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THE POLISH ARMY IN FRANCE: IMMIGRANTS IN AMERICA, WORLD WAR I
VOLUNTEERS IN FRANCE, DEFENDERS OF THE RECREATED STATE IN POLAND

by

DAVID T. RUSKOSKI

Under the Direction of Gerald H. Davis and Christine M. Skwiot

ABSTRACT

Independent Poland ceased to exist in 1795 and the various insurrections to restore the Polish state were thwarted by the Germans, Austro-Hungarians, and Russians. During the First World War, Polish statesmen called upon the thousands of Polish immigrants in the United States to join the Polish Army in France, a military force funded by the French government and organized by the Polish Falcons of America and Ignacy Paderewski, the world-famous Polish pianist. Over 20,000 men trained in Canada and fought in the final months of the war on the Western front. While in France they were placed under the command of General Jozef Haller and became known as Haller's Army. At the conclusion of the war, the Allied leaders at the Paris Peace Conference decided to send the soldiers to Poland to fight in the Polish-Soviet War to stop the western advance of the Bolsheviks. When the war ended, the United States government, with the influence of Secretary of State Robert Lansing, funded the return of the soldiers to their homes in the United States. This dissertation focuses on questions of the relationships among foreign policy, nationalism, and immigration and investigates forced

recruitment, dissatisfaction with the cause of Polish independence exacerbated by difficult wartime conditions, nationalism among immigrant groups, ethnic identity, and anti-Semitism.

INDEX WORDS: Polish immigrants, Polish independence, Polish nationalism, World War I, Polish Falcons, Ignacy Paderewski, Polish Army in France, Jozef Haller, Haller's Army, Paris Peace Conference, Woodrow Wilson, Polish-Soviet War, Robert Lansing, ethnic identity.

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2006

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Chapter 1. The Quest for a Sovereign Polish State.

“POLAND IS REBORN ON FRENCH FIELDS” proclaimed the *New York Times* in 1918. The headline referred to the creation of the Polish Army in France, a fighting force that was to carry the Polish colors on the battlefield for the first time in more than a century.¹ Over 20,000 Polish-American immigrants joined this army and fought during the final battles of the Great War. This dissertation is a study of the organization also known as Haller’s Army, named after their commanding officer, General Jozef Haller, and the Blue Army, from their distinctive blue uniforms. Comprised primarily of Polish expatriates and Polish Americans recruited in the United States, the Army also fought during the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920 that established the boundaries between the two countries. This work will describe the movement in the United States to create the Army, the recruitment and training process, engagements on the Western Front, the transfer of troops to Poland after the Armistice of 1918, actions during the Polish-Soviet War, and their repatriation to the United States. Beyond describing the military and political aspects of the Polish Army in France, this work will investigate the attitudes of the many of the soldiers within the framework of their social history that structured their attitudes about fighting for a free Poland and their desires once their goal had been achieved.

Section I of this chapter discusses the nature of immigrants, the partitions of Poland, and the various attempts to regain Polish independence from Germany, Austria and Russia during the nineteenth century. Section II discusses Polish immigration to the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Section III describes and evaluates the efforts of Jozef Pilsudski, the Polish patriot and future leader of independent Poland, who collaborated with

¹*New York Times*, 24 June 1918, 1.

Germans and Austro-Hungarians in order to gain Polish independence. Close proximity to the partitioning powers made overtly fighting for Polish liberation impossible. Only in America could Poles raise an army to fight for Polish independence.

I

The history of immigrants in the United States has traditionally been dominated by the notion that poor individuals left the country of their birth and came to America where they made the transition to life in the New World in a relatively brief amount of time. Recent scholarship calls for an enhanced appreciation of the personal and cultural bonds that sometimes motivated immigrants to action on behalf of the homeland. Ties to the native country remained strong and, in many cases, increased once the individuals came to the America. This occurred through the efforts of political leaders, newspaper editors, and the intelligentsia who desired to recreate Poland through armed conflict and sought to increase the level of nationalism among the masses that did have high levels of political awareness.² Poles are a prime example of this phenomenon since their nation had ceased to exist as a sovereign state in the 1790s, and expressions of Polish nationalism had been repressed. Loss of national independence and the departure of massive numbers of the Polish peasant class from their historic homeland encouraged nationalists leaders to create a “diasporic imagination”³ This kept the goal of an independent Poland alive in minds of Poles everywhere and led to the creation of the Polish Army in France, a fighting force that attempted to transform the realm of ideas into concrete reality of an independent Polish state. This transition was not easy. It would challenge the nationalism generated by the independence movement once the soldiers reached the battlefields of the First World War and Polish Soviet War. Nationalist rhetoric would not be enough to inspire all Polish expatriates to volunteer for

²Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1.

³Ibid., 7.

service in the Polish Army in France, nor would it sustain every individual who did volunteer once the brutality of war and longing for their families and life in America took their toll. These experiences highlighted the tension between the commitment to Poland and their future in the United States.

The issue of national allegiance among immigrant groups is a particularly difficult question. Donna R. Gabaccia argues that the “immigrant paradigm” transforms the foreigners into “nowhere men,” individuals who have left their native country and have not yet assimilated into their adopted homeland. By contrast, she refers to them as “transnational” since “they link human experience in more than one nation.”⁴ The men who volunteered to serve in the Polish Army in France had sought better living conditions and greater opportunities in America but were linked to Poland through family, language, religion, tradition, and history. The battlefields of Europe and the quality of life in Poland tested the strength of this link. Many chose to return to their adopted homeland in America rather than remain in Poland, the nation they had risked their lives to help recreate.

Wars and machinations of powerful neighbors since the late 1700s had removed Poland from the community of territorial states. Efforts by nationalists to restore Polish sovereignty failed repeatedly before World War I destroyed the empires of Russia, Prussia, and Austria and enabled the restoration of the Polish state. Once a powerful nation under the Piast and Jagiellonian Dynasties, Poland ceased to be a great power in Europe after the death of King John Sobieski in 1696. Prussia, Austria, and Russia took advantage of the weak and disorganized state and seized Polish land during the First (1772), Second (1793), and Third (1795) partitions

⁴Donna R. Gabaccia, “Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History,” *The Journal of American History*, December 1999, 1115-1116.

of Poland.⁵ In 1806, France and its allies invaded the Prussian partition of Poland and called upon the native population to fight against its Prussian rulers. Given the opportunity to liberate Poland, thousands of Poles rallied to aid the French, beginning a friendly relationship between Poland and France.⁶ Napoleon reestablished Poland in the form of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw in 1807, but after his defeat the partitioning powers again redistributed Polish land at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.⁷ Despite their lack of a unified state with defined territorial integrity, ethnic Poles regarded themselves as members of a national community defined by tradition and shared history, language, religion, and ancestry. Many among them desired the restoration of sovereignty to their homeland.

Under foreign domination, each of the partitions underwent quite different experiences prior to the recreation of an independent Poland after the First World War. The Hapsburg monarchy had centuries of experience ruling various ethnic groups within the Austrian Empire, and the Poles represented the only latest and most remote of their acquisitions. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Poles were one of the most revolutionary groups in the Austrian Empire. However, after the compromise with Hungary in 1867 created the Dual Monarchy, Poles found their opportunity to gain greater concessions from an Austrian government which needed them to maintain a parliamentary majority in Vienna. As a result, the Poles obtained “almost complete autonomy in Galicia,” (Austrian Poland), and Germanization projects in Polish schools ended. Polish became the official language, and the universities of Krakow and Lvov were “Polonised” as the entire province became the center of Polish culture. Unlike their counterparts in the German and Russian partitions, Polish aristocrats received

⁵Marshall Dill, Jr., *Germany, A Modern History* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1970), 55-72.

⁶Owen Connelly, *Blundering To Glory, Napoleon's Military Campaigns* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1987), 104.

⁷Dill, 87.

important political appointments and provided the Habsburg Monarchy with social, military, and religious leaders. These included Austrian Prime Ministers Alfred Potocki and Count Kasimir Badeni and Foreign Minister Agenor Goluchowski.⁸

Conditions in the German partition differed from those of Austria. The Prussian leaders of Germany were Protestant while most Poles there were Catholic, a factor that caused friction between the two peoples. Also in contrast to Austria, the Germans sought to obtain land on their eastern border for eventual settlement by ethnic Germans. “This territory,” according to the historian Hugh Seton-Watson, “had to be germanized, and the Poles to go under.” Thus, German policy sought the “destruction of Polish national feeling, Austrian did not.”⁹ During the 1870s, Otto von Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* against the Catholic church led to the imprisonment of Polish priests and restrictions against the use of the Polish language in schools, courts and public offices. The German government actively supported colonization of Germans in the Polish partition. By the end of the century, German expansionists began to use the term *Austroungspolitik* (“policy of extermination”) in reference to Poles in the borderlands of the German Empire.¹⁰

While Poles in the Austrian partition obtained a great deal of autonomy, their compatriots in the Russian and German partitions were not so fortunate. The Russian-controlled territory or “Congress Poland” was semi-autonomous with the Russians in charge of the most important political and administrative matters. Polish nationalists, however, wanted full autonomy. Seton-Watson explains the “Polish question” in the Russian empire in following terms:

⁸John W. Mason, *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867-1918* 2nd Ed. (London: Longman, 1997), 13-14.

⁹Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia, 1855-1914* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1952), 187-8.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 189.

The Polish nation was never reconciled to Russian rule. Eight centuries of independent statehood, and at least two hundred years as a Great Power, had created a powerful Polish national feeling. Poles would never become Russians, and would never cease to believe in Poland's right to independence. National antagonism was increased by religious antagonism. Orthodox Russians saw in Catholicism the hated Western schism. Catholic Poles despised Orthodoxy as the expression of "oriental barbarism." It was a matter not only of religious dogma, but of two ways of life.¹¹

While religion helped unite Catholic Hapsburgs and Catholic Poles, religion served to turn Poles against the tsar's regime.

Two groups led the Polish quest for independence in the Russian partition. The first, the conservatives and aristocrats, desired intervention by the Great Powers of Europe to achieve their goals. They lost credibility, however, after their failure to bring attention to the Polish question at the Paris Peace Conference of 1856 that settled the Crimean War. The second group, the radicals, "believed that Poland would only be freed by armed revolt of her people" and found support among the middle class.¹² While Polish leaders obtained some concessions from the Russian government, the turning point in Polish-Russian relations came with the insurrection of January 1863. The year-long revolt was in response to a Russian decree that sought to conscript Polish townsmen into the Russian army in an attempt to reduce the number of "able-bodied men from the chief centres of radical opinion." Although the British and French verbally supported the rebels, with the help of the Germans under Bismarck, the Russians put down the revolt. According to Seton-Watson, because the aristocrats were reluctant to move toward land reform, the "indifference of the peasants" weakened the revolt. This division between the nationalistic aspirations of the upper class and the pragmatic desires of the peasantry had important

¹¹Ibid., 74.

¹²Ibid., 76.

implications on Russian policy and the long-range results of Polish statesmen's efforts to get support from the peasants for nationalist activism.¹³

To divide the Poles after the insurrection, the Russians instituted policies designed to emancipate the lower classes and "win peasant sympathy against the nationalist landlords." They began the abolition of the Russian serfs in 1861 and gave the peasants larger shares of the landlords' land with lower redemption dues than those required from Russian peasants. To further the divide the masses from the upper classes, the tsar's government began a policy of Russification in the schools and legal system and even changed the name of the Russian partition from the "Kingdom of Poland" to the "Vistula Provinces."¹⁴

Norman Davies identifies two major periods during the nineteenth century that represent contrasting viewpoints of how Poles could regain their sovereignty. These viewpoints demonstrate the intellectual and religious differences in the attitudes of the leaders of the cause of Polish independence. The first period, the Romantic Age of Insurrections 1830-64, began with the failed November Rising of 1830-31 and brought about a series of smaller conspiracies and insurrections that lasted until the January Rising of 1863-64, another failed attempt to throw off foreign rule in the Russian Partition. The Age of Insurrection corresponded with the rise of romanticism that kept the idea of Polish independence alive during the era of partition. Patriotic Polish authors explored the spiritual world like many fellow Europeans. Davies explains,

Like their contemporaries in western Europe, they were fascinated by folklore, by historical traditions, by medieval legends, by the supernatural, by the emotional extremes of ecstasy and agony, by human Love and Death, by heroes and heroines larger than life, by the cult of Freedom; and they added a specifically Polish note of Catholic piety. All the main countries of Europe passed through the Romantic experience; but in Poland it was particularly intense. Arguably, it has provided the largest single ingredient of modern Polish culture. Indeed, since the oppressive hothouse conditions which fostered Polish Romanticism in the first

¹³Ibid., 77-78.

¹⁴Ibid., 79.

place have continued in many respects to the present day, the Romantic tradition still reigns supreme in the Polish mind.¹⁵

The extent to which Polish romantics went to lament the loss of Polish independence was embodied in an analogy of their nation with Christ. For Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) in *Books of the Polish Nation and Pilgrimage* (1832), the partitioning powers were “a satanic Trinity” that “crucified the Polish nation” just as Jesus had been crucified. Poland had not died, however, and while its body lay in the grave, “its spirit descended into the abyss, that is into the private lives of people who suffer slavery in their own country.” Poland, therefore, was the “Christ of Nations.”¹⁶

The defeat of the January Rising led many Poles to reevaluate the use of arms to achieve independence brought about the second period, 1864-1905. Davies calls this period the Era of Organic Work after a group called the “Warsaw Positivists” which argued that Poles should develop industry and trade, increase the number of towns and railways, and improve the literacy and national awareness of the people. For the Positivists, economic development was a prerequisite to Polish independence. Only after this could Poles support an independent state and take their place among the nations of Europe. Polish positivism took its motivation from the failed nineteenth century insurrections and the failure of the romantic vision of a restored Poland. With their devotion to economic development, education, and hard work, Davies argues that the “Positivists could fairly claim to be the guardians of Poland’s Body, the Romantics to be the guardians of her Soul.”¹⁷

The romantics inspired what Davies calls the “Devotees of Insurrection” who comprised an uninterrupted line of men willing to risk their lives for the Polish cause from Tadeusz

¹⁵Davies, *Heart of Europe, A Short History of Poland*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 169.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 169-70, 205, 210-11.

Kosciuszko (1746-1817) to Jozef Pilsudski (1867-1935). Kosciuszko was a Polish statesman, general and a veteran of the American Continental Army during the American Revolution. He led an army of fellow Poles who fought the Prussians and Russians in 1794 but could not stop the third and final partition of his country. Pilsudski tried to lead his countrymen against the partitioning powers during the First World War and subsequently became the head of state and commander-in-chief of the military forces after Poland achieved independence.¹⁸

Most of the men who joined the Polish Army in France fit the long tradition of Polish adventures and martyrs who fought under the banner “FOR YOUR FREEDOM AND OURS.” To conservative Poles, they were dangerous, “suicidal fanatics” and to the partitioning powers they were simply terrorists. But, as Davies explains,

. . . not even their enemies could deny they were often people of principle, moved by deep moral convictions. In the long intervals between their open insurrections, they formed a network of secret brotherhoods, which were sustained by a band of daring and devoted women, who acted as their messengers, gun-runners, and teachers, and by sympathizers and fellow conspirators among the émigrés.¹⁹

The memories of these martyrs to the cause of Polish independence were not lost on the organizers of the Polish Army in France. Using the relationship already established between the United States and Kosciuszko, Ignacy Paderewski, the world-renowned Polish pianist and leader of the movement for independence, suggested that Poles recruited in America be called the “Army of Kosciuszko.”²⁰ In this way, similarities between the American and Polish quests for independence could be used to inspire Polish Americans to volunteer for service in the Polish

¹⁸For a biography of Kosciuszko see Miecislau Haiman, *Kosciuszko in the American Revolution* (New York, Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, 1943, 1975), continued by his *Kosciuszko, Leader and Exile* (New York, Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, 1946, 1977); for a biography of Pilsudski see W.F. Reddaway, *Marshal Pilsudski* (London: Routledge, 1939); M.K. Dziewanowski, *Joseph Pilsudski: A European Federalist, 1918-1922* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1969); Wacław Jędrzejewicz, *Pilsudski: A Life for Poland* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1982).

¹⁹Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 184.

²⁰Donald E. Pienkos, *For Your Freedom Through Ours: Polish American Efforts on Poland's Behalf, 1863-1991*, (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1991), 61-62.

Army in France. The concept of independence was embedded in the histories of both nations and commonality of experience. Poles brought this desire with them to the United States where the cause of independence was not crushed but celebrated as a national tradition.

