychna. Owing to this situation the 133rd RB (45th RD) retreated in the direction of Shepetivka. By the morning of 4 July the remnants of the 133rd RB and the 400th RR (three-quarters lost and all equipment) began to regroup near Shepetivka.

Interviews with prisoners revealed the presence of the entire Polish 18th Infantry Division in front of the 45th Rifle Division. In order to secure Shepetivka railway junction, KomDiv-45 (Yakir) decided to concentrate with the 135th RB the remnants of 133rd RB and 400th RR under the command of KomBrig-135 Golubenko in the Shepetivka area.

An Army reserve unit in the form of Comrade Stepnoy's Composite Cavalry Brigade, which arrived in the Hlybochok area by the night of 3 July, was expected to arrive at Polonne. Concerned about the possibility of the enemy Starokostiantyniv group moving towards the Army rear (located in the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv area), on 3 July KomandArm-Horse ordered the Army's reserve cavalry brigade and a ChON regiment to form a united cavalry group under the command of Stepnoy and sent it to Novolabun' "for joint action with units of the 45th Division and to inflict a complete defeat on the enemy, who have become too zealous at the front of the 14th Army in the Moskalivka<sup>53</sup> – Vorobiivka – Vyshnopil' area".

On the morning of 4 July, Comrade Stepnoy's cavalry group arrived in the Polonne area and established contact with KomDiv-45. At 07:30 on 5 July the KomDiv ordered the 135th Rifle Brigade, the Kotovski cavalry brigade and Stepnoy's cavalry group to reach the Topory – Verbivtsi – Hrytsiv line by the evening of 5 July, then to move to Starokostiantyniv: the 133rd and 134th brigades were to support the strike group by capturing Slavuta – Izyaslav (133rd) and Hrytsiv – Kustivtsi (134th).

By the evening of 4 July, Comrade Stepnoy's cavalry group occupied Rozhychna – Bilopil', and 134th Brigade had taken Hrytsiv; at the same time the Polish 18th Infantry Division changed its direction to the west and Izyaslav.

Meanwhile, the break in the defensive line of the Polish 2nd Army on the Horyn' River forced it to occupy a shorter front. Following an operational order from that Army of 3 July, units of the 3rd Legion Infantry Division withdrew to the Horodyshe – Bila Krynytsya – Kolodenka line, fully closing the Rivne highway and grouping the division's units so that in case of a new Red Army attack it could organise attacks on its flanks; the Polish Cavalry Division was withdrawn to the Taikury – Novomyi's'k area to secure the right flank of the 3rd Infantry Division. The retirement was ordered to be executed after dark and in complete order, without

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<sup>52</sup> That is 8th "Red" Cavalry Division, although *Chervonnyy* is different from the word for the "Red" Army (*Krasne*).

<sup>53</sup> There are many. This is the one near Polonne (Polons'kyi district, Khmelnytskyi Oblast).



attracting the enemy's attention. To support the flanks of the Army the 1st Cavalry Brigade (disembarking from trains at Zdolbuniv Station) with two cavalry regiments and artillery went to Zdolbuniv, and the 11th Lancer Regiment of that brigade to the Velyki and Malyi Zhytyn area. By the same order, the 2nd Army commander ordered the 6th ID to march immediately with two regiments to Sedlyshche<sup>54</sup> village and then to Oleksandriya to flank the enemy; one regiment (12th) of the division was to go to Kostopil, as the Army reserve.

Having given the order to defend the approaches to Rivne, the Polish 2nd Army commander thought that on the morning of 4 July that the 6th ID and the 1st Legion ID were heading to it from the north, while from the south the 18th ID (General Krajowski was heading from Izyaslav to Ostroh). Reality was to dash his hopes: the 6th Polish Infantry Division was in the region of Sosnove in the afternoon of 2 July and only received the 1 July order to advance towards Korets' late, which they began to execute at dawn of 3 July. But then it received a new order, and went back to Sosnove and started moving to Rivne, but did not contact units of the Red 4th Cavalry Division. On 3 July the Polish 1st Legion ID, which was transferred to 2nd Army from the 3rd Army, still remained in the area south of Olevs'k. The Polish 18th Infantry Division on 1 July had just finished its concentration near Starokostiantyniv and on 2-3 July it fought a hard battle with the Konarmia's 45th RD of Comrade Yakir near Hrytsiv. It was not until 4 July that it moved on to Izyaslav.

These battles will be described in detail below.

As a result of the Konarmia's successful actions at Ostroh the Polish front on the Horyn' was broken for almost a kilometre. An important road junction, Ostroh was in the hands of the Red cavalry and, most importantly, the road to Rivne was open for the Red cavalry to carry out their task.

Meanwhile, the commander of the Polish Ukrainian Front persisted with his previous intention to break up the Konarmia: a directive of 3 July ordered the commander of the 2nd Army to maintain the Rivne area at all costs, tying up the Konarmia until the 1st and 18th Polish IDs approached from the north and south. However, that plan had little chance of success: those divisions were still two marches to the north-east of the area of operations of the Polish 2nd Army on 4 July. At 04:00 on 5 July, the 3rd Legion Division took its new positions: the 9th Regiment in the Horodyshche area, the 8th near Bila Krynytsya (closing the Rivne road) and the 7th the sector Kolodenka to Novy Dvor.<sup>55</sup>

At dawn on 4 July the 14th Division, moving through Novosilky to Taikury, attacked the Polish Cavalry Division who had spent the night near Taikury. At the same time, the 11th Division advanced with one brigade towards Zdolbuniv and, having occupied the latter, moved northwards towards Krasyliv. The vigorous attack of the 14th Cavalry Division on Taikury caused great confusion in the ranks of the Polish Cavalry Division, which fled west from there in disarray. At the same time the 14th Cavalry Division launched an attack on the 7th Regiment of the 3rd Legion ID, which was occupying Kolodenka.

Meanwhile, west of Zdolbuniv, the Polish 1st Cavalry Brigade deployed and took up strong positions on the heights near Orestiv and Il'pen. A hard-fought battle ensued on the wide front of the 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions, who fought both mounted and dismounted. About 10:00 the brigade of the 11th CD which had occupied Zdolbuniv was pushed back by a Polish detachment, supported by armour (it was two companies of the 3rd Podolian Rifle Regiment with six tanks<sup>56</sup> and three armoured trains).

Around 11:00 the position facing the Polish cavalry was restored, and all the attacks on the 14th Cavalry Division were beaten. The 3rd Legion ID had not yet been drawn into action. During these events the 6th Cavalry Division, which was moving on the left flank of the Konarmia, at midday arrived to the left of the 11th CD at Krasyliv (see Map 21).

Being not quite aware of the situation on the front lines, around noon on 4 July the Polish 2nd Army commander ordered the Polish Cavalry Division, and then the 1st Cavalry Brigade to launch a counteroffensive against the Red cavalry (in the general direction of Novomyi's'k). As soon as he received

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<sup>54</sup> This village no longer exists. It was 10 km SE of Kostopil', around Małe Siedliszcze.

<sup>55</sup> Now the very southern suburb of Rivne.

<sup>56</sup> Renault FT-17s.





information about the Konarmia units coming south from Tynne,<sup>57</sup> it was decided that the 1st Brigade's advance should be reinforced by the 2nd Lancer Regiment with one horse battery, two infantry of the 3rd Podolian Regiment, six light tanks and three armoured trains. In the meantime, around noon, the 14th CD broke the front of the 3rd Legion ID near Kolodenka and moved north, threatening the right flank of the remaining units. As a result, the enemy was forced first to clear Bila Krynytsya and Horodyshche, and then the whole division withdrew to the outskirts of Rivne.

By the same time an even more critical situation was created in the sector of the Polish 1st CB. At about 13:00 it was attacked on the Velyka Omelyana – Tynne front, from which it was forced to retreat under the onslaught of our 6th Division. At about 16:00 one brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division took Boyarka (on the western side of Rivne). At the same time 6th Cavalry Division intercepted the highway to Klevan' near Obariv, where it seized some enemy transports.

After receiving a report about the difficult situation facing the 1st Cavalry Brigade the Polish 2nd Army commander, at about 16:00 on 4 July ordered the Polish Cavalry Division to leave one regiment in the Kolodenka area, and to move with the remaining six regiments to Tynne to strike at the rear of the 6th Cavalry Division. However, the Polish division was not able to fulfil that mission, as on the way to Tynne it was met by 11th CD from Zdolbuniv Station.<sup>58</sup> Around 19:00, behind the cemetery at Basiv Kut<sup>59</sup> they started a dogged confrontation, which lasted till night. The dismounted units of the Polish Cavalry Division occupying those positions were supported by the fire of armoured trains.

At 17:00, under the pressure of the 14th CD, the 3rd Legion ID withdrew to the outskirts of Rivne and occupied the eastern edge of the city from the Shpaniv road to the Ustya River with the 9th IR; the 8th IR was positioned further along, up to the Klevan' highway; the 7th IR was in reserve, in the barracks and brickyards on the western side of the city.

A hard firefight soon ensued at the positions occupied by the 8th and 9th Regiments. Our 14th CD advanced on the 9th IR and two brigades of the 11th CD attacked the 8th IR, supported by their own artillery and that of the 6th CD. The 6th CD during this time captured Zolotiivka<sup>60</sup> and cut the road to Klevan'. One brigade of the 11th Division was fighting the Polish Cavalry Division at the Basiv Kut cemetery.

The fierce onslaught by our divisions forced the Polish Army Commander to order a retreat from Rivne to Oleksandriya. At about 22:00, under our attacks, the 3rd Legion ID and the 1st CB began retreating northwards. The retreat was covered by the fire of their armoured trains. The Polish Cavalry Division, cut off from the rest of the army, withdrew at night through Omelyana in the direction of Lutsk. In the area of Dyad'kovychi the Polish cavalry encountered units of our 11th CD, which had withdrawn to that area for the night after the occupation of Rivne. After a short battle the Poles abandoned their entire train and broke through to the west.

By 23:00 on 4 July Rivne, already abandoned by the enemy, was in the hands of the Konarmia. The divisions rushed into the city: the 6th from the north-west, the 11th from the south, and the 14th from the east. The Konarmia captured a rich booty: an armoured train, a radio station, 1,500 horses, trains with operational steam locomotives, two 6-inch guns in harness and plenty of ammunition. During the fighting for Rivne up to 700 Polish soldiers were killed and about 1,000 men were taken prisoner.

The 4th Cavalry Division during these operations was on the right bank of the Horyn', protecting the army against strikes from the east.

As Rivne was being captured, fighting continued on the front of the 45th Rifle Division during the night of 3/4 July. According to Colonel Arciszewski, General Krajowski (commander of the 18th ID) – having come into contact with Konarmia (so far the cavalry of the 45th RD) – decided to manoeuvre exclusively at night.

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<sup>57</sup> Now the western-most part of Rivne city.

<sup>58</sup> The northern tip of the modern town.

<sup>59</sup> The NW end of the modern lake of Basiv Kut. At the time one of the few bridges over the Ustya River.

<sup>60</sup> Now NW modern Rivne city.





He intended to conduct reconnaissance by day, move at night, and strike in the morning. During the day he would position strong groups in the woods and villages to secure the division against mounted attacks.

On the night of 4 July the 18th Infantry Division continued its movement and occupied the villages of Rozhychna and Bilopil'. At dawn on 4 July it took its main force through the gap formed the day before and changed its direction to Izyaslav, to take part there in a decisive battle on the Horyn', in accordance with the order from 6th Army, which had been received in the night of 3/4 July. That order instructed General Krajowski to continue operations with the aim of a decisive battle with the enemy on the Horyn', starting at Izyaslav. It also stipulated that only in the event of failure of that battle, and the encirclement of the Krajowski group, would the Polish army withdraw to cover Eastern Galicia. In this case General Krajowski, while keeping in contact with the 13th Infantry Division, must primarily act to defend the Dubno – Brody railway.

Having decided to carry out further movements only at night, on 4 July the 18th ID commander halted his units in their positions so that he could cross the Horyn' at dawn on 5 July. His intention was accomplished without any interference from our end: the 45th Rifle Division, after persistent fighting, was regrouping and was waiting for the Army reserve, in the form of Comrade Stepnoy's cavalry unit, before launching a counterattack to the south.

The 18th ID commander's intention to pursue the Konarmia resulted only in a series of combats of purely local importance, which in no way changed the strategic situation of the Polish front in the Ukraine – which had been broken by the strike on Rivne in the 80 km space from Oleksandriya to Izyaslav. In order to finally force the Poles in the Ukraine to abandon their positions and begin to retreat westwards, some effort was needed by the Red 14th Army. This was done in the form of a raid by the 8th Chervonnyy Cavalry Division on Khmelnytskyi. The execution of that raid was considerably aided on the one hand by the regrouping undertaken by General Romer of the 6th Army and on the other hand by the actions of the cavalry units attached to the 45th Rifle Division that were redirected to Starokostiantyniv from the north.

At daybreak on 5 July, the Polish 18th Division took Izyaslav, where it unexpectedly met the 10th Infantry Brigade (from the Szymański group), which had been badly damaged by the massacre at Shepetivka, and who for a week had no connection with any of the Polish Armies. On 5 July the 18th Division occupied the area north of Izyaslav. Extreme fatigue forced General Krajowski to give his division a day's rest on 5 and 6 July, so that on the night of 6/7 June they could move to Ostroh. From 5 July on the 18th ID lost contact with both the Polish 2nd and 6th Armies, because of the events that took place at the front of those armies (the Konarmia's capture of Rivne and the 8th Chervonnyy Division's raid that took over Khmelnytskyi and Chornyi Ostriv on the night of 6 July), as a result headquarters of those armies were on the move for several days.

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Let us now turn to the situation of Konarmia after the capture of Rivne (see Map 22).

Around noon on 5 July, the 4th Division started crossing the Horyn', north of Hoshcha. One brigade was left on the river to monitor the crossings on the Tuchyn – Hoshcha section, while the others positioned themselves in the Horodyshche – Zhytyn area.

During the night of 6 July, before receiving any new Front directive, KomandArm-Horse ordered the army to fortify itself in the occupied region and make reinforced reconnaissance towards the enemy. To that end, the 4th CD, taking into account the situation in the Oleksandriya – Sosnove area, was to station itself on both banks of the Horyn' with the consideration that if the enemy advanced from the Sosnove side, then two brigades should station themselves on the right bank of the river near Tuchyn; whilst if the enemy advanced from the north, one brigade should station itself near Tuchyn. The 6th Division was to remain in the occupied area and set up outposts on the Stubla River; the 11th Division was to position itself in the Hrushvytsya – Nahirne area (on both sides of the Dubno highway) and set up outposts on the Stubla to Mizoch inclusive; the 14th CD was to position itself in the area of Ivachkove – Ukrainka (south-east of Rivne) and to set up a guard on the Mizoch – Mezhyrich line (near Ostroh). The 45th RD was ordered to eliminate the enemy as soon as possible in the region of Starokostiantyniv – Staryi Ostropil' (to the east of Starokostiantyniv). Basically the Konarmia positioned its forces in a quadrangle with sides of 30 to 40 km.



This scattering of the army was caused by the situation on its flanks: the considerable pressure of the Polish infantry (18th ID) from the south against the 45th RD and further on to Ostroh, and, besides that, the closeness to the north of the entire Polish 2nd Army, with which Konarmia had not lost contact. Prisoners' accounts showed movement by new units of the Polish 1st and 6th infantry Divisions towards Rivne.

Once in that area, the Konarmia put its units in order, which were exhausted by the incessant marching and fighting. The main Army headquarters moved to Berdychiv, and the Army bases were positioned in the Berdychiv – Zhytomyr – Kozyatyn area. The army was supplied by road from Zhytomyr via Zviahel.

Meanwhile the Polish 2nd Army, pushed northwards from Rivne, lost its communication line to Kovel. On 5 July, its units were positioned as follows: the 3rd Legion Division was the area northwest of Oleksandriya (its 1st CB was sent to the right bank of the Horyn', near Sus'k, to secure the Army's right flank); the 6th Infantry Division was on the march from Sedlyshche to Oleksandriya, having advanced the 12th Regiment to Kostopil'. To secure the left flank, the 2nd Lancer Regiment, which had withdrawn to Zaborol' after the battle with the 4th Cavalry Division, was in the Kotiv area. The 1st Legion ID reached the area of Hrushivka (10 km west of Sosnove) on 5 July, and on 6 July should have moved to Tuchyn. The 2nd Army had no information about the Polish Cavalry Division, which had retreated in the direction of Lutsk.

Meanwhile, the Polish Ukrainian Front's staff were worried about losing contact with their 2nd Army, which had withdrawn so fast to the north, without any information about its future plans. It feared it would turn to Lutsk and Kovel instead of moving to Brody and L'viv, which would have opened the way for the Konarmia in the latter direction. It decided to create a solid front from Polesia to the Dnestr as quickly as possible. In this connection, on 5 July the Front commander gave an order, according to which the Polish 3rd Army was to withdraw to Sarny, the 6th to the Zbruch River (it should have moved the 18th ID to Rivne, to secure the Brody – L'viv railroad line). The same order tasked the 2nd Army: "to move between Budëny's army and Kovel with all your units to prevent him marching west, and to secure for yourself the Rivne – Kovel railway line."

In that connection, the commander of the Polish 2nd Army, on the afternoon of 6 July, issued an order which, assuming that the main forces of the Konarmia would move through Klevan' to Lutsk and Kovel, thus protecting themselves from the Horyn' side, which instructed: "immediately after resupply, proceed to decisive action on the flanks and rear of Budëny in the general direction of Lutsk".

To perform that task the Polish 2nd Army command decided at dawn on 7 July to move over the Horyn' with his right flank at Begen⁶¹ (12 km west of the Oleksandriya) and the main forces at Oleksandriya, to launch an attack to the west to reach the Stubla. The order of movement was as follows: the right column, with the 1st CB and 3rd ID, was to move to Klevan'; the left column, with the 6th and 1st IDs, the latter being the army rear guard, was to head to Biliv (10 km south of Klevan').

By that order the Polish 2nd Army was supposed to fight a battle with Konarmia with its front turned upside down; but in reality the Konarmia's position was completely different from the one imagined by the Poles.

On 6 July the Konarmia, as mentioned above, was located around Rivne. After constant marching and fighting, it was putting itself back in order; the 11th and 14th Divisions were moving south-west and south of Rivne. On that day the Konarmia command received a new Front directive :

In order to prepare for a further offensive I order:

The Horse Army is to occupy the crossings over the Styr and Ikva Rivers in the area of Lutsk – Torhovytysya – Dubno with reconnaissance units.

The left flank of the Army is to continue to fulfil its combat mission (i.e. to eliminate the enemy in the Starokostiantyniv – Ostropil' area).

Send one cavalry division to Berezne – Kostopil' to assist the units of the 2nd Army. Position the main forces with appropriate security measures in the Rivne area, with a view to a further offensive no later than 11 July, in the general direction of Lutsk – Volodymyr – Hrubieszów.

⁶¹ This town no longer exists. It was just NE of Karajevychi.



The Army is to urgently pull up its rear, put its materiel in order, care to the horses, and replenish the necessary supplies.

This directive gave the Konarmia the opportunity for some respite it needed after continuous combat work throughout June. However, the same directive subsequently led to an even greater dispersion of its units.

But the Konarmia did not get its planned respite: on the morning of 6 July the 1st Legion ID contacted the advanced units of the 4th Cavalry Division on the Horyn' River and started a tough fight with them; in the evening KomDiv-4 had to put an entire brigade into action near Tuchyn. In the morning of 7 July the fight was resumed near Tuchyn and continued for the whole day, such that the whole 4th Cavalry Division and then the 6th Division's 3rd Brigade were drawn in.⁶² By midnight, after a fierce fire fight, the enemy was pushed back from the crossing to the north. To follow the Front's directive the KomandArm-Horse at dawn on 7 July sent one regiment of the 6th CD in the direction of Lutsk, to the Radukhivka – Vil'bichi⁶³ area (10 km south-west from Olyka), and the whole 11th CD to capture Dubno. The regiment sent to Vil'bichi had occupied the indicated area by the evening of 7 July, without interference from the enemy,.

The 11th Cavalry Division was sent to Dubno at dawn on 7 July. At 14:00 the lead squadron seized the town: there was no enemy there. A bit later the enemy approached the town with up to a battalion of infantry, pushed out our squadron and destroyed all the bridges over the Ikva River. The main forces of the division, which approached at about 17:00, had to stop on the right bank of the Ikva in order to reconnoitre the crossings. The 3rd Brigade went around the town to the south-east and at about 18:00 decisively attacked the enemy infantry, which was huddled near Surmichi⁶⁴, and on the heels of the panic-stricken enemy made it into the town. For the night the division positioned itself near the town; work went on all night to rebuild the bridges and by the morning of 8 July one bridge was ready.

While the events described above were taking place on the Rivne – Dubno front, the Polish 18th Division, which began its movement on to Ostroh at night, took the town without fighting on dawn of 7 July, forcing the 14th Cavalry Division's detachments out of it. After receiving the news of the occupation of Ostroh the KomDiv-14, Comrade Parkhomenko, sent his 1st Brigade there with the aim of driving the enemy out. The 2nd Brigade was sent to the south of Ivachkove to help the 1st Brigade and the 3rd remained near Ivachkove.

Facing General Krajowski's eleven battalions of infantry and six batteries, a single cavalry brigade attacked. It made some daring mounted charges against the Polish infantry, but they ended in failure, and by evening the brigade had retreated to its initial positions.

The 18th Division on the night of 7/8 July took a circuitous route through Kuniv to Dubno, to avoid meeting the main forces of the Red cavalry. The day before, General Szymański's group had been sent by General Krajowski to Kremenets'.

On the same day, on the extreme left flank of the Konarmia, Comrade Kotovski's cavalry brigade occupied Kul'chyny (west of Starokostiantyniv), where at dawn on 8 July it made contact with Primakov's 8th Chervonnyy Division. That unit, after their raid on Khmelnytskyi, under pressure from units of the Polish 13th Division withdrawing to the new front line near Starokostiantyniv, had had to break through to the north.

In the vicinity of Rivne the whole of 7 July passed quietly, except for a fierce battle between the 1st Legion Division and the 4th Cavalry Division northeast of Tuchyn.

The Polish 2nd Army command, in the morning of 7 July, received information from its forward units that the main forces of the Konarmia remained in the vicinity of Rivne, and decided to change the direction of its movement to the south in order to take back Rivne. The general assault on the town was to begin at dawn on 8 July. The order issued by the 2nd Army general on 7 July gave its divisions the following tasks.

⁶² This brigade had formed part of the army reserve and had been located on the north-western outskirts of Rivne.

⁶³ The northern part of modern Posnykiv.

⁶⁴ Now the Sadovoyi suburb, directly across the river from the old town.



The 3rd Legion ID was to attack Rivne from the north-west at dawn on 8 July, starting from Begen village; the 6th ID was to attack the town from the north-east, from Oleksandriya; the 1st Legion ID was to attack from the east. The 1st Cavalry Brigade was to secure the advancing right flank of the Army. The main task of the Army was to capture Rivne and restore the railway link with Kovel as soon as possible.

At dawn on 7 July, the regrouping of the 2nd Army units began, except for the 1st Legion Division, which was engaged in a bitter battle with the 4th Cavalry Division, and until evening could not break away from that and move to fulfil its orders. Only late in the night did the 1st ID commander manage to get his division out of the battle and start moving towards Oleksandriya. The late time and extreme tiredness prevented that division from reaching its assigned area on the same day (i.e. 7 July), and so it was late in completing its task.

As the Polish troops were preparing to attack Rivne, at 23:00 on 7 July the KomandArm-Horse received a new Front directive, which said that the Polish troops were retreating westwards in a mess, trying to counter-attack with some of their units to secure their retreat. A relentless pursuit of the enemy was ordered:

- a) 12th Army, with the help of cavalry units of the shock group, has a main objective of a rapid offensive bypassing Sarny in the general direction of Berezne – Stepan', in order to cut off the units of the Polish 3rd Army from the crossings on the Sluch and Horyn' Rivers and destroy them. Sarny must be taken no later than 11 July.
- b) The Konarmia, in order to capture the enemy's Starokostiantyniv group, is to conduct a swift strike on their left flank and take the Kul'chyny – Bazaliya area together with units of the 14th Army, where it will establish contact with the 8th Cavalry Division sent to seize the Kupel' – Bazaliya area.
- c) The 14th Army, rapidly pursuing the enemy along the entire front, is to capture the enemy Starokostiantyniv group by means of the 8th Cavalry Division, coordinating its actions with the left flank units of the Konarmia.

Following this directive, at dawn of 8 July the KomandArm-Horse gave orders to his divisions.

- KomDiv-4 was to assist the 44th Rifle Division (left flank of 12th Army) advancing on Sosnove and defeat the enemy in Oleksandriya at all costs.
- The 6th Division was to remain in the occupied region north-west of Rivne and prevent any enemy from advancing from Lutsk, staying in close contact with the 4th and 11th CDs.
- The 11th Cavalry Division was to leave one brigade in the Dubno area, and with the rest of its forces move to the Sosnivka district, in order to defeat the enemy retreating from Ostroh to Dubno. As the retreating units were demoralised, unconnected and without precise direction and enemy group might appear from any side, KomDiv-11 was ordered to conduct reconnaissance in all directions (see Map 23).
- The 14th Cavalry Division was to keep one brigade as reserve around Ostroh, to link up with units of the 45th Rifle Division; the rest of its forces should attack the enemy retreating from Ostroh to Dubno, staying in close contact with the 11th CD and avoid casual collisions with its units.

The dispersal of forces as a result of this order was a consequence of the general situation of the Army, and the weak forward movement of the 12th and 14th Armies neighbouring the Horse Army.

Because of the difficulty of control and communication with the left flank units of the Konarmia – the 45th RD and Comrade Osadchiy's cavalry group (formed from the Kotovski and Stepnoy brigades) – operational orders had to be sent by the Konarmia's chief of staff, Comrade Klyuyev, who was in Berdychiv with the main headquarters. On 8 and 9 July the 45th RD and the Osadchiy cavalry group were to head towards Yampil', operating against the enemy Starokostiantyniv group, in line with the Front's directive (however, this was already out of date: General Krajowski had moved to the Dubno – Kremenets' area on the night of 8 July).

The orders of the Polish 2nd Army and the Konarmia, related above, led the main forces of the Polish 2nd Army to a battle on 8 July with two divisions of the Konarmia – the 4th and 6th.



The Konarmia's preparations for the last order had barely been made when, at dawn on 8 July, under the cover of thick fog, the Polish 2nd Army offensive unfolded. Units of the 3rd Legion Division and 6th Infantry Division hit the 6th Cavalry Division stretched on a wide front (from Klevan' to Shpaniv) and 3rd Brigade of the 4th Cavalry Division, located at Velykyi and Malyi Zhytyn. After a fierce fire fight at about 14:00, the enemy crossed the Horyn' near the village of Begen, knocking back the 6th CD's 1st Brigade from the crossing (the 9th and 12th IRs, with artillery, took part in the battle from the Polish side); other units of the 3rd Legion ID and 1st Cavalry Brigade were on the northern bank of the Horyn', waiting for the damaged bridge to be restored). Especially hard fighting took place at the sector of the 6th CD's 3rd Brigade, near Shpaniv, which was attacked by the Polish 6th ID – the 20th and 65th Regiments, supported by the fire of armoured trains and artillery. The regiments of the 6th Cavalry Division counter-attacked several times, but by the night of 8/9 July were forced to retreat to the north-western outskirts of Rivne, still fighting the encroaching enemy.

Farther east, near Zhytyn and Zaborol', the 3rd Brigade of the 4th CD engaged in the afternoon of 8 July in a fierce battle with regiments of the Polish 1st Legion Division (1st and 5th IRs and 2nd Lancer Regiment) coming from the east. V- and M-Zhytyn fell in the evening. Fighting on the outskirts of Rivne began to unfold into a fierce battle on a broad front.

Around noon on 8 July, the commander of the Polish 2nd Army received a report from their aviation, which said that the main forces of the Konarmia had retreated the day before from Rivne to Lutsk through Klevan' and Kivertsi. Based on that report, which was completely at odds with the actual situation, the Army's commander cancelled his previous orders for the concentric attack on Rivne. He went back to his previous idea: to keep at the flanks and rear of the Konarmia, while moving westwards.

At noon on 8 July the Polish 2nd Army was given new orders, which set the following tasks for the units

- a) In order to pursue the enemy moving through Klevan' to Lutsk, the 1st CB and the 3rd ID were to start moving westwards from the crossing at Begen to the Klevan' region.
- b) the 6th ID was to move through Shpaniv to Biliv (south of Klevan').
- c) The 1st Legion ID was to pass through Rivne, on its left flank, to completely clear it of possible enemy units; it was further stated that "in case the air reconnaissance report proves to be false and Budënný's main forces are near Rivne, the 1st Division, being closest to Rivne, will attack it with all its forces", etc.

The results of this new order will be seen below.