The idea of using Polish men as soldiers was certainly not a new concept. Throughout the nineteenth century Poles served as soldiers in the armies of all three of the partitioning powers and were a part of what Davies calls the “Military Tradition.” The partitioning powers organized the Polish Legions (1797-1802) and the Polish Army of the Congress Kingdom (1815-31). The latter referred to the Russian share of Poland awarded at the Congress of Vienna (1815) and was uniformly called “Congress Poland.” Napoleon created the Army of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw (1807-13) and his implementation of a six-year conscription term for all men in their twenties brought the French idea of a “nation in arms” to Poland.

After 1831 and the failed November Rising, no formal army of Poland existed in historic Polish territory for eighty-seven years until the recreation of the Polish state in 1919. The rebels who fought against the partitioning powers in 1846, 1848, and 1863 could not be considered an army, but did belong, according to Davies, “to that romantic world of amateur, partisan warfare where it is more important to play the game, and to stay in the field, than to think of winning.” Fighting was not associated with a specific territory or state but the idea of an independent and free Poland. The Polish Army in France was the last in a line of expatriate armed forces that included Adam Mickiewicz’s Legion in Italy (1848), Jozef Bem’s Army of Transylvania (1848-49) and Michal Czajkowski’s Polish Cavalry Division with the Turks in the Crimea (1855).

Even without an independent state and the lack of a formal army, a military tradition developed among the Poles. Davies explains:

What did develop . . . was a strong belief in the private virtues of the individual Polish soldier. Stamina and fortitude in adversity, the ability to improvise,

devotion to one's comrades, and carelessness for one's own safety, were traits which won the admiration of all the armies where Poles have served. These qualities are celebrated in the vast repertoire of Polish military folklore.²¹

As a result of the Russian Revolution of 1905, the Positivists' ideology faded and a new romantic tradition emerged to rekindle the overt desire for Polish independence.

Although they could hardly lay claim to any decisive contribution to the defeat of the Central Powers, the Polish Army in France gained crucial field experience which led to extraordinary postwar assignments. Transferred in 1919 from France to Poland, Haller's Army arrived as no other Poles had done for over a century. They came bearing the national flag as charter units of the Polish Army. That this army was recruited primarily in America was a key factor in its success. Close proximity to the partitioning powers would circumscribe the simultaneous attempt to form a Polish Army that could be converted into a revolutionary fighting force. By the beginning of the First World War in 1914, the diplomatic relations among the partitioning powers had been reoriented, placing Russia on the Allied side against Germany and Austria. This fragmented Polish nationalistic movements and forced them to redefine objectives and tactics to gain Polish unity and sovereignty. Recruitment of an army in America emerged from these circumstances and could call upon the Polish Romantic and Military tradition to inspire volunteers. Haller's Army was able to function because it came from America, far from the partitioning powers.

II

Massive changes in the Polish way of life occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century, most notably the elimination of serfdom, which had bound the peasants to the land for generations. Many serfs attained freedom but lost access to farmland that for generations they had used for subsistence. This resulted in a very large and relatively poor

²¹Ibid., 239-41.

mobile work force in a part of Europe that did not have large cities and had not experienced the rise in industrialized factory production that had occurred in Western Europe and America. Forced from the land, many of these workers were unable to support themselves.²² Advances in maritime and railroad transportation allowed more efficiently produced foreign agricultural and industrial products to undermine local economies in Polish areas of all three partitioning powers. Transportation improvements also enabled inexpensive and sometimes subsidized travel of migrants to foreign countries. Adding to the problem of landlessness, the Polish-speaking population in the three partitions increased from 12.8 million in 1850 to 25.6 million in 1910, despite the emigration of over two million during these years. Many of the men left their homeland to avoid conscription in the armies of the partitioning powers.²³

Fortunately for the Poles and the destitute populations of other ethnic groups in eastern and southern Europe, the United States presented opportunities for immigration. Most immigrants by the 1880s found that their best prospects for employment existed in or northeastern or midwestern industrial cities like New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Chicago. Railroad construction also provided work for Poles and other immigrant groups as it had for Irish immigrants during the 1840s.²⁴ By 1914, 2.2 million Poles had journeyed to the United States from the Polish partitions.²⁵ Over one million arrived between 1904 and 1913; the greatest twelve-month influx occurred in 1912-13, in which 174,365 persons arrived. With the outbreak of war in Europe, Polish immigration declined during 1914 to

²²Frank Renkiewicz, ed., *The Polish Presence In Canada and America* (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Canada, 1982), 3.

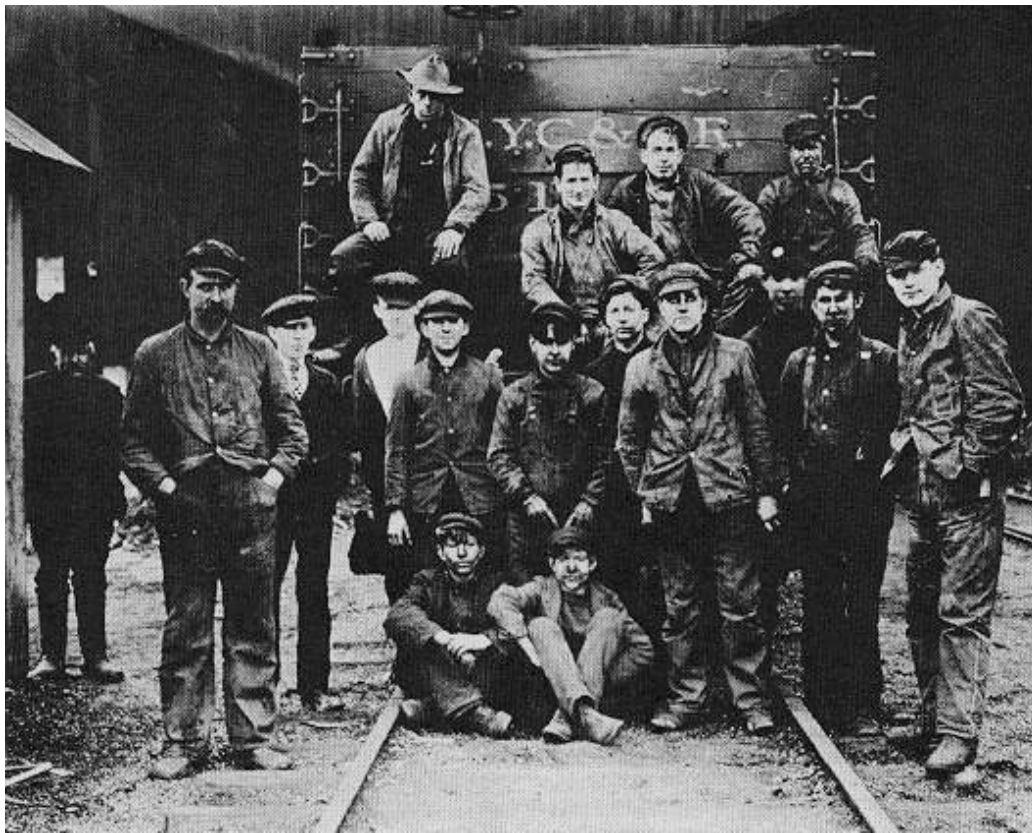
²³Donald E. Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887-1987* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1987), 25; also see Stefan Kieniewicz, *The Emancipation of the Polish Peasantry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 190-235.

²⁴Alan M. Kraut, *The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1982), 12-13.

²⁵Renkiewicz, *The Polish Presence In Canada and America*, 1.

122,657, and fell drastically to 9,065 in 1915.²⁶ According to W.S. Kuniczak, these figures may be inaccurate due to the fact that American immigration officials registered many Polish immigrants as Austrians, Prussians, or Russians, depending on the area of partitioned Poland from which they came.²⁷

While America allowed the 26 million immigrants who came to the United States from 1870 to 1920 to become workers, there existed an underlining uneasiness with the foreigners. Matthew Frye Jacobson argues that America's great growth in industrial



Polish miners in Pennsylvania (1912). Photo from W.S. Kuniczak, *My Name Is Million, An Illustrated History of Poles in America*, 74.

²⁶Paul Fox, *The Poles In America* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 52.

²⁷W.S. Kuniczak, *My Name Is Million, An Illustrated History of Poles in America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1978), 132.

production, much of which was designed for export to American's recently acquired colonies and other overseas markets, required huge numbers of immigrant labor. These laborers could earn far more in America than in their native countries, \$8 to \$10 per week in America compared to \$22 per year in Eastern Europe. These "new" immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe were considered different from the wave of immigrants from an earlier generation from Western and Northern Europe. Because of their dress and traditions, native-born and assimilated white Americans viewed them with contempt and considered them at best a necessary evil. They even questioned their whiteness. Immigrants also brought with them industrial radicalism that led to strikes and labor uprisings during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁸ These attitudes would lead to immigration restriction in the 1920s.

Even President Woodrow Wilson, who later became a hero to the Polish people when in 1917 he announced in his "Fourteen Points" that there should be an independent Poland, had denounced Eastern and Southern European immigrants while a professor at Princeton University. Professor Wilson wrote in his *History of the American People* (1902):

. . . but now there came multitudes of men of lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meaner sort out of Hungary and Poland, men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence; and they came in numbers which increased from year to year, as if the countries of the south and Europe were disburdening themselves of the more sordid and hapless elements of their population, the men whose standard of life and work were such as American workmen had never dreamed hitherto.

In 1912, Democratic presidential candidate Wilson had to distance himself from his own scholarly writings amid attacks from Polish societies and Polish priests who counseled their parishioners to not vote for Wilson. The future president wrote to Polish-American leaders that his earlier writings reflected his "clumsiness" and were "too sweeping." He claimed that he was

²⁸Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples At Home Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 63, 88-89.

referring only to Polish workers who came to America “under contract.” Wilson promised the fair treatment of foreign-born citizens and took a firm stand against literacy tests for new arrivals. He even promised to rewrite sections of his book to remove any wrong impressions it may have created, but changes were not made to the next edition of the book published in 1916.²⁹

One important characteristic of the Polish immigrants, especially when discussing the formation of an army to fight for Polish independence, was their national awareness. Many men had fled to America to avoid military conscription by one of the partitioning powers. They participated enthusiastically in fraternal organizations like the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Falcons of America to ease the transition to America and maintain ethnic ties. The latter was a para-military group that overtly wanted to fight for Polish independence and became the driving force behind the creation of the Polish Army in France. It had a significant membership during the First World War, with about 350,000 members or about 15-20 percent of adult immigrants or their descendants.³⁰ Not only did these organizations support Polish independence, they were social institutions that provided an environment where individuals could relax and enjoy friendship of similar cultural background, much as the Catholic Church provided. The First World War invigorated the Falcons’ movement and gave it the opportunity to contribute to the cause of Polish independence. In his study of Irish, Polish, and Jewish immigrants in the United States, Matthew Frye Jacobson calls Poles “Pilgrims” who were “living symbols of oppression” in the New World, searching for their freedom and the freedom of their homeland. Agaton Giller (1831-1887), a veteran of the Uprising of 1863 who wrote *On the*

²⁹Louis L. Gerson, *Woodrow Wilson and the Rebirth of Poland, 1914-1920: A Study in the Influence on American Policy of Minority Groups of Foreign Origin* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972), 55-59.

³⁰Donald Pienkos, *PNA: A Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance of the United States of North America* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1984), 332.

Organization of Poles in America (1879), and other Polish leaders saw Poles in America as a “Fourth Partition” and were “an indispensable battalion in the war for liberation” of Poland.³¹

For the Polish peasants, nationalism and ethnic identity became an issue after they arrived in America. There they encountered other ethnic groups who made them aware of their “Polishness” in relation to other nationalities. This helped to blur regional and social distinctions among Poles and encouraged them to discover previously unseen similarities of language, customs, and religion—characteristics that defined them as a people and nation. According to Jacobson, Poland’s tumultuous history supports this notion. He claims:

Polish Nationalism as we know it emerged from the long history of invasion, partition, and foreign rule, just as the Polishness of the mass of peasants awaited discovery in a foreign land. The surge in ethnic identity which often accompanied migration and resettlement provided an especially fertile medium for the full bloom of political nationalism.³²

To increase their level of political consciousness and nationalism, Paderewski, whose activities will be discussed in Chapter 2, used language and symbolism to stir Polish men to the cause of Polish independence. His highly effective methods for instilling patriotism in the masses are explained by Benedict Anderson in his study of nationalism, *Imagined Communities*. Far from a pejorative term, “imagined,” for Anderson, describes a community in which it is logistically impossible to have “face-to-face” contact with every other member of the community when the numbers may reach into the tens or hundreds of millions. Nevertheless, a community exists, one that contains a “deep, horizontal comradeship.”³³

III

Recruiting an army of expatriate Poles to fight for Polish liberation was far easier in America than in Europe, but conditions imposed by geography and diplomacy shaped the

³¹Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 15.

³²*Ibid.*, 18.

³³Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 6-7.

strategy. Those recruited in America would have to fight against Germany and Austria. Meanwhile, Jozef Pilsudski attempted to organize an army of liberation within partitioned Poland. But the Polish Legions he organized could not overtly fight for Polish independence while appearing to remain loyal to one of the partitioning powers. In order to free Poland from foreign domination, Pilsudski tried to collaborate with the Central Powers during the First World War because he believed that for Poland to gain its independence, it must first help defeat the Russians.³⁴ Once rid of the Eastern power, Poles could then ally with France and Great Britain to defeat Germany and Austria, thus casting off the yoke of all the partitioning powers. Pilsudski organized an army of Poles after the Germans and Austrians offered vague promises of independence, but the army disintegrated when he refused to force the men to swear an oath of allegiance to the Central Powers.³⁵

Pilsudski's motives were obviously kept secret from the Austro-German leaders who agreed to grant Poland limited autonomy in exchange for military participation. As a leader in the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*), Pilsudski had earlier organized "The Union for Active Struggle" to train the officers and soldiers who would be a basis for a Polish army capable of a national insurrection.³⁶ Obtaining his military knowledge from books, Pilsudski drilled and trained the men on battlefield tactics.³⁷ The organization operated secretly until it grew to a few thousand members; at that point, the Austrian government gave Pilsudski the option of disbanding or reorganizing. Choosing the latter, the Union for Active Struggle became the "Union of Riflemen's Clubs," officially sanctioned by the Austrian authorities in 1910. When war finally came, Pilsudski, a fervent nationalist who had endured a lifetime of

³⁴Titus Komarnicki, *Rebirth of the Polish Republic, A Study in the Diplomatic History of Europe, 1914-1920* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1957), 109.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 111.

³⁶Stephen P. Mizwa, ed., *Great Men and Women of Poland* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1942), 349.

³⁷*Ibid.*

negative experiences that built hostility against the tsarist regime, led Polish units against the Russians, whom he considered to be Poland's primary foe.³⁸ From 1914 to 1916 three brigades fought with the Austro-Hungarians against the Russians on the Eastern front. The Polish First Brigade fought successfully against the Russians at Volhyna in 1916 and drew the praise of the German High Command. The Austro-Hungarians distrusted Pilsudski, however, and allowed him to command only one brigade; the other commanders were professional officers in the Austrian Army of Polish descent.³⁹

On 5 November 1916, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Emperor-King Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary proclaimed an independent Kingdom of Poland to be formed out of Warsaw and Lublin, areas wrested from the Russians. The “Manifesto” issued by the two rulers called upon the Poles, in the tradition of King John Sobieski and the Jagiellonian Dynasty that had ruled Poland 1386-1572, to form armies to fight alongside the Central Powers. The German newspaper *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* criticized the Russians for the lack of development of Polish areas under their domination; the Germans and Austro-Hungarians, on the other hand, would give the new Polish state the opportunity to promote economic, political, and national growth. The paper pointed out that the Western allies aided Poland's quest for independence in words only and if the Russian armies had been victorious in the East, Poland would be under foreign domination for another hundred years.⁴⁰

Conspicuously absent from the areas granted self-government by the Manifesto were the partitions of Poland dominated by Germany in the North (Posen) and Austria-Hungary in the South (Galicia). The Central Powers simply offered the Poles the area taken from the Russians. Despite their posturing, Wilhelm II and Franz Joseph would certainly not relinquish Polish

³⁸Ibid., 350.

³⁹Komarnicki, 111.