Around 21:00 on 8 July, a violent storm broke out, with heavy rain and hail. The darkness was so intense that nothing could be seen, even at close range. The battle lasted all through the night of 8/9 July in spite of the foul weather. The 6th Cavalry Division which was driven back under the onslaught of the 6th Infantry Division from the Ponebel – Shpaniv line to the north-western outskirts of Rivne, fought hard all night with units of the Polish 1st and 6th Divisions and armoured trains.

At the same time, to the east on the line Zaborol' – Kozlyn, units of the 4th Cavalry Division fought a tough fight all day on 8 July against units of the Polish 1st Legion Infantry Division. By 22:00 the enemy had pushed the 3rd Brigade of the 4th Cavalry Division out of the area of V- and M-Zhytyn, capturing three guns. The 3rd Brigade started retreating south-east with heavy losses. (Note: Polish sources attribute this battle to the dawn of the next day, 9 July.)

At 01:30 on 9 July, the KomandArm-Horse ordered the 3rd Brigade of the 4th Cavalry Division to stop the enemy offensive by any means, occupying the line Kazachi shtab⁶⁵ – Teriv and to get in contact with the 6th Cavalry Division. The 1st and 2nd Brigades, which were in the Army reserve in the vicinity of the crossings near the town of Tuchyn, were urgently sent to support the 3rd Brigade. Numerous attacks of the whole 4th Division in the direction of Zhytyn were repulsed by the enemy with the help of heavy artillery fire.

At dawn on 9 July, the enemy opened fire on the city, drove back the units of the 6th Cavalry Division and at about 07:00 took Rivne. In an hour, the 6th CD launched a counter-attack and drove the enemy from the western outskirts of the city, but the Poles quickly launched their own counterstrike and drove our units to

⁶⁵ This literally means "Cossack staff", and there is no place I can find with that name. Teriv is equally elusive.



the south-west. The 6th Cavalry Division withdrew to the Kolodenka – N. Dvor – Omelyana – Yasynyvychi line, continuing to hold one brigade (the 1st) at Klevan' Station.

At 11:00 of the same day the 4th Cavalry Division advanced and at about 12:00 took V- and M-Zhytyn.

What was happening with the Polish 2nd Army at that time?

Early in the morning of 9 July the right wing of the Army – the 1st Cavalry Brigade and the 3rd Legion Infantry Division – moved westwards to the Stubla River (to the Klevan' – Starozhukiv line). At the same time, units of the 6th Infantry Division moved from the Shpaniv – Ponebel' area in the direction of Olyka. During the withdrawal they had some small skirmishes with units of the 6th Cavalry Division. The time of the withdrawal of the Polish 2nd Army westwards was not clear to the Konarmia.

At about 14:00 on 9 July the isolated position of the units of the 1st Legion Division in the Rivne area became very difficult, and at 15:00 its commander decided to leave the city and withdraw to the west. However, he encountered a swift advance blocking his way – from the east by the 4th CD and from the west and south-west by the 6th CD. At about 18:00 the 1st Brigade of the 4th Division occupied Shpaniv (north of Rivne). Forward units of the 2nd Brigade of the same division took the town of Oleksandriya at about the same time, where they captured 40 Polish prisoners with an officer. Interrogation confirmed that the 1st, 3rd and 6th IDs and 11th and 17th Cavalry Regiments had fought in the battle at Rivne. They did not know the overall task of the army and said that their task had been to take Rivne and join with the southern Polish group (18th ID).

A sustained firefight and our counter-attacks on Rivne continued until late evening on 9 July, but the 1st Infantry Division still maintained its position. By the night of 9/10 July the fatigued units of the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions needed rest after the constant fighting for the city: they had lost a lot of men and some military equipment. In the battles one of the glorious brave men of the Konarmia, Comrade Dundych, died a heroic death. At the same time the Polish 1st Division was preparing to leave the city and join their army. Around midnight it stealthily left the town and moved along the road to Klevan'.

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*Actions of the Polish 18th Division.* Following the orders of the Polish 6th Army and information from its intelligence that the main forces of the Konarmia were heading towards Mlyniv – Dubno, General Krajowski decided to leave Ostroh at nightfall on 7 July and move towards Dubno. For that purpose, as mentioned above, he chose a longer roundabout road, in more difficult terrain than that of Little Polesia.

As darkness fell on 7 July, the main forces of the 18th Division withdrew from the town; the rear guard delayed in the town until dawn on 8 July. The division moved in two columns to the village of Buderazh, where it arrived on at noon, undisturbed by our cavalry. This happened because the 14th Cavalry Division lost the whole day of 8 July in moving aimlessly to the town of Ostroh. The 11th Division was too late to move out of its area and on 8 July also did not come into contact with the enemy.

On 9 July General Krajowski intended to make a short march and only as far as Sosnivka to allow his units, exhausted by the previous marches, to rest.

This advance to Sosnivka led the Polish 18th Division into fighting with the units of the 11th Cavalry Division (at Sosnivka) and the rear guard with the units of the 14th Cavalry Division (at Pivche), which caught up with the 18th ID only at about 16:00 on 9 July. Attacked at both head to tail, the Polish division was forced to fight in unfavourable conditions during the crossing of the narrow bridge across the Zbytyn'ka. The whole 145th IR and 3rd battalion of the 144th IR, supported by four batteries, were turned against the 14th CD; that division's numerous attacks, both mounted and dismounted, were repulsed. The 11th Cavalry Division's units near Sosnivka were also thrown off. By midday of 9 July, the entire 18th Division positioned itself in the Sosnivka area to rest, having taken security measures. General Szymański's group occupied Kremenets' on the same day.

Having got acquainted with the situation, and having made sure that the main forces of Konarmia had not yet crossed the Ikva River, and also not wanting to get into continue to fight them because of the fact that "the soldiers of the 18th division were exhausted from the recent fighting, so would not be particularly reliable in battle with superior enemy forces", General Krajowski decided on the same day (9 July) to stop





heading towards Dubno and march by night on the forest road through Antonivtsi to Kremenets' to join with General Szymański's 10th Infantry Brigade. Around 18:00 on 9 July General Krajowski's column moved from Sosnivka towards Antonivtsi and Kremenets', where it arrived in the morning of 11 July.

General Krajowski's decision to turn from Dubno to Kremenets' was undoubtedly due to the actions of the 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions, which did not pursue him only because their cavalry was heavily overworked.

Taking into account the situation in the region of Rivne and not aware of the retreat of the Polish 2nd Army to the west, at 21:00 on 9 July the KomandArm-Horse gave operational orders to the Army to destroy the enemy occupying Rivne, and break up his entire group, thought to be operating in the Rivne – Oleksandriya area. For the attack on Rivne the 4th CD was directed to attack from the north and north-east, cutting off the enemy's escape route to Oleksandriya; the 6th CD from the west and south-west, cutting off the escape route to Lutsk; the 14th CD was to force march to Rivne and at 12:00, in conjunction with the 4th and 6th Divisions, strike the enemy from the south. The 11th CD, leaving a cover of one regiment at the Dubno crossings, was with its remaining forces to eliminate the enemy in the area of Stara and Mala Moshchanytsya (i.e. the 18th Infantry Division); the 45th RD was to move to the Dubno – Kremenets' line as soon as possible.

At dawn on 10 July the Konarmia set about fulfilling its task of capturing Rivne. In order to block the road between Rivne and Lutsk, the 6th Cavalry Division sent one brigade directly to the city, another to bypass Klevan', and a third even deeper to Pal'che. At daybreak of 10 July, the units of the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions occupied Rivne, which had already been abandoned by the enemy. Only small rear guard units of the 1st Infantry Division remained in the city. The 6th Cavalry Division drove them to the Stubla River crossing; east of Klevan', the enemy tried to resist them in previously arranged trenches, but was quickly driven out and forced west (see Map 24).

With the recapture of Rivne the 14th Division, which was marching to the city, was again turned to the south (to Sosnivka) to eliminate the enemy in that area, together with the 11th Division. KomandArm-Horse gave orders to the 4th and 6th Divisions to pursue the enemy, to prevent them getting a foothold on the Stubla River.

Biernacki, in his book *"The Battle of Rivne"*, says that "owing to flaws in the enemy's actions and insufficient reconnaissance on 10 July Budëny's cavalry was disoriented, and, what is more important, it missed the pursuit, which was led only by detachments from the weak 6th Division, sent ahead to the Stubla."

The 14th Division was ordered to eliminate the enemy in the Sosnivka area, acting in connection with the 11th Division. Then move to Zarits'k – Novoselivka – Korablyshche (20 km north-east of Dubno city), with reconnaissance in the direction of Lutsk – Demidivka.

The 11th Division was to hold the Dubno area at all costs.

The 45th Division was to accelerate its movement to the Dubno – Kremenets' area.

The Rivne operation delayed the Konarmia in the same area for a whole week (from 3 to 10 July), which enabled the neighbouring armies to make contact with their infantry units. On 10 July the left flank, the 44th Rifle Division of the 12th Army, contacted the Konarmia on the Kostopil' – Tuchyn line. At the same time the 45th Rifle Division, part of the Konarmia, reached the Ostroh – Mezhyrich area.

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With the defeat of the units of the Polish 2nd Army at Rivne, the Konarmia's operation in that area was completed; the enemy, shaken and broken morally and materially along the entire Polish-Ukrainian front, began to withdraw hastily behind the line of the Styr, Ikva and Zbruch rivers.

Stubborn ceaseless battles in wooded marshy areas with an absence of rest and poor supplies had utterly exhausted the horses and men of the Horse Army (in combat from 27 May to 10 July, 43 days). The brigades, which had had up to 1,500 sabres in May 1920, had no more than 500 sabres by early July. The



Konarmia was not getting the replenishments it needed. The magnificently equipped *Uproform*,⁶⁶ which had had an inexhaustible base of horse and manpower resources (Don – Kuban – Ukraine) and had been left in Taganrog and placed at the disposal of the South-Western Front, no longer gave anything to its Army – the Front’s promises remained promises, because, subordinated and turned into a division by the 13th Army, it no longer formed units, but fought against Wrangel. This circumstance subsequently forced the Konarmia command to establish a new *Uproform* in the area of Kropyvnytskyi. In spite of this, the general condition of the units of the Konarmia was good; although few and short on technical means, the Red cavalrymen kept alive the invincible spirit of the proletarian fighters who had raised the red banner of liberated labour.

Polish researcher Captain Biernacki assesses the actions of Budënný’s cavalry in the first period of the Rovno operation as follows

The Konarmia carried out the task entrusted to it completely: after forcing the Horyn' River and capturing an important communication node, it broke the Polish front for 80 km from Oleksandriya to Izyaslav. With that strike it provoked the Polish Front commanders to think that it was impossible to eliminate the breakthrough and so the Polish armies of the Ukrainian Front should retreat 100 km to the west. The roads to Lutsk and Kovel, as well as to the flank and rear of the Polish 6th Army, were opened. The Polish 2nd Army was thrown from its lines of communication into the wooded marshy area north of the Horyn' River, which in turn could have created for it a critical situation of being unable to organise its supplies.

And then the new situation of the Polish armies (which had retreated to the west) affected the morale of both the Polish command and its subordinate units, once again confirming that except for small successes we were not able to defeat the Konarmia, and that fighting it always ended with our withdrawal.

Although Polish historians (such as Colonel Arciszewski) try to prove that the operations of the Polish 2nd Army, with their reversed front retaking Rivne, had as their objective the “pursuit” of the Konarmia, it is perfectly clear from the events described above that it was not a pursuit, but a retreat (to their own bases). As for the orders of the commander of the Polish 6th Army, General Romer, to pursue Budënný’s cavalry with infantry, for which he allocated from his front General Krajowski’s 18th division, he merely weakened his front and allowed the Red 14th Army to proceed to more active operations; that was reflected in the raid of the 8th Chervonniy Cavalry Division on Khmelnytskyi.

The actions of the 18th Infantry Division during the development of the Konarmia’s decisive operations around Rivne had no influence on the course of the Rivne operation and were only of secondary importance. True some of the forces of the 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions were temporarily diverted to the 18th Division, but only because of the Front’s orders; under the action of those divisions General Krajowski was forced to leave the route to Dubno and retreat to Kremenets' on 9 July.

Instead of a boastful pursuit and a decision to give a general battle to Konarmia, it was a hasty overnight retreat.

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The Battle of Rivne must be divided into two distinct periods: the first from 1 to 6 July, and the second from 7 to 10 July.

The Konarmia’s operation against Rivne in the first phase is a classic example of a cavalry operation, which was three to four marches ahead of the neighbouring armies of the Front. With its vigorous advance of several marches forward, the Konarmia enabled our neighbouring armies of the South-Western Front (12th and especially 14th), numerically weak and incapable of resolute operations, to advance without any difficulties and to capture the important objectives. This is the strategic significance of the Konarmia’s capture of Rivne.

The following are noteworthy in the execution of the operation: the expedient distribution of forces into a demonstration and pinning group (a quarter of the force) and a strike group (three-quarters of the force);

⁶⁶ Department of Supply, for the formation, staffing and training of troops.



precise execution of the operational plan; surprise and stealth of action (performance at night) and rapid movement; skilful manoeuvring on the battlefield; flexibility of action in mounted and dismounted formations; skilful use of artillery and armoured units.

The shortcomings of this first period of action include: insufficient activity from the demonstration group (the 4th Cavalry Division), which missed the opportunity to engage at least some of its forces in time at Rivne, an opportunity given because of the passivity of the 6th Polish Infantry Division; and weak reconnaissance by the individual divisions, which resulted in not noticing the withdrawal from Rivne and similarly the withdrawal of the Polish Cavalry Division to Lutsk.

Regarding the Polish troops, what draws attention during that period is the great persistence of individual combat units and the utterly inept leadership of their divisions by the Polish Army generals: the actions of the commander of the 6th Polish Infantry Division around Sosnove on 1 to 3 July, 25 to 30 km north of the Konarmia field headquarters in Korets', are especially perplexing.

That division, with an entire cavalry brigade, could have disrupted the entire Konarmia operation on Rivne with a vigorous actions towards Korets' at the rear of our blocking group. However, the division was not even able to organize reconnaissance: it moved on towards Velyka Klets'ka on 3 July and then, having received new orders from its commander to move to the west, turned back and did not contact us.

The second period of operations at Rivne was marked by a considerable dispersion of the Konarmia's forces, caused by the orders of the South-Western Front. The directive of 6th July set the Konarmia's main objective as moving to Lutsk – Hrubieszów, but on the next day (7 July) it moved the centre of action to the south towards Starokostiantyniv.

At that time the Polish command was preparing a new attack on Rivne from the north by units of its 2nd Army. But due to the bad information given to the Polish Front by its airmen, that strike passed almost through thin air, and the Polish 2nd Army, while capturing Rivne with its left flank (just the 1st Legion Division), was actually moving away from the object of its actions. That strategic manoeuvre was to the advantage of the Konarmia, scattered on a large front, which almost captured the entire Polish 1st Legion Division; otherwise the Konarmia would have found itself in a very difficult position, under attacks from the north and south.

The actions of Konarmia's units against the enemy's Starokostiantyniv Group (18th Infantry Division) showed a lack of organisation in the actions of the 11th and 14th Divisions, which were not united under a single command. After placing the 18th Polish ID in a vice at the Sosnivka, the lack of unison in the actions of those divisions allowed the enemy to retreat southwards, which they did almost unhindered, not feeling any pressure from our units. The Polish 18th Infantry Division could have been annihilated if the operation at Sosnivka had been skilfully organised. The immense fatigue in the cavalry of the 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions may serve as some justification for that.



Chapter V

Konarmia Operations in the Dubno – Lutsk – Brody Area

By the time the Konarmia's final conquest of the Rivne area was complete, the armies of the Western Front, having broken through the Polish lines, were successfully advancing towards Vilnius – Minsk – Slutsk; the armies of the South-Western Front, pursuing the retreating enemy, were advancing to the line of the Styr, Ikva and Zbruch Rivers.

Following up on the success achieved by the Konarmia near Rivne, on the morning of 11 July the South-Western Front command gave its armies a directive:

Along the entire Polish front lines, both Western and South-Western Fronts, the enemy is in full retreat.

For the development of further operations I order:

1. The 12th Army, with a strike group consisting of three rifle divisions and Comrade Golikov's group, is to continue a determined pursuit of the enemy, advancing in the general direction of Kovel – Brest; one division, covering the strike group from Polesia, is to advance in the general direction of Sarny – Ratne. Have one division in the Army reserve, which, after the capture of Kovel, is to be located in the Sarny – Berezhnysya area.
2. The Konarmia, which constitutes the strike group for the Front, with the 45th Rifle Division, is to swiftly pursue the retreating enemy, attacking in the general direction of Lutsk – Hrubieszów – Lublin – Łuków bypassing the Brest region.
3. The 14th Army, covering the operations of the main strike group from Galicia, is to attack in the general direction of Ternopil' – L'viv.
4. By 24 July the Armies are to occupy the areas: the 12th Army at Kovel', Konarmia at Chełm – Krasnostav – Zamość and the 14th Army in Rava-Rus'ka – Horodok – L'viv.

The boundary lines are: between the Western Front and 12th Army – Dubrovytsya, Lyubeshiv Kobryn, all points inclusive for the 12th Army; between the 12th and Konarmia – Kostopil', Kivertsi, Włodawa, Międzyrec, all points inclusive for the 12th Army. Between Konarmia and the 14th Army – Radyvyliv, Krasnik, all points inclusive for the 14th Army.

This directive was the result of negotiations with GlavKom on 11 July, in which it outlined its plan of operations against the Poles (during their passage through Polesia) in the form of the main attack against the enemy by the Western Front, with support on its left flank by the South-Western Front. The directive above was given as a development of GlavKom's original action plan.

In connection with the general strategic situation on the Polish front, a further movement of the Konarmia towards Lublin was quite expedient: that manoeuvre, into the rear and the right flank of the Polish north-western armies, would greatly facilitate the actions of our Western Front in its movement towards the Vistula River on one hand; on the other hand, those Polish troops occupying the weaker section of their front in the Ukraine, would have been forced by their isolation from the main mass of other Polish troops, to retreat under the pressure from the 12th and 14th Red Armies. The Polish military historian Arciszewski in his study writes that during this period neither the Front nor the main Polish command had any reserves on its Southern Front to counter the movement of the Konarmia, as all reserves had been drawn to the Northern Front.

On the evening of 10 July the Polish 2nd Army reached the area of Pal'che – Romaniv (halfway between Klevan' and Lutsk), allocating one cavalry brigade to the area south of Lutsk, where by this time the 1st Cavalry Division was expected from Zamość. By the evening of 11 July the Army had positioned itself along the Styr River, with the 6th Infantry Division near Lutsk and the 3rd Legion Division near Rozhyshe. The 1st and 4th Cavalry Brigades were assigned to secure the Army's flanks: the 1st Brigade remained on the left flank, and the 4th on the right one (slightly north of Torhovytsya) with the task of reconnaissance to Mlyniv. The 1st Legion Division was again placed at the disposal of the Polish 3rd Army. The Polish 2nd Army was



assigned the task of defending the Kovel area, referring to “the forthcoming attacks in the area of Lutsk – Rozhyshe from Rivne or Dubno”.

Acting to the north, the Polish 3rd Army was to defend the area of Brest. South of the 2nd Army, from Dubno through Kremenets' – Vyshnivets' and further along the Zbruch river was the Polish 6th Army, made up of the 12th, 13th and 18th IDs, 10th IB (from 5th ID) and the [UNR] Ukrainian units commanded by General Pavlenko.

This positioning and the tasks of the Polish Armies then led to a series of clashes with our pursuing armies – the 12th Army fighting for the exits from Polesia, and the Horse and the 14th Armies for the lines of the Styr, Ikva, and Zbruch Rivers.

The Konarmia again bore the brunt of the fighting, on the Styr and Ikva rivers.

While the enemy was regrouping to take up the new positions, combat contact was broken and did not start to recover until 11 July.

Fulfilling the Front directive, KomandArm-Horse gave an operational order which said that enemy, broken by the Konarmia units, had retreated behind Styr River in general area of Kovel' – Volodymyr on 11 July. It was very active in the vicinity of Dubno – Kremenets', having occupied Dubno on 10 July and was trying to get a foothold on the Ikva River. The first task for the Konarmia was to move to the line Olyka –Mlyniv – Kozyn – Velyki Berezhtsi – Velyki Kunynets' (12 km south of Kremenets') on 12 July.

To accomplish the task, the divisions were to march: 6th CD towards Lutsk (with the main forces in the Klevan' – Olyka area, with outposts on the Tsuman' – Pal'che – Dovhoshiy line), conducting reconnaissance towards Staryi Chortoryis'k, Lutsk and Torhovytsya; the 4th Division was to head towards Mlyniv (with the main forces on the west bank of the Stubla River, in the Zarits'k – Peremylivka – Novoselivka area, with outposts on the Pryvitne – Mlyniv line), and the 11th and 14th CDs to force the Ikva River near Dubno, then spread on the left bank of the Ikva to the line Smordva – Velyki Sady – Pyryatyn, capturing Vovkovyi – Verba with their advanced units and doing reconnaissance to Berestechko and Radyvyliv. The 45th Division was to occupy Kremenets'; to support the division from the south was a newly formed cavalry group, under Comrade Osadchiy, consisting of the Stepnoy and Kotovski brigades.

The Chief of Army Air Forces was ordered to conduct reconnaissance in the regions of Kovel – Volodymyr – Sokal – Radekhiv – Lutsk. All large enemy troop concentrations and railway stations were to be bombed.

All the divisional transports were sent to Zviahel for ammunition and food supplies.

On 12 July the Konarmia, occupied the Lutsk and Mlyniv areas, without resistance from the enemy.

The 11th Cavalry Division on its way from Mizoch during the night of 11 July took Dubno after a short but fierce battle with a reserve battalion of the 50th Infantry Regiment (advanced to Dubno from the Brody area) and a collection of Polish reserve and guard units under the command of Colonel Jasiński.

Moving on, it met stubborn resistance from the enemy at Tarakaniv Fort (or Zahorce, as the Poles call it), 8 km south-west of Dubno. Colonel Arciszewski gives the garrison of the fort as 900 bayonets, five machine guns and two guns, plus the armoured train *Chobry* (8 machine guns and 2 guns) under the command of Major Matczyński. The fort was situated in a wooded and marshy area, and there was no easy access to it.

At dawn on 12 July the 11th CD renewed their attacks on the fort, but the garrison repulsed them all with heavy artillery and machine gun fire. All further attempts to capture it failed, and on the night of 13 July, the division positioned itself to the south of the fort, while at the same time occupying Dubno. In the evening of 12 July it had also occupied the area of Mlyniv without contact with the enemy.

The following events took place on the extreme left flank of the Konarmia at this time. The 45th Rifle Division, which was moving from the Ostroh – Mezhyrich area, reached Dubno with its 134th Brigade in the evening of 11 July; the 135th RB reached the outskirts of Kremenets' during the afternoon of 11 July and fought hard with General Szymański's 10th IB for the capture of the town, entering it at 20:00. The other units of KomDiv-45, Comrade Yakir's command, were: the 133rd Brigade which was the divisional reserve near Khodaky – Rokhmaniv – Shums'k (25 km east of Kremenets') and the cavalry brigade of Comrade Osadchiy near Katerynivka (12 km southeast of Kremenets').



But in the morning of 11 July the whole Polish 18th Infantry Division was already in the area west of Kremenets', after having retreated from Sosnivka under pressure from the 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions. Resting there, General Krajowski intended during the night of 11 July to move on Dubno, in order to prevent the Konarmia from reaching Brody – L'viv. But on the afternoon of 11 July he received (almost simultaneously) two contradictory orders from his 6th Army commander. The first ordered the 10th Infantry Brigade to defend the Kremenets' – Bilokrynytsya area, and the 18th Infantry Division to occupy the Kremenets' – Dubno area, sending two battalions to Vyshnivets'. The second ordered the 18th Infantry Division, together with the 10th Infantry Brigade, to defeat the enemy division (our 45th RD) which was occupying the Myrohoshcha district (to the east of Dubno), and then concentrate in the Ivannya – Pochaiv district (to the south-west of Kremenets'). Choosing the latter order, General Krajowski decided to advance from the Kremenets' area at midnight on 11/12 July, but about 16:00 the situation changed due to an attack by the 135th Brigade of our 45th Division on that town. By 2300, supported by units of the 18th Division, the situation in Kremenets' had been restored, and General Szymański's group took up its positions.

In the evening of 11 July the commander of the 18th ID received a third order from 6th Army, which gave the air reconnaissance data for the day: there was reported a movement of a large enemy cavalry group to Katerynivka (it was Osadchiy's group) and two strong cavalry columns with carts from the east heading to Dubno.

By that order General Krajowski had Colonel Jasiński's group (3,000 bayonets, 200 sabres, 12 guns), in the Brody – Dubno area, added to his command. Jointly with that group he was ordered to smash the enemy column advancing towards Kremenets', and then to take over the Kremenets' – Dubno area with General Szymański's regimental group also under his command, while the entire 18th ID was to move to the Povcha area (15 km west from Dubno. Needing to recover the situation in the Kremenets' area, the 18th Division commander decided to return to his initial plan: at dawn on 12 July he set out to finally defeat the enemy group in front of Kremenets' with two regiments and move the rest of the forces across through Verba to Dubno, with the 6th Lancer Regiment in front for reconnaissance. At dawn, indeed, one brigade, the 42nd and 44th Infantry Regiments, launched an assault against our 135th Brigade and, after a short battle, drove it eastward with heavy losses. Anticipating a battle near Kremenets', in the evening of 11 July KomDiv-45 Yakir ordered Comrade Osadchiy to move at a trot from Katerynivka to Kremenets' in support of the 135th Brigade, but the latter did not carry out that order, and spent the night of 11 July in Katerynivka.

Due to the scattered action of units of the 45th Division and Comrade Osadchiy's cavalry group, it was not possible to occupy Kremenets'. At noon on 12 July KomDiv-45 was ordered to take the Kozyn – Rudnya⁶⁷ – Pochaivska area and move Comrade Osadchiy's cavalry group to the Radyvyliv – Brody area.

By the evening of 12 July, the Polish 18th Division had occupied the area of Verba with its advanced units. While halted there, General Krajowski had no exact information about the movement of the Horse Army. The reports from the 6th Lancer Regiment said that the enemy was moving in a cloud of squadrons, the number of which was difficult to determine. Nothing was known about the actions of the Polish 2nd Army. General Krajowski was still seeking a decisive battle against the Konarmia near Mlyniv; therefore, he decided to put out a broad front with some of his men in the direction of Dubno and Khorupan' at dawn on 13 July, concentrating most of his forces behind his right flank and advancing the 6th Lancer Regiment on the left flank.

During the night of 12/13 July the 18th Division had a chance telephone contact with the Zahorce fort. In order to exploit the advantage the infantry had in night actions against the cavalry, the 18th Division started its action at 02:00 on 13 July. At dawn, the 49th Regiment entered Zahorce fort, pushing back the outposts of the 11th Cavalry Division posted there. Advancing further towards Dubno, units of the 18th Division were met by heavy machine gun fire and an armoured detachment of the 11th Cavalry Division in the outskirts of Palestyna Park.⁶⁸ A fierce fire fight ensued. Polish sources point out that our units were defending themselves with such a fearlessness that the vigorous attack of the 49th Regiment, supported by accurate artillery fire, could not push them out of the suburb. However, under the pressure of the whole 18th

⁶⁷ The Rudnya just below Pustoivanne (Radyvylivs'kyi district).

⁶⁸ Southern Dubno on the western side of the Ikva, just north of Tarakaniv.



Division, at about 14:00 on 13 July the 11th Cavalry Division was forced to leave Dubno and retreat in the direction of Mlyniv. In the fighting for Dubno the Polish units suffered losses of up to 20%.

By the evening of 13 July the Konarmia commander received a telegram from his superior:

For the purpose of the final defeat of the Polish armies you are to carry out the combat tasks set by the directive [of 11 July] with the utmost persistence and maximum effort, without giving the enemy the opportunity to linger in the lines of approach. The specified areas must be occupied by the armies within the stipulated time.

The area around the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions was calm on 13-14 June, except for an attempted attack on Lutsk by the 2nd Brigade of the 4th Division, which was repulsed. The enemy remained passive, but our reconnaissance mission found out that units of the 1st, 3rd and 6th Infantry Divisions and the 3rd, 4th and 5th Cavalry Brigades were present on the Styr River (our intelligence reports gave the enemy strength at 20,000 bayonets and 5,000 sabres, which was exaggerated). The 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions were ordered by the KomandArm to launch an attack in the morning of 14 July, to knock the enemy out of Dubno and advance to the west, pursuing it to the line of Velyki Sady – Myl'cha – Pyratyn.

On the morning of 14 July the 11th, 14th and 45th Divisions continued to fight hard with the enemy for possession of the Dubno – Kremenets' area and to the south-west of there. Particularly heavy fighting took place in the vicinity of Khorupan' by units of the 14th Cavalry Division with the 36th Brigade of the 18th Infantry Division. The village of Khorupan' changed hands four times, and as a result the enemy was driven to the south-east. By the evening the 14th Division occupied the Sady – Myl'cha area, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. The 145th and 49th IRs were captured in the battle.