⁴⁰*New York Times*, 6 November 1916, 1-2.

territory traditionally incorporated into their respective empires. In a letter to Austrian Premier Ernst von Koerber, Franz Joseph recognized the suffering endured by Poles in Galicia and promised to grant them limited autonomy as a reward for their efforts. The Emperor limited that power to that given other peoples within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.⁴¹

Less than one week after the Kaisers' joint proclamation for an independent Kingdom of Poland, Governor General Hans von Beseler, the German representative in the newly acquired area, and German General Karl Kuk called upon the Poles in Warsaw and Lublin to volunteer for service in a new Polish army to fight against Russian “tyranny” and for the security of their new nation.⁴² Their statements, along with the wording of the Kaisers' Manifesto itself, uncovered the Austro-German motivation for granting independence to the Kingdom of Poland: increased military participation by the Poles against Russia.

Polish expatriates quickly exposed the Central Powers' attempt to manufacture an Eastern ally to aid in the fight against Russia as a “devil's gift,” with only vague promises of autonomous borders and self-government. Paderewski called the proclamation a German “trick,” designed to relieve the “Teutons” from defending the territory they had captured a century before. The prospect of a Bavarian Prince being placed on the throne of Poland, a possibility considered by the German and Austro-Hungarian monarchs, further raised Paderewski's suspicions that the new kingdom would be an extension of Germanic domination.⁴³

In an interview with the *New York Times*, Leon Wazeter, a leader of Poles in America, pointed out that at least in the Russian Partition children could be taught to say their prayers in their native language; in Posen (the German Partition), as recently as 1901, German authorities flogged children for praying in Polish and fined their parents. Exchanging Russian domination

⁴¹Ibid., 7 November 1916, 2.

⁴²Ibid., 12 November 1916, 3.

⁴³Ibid., 12 November 1916, V., 1.

for a German puppet government, according to Wazeter, would be a mistake for the Polish people.⁴⁴ Germany's intentions came quickly to the surface. In the Reichstag on 17 November 1916, German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg announced that the establishment of an independent Polish state was contingent on the successful formation of a Polish army that would fight for Germany. If the number of volunteers proved to be insufficient, Germany would institute conscription and if the proposed army did not satisfy the German High Command, the Emperor would withdraw his promised independence to the Poles.⁴⁵

Enthusiasm for the new Polish army subsided quickly after the initial excitement of the possibility of an independent Poland. By 20 February 1917 only a few hundred volunteers had enlisted in the newly formed legions, mostly students at Warsaw University who had come forward just after the proclamation of support for an independent kingdom. In the meantime, the Austro-German authorities transferred Polish members of the Central Powers' armies to the area in order to train the new recruits. Fearing the impending impressment into the newly created army, many Poles went to Germany to find work. This alleviated the labor shortage in munitions factories and on farms. Others contemplated the consequences of the restoration of Russian domination and chose to wait to act until the conclusion of the war.⁴⁶ The last days of March 1917 also saw a proclamation from the Provisional Government in Russia that called for the creation of an independent Polish state. Much more generous than the German Manifesto, the Russians desired the new state to be comprised of all three partitions.⁴⁷ The proclamation lacked one all-important detail: the mechanism through which Poles could gain control of the territories.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., 19 November 1916, 1.

⁴⁶Ibid., 21 February 1917, 4.

⁴⁷Ibid., 31 March 1917, 3.

In order to bolster the fledgling army, Wilhelm II transferred the Polish Auxiliary Corps to Warsaw to form its nucleus. Franz Joseph's successor, the Emperor Karl called upon Poles to fight and “win fresh laurels for the Polish eagle,” and the Austro-German controlled Crown Marshall of the State Council promised full collaboration.⁴⁸ By July 1917, however, the Central Powers abandoned their attempt to form an independent Polish army; due to lagging enlistment, Poles would be inducted into the German and Austro-Hungarian armies instead.⁴⁹ This presented a new difficulty to the Austro-German authorities: most Polish units refused to take an oath of fidelity to either of the Kaisers. Street demonstrations occurred in Warsaw as a result of the arrest of General Pilsudski, who discouraged the legions from pledging their allegiance to the Central Powers.⁵⁰ The Austro-German authorities correctly suspected that Pilsudski secretly planned armed revolt against them, but his arrest ended any hope of future cooperation of the Polish legions with the Central Powers.⁵¹

Subsequent attempts to transfer Polish units to the Austrian and German armies brought drastic measures by the Polish authorities. On 30 August 1917, the Provisional State Council at Warsaw resigned rather than comply with Governor General von Beseler's order that Polish riflemen be transferred to the Austro-Hungarian army. The Council formed a committee to continue the affairs of state.⁵² Polish leaders in the United States interpreted the actions of the Council as one of delay tactics and offered praise for their fellow Poles as they worked to thwart the military intentions of the Central Powers. From its first meeting, the council also sought the inclusion of the German and Austrian partitions in the new kingdom. Even in resigning to

⁴⁸Ibid., 15 April 1917, 3.

⁴⁹Ibid., 25 July 1917, II, 3.

⁵⁰Ibid., 30 July 1917, 2.

⁵¹Komarnicki, 117.

⁵²*New York Times*, 31 August 1917, 3.

protest Poles being sent from Poland to aid the Central Powers, the Council provided a committee to maintain the concessions thus far attained.⁵³

Despite the actions of the Council, Austria-Hungary sent members of the Polish army to its southern front to compensate for losses to the Italians along the Isonzo River.⁵⁴ By April 1918, the Austro-Hungarians dissolved their Polish legions due to wholesale treason in the ranks and interned the soldiers in Hungary.⁵⁵ In June, the Germans demobilized the First Corps of the Polish army stationed at Bobruisk, Belorussia. The Germans confiscated all arms, munitions and horses, then sent the soldiers home. They prohibited contact between the demobilized army and any member of the Polish Council; the army was not to be used as a skeleton for a future military force.⁵⁶ The Germans found Lieutenant General Jozef Dowbor-Musnicki, commander of the corps, to be “too pro-Polish and not pro-German enough.”⁵⁷ The General had served in Polish units in the Russian army before the Revolution of 1917. After the Bolshevik takeover, however, he refused to “sovietize” his troops. Caught between the Germans and the Bolsheviks, Dowbor-Musnicki signed a “convention of Neutrality” with the Germans, but refused to have his troops fight against the Allies on the Western front.⁵⁸ The Germans feared that the homogeneous Polish units would revolt and chose to demobilize them after the Polish general refused to have their forces merged with the German army.⁵⁹ A demobilized army, stripped of its weapons, could not threaten the Central Powers with armed conflict.

A multitude of causes encumbered Austro-German attempts to create an army in the former Russian Poland, not the least of which was the failure of the Central Powers to cast

⁵³Ibid., 1 September 1917, 2.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., 8 April 1917, 4.

⁵⁶Ibid., 13 June 1918, 4.

⁵⁷Ibid., 27 July 1918, 9.

⁵⁸Fisher, 109.

⁵⁹*New York Times*, 27 July 1918, 9.

themselves convincingly in the role of “liberators” of Poland. Since the late eighteenth century, Prussian, Austrian and Russian collaboration to divide Poland created psychological barriers that made it difficult for Poles to trust either of the Central Powers.⁶⁰ In addition, fear of a fourth partition replaced the revived hope of a united nation among the Polish people at the beginning of the war, once the Germans and Austrians divided the territories of the Russian Partition between them after the tsar's armies had been driven out.⁶¹ The Germans had defeated the Russians at the Battle of Tannenberg (1914) and subsequent victories would lead to the humiliating Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918) that forced the Russians to cede a huge amount of territory to the Dual Alliance. This included all of the Polish territories they had controlled. The Austrians and Germans confiscated stocks of raw materials, machine tools, electric motors, and the metal parts of heavy machinery for use in their factories. This “de-industrialization” of Poland brought production to a standstill, led to economic hardship, and did little to ingratiate the Central Powers in the minds of the Poles.⁶²

While Austro-German plans for Poles to fight the Russians crumbled, plans for a Polish Army made up of expatriates to fight with the Allies unfolded in France. In June 1917, French President Raymond Poincaré had announced the creation of a “Polish Army in France” to fight alongside the Allies in the trenches of the Western front. Previous proposals to deploy separate Polish units to fight with the French had been discouraged by the western Allies out of regard for the sensibilities of the Russians, but the French desperately needed replacement troops as the war dragged on. After the Russian Revolution and proclamation by the Provisional Government in March 1917 for an independent Poland plans for a Polish army in the West resurfaced. While organizers in America did not have the same problems as their countrymen in Europe since they

⁶⁰Komarnicki, 112.

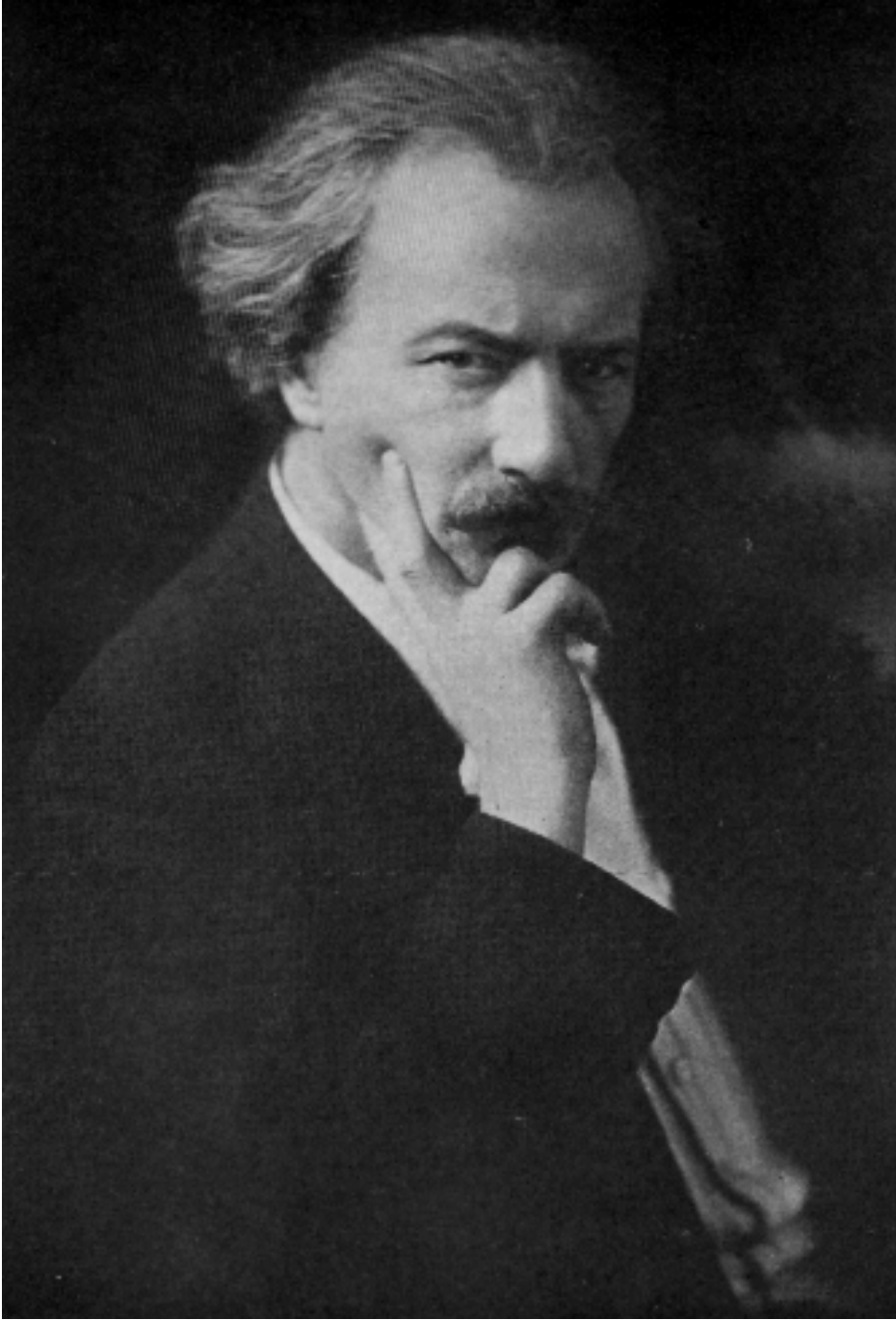
⁶¹Ibid., 113.

⁶²Ibid.

were not encumbered by the partitioning powers, recruitment of immigrants for the Polish Army in France was nevertheless difficult and complicated.

*

More than a century of foreign domination beginning in the 1790s, massive immigration to the United States in the latter half of nineteenth century, the growth of shared identity of immigrants and Polish nationals, and the burning desire on the part of Polish statesmen to reclaim their sovereignty all set the stage for the dramatic events of the early twentieth century. The First World presented the opportunity for Poles to regain their independence, but close proximity to the partitioning powers thwarted Jozef Pilsudski's attempt to organize legions to fight for a free Poland. In order to take an active, military role in the quest for independence, Polish expatriates would have to take leading role. This led to the creation of the Polish Army in France.



Ignacy Jan Paderewski. Photo from Robert Lansing, *The Big Four and Others at the Paris Peace Conference*, 1918.

Chapter 2. The Creation of the Polish Army in France.

By the time the French government officially created the Polish Army in France in 1917, the structure for forming an army of expatriate Poles in the United States had been in place for over a decade. The Polish Falcons of America expanded their existing para-military activities to recruit soldiers to join the Polish Army in France. Without their efforts and those of the Polish pianist and statesman, Ignacy Paderewski, the Army may never have existed. Paderewski used nationalistic rhetoric to effectively encourage volunteers and raise money for the Army. However, the zeal to recruit men at the local level invariably led to abuse and manipulation. While most men volunteered for service, others endured coercion to obtain their enlistment, and many desperately tried to obtain their release from service. Section I of this chapter describes and analyzes the Falcons movement. Section II explains the role of Ignacy Paderewski in the creation of the Polish Army in France. Section III describes the recruitment and training of the soldiers. Section IV argues that there was not a universal outpouring of nationalism amongst the volunteers and many men suffered abuse at the hands of recruiters.

I

The effort to organize an armed force of Polish Americans to return to Europe to fight for a free Poland was supported by the Polish Falcons of America, a branch of a nationalistic-gymnastic organization that began in Galicia, the part of Poland held by Austria. The Poles modeled this organization on the Czech Sokol,¹ which was based on German "turning societies" that stressed the benefits of "turning," or modern gymnastics, along with organized exercise as a

¹Sokol means falcon in Polish and most Slavic languages and in common usage it came to mean a recreational club that promoted nationalist ideals.

method to express a glorified and ethical vision of national identity and masculinity. Led by “Vater” Fredrick Ludwig Jahn, gymnastic sports clubs were important elements in the rise of German nationalism in the nineteenth century and mobilized young people, especially students, to promote the unification of Germany and established a pattern utilized elsewhere. The Czechs established a large membership organization in Bohemia to promote the ethnic pride of Czechs and, likewise, the Poles did the same.¹

The Falcons' society remained small after its formation in 1867 due to harsh treatment at the hands of the partitioning powers. Three years before its founding, the Russians had put down a Polish insurrection which caused them to suspect that all Polish organizations as centers of agitation. The Russians and Germans made it practically impossible to institute any new groups. The establishment of Polish gymnastic organizations was difficult in the Austrian partition, even though the Austro-Hungarian monarchy applied sophisticated techniques in ruling multi-ethnic populations.² Vienna had a method of granting privileges to Polish aristocrats to balance the influence of the Magyar leaders in Budapest. Selected Polish aristocrats had wide-ranging powers over ordinary Polish people. This gave them much power and prestige which would disappear if Poland should become independent or if liberals or nationalists should gain power in Austrian Poland.³ The defeat of the 1864 insurrection had also diminished the credibility of “romantic” revolutionaries among the Polish people. For a time, so called “realists” attracted more attention by their proposals to under Habsburg rule to improve economic conditions and provide better education for peasants. After the late 1880s, demands for independence attracted

¹Donald E. Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887-1987* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1987), 20.

²Ibid., 21.

³See Leo Valiani, *The End of Austria-Hungary* (London: Secker and Warburg 1973) and Arthur May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966).

renewed enthusiasm due to the rise in Polish nationalism and changing political climate in Europe.⁴

But by the 1890s, the Falcons movement expanded throughout the Austrian partition and, to a lesser extent, the German partition as well. The Falcons achieved little success in the Russian partition due to persistent opposition from the government. Until the tsar experienced severe challenges to his authority during the revolution of 1905, these organizations had to operate strictly as sport and educational clubs with no overt promotion of Polish nationalism.⁵

By contrast, the Polish Falcons in the United States were free to grow and thrive, especially in areas with large Polish immigrant communities, like Chicago and Pittsburgh. In the effort to arm Polish-American immigrants to return to Europe to fight for a free Poland, the Falcons came to embody the Polish romantic nationalist and military traditions. Without their participation and organized military training in the decade prior to the First World War, the Polish Army in France may never have existed.

As early as 1905, the Falcons organized paramilitary activities in the United States. In 1913, they began a two-week military training courses to form a group of instructors and potential officers for an actual army. This was a modest beginning, but 367 men completed the training. During the 1914 Mexican crisis when United States Marines occupied Tampico, Falcons' President Dr. Teofil Starzynski offered the aid of the trainees to the American government. The offer was rejected, but the training continued, albeit somewhat haphazard in form and without formal military procedures.⁶ The men lacked standardized uniforms as well as discipline and firearms, and were limited to what was available in second-hand stores and department store basements. Occasionally, the men angered farmers by using their land for

⁴ Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.



Polish Falcons in Cleveland, Ohio (1913). Photo from W.S. Kuniczak, *My Name is Million*, 98.

practice maneuvers. Stanley Pliska, the first scholar to research the army extensively, describes these events in the following passage:

On one occasion, the exercises in the vicinity of Poughkeepsie, New York led to total annihilation when Poland's rustic heroes found themselves 'prisoners of war' in a county jail. In response to protest from local farmers, the sheriff with his deputies entered the maneuver area and imprisoned the would-be Polish lancers . .

⁷

Starzynski wanted the Falcons to collaborate with other like-minded organizations. He investigated several of them before and during the First World War. He decided against a close association with the Polish National Defense Committee (KON from its Polish initials), the

⁷Stanley R. Pliska, "The 'Polish-American Army' 1917-1921," *The Polish Review* 10, Number 3 (Summer 1965): 48-49.

American branch of Joseph Pilsudski's independence movement in Austrian Poland. But another option arose in France. Wacław Gasiński (1869-1929), a Polish author living in France, began a movement to recruit volunteers to fight along with the French in separate Polish units. Because France and Russia were allies, the French government accepted the advice of the Russian ambassador and decided not to form a separate Polish legion that desired an independent Poland. Instead, Gasiński's effort resulted in the formation of two companies of infantry known as the "Bayonne" regiments. They were attached to the French Foreign Legion and suffered heavy losses in 1915 at Champagne and Notre Dame de Lorette. Some of these veterans later served in Haller's Polish Army in France and in Poland.

Direct participation by the Polish Falcons from the United States in the fighting would have to wait until the political climate changed with the ending of American neutrality and the two Russian Revolutions in 1917. Meanwhile as European armies waged bloody trench warfare in 1914, 1915, and 1916, the Falcons continued their training and hoped for an opportunity to join in an epic struggle that would determine the fate of their homeland. The Falcons joined in the efforts of the Chicago-based Polish Central Relief Committee. This organization brought together practically all of the Polish fraternal societies and Catholic parishes in the United States to send humanitarian aid to their countrymen in the form of clothing and medical supplies. This was a difficult task with the war raging in Europe. Throughout the period of American neutrality, Starzyński maintained his hope of placing armed Poles on the battle fields of Europe. In 1916 he turned his attention north of the American border to Canada, a member of the British Commonwealth already at war against the Central Powers. Starzyński reasoned that without officers, no army comprised of Polish Americans would be officially recognized by the United States or any European nation. He sought the admission of Poles in the Canadian Officers'

Training Program in Toronto. Two Falcons, Andrzej Malkowski, founder of the Polish Scouting movement, and Vincent Skarzyski, negotiated the inclusion of twenty-three young men into the Canadian school. On 2 January 1917, these men began their training.⁸

The small victory of the inclusion of the Poles in the Canadian officers' school in 1917 coincided with an enormous victory for the cause of Polish independence. Re-elected in November 1916 partially on the slogan, "He kept us out of the War," by late January 1917, American President Woodrow Wilson called for the warring nations to settle their differences in his famous "peace without victory" speech. In this message, he also called for an independent and autonomous Poland.⁹ This proclamation energized the Polish cause of independence and endeared Wilson to Polish patriots in America and elsewhere in the world.

II

In April 1917, the United States declared war on the Central Powers, and Ignacy Paderewski and the Polish Falcons decided to form an army of Polish expatriates to return to Europe. Paderewski was the leading proponent of Polish nationalism and independence in the United States, and his name and career are synonymous with the Polish cause of independence. Born in 1860 in Podolia, in Russian Poland, Paderewski studied music at the Warsaw Conservatory. In his early twenties he moved to the Royal Academy of Music in Berlin and began to draw the attention of honored and established musicians such as Richard Strauss. He then studied in Vienna, where he made his debut as a concert pianist in 1887. He became increasingly popular as he entertained audiences on the continent, in England, and subsequently in the United States.¹⁰ Music and poetry intensified nationalistic expression in Poland, especially after partitioning powers closed off direct political activity. Only musicians had the ability to be

⁸Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 93-94.

⁹Ibid., 94-95.

¹⁰Janina W. Hoskins, *Ignacy Jan Paderewski, 1860-1941* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1984), 1-2.

openly nationalistic, and they utilized their talents to promote Polish identity. The works of the great Polish composer Frederic Chopin (1810-1849) became a nationalistic statement when performed before Polish audiences.¹¹

Since the turn of the century, Paderewski had predicted that a major conflict between the partitioning powers would place the "Polish Question" back on the table of European diplomacy. He believed that the Germans would forever be antagonistic toward the Poles based on racial prejudices and could see no future in planning on a just relationship with Germany. Similarly, the decline of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy removed it as a viable candidate for an alliance to unseat the other powers. Only Russia remained, and Paderewski aligned himself with Roman Dmowski, a Polish representative to the Russian Duma and the leader of a movement to attain a degree of self-rule in the Russian partition.¹² When war came, most Poles believed that their nation could achieve independence. Paderewski and his associates thought that Great Britain, France, and Russia would ultimately be victorious and desired that Poles support the Allies. Thereby, they could claim some part of the Allied victory at the conclusion of the war and gain independence, sovereignty, or some other form of self-rule. Dmowski was to work toward these ends in the Duma while Paderewski and others did the same in the West.¹³

In January 1915, Paderewski formed and became head of the "General Commission for Polish Relief" in Switzerland. He traveled to Paris and London to raise money for this organization. Paderewski could not be blatantly political in his quest for Polish independence out of sensitivity to the Tsar, so the goal of the organization had to be for the relief of the people in Poland.¹⁴ In an interview with the London *Times*, Paderewski appealed to the British people

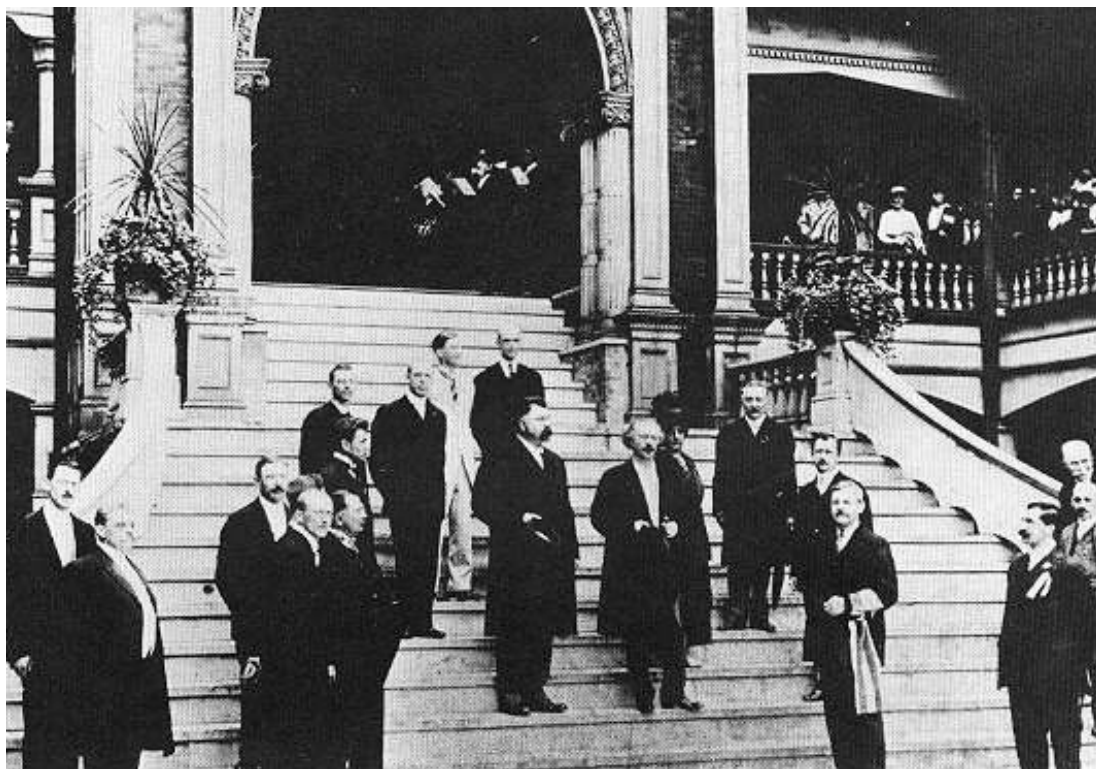
¹¹Adam Zamoyski, *Paderewski* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 141-142.

¹²Ibid., 142-143.

¹³Ibid., 147-148.

¹⁴Zamoyski, 148.

to aid in the relief of starvation in Poland. As the main battleground between the Central Powers and the Russians, Polish cities and villages had been destroyed, and the majority of the Polish civilian population was



Paderewski with leaders of the Polish National Alliance at Alliance College in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania (1915). The school later trained officers for the Polish Army in France. Photo from W.S. Kuniczak, *My Name Is Million, An Illustrated History of Poles in America*, 133.

starving. Furthermore, due to conscription into the armies of the belligerent powers, Poles fought against Poles. “Brothers are slaying brothers,” he reported.¹⁵

Paderewski next set out for America, a country he knew quite well. He had traveled widely in the United States on his numerous concert tours during the preceding decades and was well aware of its vast industrial might. The U.S. could be a valuable ally in Poland's quest for independence since it was not at that time bound by treaty to any of the partitioning powers, like

¹⁵*New York Times*, 25 March 1915, 3.

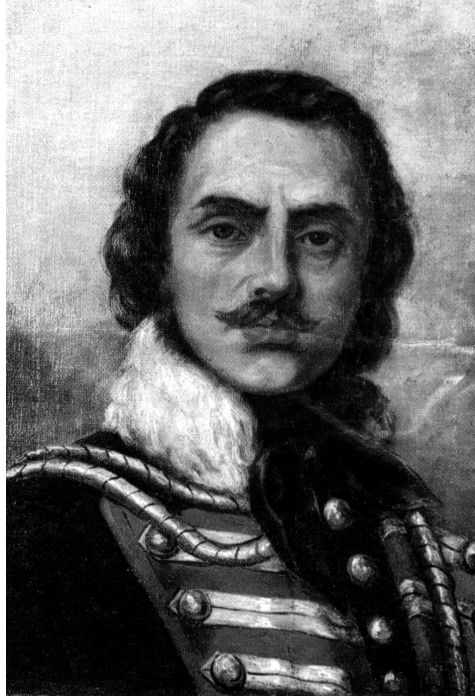
France and Britain were bound to Russia.¹⁶ Paderewski's audience in America included about four million Poles, many of whom were not dedicated to Polish independence. Most of the Polish immigrants to America came from peasant backgrounds, and subsequently, their educational background/training and level of national awareness was quite low, likely due to the fact that the partitioning powers had systematically denied any nationalistic expression. They were also exposed to American products and mass culture and they began to be “Americanized.”¹⁷ Although Paderewski gave them a Polish performing star to be proud of, the community was split as to which side to support in the European conflict. Jews and socialists from the Russian partition were anti-Russian, while individuals forced to leave the German partition tended to be anti-German.¹⁸

In his politics as in his musical performance, Paderewski played themes well-known to Americans. He played Chopin's Polish dances and praised the historic exploits of Thaddeus Kosciuszko and Kazimierz Pulaski. Both men had aided the colonists during the American Revolution and were already famous in the United States for their contribution to American independence. Pulaski (1747-1779), an affluent landowner from southeastern Poland, had fled his native land for America in 1772 after taking part in an unsuccessful rebellion against growing domination by the Russians. He joined the American Continental Army, rose to the rank of Brigadier General and organized its first cavalry regiments. Pulaski was killed at the Battle of Savannah on 11 October 1779. In political terms, he gave his life for the American cause. Kosciuszko (1746-1817) came to America in 1776 and also offered his services to the Continental Army. A trained engineer, he designed fortifications for many battles, including the

¹⁶Zamoyski, 150.

¹⁷Lizbeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 68, 157.

¹⁸Ibid., 152.



Kazimierz Pulaski. Photo from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazimierz_Pulaski; Internet accessed 10 February 2006.



Tadeusz Kosciuszko. Photo from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thaddeus_Kosciuszko; Internet accessed 10 February 2006.

American victory at Saratoga (1777). He also planned the defenses of New York on the Hudson river. After the war he returned to Poland and led another unsuccessful revolt to preserve Polish independence in 1794.¹⁹

Grateful Americans memorialized the names of Pulaski and Kosciuszko in towns, counties, and schools throughout the new nation. Such memorials gave later Polish immigrants a source of identification with their adopted home.²⁰ According to Joseph Wiczerzak:

The legacies (of Kosciuszko and Pulaski) were to be effective in two ways: they engendered pro-Polish sympathies in the American public throughout the nineteenth century and afterwards. They gave newcomers from Poland--first political exiles, later peasants coming 'after bread'--surrogate roots in the American past which psychologically lessened their feelings of being 'strangers' to America.²¹

The transition of identity from Polish to Polish-American, reinforced the by memorials to Polish patriots, was extremely effective and made many members of the Polish Army in France desire to return America after there role in Polish independence was completed.

The Russian "February" Revolution, the abdication of the Tsar, and the proclamation by the Russian Provisional Government in March 1917 for an independent Poland swept away encumbrances to an overt campaign on Paderewski's part for an independent Poland. He no longer had to appeal only for Polish "relief" but could now suggest armed military intervention. In April 1917, before a Polish Falcons' meeting, Paderewski called for the creation of a "Kosciuszko Army" of one-hundred thousand Polish-Americans to fight on the side of the Allies. Wielding his full range of eloquence, Paderewski appealed to the crowd,

Do you think that I would be hasty to send you to battle, to desire your blood, to assign you the smallest pain, to tear you away from peaceful families?
But if you must fight, then fight as befits free Poles -- fight for the recognition,

¹⁹ Donald E. Pienkos, *For Your Freedom Through Ours: Polish American Efforts on Poland's Behalf, 1863-1991* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1991), 481..