By the night of 14/15 July, after hard fighting, the 11th Cavalry Division and the 134th Rifle Brigade of the 45th RD retook Dubno, pushing the enemy back to the Tarakaniv (Zahorce) fort. In its turn, the Polish Front's command, being aware of the success of the 18th ID near Dubno, decided to bridge the gap between the Polish 2nd and 6th Armies, and in the night of 14 July ordered their 2nd Army to move the 6th ID and the 1st CB to the Mlyniv district, to strike against the Konarmia together with the 18th ID, advancing from the south.

Not sure in which direction the Konarmia would move – towards Kovel or L'viv – the 2nd Army general nevertheless ordered his Army to prepare its divisions for a stubborn defence on the Rozhyshe – Lutsk line. The general, following the orders of the Front, decided to fulfil his task in a very peculiar way: he ordered defensive positions to be created in Rozhyshe and Lutsk, with garrisons of one infantry regiment (up to 1,500 bayonets). These posts were to be supplied with ammunition and food for a fortnight, so they could be held like besieged fortresses. At the same time, the 6th Army commander, on the evening of 13 July, ordered the 18th ID to “pursue the enemy from Dubno in the direction of Mlyniv, and to make contact with the 2nd Army”.

After receiving this order, the 18th ID's commander decided to leave his whole division in the area of Verba and Kozyn on 14 June then, depending on the situation, he would move either to the west or to Mlyniv. Around noon on 14 June, the general received another order from the 6th Army, ordering him to immediately withdraw the whole division from the Dubno area to help the 13th Division, which the enemy was pressing hard in the area of Volochys'k.

By 22:00 on 14 July the entire 18th Division had assembled in the Verba area; the Dubno area was handed over to Colonel Jasinski's group. During the day of 15 July, remaining in the Verba area, General Krajowski had an interesting phone conversation with General Romer (6th Army): General Romer reported strong enemy pressure on the 12th and 13th Divisions, which were defending the shortest route to L'viv, and suggested that facing those divisions was a large enemy force of two infantry, two cavalry divisions and, he thought, Zhloba's Cavalry Corps.⁶⁹ As a result, the 6th Army commander feared for his centre, believing that his left flank would be secured by the approach of the 6th Infantry Division from 2nd Army, in the area of Mlyniv, and the Cavalry Division moving from Lutsk to Berestechko. He then urged a movement of the 18th Division to the area west of Kremenets'.

⁶⁹ Zhloba was actually in the south Ukraine at the time, fighting Wrangel's army.



General Krajowski also expressed his fear that a strike of the Polish 6th Division from Mlyniv might cause Budëny to retreat to Kremenets', and then there would be an extremely large concentration of enemy cavalry in that area. While this fantastic talk was going on, news of the capture of Dubno by the Konarmia came. The 18th Infantry Division was ordered to immediately advance on Dubno (this was about 16:00 on 15 July).

While the above-mentioned events were taking place on the Polish 6th Army's lines, the commander of the Polish Ukrainian Front had already ordered the immediate withdrawal of the 6th ID and the 1st CB in the evening of 13 July, moving them to Mlyniv. The change of the 6th Infantry Division from its position was severely delayed, and it did not move to Mlyniv until the afternoon of 15 July. This movement led to a meeting engagement with Konarmia units.

Meanwhile, on 14 July the Konarmia had managed to intercept enemy orders about their grouping in the Kremenets' – Dubno – Brody area. On 15 July the Konarmia commander received a new directive from the Front:

The Polish Army has been ordered to occupy the line of the Styr, Ikva, and Zbruch Rivers as a starting position for a general offensive. The situation demands that this must not be allowed to happen, and that the defeat of the Polish armies should be completed with a decisive strike as soon as possible.

Reaffirming the main tasks of the Armies under the directive [of 11 July] and drawing attention to the order to develop the Armies' most decisive and energetic actions, I again categorically demand that the Armies execute that order without fail, using their strike groups to deal the enemy swift and devastating blows. Not later than 20 July they are to occupy these areas: the 12th Army in Kovel, the Konarmia in Hrubieszów and Sokal, the 14th Army in Zolochiv, Peremyshlyany and Busk.

On the same day KomandArm-Horse gave new orders in the spirit of the Front's directive:

After two days of bloody battles in the Dubno area, the 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions, having conquered fierce enemy resistance and inflicted heavy damage, took Dubno. Along the whole front of our Army, the enemy is regrouping its forces on the left bank of the Styr river, and on the rest of the South-Western Front, the enemy is retreating under the onslaught of the mighty Red Army. The 12th Army is on the line Chortorys'k – Lypne – Derazhnyia; the 14th Army is on the Zbruch line, and near Volochys'k is fighting for the possession of the latter. To the south we occupy the town of Sataniv. For the upcoming operations towards Volodymyr the Konarmia is going to take the crossings over the Styr River in the Rozhyshe – Berestechko sector (a length of about 80 km).

As before, in the decisive Lutsk direction there was just the 6th Cavalry Division given the task to capture the crossings over the Styr on the 30-kilometre sector from Rozhyshe to Yalovychi (its 2nd Brigade was located in the Pidubtsi – Novokotiv district, and the others were transferred to the Novosilky – Malyn – Ostrozhets' area); it was to transfer to the left side of the Styr at Torchyn. To the south, intending to seize the crossings on the Styr and Ikva Rivers (from Yalovychi to Dobryatyn), the 4th Cavalry Division moved to the Mal'ovane – Torhovytsya – Ostriiv area with reconnaissance towards Horokhiv and Berestechko. To seize the forest massif of the so-called "Dubno Gardens" in the area of Velyki Sady – Povcha – Pyryatyn, the 11th Division was moved forward, and to secure it from the north, the 14th Division was moved to the area of Bokiima – Smordva – Khorupan'. The 45th Rifle Division and Osadchiy Cavalry Group were ordered to move to the Kremenets' – Pochaiv area and further to the Verba – Radyvyliv railway line.

Executing this order on 16 July led to a series of counterattacks between the northern Konarmia group and units of the Polish 2nd Army moving towards Mlyniv, and the southern Konarmia group (11th and 14th Cavalry and 45th Rifle Divisions) and the 18th Polish Division moving towards Dubno. At dawn on 16 July the 4th Division moved to occupy the crossing points on the Ikva northwest of Mlyniv. In the area of Velyki Dorohostai⁷⁰ and Mali Dorohostai, the division encountered units of the 6th Infantry Division, moving from

⁷⁰ Now swallowed up by Puhachivka.



the Lutsk area. The enemy deployed on the heights of the western bank of the stream; there was a bitter fire fight. Units of the 4th Division several times attacked on horse and on foot, knocking the enemy out of their positions; but as enemy reserves arrived the Poles regained their positions. The battle continued until deep into the night. During the night the 4th Cavalry Division halted in the area of V.- and M.- Dorohostai. The enemy suffered heavy losses from our fire and mounted attacks. During the night it turned back and retired behind the Styr River and in the morning of 17 July took positions near Promin' – Mstyshyn – modern Zahatyntsi; the enemy's 1st Cavalry Brigade also retired there after a short fight (about 20:00) with the 14th Cavalry Division near Bokiima. In the area of the 6th Cavalry Division, at about 17:00 on 16 July the enemy tried to push back the 2nd Brigade from the area of Piddubtsi, but was driven back to Lutsk. It appears to have been units of their 4th Cavalry Brigade, supported by infantry of the 3rd Legion Division.

Thus the attempt by the Polish 2nd Army to move into action on 16 July ended in failure. (Colonel Arciszewski makes no mention of the fighting of the 6th Infantry Division in the area of V.- and M.- Dorohostai in his study.)

Meanwhile, events in the area of the southern group of the Konarmia began to develop kaleidoscopically. General Krajowski, commander of the 18th ID, decided from the evening of 15 July on vigorous action against Dubno, moving his main force from Verba in the direction of the Zahorce fort; his flanking detachment of the 49th IR and a battalion⁷¹ of the 18th Artillery Regiment went left to Myl'cha and Sady. Around 01:00 on July 16, that detachment entered into battle with the 3rd Brigade of the 11th Cavalry Division near Myl'cha. Under enemy pressure the brigade started to retreat to Khorupan', but as the divisional reserves came up, the enemy was pushed back to Sady. The main force of the 18th Infantry Division, which was moving towards Dubno, failed to advance beyond the Zahorce fort during the night of 15/16 July. From dawn on 16 July, fierce fighting flared up again on the whole front of the 11th Cavalry Division and the 134th Brigade of the 45th Rifle Division, from Sady to Dubno. The bloody battle continued until darkness fell. Covered by strong artillery fire and taking advantage of the rugged terrain, the enemy quickly recovered from our mounted counter-attacks, manoeuvred its reserves and continued to advance. Around 21:00 Dubno was taken, pushing out the 134th RB, which retreated to the right bank of the Ikva, to the region of Strakliv⁷² – Dytynychi. The 133rd and 135th Brigades of the 45th RD spent the whole of that day fighting to capture of Kremenets'. To the south of Kremenets', near Horyn'ka, KomBrig Kotovski was seriously wounded by the Poles.

While these events were taking place on the Konarmia front, the 14th Red Army continued to fight along the entire front for access to the Zbruch River; the battles near Volochys'k were particularly persistent. The 12th Red Army moved to the Styr River unhindered. The Front reserves came up: the 25th Rifle Division advanced to Sarny Station, and the 24th RD to Kostopil'.

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From 16 to 18 July was marked by fierce fighting on the Dubno – Kremenets' – Zbruch River stretch. The Konarmia's operations during this period also began to take on paramount importance for the entire Front. Assessing the general situation of the Front, on 16 July the KomandArm-Horse in a telegram to the South-Western Front commander, expressed the following idea: the three cavalry divisions (4th, 11th and 14th) should be assigned to break the enemy group operating in the area of Pal'che – Dubno – Kremenets' – Kozyn; on top of that, an adequate cavalry group should be assigned to capture Radyvyliv. That entire operation should be supported by the 6th Cavalry Division, which would remain at the crossings over the Styr River in the Rozhyshche – Torhovytysya sector. In order to pin the enemy on a broad line, Comrade Budënyy requested the Front to order the units of the 12th Army to withdraw by the evening of 16 July to the Staryi Chortoryis'k – Rozhyshche sector on the Styr River. As for the 14th Army, its right flank units needed to advance vigorously in the direction of Pochaiv – Radyvyliv, simultaneously with the actions of the Konarmia.

Having received consent to the outlined operation from the KomFront, the KomandArm-Horse gave new operational orders at 23:00 on 16 July. Those orders stated that the Polish army had concentrated to the

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<sup>71</sup> A *Division* in the Polish, as for the Russians.

<sup>72</sup> Now southern Dubno town.



west of the Torhovytsya – Mlyniv – Dubno – Verba – Kremenets' line in order to launch a general offensive against our army. The enemy was especially active in the Dubno – Kremenets' area, and on 16 July partly pushed our units to the right bank of the Ikva River. There was no change in the neighbouring armies.

### 17 July

The following army grouping was adopted to eliminate the enemy group operating to the west of the Dubno – Verba – Kremenets' line: (see Map 25)

- KomDiv- 4 was ordered to move his division by evening to the area of Demydivka, from where, at dawn on the 18th, it should launch a decisive offensive on Radyvyliv – Brody to destroy the enemy reserves, capture its headquarters, and destroy communications between enemy units. After completing the above operation, it was to position itself in the Korytne – Khotyn area (15-20 km north of Radyvyliv).
- The 6th Cavalry Division was to remain with its main forces in the occupied area around Lutsk, ensuring the crossings over the Styr River in the Rozhyshe – Torhovytsya sector.
- The 11th and 14th Divisions were to deliver a crushing blow to the enemy in the general direction of Kozyn and to take the Kozyn – Verba area.
- The 45th Rifle Division was ordered to capture the Dubno area (for that purpose, it was to have the Army's 6-inch heavy battery attached), further advancing on Kozyn – Verba.
- Comrade Osadchiy's Cavalry Group was to support the 45th RD's operations from the Kremenets' side.

The 4th Division moved into its new area. It was not engaged in any combat during the day.

The day passed quietly for the 6th Cavalry Division.

On the front of the 11th, 14th and 45th Divisions (Khorupan' – Dubno – Kremenets') there was fierce fighting all through the day with the enemy 18th Division, which was trying to break through to the north to join the Polish 2nd Army .

Enemy planes dropped bombs over the 14th CD. Our pilots also dropped about 60 kg of bombs near Rozhyshe Station.

The Konarmia commander received a Front directive during the day which stated that the enemy had concentrated its main forces in the Dubno – Kremenets' – Volochys'k area to cover the closest approaches to L'viv, in order to evacuate it. That led to the necessity to defeat the enemy there. In fact the concept of that directive was already being executed by the Army.

### 18 July

By 18 July all the Southwestern Front's armies had come into close combat contact with the enemy and were being held by him along natural lines; neither the 12th nor the 14th Armies could advance further than the line of the Styr and Zbruch Rivers.

To give the Konarmia greater operational freedom, one of the divisions from the Front reserve, the 24th Rifle Division, was placed at its disposal .

Following the Army's orders, the 4th Cavalry Division moved to occupy the Demydivka area, leaving the 3rd Brigade to cross the Styr River. By noon the division (two brigades) had taken Demydivka, from where, after a short rest, it moved towards Radyvyliv – Brody. Around 17:00 the 1st Brigade, marching in the vanguard, after a short fight occupied Radyvyliv. The Polish 18th Infantry Division's transports (especially those of the 42nd Infantry and 6th Lancer Regiments) were destroyed in that town.

Half an hour before the attack a train arrived at the station which included a battalion to reinforce the 10th Infantry Brigade. Under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Rachmistruk, himself on his way to the 18th Division to take command of the 145th IR, it repulsed all the attacks of the 4th Cavalry Division's brigade against the station. With the arrival near the station of the enemy's armoured train *Chrobry*, the 1st Brigade of the 4th Cavalry Division left the town at about 22:00, taking 162 men prisoner.



19 July

During the night, the 4th Division withdrew to the area of Demydivka, having sent a flank guard to the village of Verben'. The 3rd Brigade remained at the crossings over the Styr River from Torhovyt'sya and southwards. On the night of 19 July, a reconnaissance squadron of the 4th Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade engaged in battle with enemy cavalry, who were crossing the Styr. After a short fight the enemy withdrew to the left bank and burnt the bridge over the river. It was found that they were the enemy 2nd and 12th Cavalry Regiments of the 4th CB.

After midnight the enemy, with more than a regiment of infantry and cavalry, attacked in the direction of Demydivka (after crossing at Khrinnyky). Advanced units of the enemy were turned back by a *division* of the 23rd Cavalry Regiment (3rd Brigade, 4th CD), but the *division* was driven back to the east and occupied Knyahynne. All information indicated it was the units of the 3rd Legion ID, which had marched from Lutsk to Boremel' at dawn on 18 July as ordered by 2nd Army. On 19 and 20 July the 4th Cavalry Division fought some units of the 3rd Legion ID, which in the evening had to withdraw to the left bank of the Styr River. During this time the 4th Division captured up to 700 prisoners and four machine guns.

The panic caused by the 4th CD in Radyvyliv reached L'viv. The area in which the Konarmia had to operate in those days was extremely rugged, covered with solid forest and swampy copses; all the high ground was pitted with trenches and wire fences left over from the Imperialist War.

After receiving the 24th RD at his disposal, the KomandArm-Horse decided to put into action his plan of 16 July. At 23:30 on 18 July the Army's divisions were given new tasks. The order outlined the following situation: the enemy at the front of the Army was continuing to conduct fierce attacks in the direction of Sudobychi – Dubno – Mlyniv, with its left flank near Smordva completely open. Our 4th Cavalry Division had successfully advanced on Radyvyliv to prevent the enemy from withdrawing from the Dubno area.

- The 24th Rifle Division was to occupy and stubbornly defend the section of the Styr River from Zhydychn to Torhovyt'sya at dawn.
- The 4th Cavalry Division was to continue to implement the earlier operational order, paying particular attention to Verba – Dubno.
- The 6th Cavalry Division was to temporarily leave its 2nd Brigade facing Lutsk, and concentrate the rest of its force in the Smordva district at dawn then, together with the 14th Division, move to Povcha and further on to Kozyn, destroying the enemy's manpower, capturing its vehicles – acting in conjunction with the 4th and 14th Cavalry Divisions.
- The 11th Cavalry Division to advance from Khorupan' in the general direction to Verba, in close liaison with the 45th Rifle Division.
- The 45th RD was ordered to advance to Verba and Pochaiv.
- The Commander of the Aviation was ordered to reconnoitre the areas of Lutsk – Volodymyr – Sokal – Radekhiv.

On 18 and 19 July fierce fighting in the Smordva – Khorupan' area between our 11th and 14th Divisions and the 18th Polish Division continued likewise in the Dubno area. General Krajowski, commander of the Polish 18th Division, received information from the Polish 6th Army in the evening of 18 July, which said that their 2nd Army was to launch an assault on Mlyniv that night with its 3rd Legion ID, and the cavalry brigades were to move to Berestechko to fight against Budëny's cavalry.

This information was immediately reported to the troops of the division to raise their spirits. In expectation of an attack from the north or north-west, General Krajowski decided to remain in the Dubno Gardens area.

From 14:00 the 1st and 3rd Brigades of the 6th Cavalry Division took part in fierce fighting, during which the 3rd Brigade was sent to bypass the left flank of the 18th Infantry Division towards Povcha. The battle between the 18th Division and our divisions in the area of Smordva – Khorupan' – Sady went on non-stop till about 20:00, being extremely fierce and mobile. The enemy met our units with heavy machine-guns and intense artillery fire.





Colonel Arciszewski reports:<sup>73</sup>

It is difficult to describe: over a dozen attacks were carried out by the enemy's cavalry regiments – with a fury and rage never seen before, even during the battle of Ostroh – from the front and flanks against infantry and from the rear against single batteries, which defended themselves with grapeshot at a distance of up to 200 metres, and then all the constant counter-attacks of our reserves.

By 18:00 the 3rd Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division had reached the area of Povcha, to the rear of the 18th Polish Division, which at that time was engaged in fierce fighting with the 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions in the Smordva – Khorupan' area. Under blows from the front and to the flank, the 18th Infantry Division began to gradually retreat south to Sady – Myl'cha. Both sides suffered heavy losses in these persistent battles. Only night and fatigue interrupted the fighting. General Krajowski's desire to be in contact with the right flank of the Polish 2nd Army did not eventuate; even the Staff of the Polish 6th Army knew nothing about the whereabouts of the 3rd Legion ID. In fact on 19 July, after an attempt to advance on Demydivka at night, it had been pushed back behind the Styr River by our 4th CD.

### *20 July*

Meanwhile, alarming information was received by the Poles about the concentration of considerable forces of the 45th Rifle Division on the Ikva River, north of Kremenets'. Taking into account the situation, and fearing for the stability of his regiments in case of a second day of hard fighting, the commander of the 18th ID decided to withdraw to the Verba area during the night of 20 July, leaving only the fort in Zahorce still occupied. By 10:00 the entire 18th Division had concentrated in the area of Verba – Bilohorodka. General Krajowski decided not to resume fighting in the region of the so-called Dubno Gardens without the assistance of Polish 2nd Army units, but to concentrate his division in the Verba area and to counteract the attempts of the Soviet 45th RD to cross to the western bank of the Ikva River. After resting in Verba he then decided to turn against the Soviet cavalry group which had already managed to take the Sady – Povcha – Kozyn area, pushing it northward. But even those ideas from General Krajowski failed – in the morning the 6th, 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions moved forward to capture the Korytne – Kozyn – Verba area, the 14th Cavalry Division advancing its lead brigade to Pustoivanne.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, the 45th Division advanced on Dubno and Fort Tarakaniv (Zahorce).

Having received information from a reconnaissance team about the occupation of the Kozyn by a large enemy cavalry group and about the movement of enemy detachments towards Kremenets' and Radyvyliv, General Krajowski decided to continue moving westwards towards Radyvyliv, initially in order to block our cavalry from getting to Brody, and then to execute offensive actions. Around midday, the 18th Infantry Division moved from Verba to Pustoivanne, where it arrived at 15:00. General Krajowski planned to leave his extremely exhausted division there, to rest for the night, but the movement of the 14th Cavalry Division forced him to dodge a fight and move to Radyvyliv (where he arrived the next morning).

By evening, the 11th Cavalry Division had marched to the Verba area, the 14th to the area of Kozyn and Pustoivanne, and the 6th to the Korytne – Bryhadryivka region; the 4th Cavalry Division stayed concentrated at Demydivka, overlooking the crossings on the Styr at Krasne – Hlyboka Dolyna. The 45th RD took Dubno in the afternoon and attacked the Tarakaniv Fort. At about 20:00, after a hard-fought battle, the fort was captured – its garrison, a battalion of 145th IR, was taken prisoner.

Everywhere between the Styr and Ikva Rivers up to the Korytne – Kozyn – Verba line was cleared of the enemy. Isolated groups of Poles wandered in the forests, to be caught by our reconnaissance units. One of the Konarmia's armoured trains arrived in Dubno.

### *22 July*

At 08:00 the Konarmia field staff also arrived in Dubno. By the evening of 21 July the enemy had withdrawn from Kremenets' under the onslaught of the 45th RD (General Szymański's brigade lost the entire 105th IR

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<sup>73</sup> The quotations from Arciszewski (and presumably those of Biernacki in the text as well) are very much paraphrased in Klyuev's text rather than direct translations. I have chosen to go with what he actually wrote, from the Polish.

<sup>74</sup> I have given Pustoivanne, but almost all the references are actually to Rudnia-Pochaivska Station, situated inside it.





in the retreat). On the same day as the enemy was defeated in the area west of Dubno, KomandArm-Horse gave a new operational order (see Map 26) for the final defeat of the enemy operating in front of the Army, and to separate the Polish 2nd and 6th Armies, operating on the Kovel – Lutsk – Brody front:

1. On the morning of 22 July the 24th Rifle Division was to force the Styr in the Zhydychyn – Torhovytsya sector, seize Lutsk, and by the evening reach the Ozdenizh – Torchyn – Hubyn Pershyi line.
2. The 4th, 6th and 14th CDs were to occupy the area on both banks of the Styr near Berestechko, moving the 4th and 6th divisions to the western bank of the Styr.
3. The 45th Rifle Division and its reserve, the 11th Cavalry Division, were to deploy to the Radyvyliv – Brody area.
4. Comrade Osadchii's cavalry group was to be withdrawn to be the Army reserve near Dubno.

In turn, the command of the Polish Front in the Ukraine intended to attack the Konarmia simultaneously with the right flank units of its 2nd Army (3rd Legion ID) and the left flank units of 6th Army (18th ID). To carry out that operation, with the aim of advancing to the Povcha – Dubno area, it was ordered:

1. The 2nd Army was to form a group under General Linde on its right flank, consisting of the 3rd Division, 60th Infantry Regiment and all the Army cavalry, which from the morning of 22 July was to develop a vigorous offensive in the general direction of Povcha. The right flank of the group was to join up with the 18th Infantry Division.
2. The 18th Division was to advance along the Radyvyliv – Dubno railway line, with as many forces as possible on its left flank, which was ordered to move towards Dobryvoda.

These orders of the Polish command and the KomandArm-Horse led to a counter-engagement.

General Linde (2nd Army group) was the first to carry out his orders. On the night of 22 July he formed a combined detachment of units of the 3rd Legion Division and the 4th Cavalry Brigade (consisting of five battalions of infantry, four batteries and two cavalry regiments) and the same night he crossed the Styr near Khrinnyky. At dawn, he occupied the section of the road from Hlyboka to Demydivka with his detachment, which led to a battle with the 4th Cavalry Division. Initially, the enemy forced our brigade from the Styr, but as the main forces of the division came up from Demydivka, along with one brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division sent in support, skilful manoeuvring forced the enemy to withdraw to the left bank during the evening. In this action the Polish 2nd Army once again showed its complete ineffectiveness.

By evening, the 14th Cavalry Division approached Rohizne (south of Demydivka).

On the sector of the 24th Rifle Division, the enemy (Polish 1st Division) also tried to move to active operations near Rozhyshche, but failed. On the 6th Cavalry Division's sector at about 16:00 a small battle with enemy cavalry took place near Shchurovychi. The attack by our brigade was so fast, that enemy left Shchurovychi without having burnt the bridge.

The main forces of the 6th Cavalry Division were concentrated in the Leshniv area by evening.

Meanwhile, in accordance with the orders from 6th Army, General Krajowski marched at noon with two columns of his 18th Division: the 35th Brigade towards Khotyn, and the 36th towards Pustoivanne (the last brigade did not leave Radyvyliv until 19:00). This movement led to a counter-battle with our 11th CD, which had left Verba in the morning heading along the Pustoivanne – Radyvyliv rail line to fight jointly with the 45th RD and to occupy the area south of Radyvyliv. The latter at this time was engaged in a stubborn battle with the Polish 10th Infantry Brigade at Onyshkivtsi (10 km south-east of Pustoivanne).

Around Baranne and Krupets' at about 13:00 the 1st and 2nd Brigades of 11th Cavalry Division clashed with the 35th IB of the 18th ID; the 3rd Brigade of our division was at that time moving to Pidzamche (10 km southeast of Radyvyliv). A fierce battle of counter-attacks took place, which lasted until almost 17:00. As a result, the 11th Cavalry Division withdrew to Kozyn.

*23 July*

The small town of Kozyn was captured by enemy's 35th IB at dawn on 23 July, after short hard fighting. the 11th Cavalry Division retreated to the area of Kam'yana Verba – Ivanivka (near Pustoivanne), where soon



new fighting started with the advancing Polish 36th Infantry Brigade of the 18th Division. By the evening of 22 July Comrade Yakir's 45th had pushed General Szymański's 10th Infantry Brigade from Onyshkivtsi, pursuing it in the direction of Pustoivanne.

By 11:00 the 18th Division had deployed on the line of Onyshkivtsi, Kozyn and Bryhadyrivka. At noon General Krajowski received information from the Polish 6th Army HQ that the attack of the 3rd Infantry Division towards Povcha had failed and that the division remained in the Boremel' area. General Krajowski decided on a wait and see attitude in the area he occupied with his 10th IB, ordering only the 35th IB to move along the Plyashivka River towards Korytne at night. However, that brigade did not start to execute the order until dawn on 24 July.

While these events were taking place in the area of the 18th Division, the Konarmia started to execute its orders to force the Styr. On the morning of 23 July the 4th and 14th Cavalry Divisions engaged the enemy (units of the 3rd ID) in a bitter fight for the crossings over the Styr in the area of Torhovytysya – Berestechko. By evening the enemy was thrown from the crossings along the whole front, except for the crossing near Tovpyzhyn (north-west of Demydivka). The 4th Cavalry Division crossed one brigade at Berestechko in the evening. At the same time the 6th Cavalry Division crossed one brigade south of the 4th Cavalry Division at Shchurovychi, attacking the flank and rear of the enemy retreating from Berestechko.

These events made the Polish 2nd Army command stop attacking, in order to cooperate with the Polish 6th Army; General Linde's group (3rd Legion ID) was ordered to defend the crossing of the Styr near Berestechko to the north. On the night of 24 July only one infantry regiment and battery (from the 3rd ID) tried to advance from Tovpyzhyn to Demydivka, but was repulsed. KomandArm-Horse, having received information about the enemy's new occupation near Kozyn, sent the 3rd Brigade of the 4th Division and the 1st Brigade of the 6th Division (and then the 2nd Brigade of the 6th Division) to that area. The movement of these brigades towards Khotyn at dawn on 24 July led to an encounter with the 35th Infantry Brigade of the 18th Division.

On 23 July the commander of the South-Western Front, assessing the general situation, concluded that it was necessary to move the centre of the Front's operations to Galicia. In this connection, the following directive was issued, which noted our successes on the Western Front and demanded the defeat of the enemy in the L'viv area. The Armies were given the following new tasks:

- a) 12th Army was to seize Kovel as soon as possible and, having set up a cordon towards Brest, to develop its main strike in the most decisive manner in the general direction of Chełm – Kraśnik – Annopol. Chełm was to be taken no later than 11 August and the Vistula and San Rivers crossed in the vicinity of Annopol and Nisko by 15 August.
- b) The Konarmia was to finally defeat the Dubno – Kremenets' enemy group, to rapidly march to capture no later than 29 July the area of L'viv – Rava-Rus'ka, throwing forward units to capture the crossings over the San River in the area of Sieniawa and Przemyśl.
- c) The 14th Army, given the objectives of the Konarmia, was to break the concentration of the enemy on the Zbruch and, using its strike group, to advance in the general direction of Ternopil' – Peremyshlyany – Horodok.
- d) The boundary lines between the Konarmia and neighbouring Armies were: with the 12th Army – Kivertsy – Lokachi – Mircze – Łabunie – Rudnik (all for 12th Army) and with 14th Army – Katerynivka – Hlyniany – Horodok – Peremyshlyany (all for 14th Army).

#### 24 July

KomFront-SW partially modified his directive with respect to Konarmia and ordered it to send the main mass of its cavalry to occupy L'viv, pushing the remains of the defeated enemy southward to the Carpathian foothills.

At 03:30 KomandArm-Horse, having regard to the situation at the front and the new directives, sent new operational orders to his divisions, which demanded the complete defeat and final liquidation of the enemy Kivertsy group. The enemy acting on the Army's front was: the Lutsk group of the 3rd, 6th, and 7th IDs and one cavalry brigade; the Radyvyliv group of the 13th and 18th IDs and one cavalry brigade (see Map 27).



On the Styr (the Zhydychyn – Lutsk – Torhovytsya – Berestechko – Berlyn sector, or some 80 km of front) were left the 24th Rifle Division and the 14th Cavalry Division (with several squadrons of the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions). The rest of the cavalry mass (the 4th, 6th, and 11th CDs) was to defeat the enemy Radyvyliv group. The 4th Division was to strike from Berestechko along the Plyashivka River towards Kozyn, the 11th Division was to strike from the southeast also towards Kozyn, and the 6th Division was to capture Brody and Radyvyliv. The 45th Rifle Division, with the Osadchiy cavalry group, was to support the Army's operation from the south (from the Pochaiv area), and to keep in contact with the units of the 14th Army.

In fact, however, as mentioned above, the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the 6th Cavalry Division and then the 1st Brigade of the 4th Cavalry Division had been moving in the direction of Kozyn since the evening of 23 July. The next morning that led to a meeting engagement with the 35th Infantry Brigade of the 18th Division, advancing from Kozyn to the north-west along the left bank of the Plyashivka.

The 3rd Brigade of the 4th Cavalry Division moved from Plyasheva through Ostriv to Tesluhiv; the 1st and 2nd Brigades remained in the area of Berestechko, with the 1st Brigade on the western bank of the Styr, operating against the enemy cavalry units there, and pushing them towards Smolyava.

The 1st Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division left Leshniv on the evening of 23 July heading through Ridkiv to Khotyn, and at dawn at the Height 112<sup>75</sup> north of Honoratka. This brigade came across the 42nd IR of the Polish 18th Division. That division had been moving with: the 42nd Infantry Regiment and three batteries from Ivashchuky to Khotyn; echeloned to the right of it, along the Plyashivka River, was 9th Border Rifle Regiment with two batteries heading in the general direction to Korytne; the 144th Regiment with two batteries was moving in reserve behind the 9th Regiment. A squadron of the 6th Lancer Regiment scouted ahead of the brigade. At the Height 112 hill there was a hard and long fight between the 1st Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division and the 42nd Regiment, which deployed three light batteries on Honoratka hill to fire at Height 112. For four hours the 1st Brigade, dismounted, held back the onslaught of the 42nd Regiment and then, with the approach of the division's 2nd Brigade, went on the attack, moving around the enemy's left flank.

By that time the 4th Division's 3rd Brigade had arrived at Boratyn from Tesluhiv and attacked the 9th Border Rifle Regiment, which could not hold and retreated to Ivashchuky. The retreat was so quick that the 144th Regiment, which was at the eastern outskirts of Bryhadryivka, could not turn to meet the Red cavalry attack in proper order, and it too was forced to join the 9th Regiment and retreat to Ivashchuky.

At the same time, under the onslaught of the 6th CD, the 42nd IR was also forced to retreat to Ivashchuky. Panic broke out in the Polish units in that area. Having information about the very hard fighting in the area of Boratyn and Khotyn, the Konarmia's commander also sent the 2nd Brigade of the 4th division to Boratyn, which by 18:00 had reached the forest, one kilometre north-east of Bryhadryivka.

On the heights, south of Ivashchuky, the units of the 35th IB attempted to resist us, but were quickly pushed out and started to retreat to Sytne, pursued by units of the 4th and 6th Divisions.

By this time the advanced units of the 11th Cavalry Division had approached Sytne from the east, from Nova Pliasheva. That unit had been fighting alongside the 45th Rifle Division near Hai and Hrada, against the 10th Infantry Brigade, pushing it towards Pochaiv. As a result of our strike from Sytne the Polish 35th Brigade fled. Colonel Arciszewski describes this event as follows:

Now everything moved in disorder: infantry, wagons and artillery fled through the fields towards the armoured train *Pionier*, which had taken part in this unfortunate battle from the railway line east of the town of Mykhailivka.

As a result the 35th IB suffered heavy losses, especially the 9th and 144th Regiments. Polish sources give 14 guns lost. Our reports state that the spoils of war amounted to 11 serviceable and 8 guns missing their locks, 103 machine guns and 1,500 prisoners, not counting those killed in the pursuit. The entire staff of the 35th Brigade was captured in the battle.

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<sup>75</sup> This height would seem to be measured in arshins, which was standard for Russia at the time. The original text notes that the Polish maps had it as 245 metres.



While these events were taking place in the Kozyn – Sytne area, our 45th Rifle Division, together with the 11th Cavalry Division, had been fighting with General Szymański's group north of Pochaiv since the morning. The 134th Brigade of the 45th Division remained near the village of Onyshkivtsi, covering the direction to Kremenets' and Dubno. General Szymański attempted to contact the 18th Division by means of the 105th Infantry Regiment, sent in the direction of Pustoivanne. This regiment was attacked by units of the 11th Cavalry Division north of Pochaiv and retreated towards Pidkamin', losing up to 75% of its men, according to a Polish source. General Krajowski, commander of the 18th ID, was still with his 36th Brigade in the morning near Pustoivanne Station, waiting for the results of his 35th Brigade, which had been sent join the right flank of 2nd Army in the direction of Berestechko.

In the evening of 23 July, after receiving belated information from the Polish 6th Army headquarters that General Linde's group had withdrawn behind the Styr after its attack on Demydivka and that Red Army units were moving south of the Pustoivanne – Radyvyliv road, and also information from an armoured train that the Reds had cut off communications between Brody and Radyvyliv, General Krajowski decided at 09:00 to withdraw back to the Radyvyliv area. Arciszewski notes that at the time this order was given General Krajowski was not yet aware of the defeat of his 35th Brigade, which he instructed to start retiring through Srebno to Radyvyliv, starting at 12:00 on 24 July.

At 12:00 the 36th Infantry Brigade moved from Pustoivanne through Sytne and Krupets' to Radyvyliv. At Krupets' the remnants of the 35th Brigade, fleeing in panic, ran into the rearguard of the 36th Brigade, pursued by our 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions. The rearguard of the 36th Infantry Brigade temporarily delayed the advance of our cavalry units at that town, but suffered losses from our artillery fire while crossing the bridge nearby.

The 3rd Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division moved from Leshniv in the morning to the Radyvyliv – Brody area and at about 19:00 engaged the advanced units of the 36th Infantry Brigade north of the Radyvyliv – Brody road.

#### *25 July*

Owing to the general situation, on the night of 25 July the enemy left Radyvyliv and, under the onslaught of our divisions (4th, 6th, and 11th) began to retreat to Brody. But it could not hold even there: in the afternoon our divisions attacked at Brody, supported by artillery. Fierce fighting on the outskirts of the city continued until late in the evening. The Konarmia had encircled the town: the 11th Division from the east and south, the 6th Division from the south-west, and the 4th Division from the west. The position of the Polish 18th Division was critical. Having been beaten and morally shocked, and having suffered heavy losses in the battle on 24 July near Sytne, it was encircled in Brody by the skilful manoeuvring of the Konarmia's divisions.

At 19:00 General Krajowski sent a radio message to the 6th Army headquarters:

The enemy has surrounded Brody from all sides with two cavalry divisions and has continuously attacked since 13:00. The 18th ID is going to break out at 22:00 on 25 July through to the area of Olesko – Pidhirtsi – Bobylukha.<sup>76</sup>

During the night of July 26th the 18th Division, due to the bad coordination between our divisions and poor intelligence and surveillance, escaped from our ring in the general direction of Zolochiv, inflicting heavy losses on the 2nd Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division, which was occupying the southern-western outskirts of the city. (This was the second time – the first was at Sosnivka – that Polish 18th Division broke out of the grip our tactical encirclement.)

Arciszewski describes these events as follows:

The hour of the departure from the starting position (the railway track) was moved from 22:00 to 23:00, as precisely at 22:00 a general attack of all the enemy forces began simultaneously from all sides.

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<sup>76</sup> This may be a reference to the crossing at Zharkiv, as a hamlet called Bobutycha was just along the river from it.



The frenzied roar of enemy cannons, the crackle of machine guns, the incessant shouts of “ura” around the city, the groans of the wounded in the streets – it was all reminiscent of the fiercest battles of the World War. The enemy was attacking with unbelievable fury, no longer on horseback but on foot, from all sides: especially from the south, at the railway station, and from the north-east. As the assaults broke down in the furious fire of our machine guns, new lines of dismounted enemy cavalry rushed at our positions.

The assault lasted half an hour. The nerves of our heroic men, stretched to the extreme, withstood this test as before. The enemy was repulsed with very heavy losses.

Now it was our turn to fall back. It was already 22:30.

The bridge on the road to Zolochiv, located just at the town exit, was covered by two enemy machine-guns. To the left and right of the bridge the enemy was settled in the hills.

The 49th IR, which was to form the front of the strike of the 36th Brigade, brought up its machine guns to the bridge in the darkness of the black night, with two guns of 2/18 Battery Field Artillery positioned just behind them.

The leading units of the 35th Brigade set up in a similar manner on the road to Holoskovychi.

Punctually at 23:00, rapid fire from the machine guns and advanced cannons began, and a few moments later both brigades launched an attack to the south.

Initially surprised, the enemy quickly realised what was happening and began firing machine-guns from the adjacent hills at the places where breaches had been made. However, a quick assault by individual companies to the right and left of the roads soon opened a gap in the ring surrounding the city and the columns began to move more rapidly in the dark night in the indicated directions. Only one elusive enemy MG, mounted on a cart, drove up in the darkness several times here and there at a medium distance to the road and unleashed whole cartridge belts at the marching column of the 36th Brigade, [which resulted in the loss of up to 50 men and a dozen horses.]

Eventually that fire ceased as well, and the division's flank and rear guards began to advance freely towards the south.

At about 09: 30 on 26 July the division reached Pidhirtsi and Olesko.

While the main mass of the Konarmia was fighting the Radyvyliv group (the Polish 18th ID and 10th IB) the Polish 2nd Army was trying to dislodge our divisions (24th RD and 14th CD) from the crossings of the Styr. On 23 July, units of the Polish 6th Division pressed the 24th Division north of Lutsk, and temporarily occupied Kivertsi. However, the situation was restored by arriving reserves, and the enemy was repulsed behind the river. On 24 and 25 July no enemy activity was seen on the 24th RD's sector, but on the left flank of 12th Army's 44th Division's front was broken north of Rozhyshche, the enemy pushing 15 km to the east, taking the village of Trostyanets', and capturing the 393rd RR. On the 14th Cavalry Division's sector, which included the Styr crossings south of Torhovytzia, the enemy (3rd Legion ID and cavalry regiment under General Linde) was unusually active on 24 and 25 July. All their attempts to cross the river near Krasne and Tovpyzhyn were repulsed on the first day, but on 25 July the enemy, with up to two regiments of infantry and cavalry, managed to take the crossings near Tovpyzhyn and Berestechko. Attempts by the 14th division to throw the enemy off the crossings on 25 July were unsuccessful.

### *26 July*

Acting on the extreme left flank, our 45th Division, while fighting with the enemy's Radyvyliv group, continued to push General Szymański's group from Pochaiv in the general direction of Pidkamin'. By the morning that group had occupied Zharkiv and came into contact with the 18th Infantry Division. In the afternoon the 45th Division reached the Slonivka River south of Radyvyliv.

As a result of the fighting on 24 and 25 July, the enemy Radyvyliv Group was beaten, suffering heavy losses, and it began to retreat towards L'viv. The Konarmia had won a major tactical and strategic success over the enemy on its entire front. Attempts by the Polish 2nd Army to develop active operations with General





Linde's group, attempting to connect with the 18th Division were unsuccessful. The 18th ID, assigned by the Polish 6th Army to "pursue" the Konarmia, was almost completely defeated, and only the lack of cohesion between the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions on the night of 26 July gave it the opportunity to slip away.

The Konarmia stood on the road to L'viv. At the same time, the successes of the 12th and 14th Armies, operating north and south of Konarmia, began to unfold favourably for us.

The failures around Brody and Volochys'k, and the threat to L'viv that they exposed, forced the Polish Ukrainian Front in to regroup its forces. In addition, the situation on the right flank of the Poles' Northern Front – due to the successful movement of our 16th Army and the Mazyr Group – required the withdrawal of the Polish 3rd Army from Polesia. In connection with that, the Front commander, General Śmigły-Rydz issued a directive in which he set out his intention to concentrate all available forces from the less threatened sections of his front against the Konarmia. However, the Polish 3rd Army (3rd and 7th IDs, 132nd and 157th IRs, Ukrainian 6th Division, and General Balakhovich's units) had to withdraw to the Stochod River during 26 and 27 July, cutting off some of its forces to the south and putting them at the disposal of the 2nd Army.

The Polish 2nd Army – reinforced by units of the 3rd Army and from the rear by the 1st Legion ID, 6th ID and composite cavalry group (2nd CD, 4th CB and 7th Lancer Regiment) – was to hold the line of the Styr from Lutsk to Torhovtsy, and assault in the direction of Radyvyliv – Brody, to enable the 6th Army to restore its position on the Zbruch. The Polish 6th Army, prior to the advance of the 2nd Army, was to stubbornly defend the approaches to Eastern Galicia, not retreating beyond the Strypa River, and then together with the Polish 2nd Army to conduct an offensive at Brody – Radyvyliv.

#### **Assessment of Konarmia operations after the final capture of Rivne**

During the battles in the area of Lutsk – Dubno – Brody the First Horse Army showed exceptional activity and great skill, manoeuvring well, dealing strong blows to the Polish divisions. It was the pendulum that regulated all the operations of the South-Western Front.

But there were shortcomings in the actions of its divisions, which mainly consisted in not always being properly coordinated with each other, as was noted by the Army RMS at a meeting of the commanders in Kozyn. During the battles, some divisions of the Army (6th, 11th and 14th) did not always manoeuvre to the flank and to the rear of the enemy's strong positions; they took unnecessary losses with frontal attacks, especially as the Polish infantry made good use of the rough terrain and their firepower.

But one cannot agree at all with the conclusions of the Polish colonel Arciszewski, who wrote that:

Budëny's aim from 14 to 26 July was to advance towards L'viv. To this end, he pushed his cavalry divisions one of after another through the gap between the 6th and 2nd Armies. ... He was trying to prevent the wings of the 6th and 2nd Armies from merging.

...

but all these attacks brought only advantages in the field, destroying only a small amount of the Polish strength.

...

The time Budëny lost in these battles was not at all made up for by the results achieved.

...

On 26 July the first reinforcements for our cavalry brigades had already arrived. The Front commander also decided to pull the 6th Division from Łuck to Beresteczko, as well as the 1st Infantry Division (27 July) from the area north of Łuck to Radomyśl and so the battle of Brody began with increased forces on the Polish side.

...

During that time, the Polish army created a whole set of new large cavalry units in the interior of the country, which, after the lapse of the 14 days, were already in battle with Budëny's army at Brody.





Gaining time is the key task of a commander fighting a delaying campaign. That goal was therefore fully achieved by General Krajowski. The heavy losses of the 18th Division were not suffered in vain.

It is clear from this document that the Polish command did not know at that time the real task of the Konarmia, only received from the South-Western Front on 23 July, was to move on L'viv.



## Chapter VI

### Battle between the Polish 2nd Army and the Konarmia on the Outskirts of L'viv (L'viv Operation)

As related above, the commander of the Polish Ukrainian Front decided to conduct a vigorous counter manoeuvre by his 2nd and 6th Armies to restore the lost positions of the 6th Army following the capture of Brody by the Konarmia. Based on the Front's orders, the commander of the 2nd Army, in an operational order of 26 July, outlined a regrouping of his forces, which was to be completed by 29 July. The entire army cavalry (1st Cavalry Division and 4th Cavalry Brigade) was to be concentrated on the extreme right flank of the army in the area of Berezivka – Merva – Berestechko. The 3rd Legion ID was to replace the 6th ID at the crossings on the Styr near Lutsk and to the south, and then transfer to the 3rd Army, after which the 1st Legion and 6th IDs were to concentrate on the Torhovytysya – Merva front, providing for themselves crossings over the Styr for greater freedom of manoeuvre on both banks of the river (see Map 28).

At the end of this regrouping, the general envisaged:

1. A cavalry group, in two columns, would strike at Brody – Radyvyliv, trying to link up with the 18th ID.
2. The 6th ID would follow the cavalry, crossing the Styr near Berestechko.
3. The 1st Legion Division, having crossed the Styr River at Maleve, would advance to the area of Plyashivka – Dobryvoda as a covering manoeuvre to ensure the 6th ID from Dubno.

At dawn on 27 July the units of the Polish 2nd Army began regrouping.

Meanwhile, following the occupation of Brody, the KomandArm-Horse decided to hit the enemy's rear with the majority of his forces – the 4th and 6th CDs – and destroy it. It was to be supported by the other divisions along the Styr, at the same time tying down the Polish 6th Army's left flank at Zolochiv. In this connection, he set the following tasks:

- The 24th Rifle Division and 14th Cavalry Division were to stay on the Styr River from Zhydychyn to Berestechko and wait, then, in the event of success from the Army's strike group, to attack towards Kyslyn – Pryvitne – Mylyatyn (see Map 29).
- On the morning of 27 July the 4th Cavalry Division was to move through Stoyaniv to Mylyatyn, destroying enemy manpower and capturing equipment and supplies.
- At the same time, the 6th Cavalry Division was to advance through Radekhiv to Sokal by the evening of 28 July.
- The 11th Cavalry Division, leaving one brigade in the Zolochiv area to await the arrival of units of the 45th Rifle Division, was to move to the Western Bug River, to a sector of Dobrotvir – Busk – Hlyniany. By the evening of 28 July, the division was to reach the area of Chanyzh – Hrabova – Yablunivka – Adamy<sup>77</sup> (near Busk).
- The 45th Rifle Division was to reach the Storonybaby – Bilyi Kamin' – Sasiv – Koltiv line by the evening of 27 July. Comrade Osadchiy's Cavalry Brigade was to position itself in the Brody area as the Army reserve.

So three cavalry divisions and one infantry division were given active duties, two of which (24th RD and 14th CD) were to start only after the 4th and 6th Divisions had been successful. The 45th Division was to tie up the enemy on a broad front, and the 11th Cavalry Division was to play the role of a back-up to both of the Army's groups.

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The Konarmia's completion of these tasks led to a series of encounters with units of the Polish 2nd Army on one side and the 18th Division of the Polish 6th Army on the other. As the formation of the 2nd Army's strike group was late (the redeployment of the 1st Legion ID and the 1st CD was delayed), its main forces did not start fighting until 30 July.

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<sup>77</sup> This village no longer exists. It was just SE of modern Zavods'ke, where the main road enters the forest.



Three periods can be noted in the operation: in the first one the offensive initiative belonged to the Konarmia, in the second one it went to the enemy and in the third one, by virtue of the retreat of the Polish 2nd Army, it returned to the Konarmia.

On 27 July only the 4th and 11th Cavalry Divisions fought, having moved forward as ordered. At Bordulyaky, the 4th Division started a long and hard fight with the enemy's 4th Cavalry Brigade (according to a Polish source), which was moving towards Brody after crossing the river. There was a cavalry duel, which resulted in the withdrawal of the Polish brigade behind the Styr, retaining the crossing. The 11th Cavalry Division, which moved to the Sokolivka area, south of the 4th CD, encountered the left flank of the 18th Infantry Division of the Polish 6th Army. That division, waiting for the Polish 6th Army to go on the offensive, was obliged to have a strong manoeuvre group on its left flank to counteract our cavalry's attempts to bypass the left flank of the 6th Army, as ordered by its Army HQ. General Krajowski assigned his best brigade, the 36th, for that purpose; that brigade was meant to move to the Busk – Krasne area on 28 July. It did that under the cover of strong reconnaissance from units of the 6th Lancer Regiment and armoured trains sent to Brody. The rest of the Konarmia front that day had no major engagement, but on the 14th CD sector the enemy bombarded our position with chemical shells, which caused vomiting and poisoning.

### *28 July*

By the evening of 27 July, the enemy had had significant reinforcements arrive: their 1st Cavalry Division, reorganised in the interior, had reached the area of Horokhiv; the lead units of their 2nd Cavalry Division, which had just been formed, had marched from Hrubieszów to Volodymyr. During 28 July, the Polish 2nd Army continued its regrouping. During the day and into the night of 29 July the 1st Infantry Division was hurriedly transferred by trucks to the area of Radomyshl'. Simultaneously, on the section of the Polish 6th Army, the 36th Infantry Brigade moved at dawn on 28 July to Krasne, leaving only weak patrols of the 6th Lancer Regiment in its former positions.

That day on the Konarmia line from Lutsk to the mouth of the Plyashivka River we saw only scouts; but in the centre and on the left flank there were very intense combats; the 4th Division pushed the 4th Cavalry Brigade back from Bordulyaky, occupied Stanislavchik and Monastyrok, crossed the Styr, and in pursuit of the enemy occupied Berezivka and Lopatyn. The 6th Cavalry Division tried to cross the Styr at Shchurovychi, but the enemy repulsed its attempts with artillery and machine-gun fire. The 11th CD continued to move to the Bug River. By the evening it had spread out in a wide front and occupied Busk and Vuzlove.

However, the 36th Infantry Brigade of the Polish 18th ID, then at Krasne, upon receiving information about the fall of Busk, moved there and, after short fight, reoccupied it. The 11th Cavalry Division had to leave Vuzlove at night fall.

Enemy aviation was intense around Brody, dropping bombs over our units.

By evening the Polish 2nd Army regrouping was finished – only the last units of the 1st Legion ID were still to arrive. On 29 July the 2nd Army was ordered to commence a general attack.

The main concept of the order was to strike in a formation echeloned to the right towards Brody and Radyvyliv, destroying the Red Army units in passing and establishing contact with the 18th Division; at the same time, the units of the 1st Legion Division, having crossed the Styr near Maleve, were to take Plyashivka and Dobryvoda on the night of 29 July to cover the manoeuvre of the army main forces to Brody and Radyvyliv.

### *29 July*

Those orders had the 4th Cavalry Brigade going through Stanislavchik southwards to liaise with the 18th Division and clear the enemy from the area west of the Shchurovychi – Brody line. The 1st Cavalry Division was to move earlier: on 29 July it was to move to Radyvyliv, smash the enemy and conduct reconnaissance towards Dubno and Kremenets'. The 6th Infantry Division, with the 11th Lancer Regiment, was to depart at 06:00 for Brody and Radyvyliv: on reaching that area the division was to prepare for a move on Dubno. Meanwhile the 1st Legion Infantry Division was to advance to their area to support from the north the operation of the main army forces. Combined detachments of all branches were to be left at the crossings



over the Styr. The 2nd Cavalry Division was assigned as the Army reserve, reaching the Horokhiv by the evening.

The execution of these order by the Polish 2nd Army led to a wide-front battle with the Konarmia divisions, which were carrying out their orders of 27 July. At dawn, the 1st Legion ID and the 2nd ID started crossing the Styr, the first in the vicinity of Maleve (facing our 14th CD), the latter against Berestechko (the 6th CD). An attempt by the 14th CD to drive the enemy back failed: its 1st ID entrenched on the eastern bank of the Styr facing Maleve, and the 6th ID, with some attached units of the 1st Division (up to 2,000 bayonets and sabres with 4 guns) started to spread quickly to the left (southern) bank of the Plyashivka, in the general direction of Mytnytsya, where the 1st Brigade of the 6th CD was situated. Our brigade launched a mounted attack and pushed the enemy out of Mytnytsya village. Having moved to nearby hills, the enemy halted and engaged in a strong fire fight. Simultaneously other forces of the 6th Cavalry Division were fighting for the Shchurovychi river crossing, where the enemy had organised a strong defence of the bridge using concrete dugouts left from the World War. Our dismounted units reached the bridge, but under heavy enemy fire had to pull back, suffering heavy losses.

### *July 30*

The 2nd and 3rd Brigades of the 6th Cavalry Division crossed the River Styr south of Stanislavchik after midnight of 30 July and arrived in the rear of the Polish 1st Cavalry Division, which was crossing at Berestechko, and had about a brigade on the eastern bank of the Styr fighting with the 1st Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division. At daybreak both the 6th CD brigades engaged the enemy in a bitter battle near Zavydche – Smorzhiv (the Poles were probably units of the 1st Cavalry Division with the 4th Cavalry Brigade and covering units of the 6th Infantry Division which were amassing near Berestechko, see Map 30). The fighting was especially fierce at Zavydche, where the enemy counterattacked the 6th Cavalry Division three times; with the last one our 33rd Cavalry Regiment was able to hit the enemy rear and it started retreating to the Sudylivka River, near Berestechko. The successful actions of our 1st and 3rd Brigades on the west bank of the Styr forced the enemy 6th Infantry Division, facing the 1st Brigade at Mytnytsya, to retreat in the evening to Berestechko. The crossing at Shchurovychi remained in our hands.

The 4th Cavalry Division did not take part in any fighting on 29 July: during the morning it moved to Radekhiv, but because of the heavy rain and deteriorating roads it was forced to return to its original position in the Lopatin – Oplits'ko area. On the morning of 30 July it moved again to Radekhiv, and took it after a short skirmish with the enemy's 4th Cavalry Brigade. The failure of the Polish 4th Cavalry Brigade against the 6th Cavalry Division forced the Polish 1st Cavalry Division to retire to the left bank of the Styr River to assist it, but that help was too late. The result was that the actions of our 4th and 6th CDs totally prevented the Polish strike force from moving on Brody. By the end of the day, that strike force was pushed north of the Sudylivka River and linked up with the Polish 2nd Cavalry Division, which had just arrived at Horokhiv.

On 29 July, the 1st Legion ID, crossing the river at Maleve, launched a determined offensive against the 14th Cavalry Division, which withdrew to the Rohizne – Vovkovyi area in the evening; the enemy occupied the Demydivka area. The Polish 6th Infantry Division remained passive in the Berestechko area.

On the evening of 29 July, due to the situation in the areas of the 6th, 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions – and having found out that the enemy had put considerable forces (including new formations) against the Konarmia to cover the approaches to L'viv – KomandArm-Horse informed his superior that L'viv would not be taken by the deadline. In a reply telegram the KomFront expressed his surprise and demanded an unconditional execution of his directive, pointing out that the 14th Army had occupied Ternopil', thereby securing the Konarmia's left flank. To safeguard itself from the Berestechko – Lutsk direction, the KomFront suggested that the 45th Rifle Division should be transferred to the Army reserve in the region of Demydivka immediately upon defeating the enemy's Radyvyliv group, which would enable the Army to accomplish its mission with three cavalry divisions.

In response, the Konarmia staff communicated the reasons for the delayed movement on L'viv, and that they considered it necessary to first eliminate the enemy Lutsk – Boremel' group.



Considering the situation facing the Army and the KomFront's order, during the night of 30 July the KomandArm gave a new operational order. It indicated that the troops of the Western Front, breaking the enemy, were directing an offensive on the Osowiec – Bialystok – Brest line; that the enemy in front of the 12th Army was preparing to retreat to the west; and that the 14th Army, having crossed the Zbruch River, had reached the Seret River near Ternopil' – Horodyshe with its right flank units. The Army's divisions were then given orders to enable them to carry out the task of capturing L'viv:

- the 24th Rifle Division and the 14th Cavalry Division were to continue a constant defence on the Styr in their sectors, watching all enemy movements; if the enemy facing them was to weaken, then they were to advance and move to the line Lokachi – Pryvitne – Mylyatyn;
- the 4th Cavalry Division was to take the Horokhiv district by the evening; then move to Kamianka-Buzka (in case the 24th Rifle and the 14th Cavalry Divisions did not reach their assigned line);
- the 6th Cavalry Division was to advance to the Toporiv area by the evening and at dawn on the 31st, cross the Western Bug River, occupy the area northwest of Busk, with reconnaissance in the directions of Velyki Mosty, Zhovkva and L'viv, cutting the rail lines in the Kamianka – L'viv and Krasiv – L'viv sections;
- the 11th Cavalry Division was to remain in the current positions and, before the 6th Division arrived, seize one of the crossings in the Kamianka-Buzka to Busk sector; on 31 July it was to assist the 45th Division in reaching Storonybaby – Sasiv.
- The 45th Rifle Division was to guard the Army's advance to the Western Bug from the south by moving to the Storonybaby – Sasiv line.