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Joseph Wiczerzak, "Pre- and Proto-Ethnics: Poles in the United States before the Immigration 'After Bread,'" *Polish Review* 21 (Fall 1976): 12.

respect and glory of the Polish name. Fight for the benefit of a united Poland, fight for the benefit of all things Polish here. If the war spreads then you will all go. If peace comes then no one will go . . . One should, nonetheless, anticipate events. In case conscription is introduced, at least two hundred thousand American Poles will have to take up arms. That large number of our youth's flower, separated and divided throughout many units, will melt in the great American sea. Poles as befits Poles will perform miracles of bravery, but no one will know about it. Foreseeing the problem, it is proper to do something about it today, at once, which will help safeguard our identity.²²

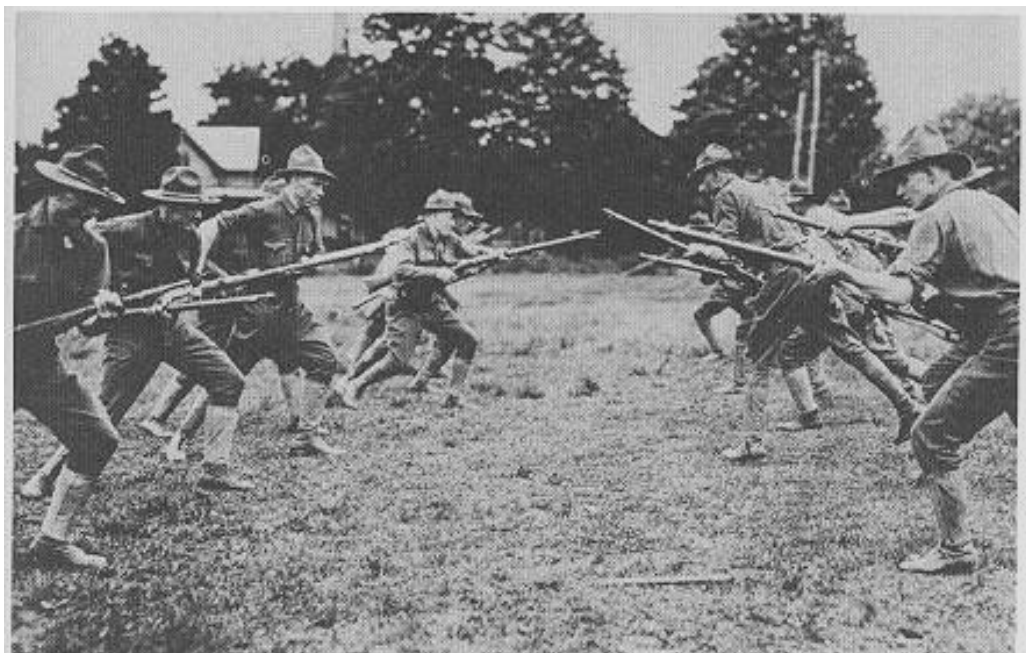
The following afternoon at a meeting of Falcon leaders, three of the twenty-three Poles who had attended the Canadian Officers' school in Toronto appeared in uniform. They told the group that seventeen Poles had successfully completed the course and five of the top graduates were being sent to the Alliance College in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania to establish a Polish-American non-commissioned officers training program. The other graduates were to help with recruiting efforts in their American home towns.²³ The Alliance school eventually graduated 389 non-commissioned officers, of whom almost one-half qualified for officer training. The school was not free: each trainee had to pay \$14.00 per month for room and board and had to provide his own uniform and transportation to and from the camp. This was not an inexpensive venture considering the three-month course cost \$150 at a time when the average steel worker earned \$3 a day. The school was eventually moved to Camp Quinton, Cotes du Nord, Canada, which became the training location of the Polish Army in France.²⁴

The effort to create an army of Polish expatriates received a tremendous boost in June 1917 when French President Raymond Poincaré announced the creation of a Polish army to fight alongside the Allies in the trenches of the Western front. As mentioned above, earlier

²²Pienkos, *Polish American Efforts*, 61-62.

²³Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 95.

²⁴Pliska, 51.



Battlefield training at the Alliance School in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, 1914. Photo from Donald Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887-1987*, I-16

discussions of separate Polish units to fight with the French had been discouraged, but after the Russian Provisional Government called for an independent Poland, plans for a Polish army in the west resurfaced.²⁵ Once Russia sued for peace with Germany in December 1917, this enabled France to support independence for Poland. Poles living in the Allied nations could enlist in the new army, and Poles serving in the French army would be released from their units to join their compatriots in the new fighting force.²⁶ The need for troops motivated the French to solicit volunteers from the United States, not only Poles, but Czecho-Slovaks as well.²⁷ The French agreed to pay the Polish soldiers the same as their own men, fund the recruitment in the United States, and return the men to their homes at the conclusion of the war.²⁸

²⁵H.H. Fisher, *America and the New Poland* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), 103.

²⁶*New York Times*, 5 June 1917, 3.

²⁷Joseph T. Hapak, "Selective Service and Polish Army Recruitment during World War I," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 10 (Summer 1991): 39-41.

²⁸Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 97.

III

In order to coordinate the recruitment, training, and transportation of men to France, an American National Department of the Polish Central Relief Committee established the Polish Military Commission. The National Department, led by Chicago banker John Smulski, had by 1917 become the “dominant political action organization in Polonia (expatriate Poles in the United States).” Its leadership role was the result of its close association with clerical and fraternal leaders in America and its amicable relationship with Paderewski and Dmowski, leaders of the Polish National Committee in Paris that attempted to form the future provisional government of a resurrected Poland.²⁹

The Military Commission’s recruitment of volunteers was aided by 800 local Citizens Committees comprised of influential Poles in all the main Polish communities in America and by the Polish press, which included twelve dailies with a circulation of 160,000 and fifty-nine weeklies and monthlies with a total circulation of 500,000. These newspapers were vitally important in spreading information about the Polish cause. Newspapers are primary in what Benedict Anderson calls “print-capitalism,” or the expansion of the print industry that aids the dissemination, codification and standardization of language and cultural identity. The rise of “print-capitalism . . . laid the bases for national consciousnesses” by creating unified fields of “exchange and communication.” Printed communication could be understood by speakers of various dialects and became the “embryo of the nationally imagined community.” “Print-capitalism” also “gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation.”³⁰

²⁹Ibid., 97.

³⁰Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 44-45.

The willingness to die for a patriotic cause, according to Anderson, is in part a result of the language used to describe the relationship between individuals and the state. Anderson describes this relationship as “political love” and explains it in the following passage:

Something of the nature of this political love can be deciphered from the ways in which languages describe its object: either in the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, Vaterland, patria) or that of home (heimat [sic] or tanah air). Both idioms denote something to which one is naturally tied . . . Dying for one’s country, which usually one does not choose, assumes a moral grandeur which dying for the Labour Party, the American Medical Association, or perhaps even Amnesty International can not rival, for these are all bodies one can join or leave at easy will. Dying for the revolution also draws its grandeur from the degree to which it is felt to be something fundamentally pure.³¹

Important recruiting impetus also came from the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union, without whose participation, according to Stanley Pliska, the effort to recruit volunteers would not have been a success. The clergy had a “tremendous influence” since not every town had a civic hall or a recruiting station, but most communities had a church and a priest. Pliska explains:

[T]he 1,018 Polish priests, organized as a body since 1912, appeared everywhere on the local scene. From pulpit to meeting hall, from inspirational sermon to farewell address at railroad stations, they were always present, always behind the recruiting campaign.³²

Since the Counter-Reformation (or Catholic Reformation) of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Poles of Slavic identity (not including Germans, Baltic peoples, or Jews who lived in “Polish” territory) had regarded themselves as Roman Catholics. This orientation intensified as the partitions left the Poles under dominance of Prussian Lutherans and Russian Orthodox Christians, with only a minority enjoying religious freedom under Habsburg Austria. Polish

³¹Ibid., 141-144.

³²Pliska, 51-52.

expatriates, like emigrants from many European countries, tended to find enhanced comfort in the religion of their homeland.

The United States War Department endorsed the plan for the recruitment of Polish immigrants in October 1917, five months after the United States declared war on Germany, but it did so with significant limitations. Only men not subject to the American draft and who did not have dependents would be accepted. The United States Compulsory Service law did not require all naturalized citizens to serve. It made them subject to possible conscription into the American Army and seriously diminished the number of men eligible for service in the new Polish army. Recruits to the Polish Army were limited to two groups: recent immigrants who had not yet acquired citizenship and Poles born in the German or Austrian partitions, and designated by the United States as



Polish Army in France recruiting poster. Photo from Ann Su Caldwell, *Poland: Here is the Record*; available from <http://www.poloniatoday.com/record2.htm>; Internet accessed 10 February 2006.

enemy aliens.³³ American officials also mandated that the recruitment of volunteers was to be "discreet."³⁴

The War Department was reluctant to sanction the recruitment of a foreign army in the United States, but did so under a clear understanding that no American citizens would be accepted into the new army. Until May 1917, Section 10 of the United States Penal Code made it illegal to recruit aliens into foreign legions, but a change in the code's interpretation by Judge Advocate General Enoch Crowder made this admissible under the law.³⁵ Many men who were native-born American citizens of Polish heritage or Poles who had become naturalized citizens violated the law and joined the Polish Army in France. Their illegal actions angered the already reluctant Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and complicated their return to America once the war was over.

The Falcons set up recruiting centers in Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Detroit, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Wilkes-Barre, New York City, Boston, Bridgeport, Schenectady, and Winnipeg.³⁶ As the effort began, Starzynski assured French Ambassador J.J. Jusserand that a significant number of men would volunteer for military service.³⁷ With the aid of the Polish National Alliance, the Falcons recruited most of the over 20,000 men who went to Europe as part of the Polish Army in France.³⁸ In Polish enclaves in America, weekends were filled with pageants, dinners, speeches, parades, and church processions to encourage volunteers to join the new army. The larger Polish communities had full-time recruiting sergeants, paid \$5 a day to

³³Fisher, 104.

³⁴Hapak, "Selective Service and Polish Army Recruitment," 42.

³⁵Ibid., 39-46.

³⁶Joseph T. Hapak, "The Polish Military Commission," *Polish American Studies*, 38 (Number 2, 1981): 28.

³⁷Hapak, "Selective Service and Polish Army Recruitment," 40.

³⁸Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 229.

follow up these patriotic gatherings with personal calls on individuals to encourage their enlistment.³⁹

The Military Commission produced a recruitment film entitled *Za Wolnosc i Ojczyzne* (*For Freedom and Fatherland*) to show at rallies. It featured scenes from the training camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake and scenes of Wacław Gasiński, who had recruited men in France to fight for a free Poland, at Humboldt Park in Chicago in front of a monument to Kosciuszko that had been funded by American Poles.⁴⁰ The film tells the story of young a Pole who is reluctant to join his friends who have enlisted in the Polish Army in France. His family and friends label him a coward, and his fiancée returns his engagement ring. In the end, he joins the army and is reconciled with loved ones and his future wife.

The recruits who joined the Army signed the following declaration:

I the undersigned, declaring my readiness to fight for a united, free and independent Poland and the honor of the Star Spangled Banner of the United States, join the ranks of the First Falcon regiment of my own will and swear obedience to the lawful authorities. So help me God.⁴¹

The loyalty oath to both Poland and America united the causes of both nations and blurred the difference between the two.

Due to the Selective Service restrictions that prohibited recruiting of United States citizens, it soon became apparent that the goal Paderewski stated of raising a 100,000-man “Army of Kosciuszko” could not be attained. Paderewski and members of the Polish “National Security League” of Chicago suggested to President Wilson that he allow non-English speaking Poles in the American army to transfer to the Polish Army. According to Paderewski and his associates, the difference in language made training difficult and required additional time. They

³⁹Pliska, 52.

⁴⁰Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 98.

⁴¹Hapak, , "Recruiting a Polish Army in the United States, 1917-1918." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1985, 67.



Chicago Poles being sworn into the Polish Army in France (1917). Photo from Jan Lorys, *Polonia rich in history*; available from <http://www.suntimes.com/century/m1917.html>; Internet accessed 6 March 2006.

also claimed that Poles were being “segregated and discharged” because they were German or Austrian citizens and thus considered enemy aliens. The Security League suggested that Polish units be formed in the American Army that could be assigned to the Polish forces fighting with the French.⁴² In a separate message to the State Department, Paderewski complained that Polish-speaking soldiers were in many cases assigned to “kitchen police and other menial duties” and “are too frequently ridiculed by their fellow-soldiers.” He claimed that this created two different

⁴²Telegram, Jacob M. Dickinson to Wilson, 9 March 1918, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, War Department, Record Group (RG) 407, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as NA), 336.4.

classes of soldiers, the higher one that understood English and lower one that did not and was a “detriment to the spirit” of the Polish soldiers.⁴³

Wilson forwarded these suggestions to Acting Secretary of War Benedict Crowell to inquire about the feasibility of such a transfer or the formation of Polish units in the American Army. Crowell prepared a memorandum detailing in no uncertain terms that such a venture would not be possible. First, according to the draft law, only men subject to the American draft were inducted into the American Army; these men were not eligible for the Polish Army since they were either American citizens or had registered their intent to become citizens. The second request, that separate Polish-speaking units be formed within the American Army would, according to Crowell, be “inadvisable” since it would set a precedent that if followed in other cases of ethnic groups would lead to “inefficiency, by greatly complicating the military machine.” He also informed the President that General John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary force, “strongly urged” that these ethnic-based units not be formed. Crowell explained that previous attempts to maintain state identities of National Guard units once they became integrated into the regular army had been “impracticable” and that the units had “absolutely lost their identity in the re-organization which was necessary.” In reference to the statement in Dickinson’s telegram that Poles had been segregated and discharged, Crowell responded that only those enemy aliens who did not desire to serve in the American army were discharged, along with those whose loyalty to the United States had come into question.⁴⁴

Paderewski and American Poles were not the only ones to attempt to increase the number of men in the Polish Army in France by securing the release of members of the American Army.

⁴³Paderewski to Wilson, 25 January 1918, Records of the Department of State relating to the internal affairs of Poland, 1916-1944, RG 59, 860c.22/60.

⁴⁴Benedict Crowell, Acting Secretary of War, to Wilson, 14 March 1918, Military Intelligence Division, War Department General Staff, RG 165, 10762-12.

In June 1918, French General Ferdinand Foch suggested that the American government treat the Poles, even the natives of Austrian-held Galicia and German held Posnania, as Allies, and allow them to choose between the American Army and the Polish Army in France. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker explained in a memorandum to the Secretary of State Robert Lansing, who had been communicating with the French, that there was no provision in the American draft laws to permit a soldier to choose between the American army and the army of his own nationality. This would require a treaty between the two nations, which could not be applied to the Poles given that there was “no recognized Polish government with which to make such a treaty.” Baker responded that if Poles were discharged from the American forces, they could not be compelled to join the Polish Army. Baker further asserted:

While it is felt that nothing possible should be left undone which might benefit the cause, and specially so those things recommended by General Foch, it is nevertheless believed that, in this case, the disorganization and dissatisfaction which would be created in our own service by granting such discharges, would greatly outweigh any advantages which might arise therefrom.⁴⁵

Secretary Baker’s position on separate ethnic units in the army reflected the pervasive notion in America that immigrants needed to cast off their Old World identities and become “Americanized.” By the early twentieth century, many had learned English and adapted to the American lifestyle. Former President Theodore Roosevelt believed the foreign languages and traditions were barriers to immigrants becoming fully integrated into American society. He had argued that an immigrant who adopted English and celebrated American holidays instead of those of his “abandoned” country was doing himself and the United States a “service of immeasurable value.”⁴⁶

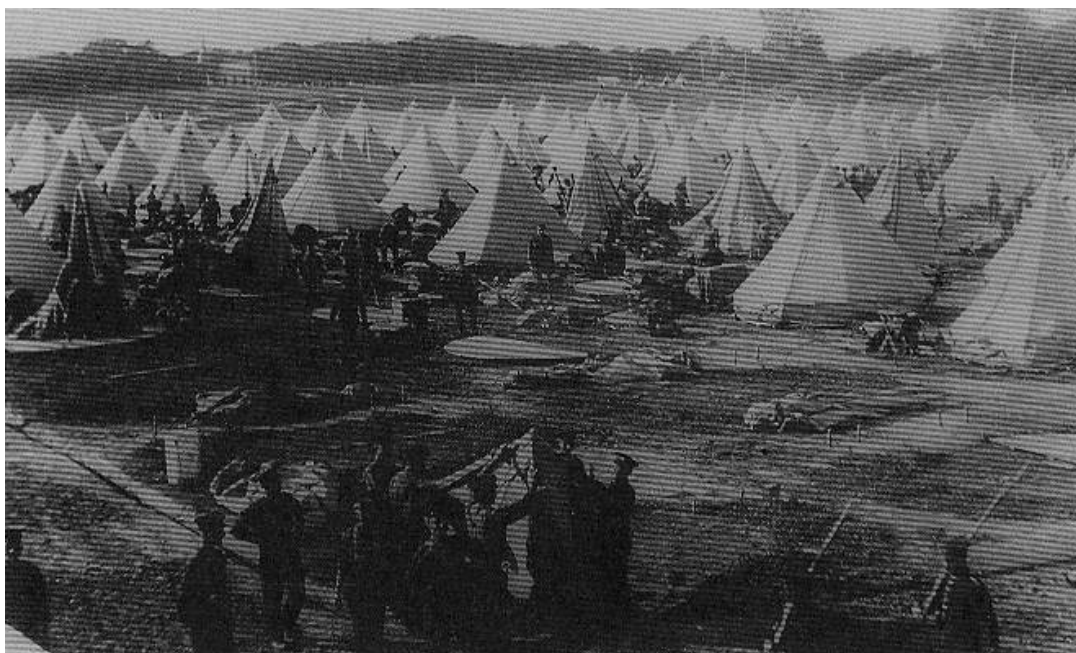
⁴⁵Baker to Lansing 15 June 1918, RG165, NA, 10762-15.