While fighting was going on between the 4th, 6th, and 14th CDs and units of the Polish 2nd Army, on the left flank of the Konarmia the 11th CD and 45th RD were fighting against the Polish 18th Division. The 11th Cavalry Division, after retreating from Busk on 29 July, began to advance towards the Vuzlove – Kamianka railway, as its orders required. After capturing Busk (in the evening of 28 July), General Krajowski had realised during the night that Konarmia's units were trying to reach Kamianka-Buzka through the Toporiv wooded area. Without waiting for instructions from his HQ, General Krajowski decided to pin the enemy to his front and prevent it from bypassing the left flank of the Polish 6th Army. For that, he ordered General Szymański's group and the 35th Infantry Brigade, all under General Szymański's general command, to move to Brody at dawn of 30 July. Meanwhile the 36th Infantry Brigade, under his command, would move to Polonychna and Toporiv against the 11th Cavalry Division. General Szymański's attack, supported by two armoured trains, was to be demonstrative in nature.

Advancing in two columns, of the 36th Infantry Brigade and the 19th Infantry Regiment, General Krajowski drove our 11th CD's 2nd Brigade units from Yablunivka – Hrabova almost simultaneously with the 3rd Brigade from Adamy and Toporiv. Our division had to fight in extremely difficult terrain for us; the forests came very close to the settlements, and the brigades had nowhere to deploy for mounted combat; but for the enemy infantry the terrain was very favourable. As a result of the fighting, by evening the 11th Division had to withdraw to the area north of Toporiv and position itself at Staryi Maidan. Having received information from prisoners that the main forces of the Konarmia were still on the eastern bank of the Styr, General Krajowski turned towards Stanislavchik (on the Styr).

General Szymański's group, facing our 45th Rifle Division, which was moving forward, was equally successful: it not only stopped our attack, but also partially drove it back from Kutly and Chishky (133rd Brigade). Only on the extreme flank of the Polish 10th Infantry Brigade, at Yaseniv, did it go poorly for the enemy. Here, the fragile Polish 105th IR, was attacked in the flank by the 418th RR (140th RB) of the 14th Army's rightmost division, which had entered into close combat cooperation with the Konarmia on 30 July). The Poles failed to survive the attack and scattered across the battlefield. At the same time the 8th Chervonnyy CD of the 14th Army joined the extreme left flank of the 45th Rifle Division near Litovyshe.

Considering the actions of the Konarmia and Polish forces in the first period of the battle, it is necessary to point out that from 27 to 29 July the Konarmia created a suitable starting position for further action against the Polish 2nd Army, thanks to the two divisions – the 4th and 11th. During the night of 30 July, it managed to move another division, the 6th, to the left bank of the Styr. During that time the Polish 2nd Army was rather passive, only its 4th Cavalry Brigade attempted offensive action; the remaining divisions just putting



up a solid defence. Only on 29 July did the 2nd Army start begin to partially wrest the initiative from the Konarmia after crossing the Styr (1st Legion ID and 1st CD) to the Plyshivka River. The failure of the 1st Cavalry Division and lack of movement of the Polish 6th Army impacted the Konarmia only on 30 July when the KomandArm-Horse, on one hand fearful of the movement of strong enemy units to the rear of his divisions, which had already crossed to the left bank of the Styr, and on the other hand the possibility of enemy movement on Dubno, decided to inform his superiors on 29 July that that situation would restrain his movement to L'viv. As for the actions of the left flank of the Konarmia, i.e. the 45th Division, it could not develop any active action until 30 July when it moved to its designated area southwest of Brody. Due to the 6th Cavalry Division's successful night-time actions against the Polish 1st Cavalry Division on 30 July the KomandArm-Horse decided to continue the next day its action against the Lutsk – Boremel' group (Polish 2nd Army) with the 4th and 14th Cavalry and 24th Rifle Divisions. The 6th Cavalry Division was to capture the crossings over the Western Bug near Kamianka-Buzka. The 11th Cavalry Division was to support the Konarmia's operation from the south. The 45th Rifle Division was to tie up the enemy around Brody.

However, on 31 July the Konarmia was not able to achieve any of the objectives it was given by its command because of the vastness of the tasks it had to accomplish. The fighting of 30 July had given the enemy an opportunity to gain considerable success on the Konarmia's flanks, even though the latter at the same time had managed to squeeze two divisions (the 4th and 6th) deep into the gap between the Polish 2nd and 6th Armies and nullified any success by the Polish cavalry strike force.

### *31 July*

During the night the Konarmia watched the developments on its flanks, especially around the 14th Cavalry Division, as the enemy managed to take Demydivka on 30 July. Communication with the divisions on the left bank of the Styr was not well organised and the command realised that the enemy's movement on Dubno was in the process of tearing the Army into two parts. That is why the orders to the Army given on at 02:30 on 31 July already conceded that the Konarmia had given up the initiative and was seeking merely to counteract the enemy's moves, with the intention of restoring the situation in the area of the 14th Cavalry Division on the Styr (see Map 31).

This order assigned tasks:

- The 4th Cavalry Division: in connection with the situation at the front of the 11th Cavalry Division, was to pull back from Radekhiv to the area of Vuzlove to communicate with the latter.
- The 14th Cavalry Division, assisted by the 6th Cavalry Division, was to restore at all costs the lost position along the Styr River.
- The 6th Cavalry Division was to assist the 14th Cavalry Division in restoring its position on the right bank of the Styr with one brigade, and send the other two brigades along the left bank of the river to destroy the enemy in the area of Lypa – Lobachivka and to clear the right bank of the Lipa River.
- The 11th Cavalry Division was to push the enemy from the Toporiv – Tur'ya area, and once it had occupied it, hold it firmly, and link up with the 45th Rifle Division.
- The latter was to move to the Storonybaby – Sasiv line, with the cavalry brigade on its right flank.
- The 24th Rifle Division was to hold the area on the Styr firmly, concentrating sufficient forces on its left flank to move towards Knyahynyne to support the 14th Cavalry Division.
- Finally, the 47th Rifle Division, which had just been transferred to the Konarmia (it was formerly the Composite Division of the 14th Army), was to concentrate in the evening in the Sestryatyn – Buhavka area (north of Radyvyliv) for further movement (at dawn on 1 August) of one brigade to the Berestechko area and two brigades to the Shchurovychi – Smorzshiv area.

The Red Army command assumed that the 24th, 45th and 47th divisions would secure the rear by crossing the Styr, in order to release all the cavalry divisions to strike against the units of the Polish 2nd and 6th Armies blocking their path, and after breaking through them, move to L'viv.





In the meantime, the deepening incursion of the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions into the enemy's positions caused them to abandon their initiative, and that even more so than the Horse Army had: while the latter sought to restore their situation, the Polish command abandoned the results of their successes.

The commander of the Polish 2nd Army ordered his task force (4th Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, and the 3rd and the 11th Lancer Regiments taken from the 1st and the 6th Infantry Divisions, under General Sawicki) to concentrate at Smolyava – Merva and throw out those units of the Konarmia that had managed to cross over to the northern bank of the Sudylyvka River. Two lancer regiments of that group – the 5th and the 17th – were ordered to attack Zhuravnyky. The 1st Legion Division and the 6th Infantry Division were to withdraw back to the left bank of the Styr, retaining the possibility of crossing to the right bank. At the same time, General Krajowski of the 18th ID, being informed about the break-through of two divisions of the Konarmia's cavalry towards Stoyaniv, and based on the relative failure of his 35th Brigade at Brody, considered the position of his left flank too advanced: he therefore ordered the 36th Brigade and the 19th Infantry Regiment to withdraw back to the Toporiv area (from the crossings on the Styr).

Both sides were busy regrouping, and the day passed relatively quietly, except for occasional combats scattered across the front. Some serious fighting happened in the area of our 14th Division, where the commander of the 1st Legion Division, on his own initiative, attacked the 14th CD camped around Rohizne – Vovkovyi during the night of 31 July, and pushed them back to the Povcha area. During this attack the enemy completely encircled the 3rd Brigade, which after several attacks broke out to join the main forces of the Division. By the evening, the whole division was concentrated in the area of Budy, from where it was meant to move to Smordva and Bokiima, to flank the enemy.

The 6th Cavalry Division attacked Berestechko during the day, but was unsuccessful; by the evening it had concentrated in brigades near Ridkiv, Shchurovychi, and Zavydche (on both sides of the Styr River).

The 4th Cavalry Division attacked Toporiv in the evening, where it encountered units of the 36th Infantry Brigade of the 18th Division, but was forced to retreat to the Ohlyadiv – Radekhiv area due to terrain conditions (forested and marshy area). The 11th Cavalry Division started to execute the Army's orders in the morning and moved to the Toporiv – Tur'ya area, where they engaged in a bitter battle with units of the 36th Brigade, which at that time had started to retreat from the Styr to Toporiv. Fearing for its rear, the division retreated to its initial positions, north-east of Toporiv. Having received information about the 4th Cavalry Division's advance on Toporiv in the evening, it again moved westward to the Tur'ya region, but met stubborn resistance of the enemy and retreated to the crossings on the Styr river near Stanislavchik – Ruda. The Special Purpose Brigade of the Konarmia also took part in the operation on Stanislavchik, as it moved from Brody to connect with the 11th Cavalry Division.

On the sector of the 45th Rifle Division, the 35th Infantry Brigade and General Szymański's group tried to advance, but were repulsed. The 45th Division's attempt to dislodge the enemy from Pidhirtsi also failed; by evening the Division had approached the Brody – Krupets' area; the 8th Chervonnyy CD of the 14th Army was on the Ponykva – Litovyshche line (to the left of our 45th Division) by the evening. As a result of these movements, the Konarmia was aimed almost in a westerly direction, occupying the line of Radekhiv – Ohlyadiv – Stanislavchik – Ruda-Brids'ka – Chishky – Sukhodoly. This position was ensured from the north-east by the 6th Cavalry Division, located on both banks of the Styr River near Shchurovychi. The 14th Division had completely broken away from the army, being pushed back almost to the Dubno area.

It seems that this movement of the Horse Army was not clear to the Polish command: according to his reconnaissance data, the 2nd Army commander considered the main forces of the Konarmia to be in the area of Leshniv and Zavydche, which had only the 6th Cavalry Division. Because of that, from Mykolaiv he gave the following order for the offensive in the evening:

Since it is confirmed with certainty that Budëny's Konarmia has concentrated in the specified area, I order:

The strike group (General Sawicki) to cross the Sudylyvka River at Mykolaiv and Skryhove and strike at Shchurovychi and Leshniv, acting on the enemy's right flank and rear;

The 6th Infantry Division, moving from Berestechko, is to strike to the south at Mytnytsya – Leshniv with all its forces;



The 1st Legion Division is to actively protect the left flank of the 6th Infantry Division.

Attack start: 6th Infantry Division at 05:00, the Cavalry Group at 07:00.

The Konarmia command had quite exact data about the enemy's grouping in front of it, slightly exaggerating their numbers. The enemy's intentions were as follows: wanting to take advantage of the encirclement of our Brody group, it decided to force the Styr on the front between Torhovytsya and Berestechko and simultaneously attack from Stoyaniv towards Shchurovychi, then to advance towards Dubno – Kremenets'.

### *1 August*

In view of the situation, a new operational order was sent to the Horse Army divisions at dawn on 1 August. It set the task: "To repel the enemy, which had appeared on the right bank of the Styr River in the area of Bokiima – Vovkovyi, and to break the enemy group in the area of Stanislavchik – Toporiv – Polonychna". In that regard:

- The 24th Rifle Division was to continue to hold the crossings on the Styr from Lutsk to Torhovytsya, having allocated a strong group to strike at the enemy's flank, acting south of Bokiima;
- The 14th Cavalry Division was to regain lost ground by a concentrated strike on Demydivka;
- The 6th Cavalry Division was to remain in its grouping on both banks of the Styr near Shchurovychi, providing the most possible assistance to the 14th Cavalry Division;
- The 4th and 11th Cavalry Divisions were to defeat the enemy grouping near the town of Toporiv and then capture the crossings over the Western Bug on between Kamianka-Buzka and Busk;
- the Army's Reserve Brigade was to assist the 11th Cavalry Division, advancing towards Tur'ya and Sokolivka;
- the 45th and 47th Rifle Divisions were to carry out the tasks previously assigned to them.

In order to liaise better with the main Army HQ, by that time we had an operations centre in Dubno, with a commander from the main HQ at its head. That also allowed better communications with the 24th Rifle Division and the 14th Cavalry Division, which were acting somewhat apart from the rest of the Army.

Those orders had the Konarmia operating in two groups: the 6th CD, 14th CD and 47th RD, acted to the north, while the 4th CD, 11th CD, Special Purpose CB and 45th RD acted to the south-west. However, even before the units of the Polish 2nd Army started their action, General Krajowski of the 18th ID again took the initiative. In the evening of 31 July he received an order from the commander of the 6th Army, who had been asked by its superior command (in Chełm at the time, monitoring the operations of the southern Ukrainian Front) that the 36th Infantry Brigade should organize a sortie from Toporiv to Lopatyn in the night of 1 August to create panic and defeat the strong enemy forces there. An Army strike force would attack Lopatyn – Stanislavchik simultaneously from the north-west.

However, the joint force sent for that purpose (one battalion each from the 19th and 49th IRs, with one battery) not only failed to reach its goal, but ran into old fortifications with barbed-wire fences near Staryi Maidan occupied by dismounted units of our 4th Cavalry Division, and was driven back with great losses. Our units set off in pursuit of the Polish detachment and the 4th Cavalry Division was able to completely encircle the entire 36th Infantry Brigade at Toporiv. During the evening the 11th Cavalry Division reached the area southwest of Toporiv, thus cutting off the enemy's escape route to Busk. Attempts by the 36th Brigade to break through to Busk before nightfall were unsuccessful.

On the sector of the 45th Rifle Division, and of the 8th Chervonnyy Division south of it, enemy units from the 13th Infantry Division and General Szymański's group conducted fierce attacks all day, which were successfully repulsed. Their only success was capturing was Yaseniv from the 8th Division in the evening, after it had changed hands several times during the day.

While these events were taking place in the Konarmia's southern group, the enemy continued its pressure, again at dawn, on the northern group: against the 14th Cavalry Division at Demydivka and Kozyn, and on the 6th Cavalry Division's sector at Shchurovychi. At dawn, the 1st Legion Infantry Division pushed away the advanced squadrons of the 14th Division and occupied the Tesluhiv – Dobryvoda area with its right flank.



The 14th CD, exhausted by previous combat, was recuperating till midday around Budy – Haevtsy [?]. Raised from its rest by the Army Chief of Staff, Klyuev – who had been heading at that time from Brody to the operations centre in Dubno – at about 14:00 it moved to restore its positions. Supported on the left flank by the 214th RR of the 24th RD, it drove the enemy away from the Bokiima – Vovkovyi area by the night of 1 August. At that time, the enemy occupied the town of Kozyn in the division's rear.

At dawn, the Polish 6th Division attacked our 6th Cavalry Division at Shchurovychi. A bitter battle ensued. The 6th Cavalry Division held back the enemy attack with artillery fire, mounted and foot attacks, but late in the night the enemy managed to push it to the right bank of the Styr and take Shchurovychi, Mytnytsya, and Leshniv. In these battles the 6th Cavalry Division took 130 prisoners, 8 machine guns, 300 horses, and many weapons.

The actions of the Polish cavalry strike force that day were insignificant: after brief combats with some screens (two *divisions* of the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions) on the Sudylyivka River, by the evening it was concentrated in the area just occupied by the Polish 6th infantry division.

The enemy did not show any activity in front of the 24th Rifle Division: it only had observation units in that sector.

At this time the armoured trains of the Konarmia were: No. 72 near Podhoretz to the west of Brody, No 62. near Radyvyliv, No 203. on the Verba – Rudnya – Pochaiv sector and No 63. at Kivertsi Station near Lutsk.

## 2 August

Recent events on the Konarmia's positions, where it had withstood stubborn battles with the best surviving and most combat worthy Polish units, forced the South-Western Front to take measures to reinforce it, and so on 2 August the Konarmia had the 8th Cavalry Division added to it. At the same time the KomFront demanded the KomandArm-Horse carry out his tasks as resolutely as possible, using all the Army and local reserves.

The commander of the Polish 2nd Army decided on that day to continue his further assault on Brody. His orders consisted of a deep encirclement of the main forces of the Konarmia (supposed to be in the Ridkiv – Brody area) by the strike force, advancing from Shchurovychi to the south-east, in order to destroy their enemy and capture Radyvyliv, and then moving the 6th ID overnight towards Brody.

The 1st Legion Division was to support the Army's operation from the north and north-east. The 4th [Cavalry] Brigade was detached from the Strike Group to clear the right bank of the Styr of enemy forces. The manoeuvre of the main forces of the 2nd Army under those orders was quite by chance facilitated by an extremely successful and opportune manoeuvre of the 36th Infantry Brigade of the 18th ID. Having lost contact with that brigade (as mentioned above, on 31 July it was surrounded by units of the 4th and 11th Cavalry Divisions near Toporiv), and being aware of the successful actions of the 2nd Army against the Konarmia near the crossings around Stanislavchik, as well as that one enemy cavalry division remained in the area north of Toporiv, General Krajowski (through 6th Army HQ) asked that a pilot be sent to the 36th Brigade with the order "on the night of 1/2 August the brigade is to strike at Staryi Maidan and take the crossing over the Styr River near Stanislavchik". The 36th brigade received the order via the plane at around 20:00 on 1 August, and also an order of the commander of the Polish 6th Army tasking it with cutting off the retreat routes of Budenny's cavalry, which remained on the left bank of the Styr. To assist the rescue of his best brigade, surrounded in Toporiv, General Krajowski assembled in Krasne a detachment consisting of two marching companies of the 1st Battalion of the 42nd Infantry Regiment and one light battery, with which he moved to Toporiv that night, leading to a battle with the main forces of our 11th Cavalry Division near Adamy.

Following this order, the 36th Brigade broke through at night to Stanislavchik and joined up with the 4th Cavalry Brigade near Lopatyn. This coincided with a general offensive of the Polish 2nd Army, so the 4th and 11th Cavalry Divisions were placed in a very difficult situation, and after fighting hard all day, in the evening were forced to move back to Brody. The 11th Cavalry Division did not feel the same strong pressure from the enemy during the day, and even advanced to Busk, but due to the retreat of the 4th Cavalry Division, it also withdrew to Brody via Tur'ya in the evening.



At the same time the 6th CD, under the pressure of the Polish 6th Division withdrew to the Konyushkiv – Klekotiv area, north of Brody, holding back the enemy attacks. By evening the 4th CD, 11th CD, and Special Purpose Brigade were concentrated in the north-western outskirts of Brody. The 45th Rifle Division still continued to occupy its former positions southwest of Brody. The 8th CD, south of the 45th RD, repulsed attacks by the advancing enemy throughout the day. The 14th Cavalry Division, with 214th RR of the 24th RD, remained in the Smordva – Bokiima area; they were unable to dislodge the enemy from Demydivka.

The 47th Rifle Division remained at the disposal of the Konarmia. Its orders from the KomandArm were to continue northward from Radyvyliv to the Shchurovychi – Berestechko area for joint action with the 14th Cavalry Division and to replace it on the Styr River. During the day, the division moved from the Krupets' district to its designated area and reached the Leshniv – Brody road. But unstable and panic-infected (probably under the influence of the Polish cavalry group moving to its rear), it retired to the forest 3 km north of Brody without any pressure from the enemy. It remained there till the next day. By that night the enemy strike force – the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions – took Radyvyliv without fighting.

As a result of the Polish 2nd Army's actions and the instability of the 47th RD, which constituted the Army's reserve, the situation was now very unfavourable for the main core of the Konarmia near Brody. In relation to this a telegram was sent to the Front RMS on 2 August outlining the state of the Horse Army. It told of the large losses the Army had taken during the previous non-stop fighting (overall losses were estimated at 4,000 Red Army men and 50% of the command staff) and noted the terrible fatigue in the Army. The men and horses were literally falling over. A lack of food and forage, due to the huge losses in the command staff, greatly affected the combat readiness of the Konarmia units.

### *3 August*

However, on 3 August the enemy allowed the Konarmia to win a number of separate victories. On the evening of 2 August the commander of the Polish 2nd Army had informed his units that, due to the changed general situation, which included the capture of Brest by the Red Army, that there was a general withdrawal of troops to the line of the Western Bug, and the 2nd Army had been ordered to take the section from Volodymyr (exclusive) to Rava-Rus'ka (inclusive).

At that time the left flank of the Polish 6th Army – the 18th ID – was preparing intensely for an assault on Brody. General Krajowski, being informed about the successful actions of the 2nd Army, had passed the news on to his officers and had they decided, with his approval, to attack Brody with the whole division, including the 10th Brigade, at dawn. Likewise the commander of the Polish 6th Army ordered the 13th Infantry Division, located south of Brody, to take offensive with its left flank units to reach the former Austro-Russian border (see Map 32).

The Konarmia command wished to restore its position on the Styr with the main forces of the Army. To achieve that the 4th and 6th CDs were to move north of Brody in the morning, to prevent the enemy from leaving the Radyvyliv – Kozyn area without impediment. The 4th Cavalry Division was to operate along the highway to Leshniv and the 6th to the east.

Around noon, one brigade of the 4th Division occupied the crossing near Bovdury, destroying the enemy's outpost there. The main forces of the division settled near Konyushkiv. KomandArm Buděnyy and RMS member Comrade Voroshilov were with the main forces of the 4th Cavalry Division. The 6th Cavalry Division, located in the Klekotiv – Sestryatyn area, was to block the road from Radyvyliv to Berestechko and conduct strong reconnaissance towards Kozyn. The 11th Cavalry Division remained at Radyvyliv.

Orders from both sides led to the following events.

General Krajowski moved his units to attack Brody before dawn. There was heavy fighting with units of the 45th Rifle Division. About 17:00 the 36th Infantry Brigade seized Brody Station and the adjoining area. Fighting around the town lasted about two more hours, after which the enemy was finally able to occupy it.

Because of the lack of coordination between the units of the Polish 2nd Army (presumably they were not given proper instructions for organising the retreat), the 6th ID, located in the woods near Leshniv at dawn, started its retreat towards Shchurovychi. General Sawicki, commander of the cavalry group, received the order to retreat only at dawn; before that he had intended to move south of Radyvyliv, in order to cut off



our units' escape route to Kremenets'. However after receiving the order and information about the retreat of the 6th Infantry Division, he decided to move in two divisional columns to Stanislavchik. The left column, the 2nd Cavalry Division, was to go to Berlyn, and the right column, to the north, to Bezodnya.

This movement led the left Polish column to a chance encounter in the Klekotiv district. The Konarmia RMS, who had observed the enemy column's movement, attacked it with the 1st and 3rd Brigades of the 4th Cavalry Division, stationed at the time in the forest to the east of Konyushkiv. At the same time, the 1st Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division and the Special Purpose Brigade of Comrade Stepnoy attacked Klekotiv from Shnyriv. The enemy was crushed and suffered huge losses; as well as a pile of dead bodies, it left in our hands up to 600 horses, four fully serviceable guns in harness, a radio station and its carts. The commander of the Polish cavalry group sent his 1st Cavalry Division from Radyvyliv to Khotyn where, after fighting with units of the 6th Cavalry Division, it began to retreat to Shchurovychi. The 6th Cavalry Division pursued the Polish cavalry until evening.

After receiving a report of the enemy's occupation of Brody, the Horse Army command directed the 4th Cavalry Division to Brody, giving it and the 11th the mission of pushing the Poles out of the Radyvyliv – Brody area. The 11th Cavalry Division took Radyvyliv easily enough, but the attack on Brody was repulsed by the enemy.

According to Polish documents the 2nd Army commander asked permission to delay the withdrawal of his units for 24 hours in order to take advantage of the success achieved over Budënný's army. However, this was not permitted. Only the units of the 1st Cavalry Division at Ridkiv were delayed, which allowed the Poles the opportunity to muster the defeated units of the 2nd Cavalry Division.

The enemy started to clear the left bank of the Styr in the Lutsk – Torhovytsya sector, facing the 24th RD, which used to opportunity to start crossing to the left bank. At the same time the 14th Cavalry Division noticed the retreat of the enemy on its sector, and moved to the Styr on the section of Torhovytsya – Khrinnyky and started to advance to the south-west.

#### *4 August*

Next day the right flank and centre of Konarmia continued to cross to the left bank of the Styr. On the 14th Division's sector the positions on the river were restored by the evening. To the south the 6th Cavalry Division advanced to the Berestechko area, where the crossing was still held by the enemy. The Brody region was still stubbornly held by the Polish 18th division: all the attempts of our 4th and 11th Divisions, supported by three armoured trains (Numbers 72, 82, 203) to take the city were unsuccessful. The 45th Rifle Division and the 8th Cavalry Division remained in their positions to the south-east of Brody, fighting with the enemy advancing on them. The Special Purpose Cavalry Brigade remained as the Army reserve in Krupets'. The 47th Rifle Division moved to Berestechko, but on the approach to the Styr panic broke out again in the 140th Brigade and it scattered. The 139th Brigade was stationed in Khotyn village.

The situation on the Konarmia front now once again made it possible to move westwards, but the general condition of the army's mounted units was so poor, owing to the incessant marching, fighting and losses, as well as insufficient supplies, both food and forage, that any idea of further movement had to be temporarily postponed. All these circumstances forced the KomandArm-Horse to give a new operational order to the Army in the evening, with the task of transferring the most fatigued divisions to the Army reserve.

On the same day, the Konarmia RMS sent a telegram to the KomFront, with a copy to GlavKom, in which it reported.

The Konarmia RMS, fully aware of its responsibility, states that whatever the given mission of the day is, the Konarmia can do nothing beyond its power. The RMS sees the only way to save the situation is to withdraw to the Ikva River, where it will be possible to put in order both the men and horses and replenish its materiel.

In the KomandArm's orders:

- The 24th Rifle Division was to remain at the crossings over the Styr on the Zhydychyn to Torhovytsya section.





- The 14th Division was told to hold at all costs the line of the stream from Okhmatkiv to Vovkovyi.
- The 6th Cavalry Division was to occupy the crossings over the Styr on the Berestechko – Shchurovychi – Bilyavtsi section, with its main forces in the area of Plyashivka and Khotyn.
- The Special Cavalry Brigade was ordered to occupy the Sestryatyn – Radyvyliv – Perenyatyn sector.
- From the south of Perenyatyn to Bobrovtsy,<sup>78</sup> the 45th Division was to position itself with Comrade Kotovski's Cavalry Brigade and with the 8th Cavalry Division on its left flank.
- The 47th Division was to withdraw to the Pochaiv district.

The 4th and 11th Cavalry Divisions began to withdraw at nightfall: the 4th Division moved to Sitne, the 11th division moved to the district west of the [Velyki] Berezhtsi township (10 km west of Kremenets').

These divisions were ordered to replenish themselves with ammunition and food supplies and to tend to the horses.

During this period the field command had no firm connection with the 24th Rifle Division or the 14th Cavalry Division, and the latter only had a connection with the Army's operational post in Dubno, where the Army Chief of Staff was during this time.

In the night of 4 August the Konarmia staff received information about the occupation of Kovel (25th RD) by the units of the Red 12th Army and the successful movement of its units to the Western Bug. In view of the new situation on 4 August it ordered the right flank divisions of the Konarmia (24th and 14th) to move to the left bank of the Styr on the line Torchyn – Lavriv – Berestechko, pointing out to the 14th Division the need for close communications with the main forces of the Army.

#### *5-7 August*

On 5 August, the Konarmia began regrouping as ordered by the KomandArm.

That day, on the extreme right flank of the Army, the 24th Rifle Division took Lutsk and continued moving from the Styr westwards to the Torchyn – Lavriv line. The 14th Cavalry Division, located to the south, crossed to the left bank of the Styr in the evening and occupied Mykolaiv – Berestechko, where it repaired the bridges the enemy had destroyed during retreat. The 6th Cavalry Division and the Special Purpose Brigade also took the sectors specified. Only on the extreme left flank did the Polish 18th Division take the offensive, against the 45th Rifle Division during the night. The enemy attacks were repelled by fire and counterattacks.

The Konarmia field staff moved to Verba, and from there it came into contact with the operational centre in Dubno. Affected by the events in the Brody area and the severe fatigue of the army, but not taking into account the successes of the 12th Red Army, the Konarmia command cancelled the orders from its staff for the right-flanking divisions. During the night of 6 August, after direct personal negotiations with the Front, the KomandArm-Horse received from the KomFront a cancellation of the Army's orders of 4 August relating to the right flank of the Army, as not corresponding with the situation, and ordered those divisions to perform the tasks given to them by the KomandArm. On 6 August the 4th and 11th Cavalry Divisions and the 45th Rifle Division concentrated in the areas specified as the Army reserve.

We have received a reply from the KomFront on the request to allow the Army to rest, in which – pointing out that 12th Army had occupied Kovel and 14th Army was in Buchach – the KomFront ordered the army to carry out the previously set mission with unflagging energy and full determination. At the same time he pointed out the need for the cavalry to make broad manoeuvres with appropriate repositioning, rather than throwing them into frontal assaults on the enemy's main forces.