⁴⁶Alan Kraut, *The Huddled Masses*, 145-146.



Volunteers for the Polish Army in France in Monessen, Pennsylvania prepare to depart for training camp in November 1917. The sign reads: "Goodbye America, We go to struggle with the despot Kaiser for your freedom and ours." Photo from W.S. Kuniczak, *My Name is Million*, 105.

Men recruited into the Polish Army in France trained at Fort Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, and, for a short time, at Fort Niagara, New York, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur LePan of Canada. When the Polish recruits arrived in Camp Niagara in October 1917, no winter accommodations were available, and the men slept in canvas tents. Under the direction of Canadian officers, the men constructed permanent billets sufficient to withstand the harsh northern winters. As the number of recruits grew throughout 1918, they men found additional accommodations in Niagara-on-the-Lake in vacant hotels, unoccupied residences, old canning factories, and the town hall. The citizens of the town provided this additional housing at no cost during the first winter and for a "nominal" fee during the second. The municipality also



Polish Americans at Fort Niagara on the Lake, Ontario (1917). Photo from Donald Pienkos, *For Your Freedom Through Ours: Polish American Efforts on Poland's Behalf, 1863-1991*, 627.

provided free light and water to the Polish camp.⁴⁷ Of the 22,395 recruits who went to training camp, 221 came from Canada and the remainder from the United States. The majority (62%) gave their nationality as “Russian Poles.” “Austrian Poles” comprised 31.5% and “German Poles” 3%, with 3.5% miscellaneous. Except for the 1,573 troops who sailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, all the soldiers departed for France from New York City.⁴⁸

During the otherwise calm existence of the training camp, one calamity befell the Polish-American troops. In September 1918, influenza ravaged the camp for six weeks and took the lives of 24 men. Another outbreak claimed an additional 17 lives, bringing the total to 41. The officers sent the remains of the deceased to their homes or buried them in a plot in the Roman Catholic cemetery marked with a large cross and a headstone for each man. To this day, the plot

⁴⁷Report of Arthur LePan, 26 March 1919, Jerzy Walter, ed. *Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiego w Ameryce: Zbiór Dokumentów i Materiałów Historycznych* [The American Polonia's Armed Struggle: A Collection of documents and historical materials] (New York: The Polish Army Veterans' Association of America, 1957), 693-697.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 693.

is maintained, and memorials have been added to honor the soldiers and General Jozef Haller, the commander of the Polish-American troops in France and in Poland.

LePan reported that a favorable relationship existed between the men and the townspeople. Despite skepticism and much agitation by the locals at the announcement of the establishment of the Polish camp in their town, the discipline among the men was “splendid,” and they received praise for their patriotism and devotion to their Poland. LePan added the following article from the *Niagara Advance* to his final report that expressed the feelings of the townspeople toward the soldiers,

It is hard to realize that after nearly eighteen months of military activity, old Niagara and the historic camp ground to the east of us is once more deserted, so far as the military is concerned. When the news reached us early in September 1917, that we were to have a Polish Camp, the prevailing opinion seemed to be that we were in for a pretty rough time and that it would be well to provide accordingly. How agreeable [sic] we were disappointed, we now know, and our regret is that the Polish boys could not stay with us indefinitely. Both from a financial and social point of view, we have benefited greatly but it goes without saying that we regret the departure of our Polish friends, more because they were our friends than because their sojourn here was a financial benefit. Never in the history of Niagara as military centre, have we had a more orderly camp, a more soldierly lot of boys, or a more congenial and efficient staff than during the Polish occupation of the reservation, and, while we are pleased and thankful that the wind up of the world's greatest war obviates the necessity for the continuance of the camp, our regret at parting is keen, not only because of our long and pleasant association with such a magnificent lot of men, but because they were, first and always, soldiers and above everything gentlemen.⁴⁹

While they may have behaved like gentlemen, the men were not paid like gentlemen. The volunteers received only their uniform, three meals a day, and five cents per day (twenty five cents at the front). The French government also offered an additional \$150 a year (invariably in arrears). There were no insurance policies and, as a result, 100 widows and

⁴⁹Ibid., 697.

orphans were forced to exist on charity after the war. In addition to the men, forty-two female nurses received training to care for wounded and sick soldiers.⁵⁰

IV

Most accounts of the Polish Army in France portray the events surrounding its creation and participation in the fighting to liberate Poland from foreign domination in romantic and idealistic terms. The files of the United States War and State Departments at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland present a less-than-glorious picture of forced enlistments, broken promises, and allegations that the men would be permitted to attack Jews and take their property once they reached Poland. While their enlistment suggests that patriotic fervor motivated the volunteers, there is evidence that devotion to the motherland was not shared equally by all Polish-Americans. The following accounts show the realities of what took place in the creation of the Polish Army in France.

Overzealous recruiters deceived young men into believing that enlistment in the Polish Army in France was mandatory. Recruiters obtained lists of men classified “V” (alien) by the Selective Service then sent them fake conscription notices which they had no power to enforce. The following example demonstrates the deceptive nature of these notices:

Recruiting Centre of Polish Army, No. 7.

No. 200. ser. 1 Wilkes-Barre, Pa., May 3, 1918.

THE SUMMONING CARD. CLASS FIFTH.

Mr. John Ziendarski: No. 738 Hanover Street, NANTICKE, Pa.

You are hereby notified to appear at once in the recruiting office, Polish Army in France, Laning Bldg., Wilkes-Barre, Pa. to undergo medical examination. Your name was given to us by the local Board as belonging to the Fifth Class, United States Army. Therefore, by virtue of the privilege granted to us by the United States Government we are summoning you to the service of the Polish Army.

⁵⁰Pliska, 55.

Have this card with you.

Signed A. Kryzanowski
Recruiting officer.

This notification was accompanied by the following circular in Polish:

From the Polish Army in France.
Recruiting Centre No. 7, 97 Public Square, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
May 3, 1918.

Dear Sir:

We have noticed your name on the list of those who are drafted to the military service. At the present time the military affair[sic] is important to every man who is able to fight, we, therefore, are in haste to notify you of the following:

By virtue of the decree of the Government of French Republic of the 4th of June, 1917, there has been created an Independent-Authonomic[sic] Polish Army in France, which will fight under the Polish flag and Polish command for the United and Independent-Democratic-Poland.

The above decree has been adopted by all allied countries, also by the Government of the United States by decree of October 6, 1917.

Polish soldiers are entitled to the same rights as French soldiers, but their salary is much higher. It reaches fourteen dollars a month without any deduction, and in France twenty dollars.

As you are not a citizen of the United States, you have a perfect right and duty to enlist in the Polish Army in France, and in this manner fulfill your duty as a citizen-Pole.

With the first call there is mailed to you a card of summons with which you have to appear according to the address given in said card.

Exemption from the military service is not excluded, as far as there will be given reasons deserving such a consideration; anyhow you must appear and present such reasons.

Yours truly
A. Krzyzanowski
Recruiting officer⁵¹

John Biernat, a Galician-born immigrant of Austrian citizenship, received one of the recruiting letters in May 1918. Biernat was not legally obliged to enlist in the Polish Army and did not desire to do so. After his arrival at the recruiting station, however, the recruiters forcibly sent him to the training camp at Fort Niagara-on-the-lake, Canada. Officials at the camp confined him and compelled him to sign an enlistment application. The recruiting officers

⁵¹Records of the Department of State relating to internal affairs of Poland, 1916-1944, 860c.22/26.

claimed that Biernat joined the legion freely by making his mark (an X) on the application. Swedish diplomatic and consular officials, who handled Austro-Hungarian affairs in the United States during the war, brought the case to the attention of the State Department. They doubted the allegation that Biernat had signed any document with an “X” because he could write “very well and clearly.” As further evidence that Biernat had no intention to join the Polish Army, the Swedes provided affidavits from Biernat’s sister and fiancée that stated the time and place of his forthcoming wedding; indeed, “furniture was bought, and the house rented where they were to live.”⁵²

The Swedes also appealed on behalf of Wadysaw Kusek, another Austrian citizen. He had filed his papers to become an American citizen and also had a wife and children; either his application for citizenship or his status as a parent should have exempted him from service in the Polish Army in France. Kusek's story was similar to Biernat's, except that he admitted signing the enlistment application because the recruiters had given him alcohol. The reluctant soldier wrote this letter:

Dear Uncle:

I address this letter to you in the words of old Poland – blessed be Jesus Christ. And now I want to tell you that I am well, except that the heat is great here, And now, dear uncle, I earnestly pray that you would be so good and see to it that they let me go, for they already let one of us. But get the advice of some wiser man, and tell them I have children and citizen papers. They must let me go. But it is useless to go to Augusta Street, but go to the Peoples Daily and tell them everything, what they did to me and they will advise you. And if they should ask if I myself signed, tell them that they got me drunk and got me there. And whatever you will pay out I will repay you. Only hurry up before they send me to France. And now I greet you from my heart and I kiss you in the Lord.

14283 W. Kusek,
3rd Depot Battalion,
Niagara in the Lake.[sic]

⁵²Ibid., 860c.22/28.

Only get busy. Then they will let me go. For they have no right to take any one who has his papers and is married. They do these kinds of humbug there on August Street. They already let one go because his brother looked after him.

While detained by the Polish recruiters, Kusek became acquainted with John Biernat whose account is described above. In an affidavit obtained by Swedish authorities and presented to the American State Department, Biernat stated that while detained, Kusek wept and bemoaned his fate and that he was “ruptured” and had to wear a truss that prevented him from obtaining employment at either the McCormick or Deering factories in Chicago and that doctors told him he needed an operation. Biernat further stated that Kusek was held with others as prisoners for four days and then Kusek received an additional ten days imprisonment as a penalty “for something.” Unlike Biernat who obtained his release before being sent overseas, Kusek accompanied the Polish army to France against his will on 23 May 1918.⁵³

The events surrounding the forced enlistment of Ignatz Skwarcian, an employee at the University of Notre Dame, in South Bend, Indiana, tells an even more troubling story. According to a his friend, George Sternet, Skwarcian received letters from the Polish Army recruiting office similar to one described above that told him to report “or be arrested.” He reported to the office on 2 June 1918. The recruiters asked him to join the Polish Army, but he declined. The recruiters had him sign a document that, they told him, stated he did not have to serve in the Polish Army. Less than a week later on 8 June 1918, a police officer telephoned Skwarcian at his workplace and ordered him to report to the police station. Once there, the police officer “began to scold and demand why he had not come before” and “that he must go with the Polish Army.” Skwarcian told the police that he did not want to join and would not join the army. At that point, the police officer telephoned the Polish Army recruiting office. After a discussion with one of the recruiters, Skwarcian was imprisoned for several hours until he was

⁵³Ibid., 860.c22/29, 33, 42.

loaded on a truck and taken to the South Chicago Polish Army Recruiting office. Two days later on 10 June 1918, Skwarcan's friend Sternet finally found him with other recruits "weeping and left eye blackened." Skwarcan told his friend that the officers had "beaten him up, cursed and abused him, and tried to get him to sign an application," which he refused to do. Despite his refusal, he was taken to the training camp in Canada. Other men that were with Skwarcan had been threatened with imprisonment if they did not enlist.⁵⁴

Three Galician-born residents of Newark, New Jersey, Michael Olexkiw, Michael Styranec and Andrew Petreyko, had a similar experience to that of Skwarcan except that they were not physically harmed. Intimidation came from another source. All three men worked at the Tollis Foundry in Newark, where a policeman arrived and took them to the Newark Armory. There, they were turned over to American soldiers who, in turn, took them to the Polish Army recruiting office where they were intimidated into "making their mark" on induction cards against their will. At this point they were escorted to the railroad station by a Polish officer who carried a revolver that the young men fully believed he would use if he men tried to escape.⁵⁵ The recruiters continued the practice of sending the induction notices to Poles classified as aliens until warned by the Bureau of Investigation to change the wording of the letter.⁵⁶

Other recruiters used more subtle forms of persuasion. For example, they promised some men who had already been drafted into the American army the opportunity to become officers if they transferred to the Polish Army.⁵⁷ One soldier, Thomas Majewski, a natural-born American citizen of Polish descent, after being examined by doctors and declared "physically unfit" by his local draft board, received permission to enter the Polish Army in France. The Polish recruiters

⁵⁴Ibid., 860c.22/36

⁵⁵Ibid., 860c.22/51.

⁵⁶Joseph T. Hapak, "Selective Service and Polish Army Recruitment during World War I," 49.

⁵⁷Records of the Department of State relating to internal affairs of Poland, 860c.22/18.

promised him he could enter the Polish officers' training school at Niagara-on-the-Lake, but to his dismay, he discovered that there was no officers' course, just a non-commissioned officers' course. He found the conditions were "entirely misrepresented regarding pay and conditions" by the recruiters. In the case of Majewski, the question of nationalism was not an issue, he only wanted to serve the cause of a free Poland as an officer; otherwise, he wanted to be released from the army.⁵⁸

While the above accounts of young Polish men who were forced, threatened, and deceived to enlist in the Polish Army in France are distressing, they pale when compared to the allegations made by A. Leo Weil, an attorney in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that recruits were told that in addition to fighting for liberation of their homeland, they could "exterminate the Jews of Poland" and take their property.⁵⁹ His letter to Colonel John M. Dunn, Acting Director of the United States Army Military Intelligence Division, led to an investigation by the War Department that included clandestine observations of the recruiting officers by United States Army personnel.

The War Department had Captain Edward H. Flood interview Nich Bardyn, who claimed the recruiters told him and others they could kill Jews. After he and three other men, Theodore Hrynyszyn, Mike Chereba and George Smorunk, joined the army, they were taken into a private room where they were told by an officer that they were going to Poland to fight as "patriots." To this the officer added the following statement:

It will be a part of your duty as such patriots to exterminate those fellows with the ear locks. All of them must be killed. You will have an opportunity in consequence for pillage and loot, as it is proposed to wipe out the Jews in every city in Poland.

⁵⁸Ibid., 860c.22/30.

⁵⁹Military Intelligence Division, War Department General Staff, 10059-89.

Flood then instructed an “operative” of Polish birth who had been assigned to his office by the Military Intelligence Division in Washington, D.C. to work among the foreign population, to “mingle” with men who intended to join the Polish Army to discover if they had been told the same as Bardyn. The operative did not find anyone who could corroborate the story.⁶⁰

Similar investigations in Chicago and Boston produced the same results, that claims that recruiters were spreading anti-Semitic propaganda were unfounded. In Boston, when questioned about these allegations by plain-clothed American Army sergeants, the recruiters claimed that the “German or Bolshevist propagandists” started the rumor.⁶¹ In Chicago, a recruit said, “It is a d – lie and is German propaganda.”⁶² Only one report substantiates Weil’s claims. Captain John B. Trevor and Lieutenant Albert Hlavac of the Military Intelligence office in New York City describe the recruitment of the “Polish Legion” in New York City and vicinity in the following way:

- a): All kinds of promises are given to the prospective recruits as to their rights if they enlist in the Polish Legion in the fight for the establishment of an independent Poland, to be for the Poles only.
- b): Spreading of Anti-Jewish propaganda by the Polish Clergy (Catholics) among the Poles, who live mostly in communities and are generally devout Catholics.
- c): Use of liquor for recruiting purposes, and as soon as the prospective recruit becomes intoxicated, he is persuaded to sign his enlistment papers and is immediately spirited away to the Concentration Camp at Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada, without any opportunity of communication with friends.⁶³

These examples of the recruiting practices suggest that the formation of the Polish Army in France were less honorable than most depictions of its creation convey. Stronger evidence to support the allegations that recruits were told that they could attack Jews comes from the fact

⁶⁰Ibid., 10059-89.

⁶¹Ibid., 10059-89, 9.

⁶²Ibid., 10059-89, 17.

⁶³Ibid., 10059-89, 11.

that once the Army arrived in Poland after the Armistice, there were numerous reports of attacks on Jews. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Absent in the rhetoric of the Polish leaders like Paderewski who sought to transform the Polish immigrants into ardent patriots was justification for the type of coercion it required to motivate individuals to join the Polish Army in France. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Polish author Adam Mickiewicz had described his countrymen as “pilgrims” who waited for the opportunity to free their homeland, and created an image that persisted among other Polish leaders. Mickiewicz wrote that the “Polish Pilgrims are the soul of the Polish nation . . . No Pole on his pilgrimage is called a wanderer, for a wanderer is a man straying without a goal; nor is he an exile, for an exile is a man exiled by the decree of the government, but his government did not exile the Pole.” The Pilgrim “hath made a vow to journey to the holy land, the free country.” As Matthew Frye Jacobson explains, priests, colonization societies and nationalist organizations like the Polish National Alliance sought to insure that Poles in the United States were not “denationalized” nor “lost to the Fatherland.”⁶⁴

But the above accounts show that there was not a universal outpouring of patriotism and nationalism among Poles in America to personally join in fight to liberate Poland. No doubt thousands of men who joined the army had a sincere devotion to the cause of Polish independence and a heart-felt sense of nationalism. Their patriotism and loyalty would be tested in a much more difficult arena than a recruiting office in America and training camp in Canada: the trenches of the Western front and battlefields of the Polish-Soviet War. In all, 38,108 men applied for duty. The Polish Army in France accepted 22,395 men for military service and sent 20,721 to France during the First World War.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 14-15.

⁶⁵Hapak, “Recruiting a Polish Army in the United States, 1917-1918,” 171.

*

The Falcons' movement that began in partitioned Poland in the mid-nineteenth century laid the framework for creation of the Polish Army in France. To increase support the new army, Ignacy Paderewski used nationalistic language to inspire young Polish immigrants to join the army he hoped would total 100,000 men. The American decision to only allow aliens to join the organization and not United States citizens, even if they were of Polish decent, seriously diminished the number of potential volunteers. This led recruiters to use false information and abusive tactics to obtain volunteers. These tactics began with sending false draft notices to Polish immigrants and promises of officer training and went as far as to promise individuals they could attack Jews and take their property once they reached Poland.



General Jozef Haller. Photo from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Jozef_Haller.jpg. Internet accessed 26 May 2006.

Chapter 3: Fighting on the Western Front, Transfer to Poland after the Armistice of 1918 and Attacks on Jews.

The Polish Army in France fought in the trenches of the Western front from the Summer of 1917 until the Armistice ended the First World War on 11 November 1918. When the war ended, the Allies decided to send these Polish troops to recreated Poland, but vehement German protest against Polish troops in Germany caused much discussion at the at the Paris Peace Conference. Allied insistence eventually led to German acquiescence on the issue. Section I of this chapter describes the fighting on the Western Front and argues that there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the Polish Army in France which underscores the lack of nationalism that many of the men felt. Section II describes and explains the negotiations between the Allies, led by French Marshal Ferdinand Foch, and the Germans concerning the movement of the soldiers. Section III describes the transportation of the Polish Army in France across Germany and the darkest episode in the activities of the soldiers when some of the men attacked Jews after entering Poland.

I

By June 1918, the Polish Army in France approximately equaled the size of one French division: twelve thousand men divided into three regiments of infantry, one brigade of artillery, two squadrons of cavalry, and two companies of engineers which formed the basis of an aviation service and a hospital corps. In organization, training and tactics, they followed French methods and used French equipment. They wore blue uniforms and came to be called the “Blue Army.”

By the summer of 1918, the French planned to keep two-thirds of the men at the most dangerous front lines, which at that time occupied a sector north of Chamery under the high command of General Henri Gouraud of the French Fourth Army. According the American Military Attaché Robert Maverick, “The discipline of the troops seems excellent. They are a sturdy, earnest lot of soldiers, somewhat lacking in training.”¹

The officers for the Polish Army had been chosen from officers and men in the Allied armies with experience in modern warfare. To the thousands of Poles from America were added about 2,800 prisoners of war (POWs) captured in German uniform. Like Alsatian prisoners of war, they had received “special lenient treatment” and were permitted to enlist in Allied military units. The Germans had taken Alsace from the French in 1871, and the French wanted the territory and its citizens returned to France. France considered Alsatians to be Frenchmen perhaps or likely forced to serve in the German army. Although treaties and international agreements at The Hague (1899 and 1907) forbade forced recruitment of prisoners of war, France considered citizens of Alsace and Lorraine to have the right, even an obligation, to serve in the French army. The Paris government extended that interpretation to include Polish POWs because they assumed that Poles had been conscripted against their will and therefore could legally be recruited. The Germans, of course, protested. Other men had been recruited from Allied and neutral countries in Europe.²

The effort on the part of Poles to win independence for their homeland received a tremendous boost in January 1918 when President Wilson proclaimed the “Fourteen Points” that justified his desire for America to declare war against the Central Powers and outlined his plan insuring peace in post-war Europe. The thirteenth point was of critical importance to Poles.

¹Report on the Polish Forces in France, Lieutenant Robert Maverick, American Military Attaché, 24 June 1918, 2034-6, Record Group 165, National Archives/College Park, MD.

²Ibid.

Wilson called for an independent Poland: “An independent Polish state should be erected which should include free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by covenant.”³ The other Allied nations accepted Wilson’s appeal, and on 3 June 1918 the Supreme War Council passed the “Versailles Declaration” that called for an independent Poland, stating that it “is one of the conditions of lasting peace and justice in Europe.”⁴

From the Summer of 1917 until the Fall of 1918, Polish soldiers served as troop replacements for French Fourth Army, where they gained much training and combat experience. In order to train the Polish officers, the French command assigned them first to French units and then later transferred them to Polish units. France was desperate for infantry replacements but discouraged independent field commands by foreigners. British and American expeditionary forces had to negotiate firmly with the French to control their own operations, even though they had their own training, doctrine, and economic power bases. Polish troops had to be trained by the French officers in French methods and equipment. Even experienced soldiers had to adapt from their prior training in Russian, German, or Austrian military traditions. They had to accept French control.

In one of their first encounters with the Germans on 18 June 1918, the Polish First Regiment, consisting mostly of members of the Polish Falcons from America, moved into sectors of the front held by the American 81st (“Wildcat”) Division, a Tennessee National Guard unit.⁵ In his report on of the Polish First Regiment, Lieutenant W. Piekarski described the actions during a two-week rotation in the front lines:

³Pienkos, *Polish National Alliance*, 110.

⁴Cited in *Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiego w Ameryce*, Section XXVI.

⁵Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 100.

On the night of June 18 to 19, the third battalion launched an attack on the German positions in the Le Grille wood. The platoon commanded by Second Lieutenant Witkowski crossed the labyrinth of ditches separating the enemies. They made their way through barb wires and attacked a nest of a German defense. The immediate counterattack of the enemy made the platoon withdraw in very difficult conditions – on the enemies’ area. The platoon suffered huge losses: 2 people killed, 7 wounded and 3 missing.

On June 23, the seventh company foiled the ambush set by the Germans on Arras position. On June 25 the Germans made an attempt of seizing our Friedrichshaven position (the position of the seventh company). They were fought off by fire of light machine guns and grenades.⁶

In June 1918 the Polish Army in France received its official battle banners from French President Raymond Poincaré near the regiment’s position at Villeres-Marmery. The President presented the banners from the cities of Paris, Verdun, Belfort, and Nancy and stated with ceremonial eloquence, “The sons of Poland are coming in great numbers from America to fight henceforth under their own colors on the side of their allies in defense of national ideals . . . The white eagle of Poland may now spread its wings anew and soar in the radiance of victory.”⁷ Roman Dmowski, president of the Polish National Committee, along with representatives of the French, English, Italian and American governments were present at the ceremony.⁸ After Dmowski and General Gouraud inspected the troops, the men swore the following oath:

I swear in the presence God and Holy Trinity that I will be faithful to my Homeland, the only one and indivisible Poland. I swear I am ready to sacrifice my life to contribute to the holy matter of regaining Her independence and unification. I swear I will always defend my banner, I will abide by discipline and obey orders of my military superiors and swear to guard the honor of the Polish soldier.
God help me to keep my oath.⁹

A *New York Times* correspondent captured the passion many of the men felt about carrying the Polish flag into battle for first time in over century. Walter Duranty wrote that, “the

⁶Lieutenant W. Piekarski “Military actions of the First Regiment of Polish Riflemen on the front in Champagne, *Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiego w Ameryce*, XVI.

⁷*New York Times*, 23 June 1918, 5.

⁸“A Pole” 21 June 1918, *Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiego w Ameryce*, XVI, 1-2.

⁹*Ibid.*

eyes of soldiers who had fought this war from the beginning were glistening with tears at the first realization of the dream that four generations of Polish patriots had pursued in vain.”¹⁰ One soldier who had fought with the French since the war began and had his leg “torn off” at the battle of the Somme, received a flag by the women of Bayonne. The Polish Foreign Legion had seen action so heavy that its flag had thirty-seven bullet holes. Only a “tiny handful” of the original members of that unit remained to fight with the Polish-American volunteers. Duranty explained the symbolism of the ceremony to his readers in the United States:

To America, perhaps more than to any other nation the country’s flag is the supreme object of reverence. It is not hard for Americans to imagine what would be the feelings of soldiers who, after a long and desperate struggle to maintain their own language and individuality against foreign tyrants, know that at last the emblem of their ancient glory is waving above their ranks.¹¹

Not all the soldiers were devoted to the Polish flag and the cause of Polish independence. On 29 July 1918, less than a week after the pageantry of the flag ceremony, one American volunteer and two Polish recruits from prisoner of war captivity deserted. Shortly thereafter, a German plane dropped pictures of the deserters with leaflets stating that the war was over for these men and that they had been forced to join the Polish Army in France. Translated from Polish, the leaflets delivered the following message:

Comrades of the 10th Company can you recognize us?

Poles! – Comrades!

We do not want to fight with you. We trust you do not want to either. France and America have not the right to make us fight against Germans who are at peace with your homeland Poland.

The German army saved you from the Russian terror. The government from Warsaw let France know that Poland wants to live with Germany in peace and that they do not want any French influence.

You do not have to fight for France that has none of their own soldiers and expose you to disability and death . . . So go back to your Polish country, to your families. Your way leads through our trenches. Do not hesitate to come to us.

¹⁰*New York Times*, 24 June 1918, 1.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 3.

Many of your Polish comrades have already come to us and they do not regret it .
 . . .¹²

This was a standard method of front-line propaganda. But the text did play upon the divided loyalties of Poles who had served in foreign armies and governments and who had been promised some degree of post-war self-rule by all sides. Despite these appeals, no mass desertions by the Polish soldiers occurred and reflected the deep attachment the volunteers felt for the Allied cause and the rejection of the Germans.

On 20 July 1918, the First Polish Rifle Regiment received orders to attack German positions near the town of Auberive. Following a moving barrage, they began their forward movement at 8:30 p.m. They took the German positions, but lost six men and suffered fifteen wounded. They followed on 25 July 1918 with what General Archinard called a “splendid attack” on German positions in the Raquette forest. The Polish 5th company destroyed one battalion of the German 66th Infantry Regiment and captured over one hundred prisoners. Although his thumb was shot away, the 2nd battalion’s adjutant, Captain Piekarski, remained at the head of his unit all day and all night. During the engagement, one of the non-commissioned officers killed several Germans, including a captain whom he disposed of with a blow from a pickaxe handle. The French Army report of the events stated that the Polish forces and French forces had:

. . . broken a fierce German offensive on 15 July, during the night from 24 to 25 July, following a short artillery fire preparation, they seized in one thrust, in spite of the enemy’s hard resistance, the objects of their attack spread over the area 2 km wide and almost 1 km deep, captured over 200 prisoners and a significant amount of equipment.¹³

The Polish army experienced intense military action during the summer of 1918. It was then that Colonel Jozef Haller emerged as a leader in the Polish independence movement. Haller

¹²*Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiego w Ameryce*, Section XXVI.

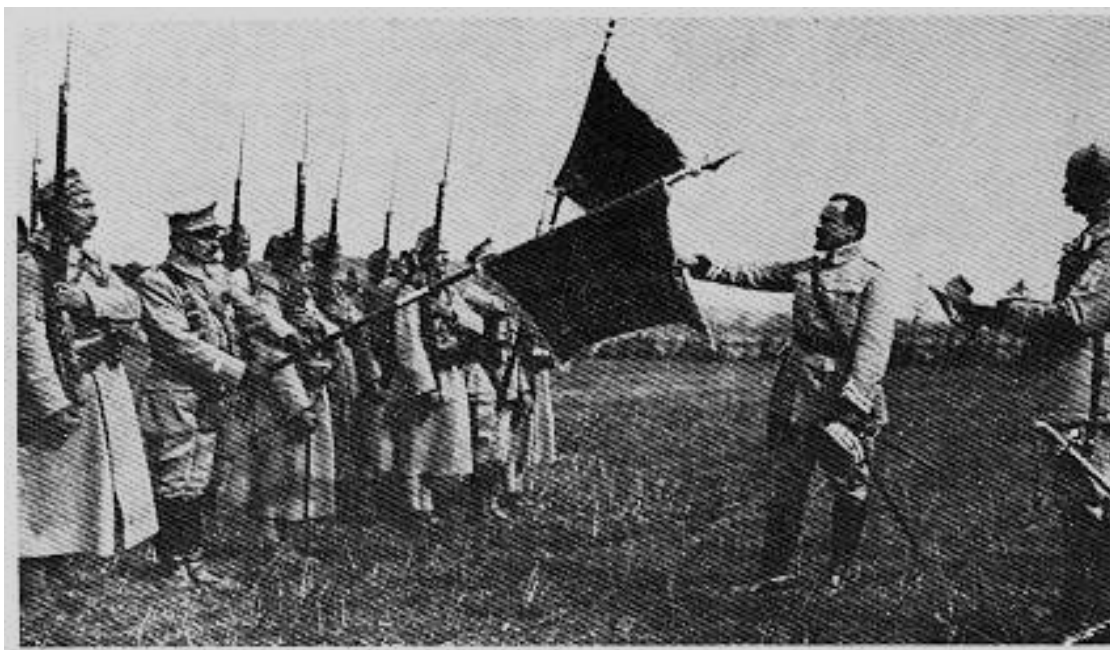
¹³*Ibid.*, Section XXXVIII.

was an officer of Polish descent, who had led a unit of Polish troops in the Austro-Hungarian army called the “Carpathian Iron Brigade.” Prior to the First World War, he had served as an officer in the Austrian army and had served as a military instructor for the Polish Falcons in Galicia from 1908 to 1914. With the outbreak of the war, he became the commander of the second Polish legionary brigade under the authority of the Austrians. In March 1918, he led his forces in a revolt against the Central Powers in protest of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty that ended the war on the Eastern Front. He later left Russia through the port of Murmansk. Haller communicated to Paderewski his desire to coordinate the activities of his troops with those being organized in France. Haller’s men had successfully engaged German and Austrian forces sent to intercept them and he wanted to combine their experience with that of members of the Polish army fighting on the Western front for a united and free Poland.¹⁴

By the middle of August, Haller, now a general, was in Paris. He related in an interview with the *London Daily Chronicle* that his countrymen were on their way to Poland from Russia and Siberia to join his forces that assembled at Murmansk on the coast of the Arctic Ocean. Although the Bolsheviks prevented the Poles from reaching their destination and stopped the transportation of supplies, he was confident that the goal of an independent Poland would be attained. Given the task of coordinating the movement of all Polish forces fighting the common enemy, Haller berated the Central Powers for bad faith: “what they offered with one hand, they withdrew with the other.” According to Haller, the Germans had no intention of giving the Poles real independence; the Allies, on the other hand, recognized Poland's “sacred right” to be an autonomous nation. Once he arrived in France, Haller became Dmowski’s choice for the Polish

¹⁴*New York Times*, 3 July 1918, 4. For more on Haller see *Józef Haller de Hallenburg*; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jozef_Haller_de_Hallenburg; Internet accessed 1 April 2006.

Army in France's commander-in-chief and he took command on 6 October 1918. As it turned out, his appointment came only five weeks before the end of the war.¹⁵



General Haller becomes “Commander in Chief of the Polish Armies” on the Western Front, October 6, 1918. Photo from Donald Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887-1987*, I-18.

In October 1918, the British Government recognized the Polish Army as “autonomous, allied, and co-belligerent,” and the American government did likewise the following month.¹⁶ On 21 October 1918, the French decided to launch an attack that included the Polish Army in France. The operation was to begin on 14 November, but the Allies and the Central Powers signed the Armistice three days earlier. According to Lieutenant Piekarski, many of the soldiers had a strong nationalist sentiment:

While the trucks were being loaded in preparation for the attack, the Poles received the order canceling the attack since the cease-fire had been agreed upon. The French soldiers were glad to receive that message whereas the Polish soldiers were rather indifferent and disappointed. They had been deprived of the aim the whole division had been trying to achieve: fighting against Germans on the

¹⁵Ibid., 15 August 1918, 3.