However, in spite of the KomFront's orders, the general state of the core of the Konarmia forced its command to temporarily switch to defence in the centre and on the left flank and to withdraw the two divisions that had suffered most in the fighting – the 4th and the 11th – into the Army's reserve. In an order

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<sup>78</sup> This is a crossing, just east of modern Krutniv.





of 6 August KomandArm-Horse ordered only the right flank and the centre of the Army, that is the 24th Rifle Division and the 14th Cavalry Division, to go on the offensive in their sectors at dawn on 7 August. The 24th was to advance to the Pryvitine – Skryhove line and the 14th to clear the left bank of the Styr in the Boremel' – Berestechko district, aiming for further movement to Radekhiv and Vuzlove. The remaining divisions of the Konarmia were left in their previous areas. Measures were taken to supply the army with everything it needed (food and ammunition), for which mobile workshops were moved to the station at Verba. Measures were also taken to remove the sick and wounded from the Army and to move a bathing train to the Army reserve's area. The political department of the Konarmia deployed cultural and educational work in the divisions withdrawn to the reserves.

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By order of the Front the 24th RD was reintegrated into the Red 12th Army at 24:00 on 7 August. In that directive the 12th Army was instructed to continue to pursue the enemy towards Chełm, and with the forces of not less than three divisions it was to deal a decisive blow to the enemy from Volodymyr in the general direction of Rava Rus'ka, and as soon as possible take the Rava Rus'ka – Tomaszów area. The KomandArm-Horse was instructed by the directive to regroup the main units of the Army to the Army reserve; the remaining temporarily attached units were to act in coordination with the units of the neighbouring 12th and 14th Armies. The units allocated to the reserve were ordered to be kept in a concentration, having taken all measures to promptly arrange resupply for the horses and materiel.

This order was a reflection of the decision of our High Command, which in early August, based on a general assessment of the operational situation on the Western Front, decided to transfer all the armies of the South-Western Front – the 12th, 14th and Horse – to the Western Front, combining their forces under one command.

In the meantime 6 August brought significant changes in the situation of the Polish armies in front of the Horse Army.

The Polish Commander-in-Chief directed the 1st ID, 18th ID, 2nd CD, HQ of the 2nd Army, and the HQ of the Cavalry strike force to the north-eastern front, to take part in the major battles ahead in front of Warsaw. By virtue of that order the 18th ID began to be replaced by units of the 6th ID and loaded into trains for its dispatch to the area of Modlin. From then on the Polish south-eastern front in Ukraine became only a covering front, according to Polish historians. The task of that front was to “tie up the enemy forces in order to facilitate the northern front”, where the critical action of the war was to take place. (The Konarmia command was unaware of these circumstances at the time, other than that the 18th Polish Infantry Division had been transported by rail from Brody to L'viv.)

#### *8-14 August*

At dawn on 8 August the enemy once more launched a counteroffensive along the Brody – Dubno rail line and drove the Special Cavalry Brigade out of Radyvyliv. The brigade quickly regained its position by counterattacking, pushing the enemy back from Radyvyliv to Brody. A brigade of the 4th Cavalry Division moved to support the Special Brigade but, with the restoration of its position, it returned to its starting place.

On the rest of the Konarmia front, only the 6th and 14th Cavalry Divisions fought hard with the enemy to reach Stoyaniv – Radekhiv – Lopatin – Stanislavchik. The enemy put up stubborn resistance, especially to the east of Radekhiv, where his units seven times attacked the 1st Brigade of the 14th Cavalry Division. After a series of stubborn battles, the units of the cavalry divisions broke the enemy group in the area of Zelene – Kulykiv (10 km east of Radekhiv) and pushed it to Radekhiv – Stoyaniv on 9 August. In the Brody district the enemy continued to hold Brody firmly and their positions along the Slonivka River. But intelligence from HQ on that day revealed that the enemy was uploading its 18th Infantry Division at Brody Station to be sent to L'viv (that division was actually moved to the front north of Warsaw and replaced by the 6th Infantry Division).

During that day the KomandArm-Horse gave a new operational order which tasked the 6th Cavalry Division with securing the crossings over the Styr between Shchurovychi and Stanislavchik.



On 10 August the day passed quietly along the entire Konarmia front: the divisions conducted intensive reconnaissance of the enemy in order to prepare the move to L'viv.

Together with the Horse Army, the 12th Army began to advance and move its centre forward towards the town of Chełm and its left flank to the Volodymyr – Zvynyache line. The 14th Army moved to the Strypa River.

On 11 August, the enemy launched a vigorous attack on the Konarmia, aiming to push it from the crossings on the Styr. However, after stubborn fighting, the enemy was repulsed everywhere except for the crossing at Stanislavchik, which they managed to take from the dismounted squadrons of the 3rd Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division.

During these battles GlavKom took a definitive decision to withdraw the Konarmia from advancing on L'viv and to transfer it to the Western Front.

The decision about this transfer was notified to the Konarmia RMS. As a result of that on 10 August the latter initiated a request to transfer the Konarmia directly to the disposition of GlavKom, considering that “the frequent submission of the Konarmia to fronts affects all institutions harmfully, and especially supplies”. But GlavKom did not agree with the arguments of the Horse Army RMS and decided to leave it as part of the Front.

At 24:00 on August 8, the Horse Army RMS had had a direct conversation with the South-Western Front RMS in Berdychiv (Stalin and Egorov) in which the Front RMS confirmed the transfer of the 1st Horse Army to the Western Front in all respects. In that conversation the RMS considered the transfer of the Horse Army to the Western Front to be possible only if a firm operational link was established with the HQ. The issues of communication between the Horse Army and the various Front headquarters had been a significant issue, so the concern of both the Horse Army RMS and the South-Western Front RMS were quite justified in this case, as the headquarters of the Western Front was located in Minsk. The plan was to establish an operation post in Kyiv with responsible officers of the Horse Army and Front headquarters both present.

The field headquarters of the Horse Army used almost exclusively radio, sometimes on planes, during operations – for example during its raid on the rear of the Polish 3rd Army.

Subsequently, in a telegram of 12 August, the command of the South-Western Front proposed to GlavKom that the 1st Horse Army be concentrated near Khmelnytskyi, as the Front's reserve, where it might also be able to reinforce the Crimean Front.<sup>79</sup>

In accordance with the directives of the South-Western Front, the Horse Army had been getting ready for a decisive move to L'viv. To that end the Army command had ordered a realignment, with the goal of bringing up the Army reserves for a crossing of the Styr. Following those orders, the 4th Cavalry Division moved towards Radekhiv and was positioned at the rear of the 14th Division, in the Shchurovychi – Leshniv area. The 11th CD was to replace the Special Cavalry Brigade at Brody, and the latter was to move to the Khotyn area (north of Radekhiv).

During this regrouping, on 12 August, a new directive was received from the Red Army command, which set the following task for the Konarmia: “in the shortest possible time, crush the enemy on the right bank of the Western Bug, cross the river and capture L'viv on the heels of the fleeing remnants of the [Polish] 3rd and 6th Armies”. The directive ordered the neighbouring 12th Army, to the right, to “take Tomaszów as soon as possible, throwing out cavalry to quickly seize the crossings of the San River between Sieniawa and Radymno”.

Information from military reconnaissance and an intercepted order of the Polish 1st Legion Division by the Horse Army command made it clear that the main forces of the enemy 3rd Army were withdrawing behind the Western Bug (an orderly of the 1st Legion ID was captured with an operational order on 8 August at Vuzlove).

It was learned that the junction of the Polish 3rd and 6th Armies was in the Brody – Busk area.

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<sup>79</sup> This was due to concern about Wrangel's break-out from the Crimea.

On the evening of 12 August the Konarmia's command gave an operational order to move the Army to the crossings of the Western Bug, as the Front had directed. The concept of the orders was to capture the crossings over the Bug on a wide front from Dobrotvir to Bilyi Kamin' (some 50 km). The main mass of the Army – the 4th, 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions – were directed to Busk. The 6th CD was to capture Busk, and behind it the 4th and 11th Divisions were to be in echelon immediately behind Busk on the right bank of the Western Bug: the 4th to the east of it in the Sokolivka district, the 11th to the north of it. The 14th Cavalry Division was to go to Kamianka-Buzka. South of it, the 45th and 47th Rifle Divisions and the 8th Cavalry Division (the Zolochiv group) were to bypass Brody to the south, on the Vovkovatytsya – Luchkivtsi – Zahirtsy – Koltiv line, which they were to reach by the evening of 13 August.

As these orders were issued a new directive arrived from KomFront-SW which said that the Mazyr forces group (of our Western Front) had taken the town of Kock and on 14 August was due to cross the Vistula and take Ivangorod fortress (Dęblin). This directive reconfirmed the previous task of the 12th Army to seize the Tomaszów – Rava-Rus'ka area and the crossings of the San River on the Sieniawa – Radymno stretch as soon as possible; after occupying Chełm on its right flank, the 12th Army was to pursue the enemy in the general direction of Krasnik – Janów, to occupy as soon as possible the crossings of the Vistula River near Annapol – Zawichost and Rozwadów and Nisko on the San, acting in close connection with the units of the Western Front. The Konarmia kept its previous task of moving to L'viv.

As a result, its divisions engaged in a bitter battle during 13 and 14 August for the lines they were to reach. The enemy defended stubbornly and counterattacked, but by the evening the 14th Division took Radekhiv – Horokiv, the 4th and 6th took the Toporiv region, and the 11th Division pushed the enemy out of Brody (see Map 33).

Our divisions had to act almost exclusively on foot because of the forested and marshy terrain: cut with canals, a limited number of roads and destroyed crossings, the landscape made it very difficult to advance. Our units had to leave behind their artillery and tachankas. Notwithstanding this, and the enemy's large amount of equipment, the Konarmia divisions showed a high fighting ability, knocking the enemy out of their positions.

At dawn, on 14 August, the enemy's 40th and 105th Regiments, with 8 guns, advanced to Lopatyn, where the Army field headquarters was based, and at 09:00 occupied that village. Because of the suddenness of the attack, the HQ lost some of its supplies and a radio station, which temporarily disrupted communication with the Army operational centres at Verba and Dubno. The enemy attack was successful because of poor security organisation by the Special Cavalry Brigade, which had left the road running from the crossing at Stanislavchik unoccupied. The 4th Cavalry Division was sent to eliminate the enemy, and after some fierce fighting it broke the enemy and pursued it to Monastyrak, capturing 100 prisoners and 14 machine guns and sabring up to 500 Poles.

The same day (the evening of 14 August) the Horse Army command received a directive from the KomFront-SW, which said that on the basis of a GlavKom directive (of 13 August) the 12th Army and the Konarmia (less the 8th Cavalry Division) from 12:00 came under the operational command of the KomFront-W. Those armies remained on their present supply system until the Western Front could organise direct supply, equally with respect to resupply by the South-Western Front. An operations post was to be set up in Kyiv for liaison with the Western Front HQ. Until it had been established, the Army was to keep in contact with the South-Western Front HQ and receive all the operational tasks through it. The 8th Cavalry Division was placed at the complete disposal of KomandArm-14. He was ordered to keep the 8th Division on his right flank until the tasks for the Konarmia were clarified.

#### *16-20 August*<sup>80</sup>

Since no new tasks were received from the KomFront-West, the Konarmia carried on with the task of capturing L'viv. On 15 and 16 August the army fought hard for the crossings of the Western Bug, and after heavy fighting the 6th Cavalry Division crossed the river north of Busk (at Pobuzhany); the 4th Cavalry Division was deployed to assist it. The enemy continued to hold Busk. By the evening of the 16th the 4th

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<sup>80</sup> Piłsudski launched his counter-attack from the Wieprz on 16 August, although it was not until 18 August that the Soviets realised the scale of the attack. Hence the increasing urgency about the transfer of the Horse Army north.



and 6th Cavalry Divisions reached the Streptiv – Zhelekhiv – Banyunyn – Lisok line (12-15 km from Busk), and established themselves on the western bank of Bug. In these battles the 4th and 6th CDs took 800 prisoners and 18 machine guns from the enemy.

The 14th and 11th CDs continued to fight hard for the crossings: the 14th at Kamianka and the 11th at Busk.

At 21:15 on 16 August, while in the village of Adamy, the Konarmia commander received the first directive from the commander of the Western Front to move his action northwards towards Volodymyr. We shall quote this message verbatim:

To the KomandArms of the 12th and the First Horse, copies to the Southern Front and GlavKom. Minsk. 15 August.

In order to concentrate our main forces in a decisive direction, I order:

1. KomandArm-12 is to replace the units of the First Horse up to and including the Toporiv area, at the same time continuing to implement my previous directive. KomandArm-12 will take over command of Comrade Osadchiy's cavalry group.
2. KomandArm-First-Horse is to withdraw his cavalry units to Toporiv, having occupied the sector south of Toporiv with units of the 45th and 47th Rifle Divisions. Those divisions are to report to KomandArm-14. *The entire Konarmia, comprising the 4th, 6th, 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions*, is to move in four marches to the area of Volodymyr – Ustyluh.
3. The dividing line between the 14th Army and the Western Front was outlined by the GlavKom as Dubno – Toporiv.

18:40, signed Tukhachevskiy.

This directive was transmitted to the KomandArm-Horse by the officer on duty at the Western Front headquarters with only one signature, that of Comrade Tukhachevskiy. The presence of one signature caused the RMS of the Horse Army to query it with the RMS of the Western Front and on 17 August it received a reply signed by a RMS member of that front, Comrade Unshlikht, confirming the directive.

In reply the KomandArm-Horse sent the following telegram from Adamy village at 01:30 on 17 August, to the KomFront-W, with copies to GlavKom and KomFront-SW.

Regarding the order received on 16 August at 21:15. The Army at this moment is not able to leave the front, as the line of the Bug has been crossed, and our units are on the approaches to L'viv. The forward units are 15 km east of the city and the Army will capture L'viv on 17 August. Upon completion of that operation the army will move according to the directive.

Despite receiving the new Front directive, the Konarmia's RMS, having discussed the situation until 02:00 on 17 August, issued a new operational order that tasked the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions with the rapid capture of L'viv.

According to those orders, the 4th Division was to seize L'viv from the north and northwest, and then pursue the enemy in the general direction of Yavoriv; the 6th Division was to operate from the south-eastern and southern sides, and to pursue the enemy in the general direction of Horodok; the 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions were to cover that operation from the north and south: the 14th, after the crossing at Kamianka to take Kulykiv (south of Zhovkva), and the 11th, after the crossing in the Busk area, head to Pidhirne – Ostriv<sup>81</sup> (10 km SSE of L'viv). The L'viv Group (formerly the Zolochiv – 45th and 47th RDs and 8th Chervonnyy CD) was to capture the line L'viv – Bibrka – Novi Strilyshcha as soon as possible, where it should consolidate and become fully subordinate to KomandArm-14.

So the KomandArm-Horse did send the L'viv Group (45th, 47th RDs and 8th CD) in the direction indicated. As to the withdrawal of the rest of the army from L'viv, after discussing the situation the Horse Army RMS decided to finish the L'viv operation first, and only then begin moving to Volodymyr. The success of 16

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<sup>81</sup> This is none of the modern places called Ostriv. It refers to a place on the modern highway just NE of Chyzykiv.



August (the 4th and 6th CDs crossing the Western Bug) and the progress along the front gave us hope for a rapid outcome of the operation, as outlined in the Konarmia order of 17 August.

Due to those circumstances the execution of the Western Front directive was not started in time, even though the Western Front HQ made it clear in a telegram of 17 August that the regrouping was a matter of urgency and was extremely important under the circumstances at the time.

The ordered movements proceeded slowly: the 14th Cavalry Division managed to cross Western Bug near Kamianka only in the evening of 18 August<sup>82</sup>, and the 11th cavalry, north of Krasne, on 17 August and forcing the enemy to evacuate Busk in the evening. Because of that, just the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions were available for the fierce battles on the immediate outskirts of L'viv on 17 and 18 August.

On the 17th, after prolonged fighting, the L'viv group (Comrade Yakir) also crossed the Western Bug south of Bilyi Kamin' and moved to Zolochiv – Holohory, which were captured on the same day.

On 16 August the 14th Cavalry Division had fought hard battles for the crossings between Dobrotvir and Ruda; the enemy occupied the commanding left bank and suppressed all the division's attempts to cross the river with heavy artillery fire.

The fighting continued with persistence on both sides, and only on 18 August was the 14th Division able to capture Kamianka, having crossed south of it. During the retreat the enemy threw away their weapons and left many prisoners in our hands, but they also burnt all the bridges behind them.

By the evening of 18 August the 14th Division, in pursuit of the enemy, reached the region of Zibolky – Mohylyany (10 km south-eastward of Zhovkva). The 4th and 6th CDs, which were fighting on the immediate approaches to L'viv, after fierce collisions with the enemy by the evening had occupied the areas: the 4th CD in Doroshiv – Sytykhiv – Vysloboky, and the 6th in Verkhnya Bilka – Ostriv (10-15 km from L'viv). The enemy exerted unprecedented persistence to our advance; on all the railway lines running from L'viv they engaged their armoured trains with heavy artillery and bombarded our advancing units with reinforced artillery fire. Squadrons of up to 18 planes flew over our divisions, machine-gunned us and dropped bombs; on 16 and 17 August the 6th Cavalry Division alone had over 200 men and 300 horses seriously wounded by shrapnel from air-bombs. One attack of the 6th Cavalry Division was broken up solely by planes.

In spite of this, our divisions showed great courage and heroism, inflicting considerable losses on the enemy. From 16 to 18 August we took more than 1,000 prisoners, many machine-guns, five guns, many transports, two armoured trains cut off at Kamianka and over 1,000 enemy were killed.

On 19 August the Konarmia continued to fight hard against the enemy on roughly the same line: the 4th Division at Doroshiv – Sytykhiv – Dubliany; the 6th and 11th Divisions and the Special Brigade at Yampil - Myklashiv – Nyzhnya Bilka – Verkhnya Bilka – Ostriv – Chyzhykiv. The enemy, reinforced from the rear and supported by aviation squadrons and armoured trains, showed unprecedented tenacity, shooting at our advancing units with frenzied artillery and machine gun fire. As a result the 4th, 6th and 11th CDs could not advance. During one of the attacks on that day one of the best commanders of the Konarmia, KomDiv-4 Comrade Litunov, was killed.

During the same day the 14th Cavalry Division was fighting hard to the southeast of Zhovkva (Zibolky – Mohylyany), where the enemy tried to encircle its right flank (the Poles in this area included Rommel's 1st CD and the 38th IR). As a result, on the night of 20 August the 14th Cavalry Division was forced to retreat in the general direction of Kamianka.

The L'viv Group (45th RD, 47th RD and 8th CD) by the evening of 19 August, after persistent fighting, arrived to the west of the line from Hlyniany to Peremyshlyany. The 8th Division took Bibrka that day and moved further west.

A significant number of commanders and commissars were killed and wounded in the battles for L'viv; the 6th and 11th Divisions suffered particularly heavy losses in the command staff.

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<sup>82</sup> Captain Moslard states that at the crossings at Kamianka and southwards the Poles had the 5th Infantry Division (very weak) and Rummel's 1st Cavalry Division (1st, 6th and 7th Brigades) with the 38th IR.





While the Konarmia was fighting on the outskirts of L'viv, the enemy (1st ID, Ukrainian 6th ID, 3rd Legion ID and the Bulak-Balakhovich detachment) pushed back the right flank of the 12th Army behind the Western Bug and occupied Hrubieszów.

In a directive covering the situation at the front, the KomFront-West ordered the Konarmia to concentrate all its forces and strain all its efforts in reaching Volodymyr – Ustyluh by the appointed time in order to attack the enemy's strike group in the rear.<sup>83</sup> In reply to this directive, which was received at 21:00 on 19 August, at 23:30 on the same day the Konarmia commander sent to the KomFront-W a telegram.

Minsk. KomFront-West.

Copy to RMS of the Western Front and KomFront-SW.

Borshchovychi. 23:30 on 19 Aug 1920

At this time the Konarmia units have approached to within 6 km of L'viv from the southeast and east. The enemy, who has gathered huge numbers in front of the Konarmia – consisting of the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions, 5th, 6th, 12th and 13th Infantry Divisions, one regiment of the 11th Infantry Division and the garrison of L'viv, consisting exclusively of volunteers, with eight armoured trains, numerous artillery and several squadrons of planes – is offering desperate resistance on all the approaches to L'viv and may even launch a counter-attack. And the enemy continues to pull reserves to L'viv, bringing them in by rail. It was impossible to capture L'viv on 18 and 19 August, but in two or three days L'viv should be occupied by Konarmia units.

I consider the abandonment by the Konarmia of the sector it currently occupies and its replacement by another unit, at this moment and under these conditions, absolutely impossible and could have a catastrophic effect on the entire front. I consider that the enemy operating against the Konarmia, even though it has suffered great losses in manpower on 17 and 18 August, retains its strength and is able to launch an offensive as soon as Konarmia leaves the battlefield. Our L'viv Group, on the other hand, consisting of the 45th and 47th Rifle Divisions, is unable to hold the enemy's L'viv group, and the right flank of the 14th Army is 60 to 70 km behind our left flank. Considering the above, I ask for your instructions on how to proceed.

Commander of the First Horse Army Budënyy  
RMS member Voroshilov  
Head of Field Staff Zotov

The situation at Warsaw had begun to develop extremely unfavourably for our Western Front on that day, and sending the Konarmia to Lublin was urgently needed, so the KomFront-W again demanded the immediate execution of his order to move the Konarmia as quickly as possible, and not be carried away by local success in the form of the capture of L'viv.

That directive also ordered: "From now on, carry out the orders given precisely and unquestioningly and do not compromise the general situation by unauthorised changes to the tasks assigned to the Army." But this was received at the field station in Busk only at 04:00 on 20 August and was handed to the KomFront at 12:00 of that day. But even before receiving that directive, at 10:00 on 19 August the KomandArm-Horse had given an operational order to the commander of L'viv Group, Comrade Yakir, concerning the exchange of Konarmia units at L'viv – even if the Konarmia had not succeeded in capturing L'viv, the exchange should be completed by the evening, not later than dawn on 20 August.

In the same order, the KomandArm indicated that on dawn on 19 August the Konarmia had gone on the offensive to destroy the enemy defending L'viv and seize the city: "At dawn on 20 August the Konarmia will begin to execute the Western Front's directive, withdrawing units from the battle to behind the Western Bug, and from there moving to the area of Volodymyr – Ustyluh". Following this instruction, at 21:55 on 19

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<sup>83</sup> The strike group intended is Piłsudski's 4th Army, attacking from the Wieprz River.



August in Borshchovychi village, an operational order was sent for the cessation of further operations against L'viv and the withdrawal of the army for the new task of given by the Front.

At 22:00 on 20 August the KomandArm-Horse received a telegram, through the HQ of the SW Front, which demanded, on the one hand, the change in direction of the Horse Army's operations from L'viv to the northwest, while on the other hand it drew the "special attention of the Army RMS to the fact that the occupation of L'viv itself should not affect the timeframe for the execution of orders by the Western Front, and all measures should be taken to ensure that the occupation of the large city would not have a corrupting effect on the troops". This telegram was signed by Trotskii, who was then Chairman of the RMS of the Republic, and is a prime example of his political and operational illiteracy, apparently completely ignorant of the actual operations.

This telegram was received after the Konarmia had withdrawn from L'viv to behind the Western Bug (to the east).

The delay in the sending of the directive by the KomFront-W was due to a number of reasons outlined above. In addition, KomFront-SW had from 23 July considered the most important use of the Konarmia was towards L'viv, and the Horse Army RMS was also ardently in support of developing operations in that direction. The reasons for the late execution of the directive are detailed in a telegram of Comrade Voroshilov, a member of the Konarmia RMS, dated 21 August, in which he evaluated quite clearly and definitely the political and strategic situation at the time, and in that evaluation he was absolutely right.

In that telegram, Voroshilov said that "withdrawing the Konarmia from the L'viv front at a time when the army had come so close to the city, tying down up to seven enemy divisions, is a major mistake". He goes on to say that "by continuing the battle for the capture of L'viv we would not only serve as a magnet for the enemy, but at the same time, the most serious threat to the rear of his strike group, to which we could always deliver a crushing blow through Lublin." "In addition, by taking on L'viv, we are entirely relieving the 14th Army, which could in large part become the reserve of the Republic.

The withdrawal of the Army to the new direction should have been done at the same time as its subordination to the Western Front, before it was to get into the tough battles on the Western Bug; according to the Polish historians, it was possible to do that at the time.

Colonel Loir, in French service, in his article about cavalry on the Polish front asks the following question:

What would have become of the Polish manoeuvre if Budënyy had engaged the entire army against the concentration of Polish troops (over the Wieprz), who were unsecured from the south,<sup>84</sup> rather than persisting in his desire to reap laurels by acting on his own initiative on L'viv.

And answering it, he says that the Polish operation would have failed completely: "what consequences this would have had – it is difficult even to imagine".<sup>85</sup>

It is impossible to agree with this conclusion, and the accusation made against Comrade Budënyy is incorrect. It was not on his own initiative, but thanks to the orders of the South-Western Front and the reasons given above in Voroshilov's telegram.

Meanwhile the leader of the Polish state, Piłsudski, was afraid of Budënyy's cavalry moving towards Lublin and in his book "The Year 1920" he wrote that organising his counter manoeuvre towards Brest "was fraught with danger", which could have turned the manoeuvre he led into an extremely risky venture – for by removing the 1st and 3rd Legion Divisions from the Southern front he was opening a door for Budënyy's Konarmia as well. Piłsudski wrote:

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<sup>84</sup> Not really true. The Poles had unused divisions that could have defended the southern approaches to the strike group (the 2nd and 3rd).

<sup>85</sup> This also assumes, somehow, that the Polish troops that had harried the Konarmia for weeks would have meekly let it set off towards Lublin unhindered. The same Konarmia that didn't make it past Zamość.

Loir was apparently unaware that the speed of the Konarmia was nullified by the ability of the Poles to use their rail network to redeploy in front of it.



Despite the fact that our cavalry was there ... they had orders to delay Budënnny's Konarmia in its movement towards us, however, past experience did not give me confidence in the execution of that order. We could expect that in a short space of time to have Budënnny's Konarmia, or a part of it, marching from Sokal and Hrubieszów on my immediate rear, which might have rendered all my efforts in vain.

What are the main reasons for our failure in the L'viv Operation and was it necessary to start it in the first place?

If, at the end of July 1920, GlavKom decided to unite the command of the armies and the two fronts in one pair of hands, it should have been decisive and definite, not in the form of a number of muddled directives. Even in its communication of 11 August GlavKom, when outlining the movement of the Konarmia towards Zamość and Tomaszów – Hrubieszów, asked the KomFront-SW for his opinion on the directive, and did not set any categorical aims. The same indecisive attitude is shown by the KomFront-W, who on 14 August informed the Konarmia of its subordination to the Western Front, but gave it a task only on 15 August, which arrived with the Army field HQ late in the evening of 16 August, at a time the Konarmia was engaged in fighting with the enemy on the Western Bug.

On 14 August the Konarmia was still on the eastern bank of the Western Bug River, preparing to cross it, and could have turned to the north to perform a new task from the Western Front. That moment was lost, and a move towards Lublin could have confused the Polish command's maps and partly stopped the transfer of its reserves from the Ukrainian to the Warsaw front.

The late receipt of the task from the Western Front made its fulfilment impossible: the main nucleus of the Konarmia (4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions) was already on the western side of the Bug and was fighting on the outskirts of L'viv. It would have been taken regardless of [the amount of heavy Polish] equipment if the order to withdraw from the battles near L'viv had not been given on the 19th, which to a certain extent affected the political and moral condition of the army – already looking at the lights of the Galician capital. Comrade Budënnny informs me that after capturing L'viv the Konarmia RMS proposed that they could in 5 to 7 days be able to form two Galician infantry divisions, thanks to the mood of the Galicians, who were on our side.

The delayed execution of the L'viv operation was also a consequence of a number of major deficiencies on the part of Konarmia command, of which the primary ones were: 1) an overestimation of the operational situation (the enemy's occupation of a heavily fortified area, almost a fortress, with the radial lines of railways and well supplied with equipment), and 2) the dispersion of its forces and actions across a broad front.

Directing an attack bypassing Zhovkva to the north would have given Konarmia quicker success, with access to the rear of the L'viv fortified area.

L'viv would still have been taken by a frontal attack, but this success would have cost the Army too much: the Army's losses incurred in similar frontal attacks showed that.



## Chapter VII

### The Movement of the Horse Army To Zamość and the Withdrawal from Operations on the Polish Front

*20-29 August*

After the retreat of their armies against our Western Front, the Polish high command began to regroup their forces, generate new formations in the interior and draw up a plan of counter manoeuvre (under the guidance of French generals) to attack our Western Front's armies. In the area between the Vistula and the Wieprz Rivers around Lublin, the enemy was amassing its 4th Army to strike northward; its 3rd Army, further south, was given the task of covering this regrouping, acting against our Mazyr Group (Comrade Khvesin) and 12th Army. Those two Polish Armies constituted the so-called "Middle Front", commanded by Piłsudski himself. The Polish southern front operating against our Konarmia and the 14th Army included their 6th Army and the Ukrainian 7th Army.

On 16 August, across the entire Western Front, the enemy launched a counter-offensive, developing its strongest blows on its right flank. The situation on the left flank of our [Western Front] Armies forced our command to give new tasks to the 12th and Horse Armies. A swift strike by those armies towards Lublin was imperative: it would not only fill in the gap left to the left wing of the Western Front, but it would also disrupt the enemy's counter-movement from the line of the Wieprz.

By 17 August, facing our Mazyr group, the enemy had occupied the towns of Luków and Biała Podlaska (facing Brest). This enemy success forced the Western Front to issue a new directive to its forces on 17 August, in which (as was said in the previous chapter) the Konarmia was ordered to put the greatest possible effort into mobilising all its forces and concentrating in the Volodymyr – Ustyluh region, in order to advance from there into the rear of the enemy strike group. On 17, 18 and 19 August the enemy continued to advance and on the 19th occupied the fortress and city of Brest. This was achieved by the 3rd Legion ID (Polish 2nd Army), and it remained there until 22 August, conducting deep reconnaissance towards Kobryn and overhanging the right flank of the [Red] 12th Army. That Army, following the Western Front's orders, by 20 August (the time the Konarmia left L'viv) held the following positions on the banks of the Western Bug: the 7th, 25th, and 58th RDs in the Chełm area (the right flank of the 58th was 20 km southeast of Włodawa); on a front 50 km south of the Huczwa River (to the west of a line Hrubieszów – Kryłów – Varyazh) was the 44th RD; and further south through Belz on to Velyki Mosty was the 24th RD. All in all, the whole 12th Army was in a cordon along a front of 180 km without any indication of any grouping and with the intention of advancing to the line of Lubartów – Chełm – Rava Rus'ka.

At the same time the Konarmia's command, following the 19 August orders from the Western Front, started regrouping its divisions to leave L'viv. The divisions were to leave one regiment on their sectors (on a front of about 50 km from Kamianka through Staryi Yarychiv to Stare Selo inclusive) and set out before nightfall. The right-flanking 14th Cavalry Division was to move to the area of Vuzlove; the 4th Cavalry Division, positioned to the south, was to head to Silets'; the 6th Cavalry Division to the south of Toporiv; and the 11th Cavalry Division to the north of Busk.

The Konarmia began this regrouping at 12:00 on 20 August. By the evening, units of Comrade Yakir's group had replaced it on the Kamianka – Staryi Yarychiv – Hanachivka line with units of the 45th and 47th Divisions. Comrade Kotovski's cavalry brigade was pulled up to Velyka Vil'shanytsya, stepped back behind the left flank of that group. The 8th Cavalry Division advanced to Bibrka for further movement westwards (see Map 34).

By the evening of 22 August the Konarmia (following the orders of 21 August) had moved to

- 14th CD in the area west of Horokhiv,
- 4th CD in Volytsya-Druzhkopil's'ka and Stoyaniv,
- 6th CD to the east of Stoyaniv
- 11th CD in the area east of Vuzlove.

Three armoured trains were transferred to Comrade Yakir's L'viv group, the rest were sent to the Kovel area (via Rivne), and the Army's supply and artillery support units were sent there as well.



The field staff moved to Radekhiv.

According to the operational orders of 22 August, the Army should have been concentrated in the Staryi Poryts'k – Mylyatyn – Horokhiv area by the evening of the next day.

However, on the night of 23 August the KomandArm received a new directive from KomFront-W, which said that because of the delay in concentrating the Konarmia in the instructed region the situation on the Western Front had changed so much that serious new preparations were needed to flank the enemy from Włodawa and Hrubieszów. The new Front directive ordered the Konarmia to go to the area of Sokal – Dobrotvir – Stoyaniv and await further orders.

While the Konarmia was moving to the right bank of the Western Bug, the enemy attacked the front of the 45th and 47th RDs, crossed that river near Kamianka and launched an assault on Vuzlove.

A new directive from the KomFront-W, received in the morning, outlined the situation facing the 45th and 47th RDs, above, and ordered the Konarmia to launch a vigorous counterstrike to restore the situation on the sector of those divisions. The situation of the Konarmia front by midday of 23 August was as follows: the 11th Cavalry Division was fighting all night from 22 to 23 August with the enemy, advancing on Vuzlove along the railway from Kamianka. The remaining divisions remained in the Radekhiv – Stoyaniv – Horokhiv area. The 12th Army, which was acting to the north of the Horse Army, with its left flank occupied Tyszowce – Łaszczów – Belz – Velyki Mosty – Kupychvolya; the right flank of the 14th Army (acting to the south) had retreated behind the Western Bug under the enemy's pressure.

In pursuance of this second Front directive the KomandArm-Horse indicated the situation outlined above and gave his divisions the tasks:

- The 4th was to take the Boratyn – Hatkivka area (10 km west of Sokal) by evening, throwing their forward units to the Dołhobyczów – Chervonohrad front and scouting in the direction of Komarów – Rava Rus'ka – Zhovkva.
- The 6th was to concentrate in the area of Korchyn – Novyi Vytktiv (20 km south of Sokal) by 13:00 and to capture the crossings on the W. Bug in the section Chervonohrad – Silets' with its advanced units.
- The 11th was to destroy the enemy in Vuzlove and clear the whole right bank of the W. Bug from Dobrotvir to Sokolya (13 km NW of Busk); take over all the crossings on the W. Bug from Silets' to Sokolya and throw forces on the left bank of the W. Bug to communicate with the 45th RD.
- The 14th was to remain in the Horokhiv area as the Army reserve (behind the right flank of the Army and partly behind the centre).

By the night of the 24th, the Army occupied the specified areas with little fighting. The field staff remained at Radekhiv.

Units of the enemy's 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions were detected near Chervonohrad.

On 24 August a new directive was received for the Western Front stating that the 14th Army's right group (Yakir) was successfully advancing towards L'viv; that the Konarmia, having concentrated in the Sokal – Dobrotvir – Stoyaniv area (it was already there), was to launch a determined and swift advance towards Krasnystaw and Lublin, to seize the Krasnystaw area within four days. The 12th Army (acting on the right) was by this time occupying the line of the W. Bug river, and the 14th Army was holding Busk on its right flank. The directive above was given by GlavKom: Comrade Tukhachevskiy considered the Konarmia's attack in the situation of the time to be pointless, and the Konarmia command agreed.

At dawn on 25 August the Konarmia moved in the direction of Zamość. The movement was organised as follows:

- The 4th Division would move to the area of Varyazh, NW of Sokal (a distance of 10 to 12 km).
- The 6th to the vacated area of Hatkivka – Sebechiv (25 to 30 km), both places just west of Sokal.
- The 11th during the night of 26 August was to reach the Komarów area (from Dobrotvir to Komarów is about 80 km in a direct line).





- The 14th was to concentrate in the Skomorokhy – Stenyatyn area (west of Poryts'k, a 25 km march) by 18:00 on 25 August.

The Army's armoured trains were urgently redeployed to the Kovel – Volodymyr and Kovel – Chełm lines; the supply and artillery fleets were moved to Lutsk, from where ammunitions was to be transported to the Army in the Volodymyr area.

The Army's operations post was moved to Lutsk to communicate with the front and neighbouring armies.

The second echelon wagon trains and all unnecessary army supplies were moved along the right bank of the W. Bug River to the Horokhiv – Pryvitne area (via Torchyn).

By midnight of 26 August the divisions had reached: the 4th Division at Varyazh, the 6th Division at Sokal, the 11th Division at Zubkiv – Perespa, and the 14th Division at Skomorokhy, where enemy (infantry and cavalry) were detected on the Huczwa River (near Łaszczów) and to the south near Uhniv.

A new order at 24:00 on 25 August had the KomandArm send the 14th CD to capture the Mircze – Modryń area (10 km south of Hrubieszów); the 4th CD to Komarów; the 6th CD in general direction of Tomaszów; and the 11th to transfer to the Army reserve in the Żniatyn – Nowosiółki<sup>86</sup> area (25-30 km to the south-east).

On 26 August, due to heavy rain, the Konarmia was delayed in the Varyazh – Sokal – Vytktiv area and only left on the morning of 27 August for Tyszowce and Łaszczów. The roads were extremely difficult.

By the time the Konarmia had made these moves, the enemy had pushed back units of the 24th Rifle Division from the W. Bug River in the section of Sokal and Chervonohrad; so a 35 km gap was created between the 12th and 14th Armies.

To assist the 12th Army, the KomFront-W ordered KomandArm-Horse to transfer to KomandArm-12 his Special Cavalry Brigade (located at the field headquarters), directing it to the area of Vytktiv – Vuzlove. However, this order was not carried out: the brigade remained on guard duty at the field headquarters and constituted the permanent Army reserve.

Alarmed by the movement of the Konarmia, the Polish High Command took some measures to increase the forces of their 3rd Army, which was acting against our 12th Army. For this purpose, on the 20 August, the 3rd Army was sent the following units:

1. The Kuban Cossack Brigade, the 214th Lancer Regiment, and the 9th and 10th Infantry Divisions from the Northern Front.
2. The 18th Infantry Division and Colonel Dreszer's Cavalry Division, concentrated near Mława, which were to be moved to Lublin.
3. General Stanisław Haller's group (13th Infantry and 1st Cavalry Divisions) was ordered from the L'viv area to follow the Konarmia.

But in practice by the time the Konarmia reached Tyszowce – Komarów, the Polish High Command could only move to Zamość the 30th and 31st IRs of the 10th ID; the 19th Brigade of that division was still on the way to Krasnystaw by train and could not take part in the fighting near Zamość. In addition, the 17th Brigade of the Ukrainian 6th Division and the Cossack brigade of *Esau*<sup>87</sup> Yakovlev were concentrated near Zamość and to the south-east of it.

To the north-east of Zamość, in the vicinity of Grabowiec, was the 2nd Legion Division.

On 27 August the 4th Division engaged in fierce fight with the Cossack brigade in the area of Tyszowce, which it had occupied, and after a mounted battle put it to flight, capturing 100 prisoners, 200 horses, three guns and other trophies. The former soldiers of the 14th Division, White Cossack traitors, were decisively beaten and fled to Komarów on their first attempt to defend the interests of gentry Poland.

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<sup>86</sup> The one in Tomaszów Lubelski county.

<sup>87</sup> Captain in the Cossack cavalry.



The 7th Cavalry Division, which was moving southward on the Rzeplin – Belz line, met stubborn resistance from the enemy (1st Cavalry and 13th Infantry Divisions) and fighting dismounted until the night of 27 August, was not able to advance forward.

The 11th Division followed the 6th Division as the reserve and by nightfall positioned itself in the Telatyn – Nowosiółki area.

The 14th Cavalry Division fought to occupy the Modryń – Mircze area, and the advanced units crossed the Huczwa River (at Terebiniec).

On 28 August the army advanced with fighting towards Zamość; by the night of 29 August it had reached the Kotlice – Komarów – Rachanie line; during the day prisoners were taken from the 2nd and 4th IRs of the 2nd Legion Division, the 1st Terek and 2nd Don Regiments of the Yakovlev Cossack Brigade, and the 30th IR of the 10th Division.

In front of the Konarmia, units of the 10th Infantry Division and the 2nd Legion Division operated near Zamość; the remains of the defeated Cossack Brigade had also retreated to Zamość.

To the south, units of the 13th Infantry Division and the 1st Cavalry Division were active. This was General Haller's group, which during the battles for L'viv had been in the Zhovkva – Uhniv area and were moved by Polish command to pursue the Konarmia after its withdrawal from L'viv.

At dawn on 29 August the Konarmia was ordered to move in two columns: the right column, with the 4th and 14th Cavalry Divisions, to the east of the Zamość – Krasnystaw highway, and the left column, the 6th and 11th CDs, along the Zamość highway.

### *30-31 August*

On 30 August, after fierce fighting with the advancing enemy, the Konarmia took the areas immediately to the south, southeast and north of Zamość, cut the Zamość – Biłgoraj rail line at Zawada Station, captured an armoured train and took 200 prisoners.

At that time, General Haller's group launched an assault from the south, and by the evening of 30 August took Komarów and Tyszowce, cutting off the Konarmia's southern escape route. To the north-east the area around Grabowiec was occupied by the 2nd Legion Infantry Division. Any further movement to the north would have meant that the Konarmia could be encircled (see Map 36).

New Polish reinforcements continued to arrive from the north, and the forces of the Konarmia continued to dwindle.

General Sikorski, who had recently taken over command of the Polish 3rd Army, gave orders to his troops on that day:

The units at my disposal, at 13:00 on 31 August, are to launch a vigorous attack, as a result of which Budënný's army may be completely annihilated.

The subsequent balance of forces will then enable us to defeat the Soviet 12th Army.

1. General Haller is to tie up the enemy in the Komarów area with offensive action, continuing his task of closing off Budënný's exits through Tyszowce, simultaneously aiming to establish contact with the units advancing from the Zamość side, for which purpose reach the Łabunie district early in the morning of 31 August. Whichever direction the enemy starts his retreat, General Haller should concentrate all his attention on intensifying his pursuit of it, directing all his cavalry even as far as Sokal, and at the same time using his infantry to prevent the enemy from withdrawing from the area between Zamość and Grabowiec.

2. General Żeligowski (10th Infantry Division) is to concentrate as quickly as possible those regiments of divisional infantry which are in the Zamość area in order to launch an immediate attack along the Zamość – Kryłów axis.

General Żeligowski, in any case, is to hold all his forces that are now in Zamość until 2100 hours on 30 August along the Zamość – Łabunie – Komarów highway; throw back the enemy units standing on that line and try to get in contact with General Haller's troops as soon as possible.



In the event of success, General Żeligowski is to concentrate all his forces in the Dołhobyczów – Kryłów area.

3. Colonel Żymierski (2nd Legion Infantry Division), together with his subordinate units (a brigade of the Ukrainian 6th Division), is to strike from Grabowiec in the general direction of Miączyn at 22:30 on 30 August.

Having defeated the enemy located there depending on the general situation and the elimination of his forces which might have reached the west of Miączyn, continue your offensive in the eastern direction towards Malice. Colonel Żymierski is to simultaneously capture the crossing of the Huczwa River at Werbkowice, aiming to take the road junction at Mircea as soon as possible, ensuring its left flank by simultaneously taking Hrubieszów.

This order shows that the intention of the command of the Polish 3rd Army was to press on the Konarmia concentrically from the north, west and south and simultaneously cut off its escape routes on the Huczwa River (the Polish command set out here to tactically encircle the Konarmia).

The Konarmia found itself in the enemy rear for the second time during its operations on the Polish front – but there was a big difference between the breakthrough in May (Zhytomyr – Berdychiv) and that in August. In the first case the enemy front was broken through, but here the Army found itself in the midst of advancing enemy units, which had received fresh reinforcements and were very well equipped, with plenty of firepower. In addition, the raid was made into the full force of the elements, as the rains of 30 and 31 August had covered the whole of the forested and marshy region with mud, making manoeuvring the army very difficult. In the previous fighting the Army had used up almost all its combat supplies. The enemy had aviation squadrons operating, bombarding the Konarmia with bombs and machine-gun fire.

The 12th Army, which was next to Horse Army, was not very active (it was opposed by only the 7th Infantry Division), mostly stationary. The Konarmia needed to destroy the enemy's southern group (at Komarów) to ensure its operational freedom, but as it continued to move northwards towards Krasnystaw, it was threatened by the enemy Grabowiec group from the northeast. By noon on 31 August, the army was in an extremely difficult position. A narrow corridor, full of marshes and forests, was all that was left to manoeuvre in.

During the battles of 26 to 31 August the Konarmia had suffered heavy losses in manpower and horses and exhausted almost all its ammunition. Having analysed the situation at the Konarmia's front, its command decided to turn eastwards and join the main front line through Hrubieszów.

#### *1-5 September*

The 4th Cavalry Division was moving at the head of the Army. After a series of attacks, it knocked the enemy out of its positions on the Mołodiatycze – Hostynne line (15 km west of Hrubieszów) and broke through to the Huczwa near Werbkowice. The enemy, having recovered, took the offensive and pushed it away from the crossing. At 12:00 the division again went on the offensive and in a complex fight destroyed units of the 30th IR from the 10th ID, cutting up two squadrons of Cossack cavalry. On the way back it encountered units of the 2nd ID, moving to Hrubieszów – it was the 4th Legion IR, tasked with taking Hrubieszów. The Polish regiment lost 68% of its unit to us, and 30th IR lost 50% – the 4th Cavalry Division in these battles took up to 1,000 prisoners, two guns and many machine guns. By nightfall the division had reached the line of Moniatycze – Nieledeu (5-8 km north of Hrubieszów). Under the cover of the 4th Cavalry Division, all of the Army's transports were withdrawn from under enemy attack.

At the same time, the 11th Cavalry Division fought fierce battles with the enemy on the Huczwa River crossings at Werbkowice, and the 14th on the Grabowiec- Hrubieszów road at Mołodiatycze. The 6th Cavalry Division moved in the rear of the army, holding back the enemy onslaught along the Kotlice (southernmost road) – Modryń. Due to the selfless bravery of all the Army's soldiers the latter honourably escaped from the enemy encirclement, leaving the enemy no valuable trophies (except the automobiles), although it suffered heavy losses in manpower.

The enemy, having let the Army escape, furiously attacked it the whole day of 2 September, trying to occupy the crossings over the Huczwa river.



On 3 September, with prolonged fighting, the Konarmia's units held their ground calmly, remaining in their occupied areas. The weather was continuously rainy.

In their dispatch to the Western Front (dated 4 September) the Horse Army command described their raid on Zamość in the following way:

The Konarmia, following its orders of 24 August, after heavy rain during the whole day and night of 26 August, in the morning of 27 August left the Varyazh – Sokal – Vytktiv area on extremely difficult roads. Leaving all the armoured vehicles where they were, the army moved to occupy the Tyszowce – Łaszczów area. In the Rzeplin – Wasylów – Lopatin – Belz area the enemy had a force of the 1st Cavalry Division, 2,500 sabres, and two infantry regiments of the 13th Division, 3,000 bayonets, supported by an armoured train, who put up a stiff resistance to the 6th Cavalry Division. The fight lasted until late at night, after which the division, still in contact with a considerable enemy force from the south, positioned itself for the night in the Wasylów – Nowosiółki area.

That evening the 4th Cavalry Division marched to Tyszowce, crushing minor enemy forces near Kmiczyn. Then in a charge on the [enemy] Cossack cavalry brigade, of 750 sabres, it took 120 prisoners, three guns and 200 horses, and then pursued the panicked fleeing enemy until darkness fell, camping overnight near Tyszowce. The 14th Cavalry Division moved behind the 4th and 6th, forming the northern guard. The 11th was behind the 6th. The 14th positioned itself for the night in the Mircze – Andrzejówka area, and the 11th in the Żabcze – Liski area.

On 28 and 29 August, with heavy rain and muddy roads, overcoming the enemy's resistance, which sometimes appeared from the front or flanks, the Konarmia continued non-stop movement and captured over 100 prisoners, and by the evening of 29 August had reached the line Żuków (8 km south-west of Grabowiec) Maidan – Bortatycze – Zawada – Szewnia Górna. At Szewnia the 11th Cavalry Division defeated the remnants of the Cossack cavalry brigade. Some units of the 6th Cavalry Division, during the night of 30 August, made a raid on Tomaszów, knocking out small units of the 3rd Cavalry *Kuren*<sup>88</sup> of the Ukrainian 6th Division.

On 30 August the 6th Cavalry Division fought a dogged battle for the possession of Zamość, where the enemy had concentrated a large number of the 10th Division's infantry, consisting of the 30th and 31st Regiments (3,000 bayonets), numerous artillery, and one armoured train. In the morning of 30 August, units of the 11th Cavalry Division and the Special Cavalry Brigade were in a hard fight with the enemy advancing from the south on Komarów – Wólka Łabunska – Ruszów (consisting of four cavalry regiments, up to 2,500 sabres, of the 1st Cavalry Division and two infantry regiments, 1,500 bayonets, of the 13th Infantry Division) and while fighting heavily began to retreat northwards.

Because of the forest and marshy terrain,<sup>89</sup> extremely difficult roads and overworked horses, manoeuvring the Konarmia units to the flank and rear of the enemy was very difficult and slow. The enemy used the conditions to their benefit, attempting to capture Tyszowce on the night of 30 August and to try to encircle the whole Army by advancing its units on Perespa.

On the 31st the enemy continued to advance northwards towards Czesńiki – Niewirków - Perespa, and at the same time the enemy concentrated the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Infantry Regiments of the 2nd Division and a battalion of the 142nd IR in the area of Grabowiec – Bereść – Gdeszyn – Zawalów and assaulted Miączyn, where it successfully raided part of the field headquarters' transports and took the heavy artillery. A counter-attack of the 4th Cavalry Division and the staffs and institutions of the field headquarters pushed back the enemy, and took back the carts and guns. The enemy, entrenched on the line Zawalów – Folwarki, north of

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<sup>88</sup> The UNR liked to revive old Cossack terms, this is the equivalent of the Russian *divizion*.

<sup>89</sup> The area had only scattered small forests, with plenty of space in between. Due to the rains, it would have been quite heavy going, especially in the bottoms of the (gentle) valleys.



Zawalów – Grabowiec, offered strong resistance, moving in the area of Żuków to counter-attack and twice occupying that town.

To eliminate the enemy group attacking from the south, the 4th Cavalry Division was redeployed to Czesńiki – Niewirków, and together with the 11th Cavalry Division and the Special Cavalry Brigade attacked several times. They were forced to retreat by heavy enemy artillery fire and machine-gun fire from the infantry entrenched on the heights south of Czesńiki – Niewirków.<sup>90</sup> The 6th Cavalry Division on 31 August was concentrated in the Maidan area and, leaving a guard on the Sitaniec – Siedliska – Zawada Station line, moved to support the right flank of the 11th Cavalry Division, but was somewhat delayed.

By midday of 31 August, the Konarmia was in an extremely difficult position. Only a narrow corridor remained for manoeuvring, but where the Army could not deploy due to the abundance of marshes and forests. We were running out of ammunition, even though it was being expended very sparingly during the raid, and the 12th Army could not give us any support, not moving a single pace forward. The Konarmia was engaged in heavy skirmishes with a superior enemy, who had stalled our advance towards Krasnystaw – Lublin with a counter-offensive, and the situation was fraught with disaster. Thus orders were given to move back to Hrubieszów and join with the 12th Army.

At 16:00, under the cover of the 11th and 6th Cavalry Divisions and the Special Cavalry Brigade, and led by the 4th Cavalry Division, the Army took the route Niewirków – Hostynne – Werbkowice towards Hrubieszów. In the Horyszów – Hostynne – Wilków region the 4th Cavalry Division defeated two battalions of the 30th Regiment, one battalion of the 142nd Regiment and two squadrons of the Cossack division (they took up to 700 prisoners and sabred 400) and cleared the road to take the Red Army to Hrubieszów. It camped overnight in the Peresełowice – Hostynne – Werbkowice region.

The Special Cavalry Brigade, the 11th Cavalry Division and then the 3rd Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division were resisting the onslaught of the enemy Komarów group, which followed their heels all day of 31 August. By the evening of that day the Konarmia, losing its wagons and other equipment on heavy roads and with exhausted horses, broke out of the ring and contacted the 44th Rifle Division near Hrubieszów. On 1 September, the Konarmia crossed the Huczwa River without any resistance, and after the destruction of units of the 4th Cavalry Division and 1st and 2nd Legion Divisions<sup>91</sup> at Hrubieszów, where up to 300 Poles were killed and up to 1,000 prisoners taken along with three heavy artillery pieces, it was concentrated in the Hrubieszów – Gozdów – Werbkowice – Malice – Sahryń district.

During the five-day raid, with the conditions mentioned above and under the unprecedented tenacity of the enemy, who were trying to encircle and destroy the Konarmia, the Army suffered heavy losses of staff, Red Army men, horses and materiel. As a consequence of stubborn fighting and daily movements under the pouring rain on the impossible roads, the soldiers and horses of the Konarmia are extremely exhausted and need a long rest to replenish their units with weapons and to repair the badly damaged transports

Signed Budëny and Voroshilov.

The Polish military historian Lieutenant-Colonel of the General Staff Boltucz assessed the actions of Budëny's cavalry on its move to Zamość as follows:

With the most careful calculations the Konarmia could have moved 30 km a day (from the area of its concentration after the withdrawal from L'viv) and by the evening of 30 August have been near Lublin. What could have prevented this movement? The 2nd Legion Infantry Division,

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<sup>90</sup> This is the famous “Battle of Komarów”. Note that in this account it is the Polish infantry that are mentioned as the decisive factor. Accounts of it being the “last great cavalry battle” somehow omit that it was mostly Polish infantry on the battlefield. Of course they also leave out that Wrangel was about to fight larger cavalry battles later.

<sup>91</sup> The 1st Legion Infantry Division was not present, being much further north at the time.





situated over a large area and tied up to the front fighting with the Soviet 12th Army, was not in a position to concentrate its forces at the necessary moment to counter Budënyy.

Only one regiment with artillery had landed from the 10th Infantry Division in the Kraśnik – Lublin area (not counting the garrison in Zamość consisting of the 30th and IRs of the same division). Moreover, the Polish High Command had only the 215th Lancer Regiment in its reserves in that area. These forces were very weak to oppose Budënyy. It is necessary to admit that a successful move by Budënyy towards Lublin would have been fatal for the Polish troops, especially for the 3rd Army.

... Budënyy's delay of two to three days in Zamość gave the Polish command the opportunity to: 1) organise the manoeuvre of the 2nd ID towards Grabowiec-Miączyn; 2) allow General Haller's group to catch up with Budënyy and 3) let the command of 3rd Army organise a manoeuvre from the north and south against Budënyy, with Zamość serving as a reliable support for this two-way manoeuvre.

On 4 and 5 September the enemy continued to press on both the Konarmia and the neighbouring 12th and 14th Armies, which began to retreat behind the Western Bug. The enemy sought to squeeze the Konarmia into a ring around Hrubieszów in order to cut it off from the crossing.

To prevent the possibility of the Army being cut off from the crossing at Hrubieszów and to move it from the enemy flank attacks, the KomandArm ordered the main forces of the Army to withdraw to the region of Volodymyr, leaving forward units on the Bug crossings (on the line Ustyluh – Lytovezh).

On the same day we received new directive from the KomFront ordering the Konarmia to withdraw from battle and give it a rest in the area of Hrubieszów – Kryłów. KomandArm-12 was ordered to secure the location of the Konarmia in that area. However that directive was already late, as not only 12th Army but also the Konarmia had retreated behind the Bug. The field staff moved to Volodymyr. Until 12 September the Army remained in the occupied region, holding back enemy attempts to cross the river near Hrubieszów (see Map 37).

At dawn on the 12 September the enemy crossed to the eastern bank of the Western Bug river near the village of Vygodanka<sup>92</sup> opposite the town of Hrubieszów and launched fierce attacks on the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions, aiming to reach Volodymyr.

As the enemy had plenty of artillery, the counterattacks of the 4th and 6th Cavalry Divisions were unsuccessful. Testimonies of prisoners revealed that the units of three infantry divisions (2nd Legion, 10th, and 13th) and one cavalry division were involved in these battles.

On the same day, under enemy pressure, the poorly equipped units of the 12th Army retreated to Kovel.

Some units of the 14th Army surrendered to the enemy at Sokal. Due to the current situation on the South-Western Front, the KomandArm ordered the cavalry divisions of the Army to retreat east of Volodymyr. On the morning of 13 September, after a bitter battle with the enemy's superior forces, the 14th Cavalry Division left Volodymyr.

On the same day, the enemy raided Kovel, continuing to attack the 12th Army.

A directive of 13 September ordered the 12th Army to dislodge the enemy from Kovel and immediately replace the Konarmia's units on the battlefield.

Konarmia was ordered to concentrate its main forces in the vicinity of Perespa – Rozhyshe (on the Styr) and prepare to strike to the northwest; keeping in contact with KomandArm-12.

The Konarmia was never able to leave the battle to rest and resupply, and continued to receive new combat missions due to the low combat stability of the neighbouring 12th and 14th Armies.

Only the 4th and 14th Cavalry Divisions withdrew from the field; the 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions continued to support the 12th Army (44th Division) and fought hard against the encroaching enemy.

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<sup>92</sup> Just north of the rail bridge by Ambukiv.



At nightfall of 14 September KomandArm-Horse ordered the transfer of the Army's concentration to the east from the line of Lutsk – Dubno in the Olyka – Varkovychi area to receive reinforcements arriving for the Army and repair technical equipment (on the basis of a new Front directive). At 01:00 on 15 September an additional Front directive was received:

KomandArm-12 is to immediately replace the units of the 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions with units of the 44th Rifle Division.

KomandArm-Horse is to immediately send the 4th and 14th Cavalry Divisions to the Rivne district, to join the 4th and 11th Cavalry Divisions there.

In that area, the Army should be put in order and to be ready for active operations in the shortest possible time.

That day the 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions were exchanged at the sector of the 44th RD, and the Army was directed to the region specified.

The enemy continued to advance with unrelenting energy from Lutsk in the general direction of Rivne – Dubno. Units of the 12th Army were ordered to occupy and defend the line along the Stokhid River from Lyubeshiv to Sokil (on the Styr) and on to Ivanychi (on the Mlyniv – Rivne highway). To the south, the 14th Army occupied the Styr between Maleve and Stanislavchik; its left flank resting on the Dnestr River. The Konarmia was given a new task – to defeat the enemy advancing on Rivne and Dubno and repel it behind the Styr (see Map 38).

By 20:00 on 16 September the Konarmia had regrouped to the Rivne region, with the 4th and 14th Cavalry Divisions in the Olyka area; the 11th Division on the crossings over the Styr near Lutsk and to the south; and the 6th Division in the Mlyniv area. During that whole day the Konarmia units fought hard battles with the enemy advancing east of the Styr, repulsing them by counter-attacks. But the enemy quickly recovered and continued to move after our rear guard. The units of the 12th Army (24th and 44th RDs), which were operating beside the Konarmia continued to retreat.

By nightfall, the enemy cavalry division and infantry had taken Lutsk, and were advancing along the highway to Rivne.

All the next day the 4th Division fought with superior enemy forces near Klevan'; by nightfall it was forced to retreat to Rivne.

The 14th Cavalry Division, operating along the Stubla River, south of the 4th (10 km from the Klevan'), fought two enemy infantry divisions at Richyshche, where its 3rd Brigade was almost completely wiped out, having lost all its commanders and commissars. Similar battles were fought by the 2nd Brigade, which was operating south of the 3rd Brigade, west of the village of Satyiv.

To support the 4th, 11th and 14th Cavalry Divisions, the KomandArm ordered the 6th to move to the offensive, from Mlyniv to Lutsk, to act on the flanks and in the rear of the enemy.

The incessant fighting prevented the Konarmia from putting itself in order and absorbing the incoming reinforcements into the divisions.

On 17 September the KomFront-W ordered:

To ease the replenishment of the Konarmia, all its field units should be concentrated as soon as possible to the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv area.

On the same day we received a telegram from the Western Front Headquarters, that in case of withdrawal we were to destroy railway bridges by blowing up the trusses and burning down the wooden pillars and slabs. At the same time the 12th and Horse Armies were ordered to take urgent measures to remove stock from the railway lines and warehouses in their areas.

The situation at the front kept deteriorating: the 12th Army continued to retreat eastwards. Communication with 14th Army was lost. The Konarmia was ordered to hold at the Stubla River until nightfall, and by the morning of 18 September, the main forces of the Army were drawn to the [Richka] Ustya River, where they were to remain until nightfall. On the night of the 19th, it withdraw behind the Horyn' river.



According to an operational order of 17 September, the Horse Army was to withdraw to the line above: on the right flank was the 4th CD, then south of it was the 11th CD, then south again the 6th CD (at Zdolbuniv). KomDiv-14 was ordered to withdraw his division from the fighting and concentrate near Korets', where he was to sort his units into order. The Konarmia armoured trains were routed on the 17th to the Klevan' – Rivne and Zdolbuniv – Rivne sections. The armoured units were moved along the highway to Klevan' – Lutsk. There was no contact with the infantry units of the 12th Army: we found only isolated groups of riflemen, who had completely lost touch with their division, where the 44th Rifle Division was supposed to be. At midnight we got a report from the commander of the 58th RD that his division occupied the sector of Novi Chervyshcha – Berezhnitsa on the River Stokhid (where the enemy was not showing any activity), so echeloned in front and to the right of the Konarmia.

At dawn on 18 September the enemy seized Rivne, after fighting with the 4th and 11th Cavalry Divisions.

All day long the Konarmia units slowly retreated to the Horyn' River.

Because of the poor stability of the retreating units of the 12th and 14th Armies, which often retreated even before any pressure from the Polish troops, the whole burden of fighting from 4 to 18 September fell on the Konarmia, which was expending its last forces.

This circumstance once again prompted the Horse Army command to petition for the withdrawal of the Army to the deep rear for re-manning and putting itself in order.

In response to this, on 18 September it received a directive from KomFront-W which found that the situation outlined by the KomandArm further emphasised the need to withdraw the Konarmia to a deep reserve in the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv area. All the Army's divisions were to be concentrated in that area, and the heavy rear units should be sent to the Dnepr River line. On the same day it received yet another message from the KomFront, which informed it that GlavKom had decided to transfer the 24th RD to the Konarmia, to help cover the withdrawal of the cavalry units from the front lines. That unit was supposed to be on the Rivne – Zhytomyr highway. At the same time, all the reinforcements available at the Zhytomyr province military enlistment office were handed over to the Army. At 02:30 on 19 September another telegram was received from the Western Front Chief of Staff, which added to the directive above: the 44th RD was added to the Army, on top of the 24th Division. To avoid blocking the Kyiv – Berdychiv railway line, all reinforcements for the Army were ordered to be sent to Kremenchuk.

The situation on the front deteriorated further. Parts of the 12th Army were retreating at pace; the enemy was advancing rapidly towards Berdychiv and Zhytomyr; Kyiv was threatened. In that context the KomFront-W ordered the evacuation of all supplies from the territory west of the Dnepr to its eastern bank, with the Konarmia being provided with the Fastiv – Kyiv – Kremenchuk railway.

The Army received new orders, and at dawn on 19 September the Horse Army divisions occupied the eastern bank of the Horyn' river from Tuchyn to Monastyrok, having destroyed all the crossings. The 4th, 11th and 6th Divisions were deployed from right to left; the 14th Division was the Army reserve to the east of Korets'. Retreating under pressure from enemy cavalry units, the 24th RD passed Ostroh and moved to Izyaslav. In pursuit of the division at 19:00 the enemy occupied the crossing of the Horyn' river near Ostroh (on the left flank of the Konarmia).

The 14th Division was ordered to urgently redeploy from the area of Korets' to the area of Myropil' – Romaniv (on the Shepetivka – Berdychiv railway) to support the left flank of the Army. The Special Cavalry Brigade was concentrated in the area of Korets' as the Army reserve. At 15:00 two regiments of the 131st Rifle Brigade (44th RD) arrived at the right flank of the 4th Cavalry Division, to occupy the Tuchyn – Hoshcha area (25 km east of Rivne). The 4th CD, upon its replacement by the units of the 44th RD, withdrew to the Berdychiv area to be resupplied.

There was no information of the whereabouts of the units of the 24th Division (left flank of the Konarmia).

Swept away by the failures, the units of 12th Army retreated to the east in great disorder. There were reports that a large number of Red Army units withdrew in panicked groups and singly. A KomFront directive ordered urgent and decisive measures to combat desertion, whereby:



- 1) KomandArm-12 was to set two strong barrier lines: one on the line Ovruch – Korosten' – Zhytomyr – Berdychiv and another along the Dnepr from Chornobyl to Kyiv;
- 2) KomandArm-Horse was to provide full assistance in the fight against desertion;
- 3) those detained on the country roads and railways were ordered to be sent to the areas designated for the rear staging areas of the divisions, under the care of KomandArm-12. In those areas he was to prepare food and baths and intensify political work.

The 12th Army was ordered to be based at Kyiv, covering from Sarny to Kyiv with its right flank; the Konarmia was ordered to Kozyatyn – Fastiv – Tsvitkove – Znam'yanka – Kremenchuk. The general management of the railway lines in the area of these armies was entrusted to the Head of Military Supplies for the Republic, Comrade Arzhanov.

On 20 September the Konarmia continued to hold back the enemy onslaught on the Horyn'. The right flank units of the 12th Army were positioned along the Styr, 50 km to the west, and covered Sarny. The 14th Army, to the left, was ordered to entrench on the Rokhmaniv (Shums'k) – Bilozirka – Volochys'k – Sataniv line and further along the Zbruch River.

The Konarmia was given the task of stopping the enemy movement on the Horyn', while successively transferring cavalry divisions to the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv district for reinforcements. After long search in the evening of 21 September, liaison with the 24th RD was re-established: it had retreated towards Ostroh and arrived at the line Mezhyrich – Shums'k (15-20 km to the west of Ostroh).

On 22 September the KomandArm-Horse gave an order to the 24th and 44th Divisions, together with the 6th and 11th Cavalry Divisions, to hold at the Horyn', covering the Rivne – Zviahel highway. The 4th Cavalry Division was to move to the north-west of Berdychiv (near the town of Chudniv) at dawn on 23 September. The 14th was to remain in the Romaniv – Myropil' area. The Field Staff with the Special Brigade was in Korets'. The main HQ was in Berdychiv.

At dawn on 23 September, on the left flank of the Army, the enemy defeated units of the 24th RD near Ostroh, crossed the Horyn', and took Izyaslav after a fight. Under pressure from the enemy, the 24th Division continued to retreat eastwards, and at noon on 24 September the enemy had captured the railway junction at Shepetivka. The other units of the Konarmia continued to hold back the enemy on the Horyn' River.

At 16:00 on 24 September new orders were received from the KomFront-W, which stated that at 02:00 on the 27th the 24th and 44th RDs were to be transferred to 12th Army, which was subordinated to the South-Western Front.

From that moment the Konarmia, with all its cavalry units, was assigned to GlavKom's reserve. The Army was ordered to break away from the enemy and retreat to the Berdychiv area. The 6th and 11th CDs were ordered to surrender their sectors to the 24th and 44th RDs and withdraw to the designated areas. The armoured trains were to run along the Shepetivka – Berdychiv line; the armoured detachments remained on the Zhytomyr – Berdychiv highway until the evening of the 24th.

By the evening of 26 September, following the High Commands orders, the Konarmia was concentrated in two groups: 6th and 11th Divisions to the west of the Shepetivka – Zviahel rail line (11th CD in the region of Velyka and Mala Horbasha – Khyzhivka; the 6th at Pashuky – Korchyk – Romaniv), 4th and 11th – west of Berdychiv (4th division near Chudniv and the 14th at Raihorodok). The Chief of Staff, with the Special Brigade, was positioned behind the first group at Rohachiv on the Sluch River.

Near Korets' (on the Rivne – Zviahel highway) on the afternoon of 26 September enemy cavalry raided our armoured units. After a heavy battle, by the evening our armoured vehicles had broken through the enemy positions and joined the Chief of Staff. The 44th RD was fighting with the enemy at that time 10-12 km east of Korets'. These were the Konarmia's last combat episodes on the Polish front.

The impending armistice with Poland and the need to eliminate Wrangel as soon as possible caused the Konarmia to move from the South-Western Front to the Southern Front and GlavKom ordered the Konarmia to concentrate near Kremenchuk by 10 October.



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### *Assessment of the combat operations of the Konarmia from the moment it left L'viv*

On 16 August the Konarmia received its first directive from the Western Front to advance to the Volodymyr area.

At that time the Army was fighting fierce battles on the Bug, and two divisions were already on its western bank. For a number of reasons, mentioned above, the Konarmia could not abandon the object of its actions and only on 20 August did it start to execute the directive of the Western Front. By the evening of 22 August its units had only reached Horokhiv (60 km from Volodymyr).

Then the Western Front changed the Army's task three times during two days (23 and 24 August): first it was ordered to concentrate in the Sokal – Dobrotvir – Stoyaniv area and await further instructions, then to provide vigorous assistance to Comrade Yakir's group, and thirdly, it was to head from the Sokal – Dobrotvir – Stoyaniv area to capture Krasnystaw within four days, for a further movement to Lublin. The Konarmia began to carry out the latter task at dawn on 25 August – but by that time the enemy had pushed our Western Front's armies from the Grodno – Brest line to the east and forced our 4th Army, together with Gai's CavCorps, to intern in East Prussia.

At the same time the Polish 3rd Army, operating in the Włodawa – Chełm region, prevented our 12th Army from striking northwards against the enemy strike group near Brest. A movement of our cavalry to the Lublin area in the last third of August had still been possible (as Polish sources confirm). By the end of August the enemy had only managed to move the 10th ID to the Lublin area, then disperse it from Lublin to Zamość – but, regardless, the Polish command had the initiative to act in that period.

The movement of the Konarmia following the last directive was extremely slow due to the raging weather; the heavy rains made the forested and swampy area extremely difficult to cross. Moreover, during the raid the Army's units were burdened with considerable transports (even divisional ones), so they spent some time protecting them. All this made manoeuvring extremely difficult.

Despite considering the movement to Zamość as pointless, and in spite of the difficult conditions, the Konarmia continued to defeat the enemy, who suffered considerable losses.

The enemy's successful counter manoeuvre, the general immobility of our South-Western Front, the lack of ammunition and the Army's great fatigue were the main reasons for turning back to the east and joining the 12th Army.

The further operations from 1st to 26 September are interesting to consider as, despite the boastful Polish literature's assertions that the Konarmia was defeated at Zamość and never again assumed the initiative on the Polish front, those operations say just the opposite. Not once did the Polish units manage to force the Konarmia to retreat. On all the lines, from the Western Bug to the Horyn', it prevented the enemy from advancing – and where its units remained at the front, the enemy basically had no success. During these nearly four weeks the Konarmia acted as a screen for the South-Western Front, under cover of which the Red 12th and, to an extent, the 14th Armies could put themselves in order and were able to resist at certain lines.





## Chapter VIII

### Conclusion on the Actions of the First Horse Army on the Polish Front

During its four month stay on the Polish front (25 May to 27 September), the Konarmia fought constantly against superior forces and, in spite of that, twice broke through the front, making raids into the enemy rear (one at the start of the Berdychiv – Zhytomyr operation, and another at the end to Krasnystaw).

All the Konarmia missions were successful, although not always within the time frame assigned (especially during the L'viv Operation). The reasons for this were the general operational situation of the fronts and the slow operational tempo of the 12th and 14th Armies neighbouring the Konarmia.

Kakurin and Melikov wrote:

The Konarmia in the operations of the South-Western Front against the Poles was like a pendulum which regulated by itself all the operations of the that front.

This role was fulfilled to the end and with honour by the Konarmia, from its first steps onto the right-bank Ukraine.

In assessing its activity, we must never forget the fact that the most brilliant pages of the South-Western Front in Ukraine are written in the blood of its soldiers.

During the actions on the Polish front the Konarmia took many prisoners and trophies: 32 officers, 12,000 soldiers, 3,000 horses, 85 heavy and light guns, 350 machine guns, 600 rifles, 100 revolvers, 30 shell boxes, 400,000 cartridges, 8 armoured cars, 10 trucks, 208 carts, 26 field kitchens, 3 armoured trains, 2 tanks, 1 radio station, 500 saddles, 100 sets of harness, etc. In addition, about 10,000 men of the Polish units were killed in the fighting.

During this period the Konarmia suffered considerable losses:

- killed : 208 command staff and commissars, 1,850 men;
- wounded : 727 commanders and commissars, 6,340 men;
- shell-shocked : 27 commanders and commissars, 400 men;
- missing: 36 commanders and commissars, 570 men;
- sick: 138 commanders and commissars, 1,323 men.

In total, the following persons were discharged: 1,136 command staff and 10,483 Red Army men.

There were some additions in the course of the campaign : 90 command staff and 1,633 Red Army men. However, losses exceeded 50%, with gains less than 10%, and in the combat units it was even worse.

For the horses the Konarmia lost:

- In the cavalry units: 5,595 horses were killed, 5,287 wounded, and 649 captured.
- In the transport : 120 killed, 90 wounded, and 820 captured.

The Army also lost some equipment in the form of 22 light cannons, 67 machine guns and 2 armoured vehicles.

Noteworthy is the almost total absence of surrender in both the political staff and from the Red Army soldiers.<sup>93</sup> Surrendering was considered the most terrible disgrace, incompatible with the rank of Red Army man. Those glorious traditions, inculcated by the revolutionary volunteers, lived on in the Konarmia from its first to its last days.

The Horse Army men preferred to sign himself with his own blood, and his last cartridge, into the history book of the great struggle, but not to surrender to the shameful captivity of his class enemies.

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<sup>93</sup> Ignoring the almost entire brigade that went over, of course!



By comparing [relative] cavalry losses in the three wars (Russo-Japanese, Imperialist and Russo-Polish War of 1920), we can see that cavalry losses in the Russo-Polish War of 1920 were much higher than in the previous wars, as follows:

Cavalry Personnel Losses per 1,000 men engaged in combat.

|                                                                   | <b>Killed</b> | <b>Wounded</b> | <b>Sick</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| <b>I. Russian-Japanese War of 1904-1905 (18 months):</b>          |               |                |             |
| Officers                                                          | 31.75         | 221.4          | –           |
| Lower ranks                                                       | 19.4          | 105.4          | –           |
| <b>Imperialist War on the Russian front 1914-1916 (28 months)</b> |               |                |             |
| Officers                                                          | 61.9          | 409.8          | –           |
| Lower ranks                                                       | 35.8          | 181.4          | –           |
| <b>Russo-Polish War 1920 (3 months)</b>                           |               |                |             |
| Command Staff                                                     | 95.0          | 348.7          | 49.3        |
| Red Army soldiers                                                 | 63.5          | 236.2          | 52.3        |

Losses of Red Cavalry on the Polish front were six times higher than the cavalry losses in the Russo-Japanese War and five times higher than in the Imperialist War. Even comparing with the losses of the infantry in the Imperialist War on the Russian front, the losses of the Red Cavalry were almost identical to those of the infantry.

The actions of the Konarmia on the Polish front in 1920 showed clearly what great importance large cavalry masses had in the theatre of war. That war emphasised the necessity to use cavalry independently in major frontline operations, not being afraid of penetrate deeply into the enemy's lines. The same war emphasised the need to have large cavalry masses at the disposal of GlavKom. The Konarmia operations on the Polish front showed the necessity of supplying large cavalry masses with sufficient air power, armour, radio communications and the inexpediency of attaching a cumbersome army rear to the cavalry masses, which hindered the work of the cavalry.

The actions of the cavalry on the Polish front showed that the large cavalry masses retained their place on the battlefield, where modern cavalry must be able to operate both on horseback and on foot, making extensive use of their firepower.

Particularly striking is the extent and depth of the Red Cavalry's operations on the Polish front. From 26 May to 31 August the Konarmia went over 800 km in combat, conducting a number of major operations:

- 1) Breaking through the Polish front and raiding Zhytomyr – Berdychiv;
- 2) Movement to the Uzh and Ubort' rivers (Korosten' operation);
- 3) The Zviahel Operation;
- 4) The Rivne Operation;
- 5) The Dubno-Brody Operation;
- 6) Combats around L'viv;
- 7) The raid on Zamość;
- 8) Covering the 12th Army's retreat from the Western Bug.

The operational mobility of the Army in connection with these operations was on average 30 km a day (from 20 to 40 km); the duration of operations (each separately) averaged 5 to 7 days.

These figures exceed the World War figures by a factor of two. The total depth of operations of the Konarmia also greatly exceeds (almost twice) the limits of movement of the World War armies, even on the Western Front. All these facts contributed to the difficulties in supplying the Army, with all types of supplies. Basing it on the railways was not always possible, as the enemy destroyed almost all the bridges during their retreat, so the restoration of the rail lines required significant time and effort. The automobile transport of the Army was insignificant, but nevertheless convoys on the Zhytomyr – Rivne – Dubno highway greatly simplified the supply of the Army with everything necessary (mainly ammunition, feed grain and food).

During the Konarmia raid on Zamość, the railway line from Lutsk to Kovel to Volodymyr was restored, through which all necessary supplies and the evacuation of the sick and wounded were organised for the Army. But the instability of 12th Army units, which allowed the Polish command to make a daring raid on Kovel with their armoured vehicles, disrupted the normal supply of the Konarmia, and the forward Army base in Kovel was destroyed.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Combat composition of the First Horse Army.

The numbers below are all specifically “for combat units”.

As of 1 June

|                    | Command      | Bayonets   | Sabres        | MGs        | Guns      | Men           | Horses        |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|
| Special Purpose CB | 84           | —          | 1 284         | 22         | —         | 1 368         | 1 515         |
| 4th CD             | 374          | 46         | 3 365         | 100        | 12        | 3 785         | 8 700         |
| 6th CD             | 378          | —          | 5 540         | 95         | 12        | 5 918         | 9 053         |
| 11th CD            | 331          | —          | 2 768         | 56         | 12        | 3 099         | 3 600         |
| 14th CD            | 342          | 221        | 3 193         | 89         | 12        | 3 760         | 4 314         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>1 509</b> | <b>267</b> | <b>16 150</b> | <b>362</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>17 930</b> | <b>27 182</b> |

As of 1 July

|                    | Command      | Bayonets   | Sabres        | MGs        | Guns      | Men           | Horses        |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|
| Special Purpose CB | 39           | —          | 790           | 12         | —         | 944           | 896           |
| 4th CD             | 353          | —          | 3 171         | 102        | 12        | 4 579         | 5 525         |
| 6th CD             | 313          | —          | 4 815         | 83         | 12        | 8 138         | 8 636         |
| 11th CD            | 281          | —          | 2 319         | 52         | 7         | 2 600         | 2 737         |
| 14th CD            | 302          | 261        | 2 065         | 82         | 12        | 2 628         | 2 540         |
| Reserve CB         | 90           | —          | 929           | 18         | —         | 1 638         | 1 339         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>1 378</b> | <b>261</b> | <b>14 080</b> | <b>349</b> | <b>43</b> | <b>20 552</b> | <b>21 673</b> |

As of 1 August

|                        | Command      | Bayonets   | Sabres        | MGs        | Guns      | Men           | Horses        |
|------------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|
| Communication Squadron | 8            | —          | 188           | 2          | —         | 266           | 259           |
| Special Purpose CB     | 72           | —          | 791           | 16         | 4         | 1 211         | 1 122         |
| 4th CD                 | 329          | —          | 3 193         | 103        | 11        | 4 389         | 4 691         |
| 6th CD                 | 337          | —          | 5 240         | 89         | 12        | 5 810         | 6 212         |
| 11th CD                | 273          | 190        | 1 698         | 33         | 9         | 2 872         | 2 790         |
| 14th CD                | 269          | 398        | 1 911         | 79         | 12        | 2 954         | 2 924         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>1 287</b> | <b>588</b> | <b>13 021</b> | <b>322</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>17 497</b> | <b>17 998</b> |

As of 3 September

|                    | <b>Command</b> | <b>Bayonets</b> | <b>Sabres</b> | <b>MGs</b>       | <b>Guns</b>    | <b>Men</b>    | <b>Horses</b> |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Special Purpose CB | 86             | 13              | 944           | 35               | 8              | 1 360         | 1 524         |
| 4th CD             | 395            | 114             | 2 734         | 95               | 12             | 4 638         | 5 475         |
| 6th CD             | 327            | —               | 4 336         | 60               | 12             | 4 869         | 5 008         |
| 11th CD            | 249            | 725             | 1 143         | 25               | 8              | 3 125         | 3 183         |
| 14th CD            | 323            | 655             | 1 718         | 68               | 11             | 2 696         | 2 041         |
| Armour             | 85             | 506             | —             | 128              | 20             | 812           | 9             |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>1 465</b>   | <b>2 013</b>    | <b>10 875</b> | <b>283 + 128</b> | <b>51 + 20</b> | <b>17 500</b> | <b>17 240</b> |

The armour consisted of 5 armoured trains<sup>94</sup>, one small armoured train,<sup>95</sup> and 4 armoured car detachments. The 20 guns in the armour were 16 of 3-inch (76 mm), two of 4.2 inch (107 mm), and two of 80 mm.

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<sup>94</sup> The word used implies the “shock” trains, intended for combat at the front, rather than ones merely supplying artillery support.

<sup>95</sup> The word used implies a small flying car, so perhaps a captured Polish armoured rail car.





## Appendix 2

### List of materials used

1. Materials of the Information-Historical Department of the Operational Department of the Headquarters of the First Horse Army (Maps 1-8).
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## Appendix 3

### Place Names

Because my text uses the modern Ukrainian, Belorussian and Polish names, this list allows readers to reference the place names in the original Russian when using period maps.

| <i><b>Modern</b></i> | <i><b>1920 Polish</b></i> | <i><b>Russian in Book</b></i>                            |
|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Berezivka            | Laszków                   | Lashkov                                                  |
| Bilokrynytsya        | Białokrynica              | Belokrynitsa                                             |
| Boremel'             | Boromel (Mikajlowka)      | Mikhaylovka                                              |
| Borshchovychi        | Barszczowice              | Barshonitse                                              |
| Brest                | Brześć-Litewski           | Brest-Litovsk                                            |
| Bryhadyrivka         | Żabokrzyki Małe           | Zhabokryki                                               |
| Chervonohrad         | Krystynopol               | Kristinopol'                                             |
| Dnipro               |                           | Ekaterinoslav                                            |
| Dobryvoda            | Dobrowódka                | Dobrovodka                                               |
| Fedorivka            | Tudorow                   | Tudorov                                                  |
| Hannivka             | Ganowka                   | Annovka                                                  |
| Hatkivka             | Hatowice                  | Hotovitsa                                                |
| Kamianka-Buzka       | Kamionka Strumiłowa       | Kamianka Strumilova                                      |
| Katerynivka          | Katerberg                 | Katerburg                                                |
| Khmelnyskyi          | Proscurów                 | Proscurov                                                |
| Khoroshiv            | Horoszki                  | Horoshki (Volodarsk-Volynskyi in Soviet times)           |
| Kremenets'           | Krzemieniec               | Kremenets'                                               |
| Kropyvnytskyi        |                           | Elisavetgrad (Zinovievsk and Kirovograd in Soviet times) |
| Kupychvolya          |                           | Kupicha Wola                                             |
| Kvitneve             | Zydowcy                   | Zhidovtsy                                                |
| Luchkivtsi           | Kadłubiska                | Kadlubiska                                               |
| Mostove              | Wojtowce                  | Mostove                                                  |
| Mykolaiv             |                           | Mikhaylovka                                              |
| Nahirne              |                           | Ulbarov                                                  |
| Novofastiv           | Nowo Chwastov             | Novo Khvastov                                            |
| Novokotiv            | Kopcze                    | Kopche                                                   |
| Novolabun'           | Łabuń                     | Labun'                                                   |
| Novoselivka          | Bożkiewiczze              | Bozhkevichi                                              |
| Nyzhnya Bilka        | Biłka Krowewska           | Bilka Krulevskaya                                        |
| Orikhovets'          | Tatarinowka               | Tatarinovka                                              |
| Oplits'ko            | Oplucko                   | Oplutsko                                                 |
| Pervomais'k          |                           | Olviopol'                                                |
| Pidhirne             | Unterbergen               | Unterberg                                                |



|                      |                      |                                                  |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Pidhirtsi            | Podhorce             | Podgortse                                        |
| Povcha               |                      | Pelcha                                           |
| Promin'              | Pulhanów             | Pulganiv                                         |
| Prychepivka          | Marjanowka           | Mar'yanovka                                      |
| Pryvitne             | Świniuchy            | Svinyukhi                                        |
| Pryvitne             | Ewelinów (Wołkownia) | Kolonia-Volkovnya                                |
| Pustoivanne          |                      | Rudnia-Pochaivska Station                        |
| Radekhiv             | Radziechów           | Radzikhov                                        |
| Radyvyliv            | Radziwiłłów          | Radzivillov                                      |
| Shchurovychi         | Szczurowice          | Churovitse                                       |
| Sosnivka             | Obgów                | Sosnivka                                         |
| Sosnove              | Ludwipol             | Lyudvipol' (but more normally Sosnovoe)          |
| Svitanok             | Błudow               | Bludov                                           |
| Tur'ya               |                      | Turze                                            |
| Ukrainka             | Korostowo            | Korostov                                         |
| Velyka Vil'shanytsya | Olszanica            | Olshanitse                                       |
| Velyke               | Rykanie Wielkie      | Rykany                                           |
| Velyki Puzyrky       |                      | Bolshoi Puzirky                                  |
| Verkhnya Bilka       | Biłka Szlachecka     | Bilka Shyakh                                     |
| Vuzlove              | Chołojów             | Kholoyuv                                         |
| Volodymyr            | Włodzimierz          | Vladimir-Volynski                                |
| Volodymyrivka        | Złodiejewka          | Zlodyivka                                        |
| Vyshnivets'          | Wsniowiec            | Vishnevets                                       |
| Zahatyntsi           | Rykanie Mały         | Rykany                                           |
| Yampil               | Prusy                | Prussy                                           |
| Yemil'chyne          |                      | Emilchino or Yemilchino                          |
| Zamość               |                      | Zamost'e                                         |
| Zhovkva              | Żółkiew              | Zholkev / Zelekhov                               |
| Zhuravnyky           |                      | Druzhkopol' (sometimes Volytsya-Druzhkopil's'ka) |
| Zibolky              | Dzibułki             | Dzibulki                                         |
| Zviahel              | Zviahel              | Novograd-Volynski                                |