¹⁶Ibid., 17 Oct 1918, 1; 5 Nov 1918, 12.

Western front. Each soldier asked what would happen with the regiments that had been trained for fighting for such a long time. All of the soldiers believed that the Allied victory would guarantee the rights of Poles to the lands of the German, Russian and Austrian annexations. Everyone's intention, was to come back with the Division to independent Poland to devote to their homeland all their effort and to become the Polish Army.¹⁷

The enthusiasm was not shared by all the men who served on the Western front. Like much of the historiography about the Polish Army in France, Polish authors attempt to cast the overall effort in the most positive manner possible, but closer analysis reveals a negative side to the experience of the soldiers. In a report about the Polish Legion in the French Army filed by Brigadier General D.E. Nolan, Assistant Chief of Staff, American Expeditionary Force, many Poles from America were very dissatisfied with the conditions in their outfit. The Poles complained that recruiters in the United States had induced them to join by promising them that they would receive the same pay, rations and clothing as American soldiers, but as of September 1918 they had received the much lower pay of French soldiers, "very meager rations," and "inferior" clothing. Many men claimed that their faith in the promises made to them by recruiters had been "broken."¹⁸ These complaints may have reflected a lack of commitment to the cause or perhaps just lack of satisfaction with conditions.

Especially demoralizing was their belief that they were simply being used as "man-power" for the French Army without any regard for the future of Poland. Nolan asserted that, "the majority of the Legion are anxious to get out." Polish "cadet officers" had an additional complaint. They had been denied the opportunity to become full-fledged officers once they arrived in France, as they had been promised by recruiters in the United States. Despite the fact that they had enough experience, the Poles had been placed in minor positions while the French

¹⁷*Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiego w Ameryce*, Section XXX.

¹⁸Brigadier General D.E. Nolan, Assistant Chief of Staff, American Expeditionary Force, to Chief, Military Intelligence Branch, Executive Division, 18 September 1918, 10059-78.

had taken the “desirable ones.” According to General Nolan, the result was the Polish Army was being “run with the French rather than the Polish end in view.”¹⁹

The U.S. State Department received letters from individuals in the Polish Army requesting release from military service before being sent from France to Poland. One soldier remarked that he was homesick and when he observed the American soldiers preparing to return to United States, he longed to join them. The argument of these men and, in many cases, their families was that they volunteered for service with the Polish Army “in France,” and they were being “forced” to go to Poland.²⁰ The United States' government informed them that the duration of their service in the Polish army lasted until a stable government formed in the new Polish state.²¹ An army would be needed to thwart the expansion of Soviet Russia and to establish boundaries of the new states of Poland, Germany, and Austria. General Haller's office also received many requests from soldiers from America to be released from service since hostilities had been concluded on the Western Front. Haller refused to consider dismissal of any soldiers until the peace treaty with the Central Powers was completed. He understood that since the Army was comprised of tens of thousands of men, death or illness in a soldier's family was bound to occur. This was not, however, grounds for obtaining release from the Polish Army in France.²² The repeated requests for the release from the Polish Army in France based on a multitude of reasons were an indication that many of the men were not committed to the cause of Polish independence. The nationalism demonstrated when they volunteered faded when confronted with the reality of war and prospect of going to re-created Poland and continuing to fight against the Bolsheviks.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰ Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Poland, 1916-1944, 860c.2225/3, 9, 13, 14, 108, RG 59, NA/College Park, MD.

²¹Ibid., 860c.22/87.

²²*Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiego w Ameryce*, 683.

II

At the same time that the war ended in France, Jozef Pilsudski obtained his release from Germans and returned to Warsaw where he became Chief-of-State and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army. Immediately he became embroiled in the problems of settling the boundaries with Poland's neighbors. The outbreak of hostilities with the Soviets led the Polish government to consolidate and organize its forces under Pilsudski's direction, in preparation to stop the spread of Bolshevism on its eastern border.²³ Following the Armistice, Pilsudski requested that French Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Allied Commander in Chief, transfer the Polish Army in France to Poland. This was not immediately done, however. According to Stanley Pliska, Foch may have feared involvement in Polish politics. Certainly, Roman Dmowski, who wielded a great amount of influence in Allied circles, preferred to wait for further developments before committing a military force into a political realm dominated by Pilsudski, his socialist rival.²⁴

At the beginning of the Paris Peace Conference two rival factions claimed to represent the legitimate voice of a recreated Poland. On one hand, there was Dmowski, the leader of the Polish National Committee considered by the British to be a right-wing extremist and overtly anti-Semitic. While he desired a large Poland to thwart any future German aggression and the immediate threat from the Bolsheviks, his grandiose ideas of Polish boundaries that mirrored those of 1772 alienated many Allied statesmen. On the other hand, there was the more pragmatic Pilsudski, who was a national hero and wanted a strong Poland. Pilsudski was willing to include Lithuanians and Ukrainians in a federation to stand against Bolshevik power.²⁵

²³Ibid.

²⁴ Stanley R. Pliska, "The 'Polish-American Army' 1917-1921," *The Polish Review* 10, Number 3 (Summer 1965): 56-57.

²⁵ Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919, Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 211. Also see Kay Lundgreen-Nielsen, *The Polish Problem at the Paris Peace Conference, A Study of the Policies of the Great Powers and the Poles, 1918-1919* (Odense University Press, Denmark: 1979), 125-160.

The character of Allied diplomacy changed before and during the peace conference. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918) had profoundly altered the geographical contours of World War I in its last stage. German and Austro-Hungarian forces occupied Byelorussia and much of Ukraine as well as the Polish heartland. Large German units were released for service on the western front. This enabled General Erich Ludendorff to concoct five great offensives intended to conquer France. Their failure ruined German chances for a negotiated peace, but it is important to recognize that the combat experienced by the Poles and Americans late in 1918 was in response to German offensives. They were significant in the last phase of the military part of the war. The Poles claimed that their participation on the battlefields justified their territorial claims at the peace conference at Paris in 1919. The Russian Bolsheviks had been ejected from Baltic territories, Byelorussia and Ukraine as a result of Brest-Litovsk but after the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy in October and the surrender of Germany in November 1918, the Bolsheviks were returning to territories of the old Russian Empire. That made the military security of Poland extremely precarious and led to the Polish-Soviet war of 1919-1920.

The Polish Army in France was technically under the authority of Dmowski and the Polish National Committee. Allied leaders were concerned that the arrival of the Army in Poland under Dmowski's direction could lead to civil war without Pilsudski's agreement on the leadership in the new nation. Paderewski went to Warsaw in January 1919 and worked out the structure of the new government with Pilsudski. Their agreement named Pilsudski head-of-state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces and Paderewski would head a coalition government as prime minister. Assisted by Dmowski, Paderewski would also act as Poland's representative at the Peace Conference.²⁶

²⁶Ibid., 213-214.

With the question of rival political factions settled, Haller's Army, as the Polish Army in France came to be known, became the subject of numerous discussions at the Peace Conference. The major question was which route the army should take to Poland. Foch believed that the best way was to have the men board ships in France and sail to Danzig and then take trains to the city of Thorn (Torun in Polish) or from Danzig to Mława. But, according to Foch, the Germans would resist the passage of the troops through Danzig, just as they would resist the loss of Posen (Poznań), the German partition of Poland. Foch proposed creation of a base at Danzig with protection and security of the entire rail line through Germany. The Allied leaders, however, rejected this proposal.²⁷

In a subsequent meeting, Foch explained that the Allies had in "theory," according to terms of the Armistice, the right to use the Danzig to Thorn railway, but in "practice" the Germans controlled the area. Thus, without the Allies sending in troops, the plans for transporting the Polish troops via this route was "unrealizable." If it required an army to establish a base at Danzig and protect the railroad, British representative Arthur J. Balfour asserted that the Polish Army would be able to perform these tasks. But Foch explained that while the Germans would not interfere with Allied troops out of fear of reprisals on the Western Front, they would attack the Poles, especially since the Polish troops were not completely organized.²⁸

Despite Foch's warnings that the disembarkation of the Polish troops at Danzig would result in armed conflict with the Germans, some members of the Peace Conference, including British Secretary of State Alfred Milner, inquired of Foch whether the Allies could simply demand that the Germans allow the Polish troops to land at Danzig and proceed on trains to

²⁷Minutes of the Council of Ten, 22 January 1919, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States(hereafter cited as FRUS), The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, Volume III, 670-671.

²⁸Minutes of the Council of Ten, 24 February 1919, *ibid.*, Volume IV, 106-107.

Thorn and Mlawa under the threat of renewed hostilities on the Western Front. Wilson's chief adviser Edward House suggested an indirect approach that the Allied Commission in Poland explore the issue with the Germans. Foch agreed and proceeded to compose a telegram to the Commission in Poland. However, the message was more of an ultimatum than an inquiry:

In accordance with the terms of Clause XVI of the Armistice of 11th November, 1918, the Allies have free access to all territories evacuated by the Germans on their Eastern front, either by way of Dantzig (sic) or by the Vistula, both for the purposed of maintaining order.

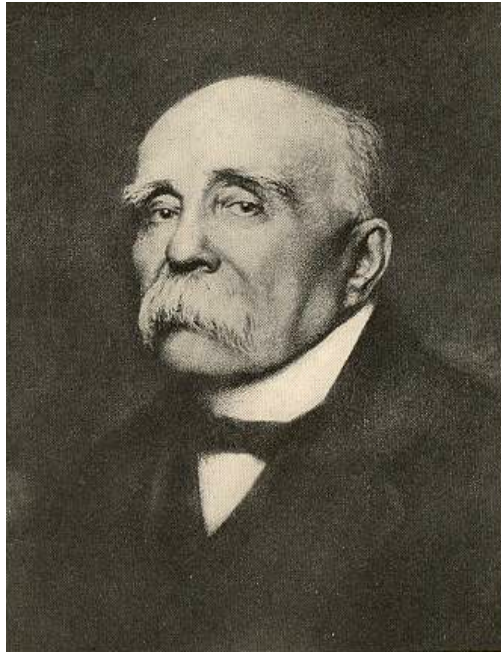
Taking advantage of this clause, the Allied and Associated Governments intend shortly to transport to Poland the Polish troops now in France and in Italy. These troops will disembark at Dantzig, whence they will proceed by rail via Thorn and Mlawa . . .²⁹

At a subsequent meeting of the Conference, French Premier Georges Clemenceau told the gathering that he had received a telegram from General P. Nudant of the Inter-Allied Commission stating that the Germans demanded that "no troops should be landed at Dantzig." According to General Kurt von Hammerstein, the military representative on the German Armistice Commission at Spa, Belgium, the transportation of Polish troops by railroad across an area heavily populated by Poles en route to Warsaw would lead to armed conflict in Eastern Prussia where German troops were facing the Bolsheviks. Foch further reported that, according to two French generals who had just arrived in Paris from a meeting with the Germans at Kreutz, General Hammerstein had personally obstructed the Allies' request.³⁰

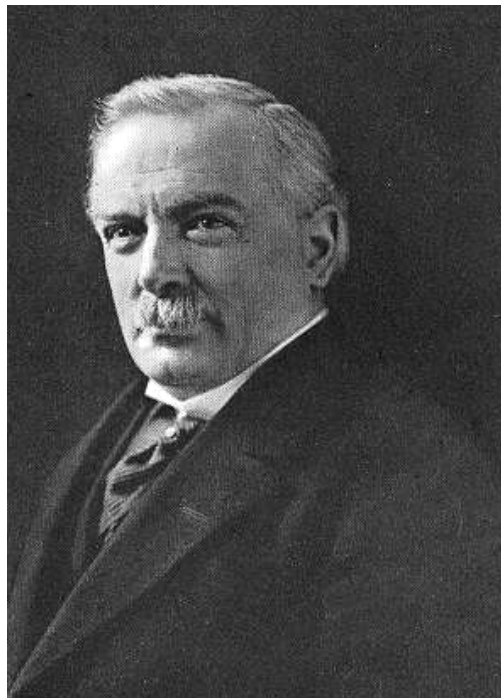
Aware of the dire need for Polish troops in Poland and with the prospect of being unable to transport them through Danzig, Foch had studied an alternate plan of transporting the men to their homeland. He reported to the Conference that in less than one week's time, enough rolling stock could be obtained to begin sending two trains per day to Poland. Although slow, it could be supplemented by water travel, although the

²⁹Ibid., 125-126.

³⁰Ibid., 11 February 1919, Volume IV, 315-316.



French Premier Georges Clemenceau.



British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Photos from Robert Lansing, *The Big Four and Others at the Paris Peace Conference*, 10, 78.

issue of transporting the men across Germany had still not been resolved. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George did not believe that the Germans would “point blank refuse” to abide by the conditions of the armistice. He suggested that Foch himself go to Spa and discuss the issue with the German representatives. Foch balked at the request. He saw no need to go and obtain verbal promises from the Germans that he did not believe they would give or uphold. He recommended again that the troops be sent via the slower land route, as they would “eventually” reach Poland. He stated flatly that “they would never get there” using the sea route. Lloyd George and Wilson wanted to avoid the appearance of backing down on demands that Danzig be opened to Polish troops.³¹



Marshal Ferdinand Foch. Photo from Margaret Macmillian, *Paris 1919*, 288.

³¹Ibid., 19 March 1919, 424-428, 430-431.

Still wanting to be sure that German intentions had not been misinterpreted, Lloyd George and Wilson renewed pressure on Foch to go to Spa. Foch demanded the right to threaten to reopen military operations if the Germans refused. Wilson suggested that the Germans would understand a “frank and open explanation” without stating what the consequences of refusal would be.³² At private meeting of the “Big Four” with Foch on 24 March 1919, the details of which are not contained in Papers Relating to the Paris Peace conference, the Marshal agreed to journey to Spa to meet with the Germans and negotiate the transport of the Polish Army to Poland. Foch did not receive the authority to renew fighting on the Western front if the Germans refused the use of Danzig as he had desired, but simply to confer with the Supreme War Council as to the repercussions.³³

It was agreed at the next meeting of the Council of Ten that Foch would invite the Germans to meet with him at Spa on 3 April 1919 to discuss the issue. The Allied leaders instructed the Marshal to explain to the Germans that contrary to latter’s belief, the Poles were indeed “Allies” since they fought on the Western front and were travelling to Poland for the “preservation of order.” The Council also added an important clause to the decision about Foch’s mission: “That Marshal Foch shall further be authorized, if he thinks it desirable, to arrange for the use of Stettin and other ports to supplement Danzig, where a portion of the troops will have to be disembarked.”³⁴

Foch proceeded to Spa and met with the German representative, Matthias Erzberger and negotiated the transfer of the Polish Army to Poland during the first week of April 1917. Contrary to the wishes of Lloyd George and Wilson, Foch used the authority given him by the Conference leaders to approve a land route and abandon any plans of using Danzig as a point of

³²Ibid., 428-430.

³³Annex to *procès-verbal*, *ibid.*, Volume IV, 472.

³⁴Minutes of the Council of Four, 30 March 1919, *ibid.*, Volume V, 15-16.



Woodrow Wilson. Photo from Robert Lansing, *Big Four and Others of the Peace Conference*, 38.

disembarkation. According to the agreement, General Haller's troops were to be sent in closed trains and would not personally carry any ammunition; it would be carried, along with other supplies, in "sealed wagons." The Allies would take "all measures" to avert any incidents between Haller's men and the German population.³⁵ To facilitate this, seventy-five American officers, each with an interpreter, were assigned to the trains. The Inter-Allied Railway Commission appointed officers to be at railway stations in Germany where the trains would stop for any length of time. The Poles were not to display any "outward manifestation of armed power" and to refrain from "singing or demonstrations of a character likely to cause trouble with

³⁵*Times* (London), 11 April 1919, 14.

the Germans.”³⁶ The trains were to stop every six hours to feed the men and take on supplies. The Poles were prohibited from leaving the railway stations, and guards were to be placed at the stations to prevent any infraction of this rule.³⁷

Despite the fact that Foch had disregarded Lloyd George’s instructions to demand that the troops be landed at Danzig, the Prime Minister congratulated the Marshal for his “remarkable skill and ability he had shown in the conduct of these negotiations.”³⁸ He praised Foch even though press reports indicated that the Allies had given in to German demands not to use the port of Danzig. A *Times* (London) headline called it a “BAD PRECEDENT FOR VERSAILLES” and argued that by conceding to the German demands, the Allies had not increased their “prestige,” but instead strengthened the German position and allowed them to become more “obstinate and stiff-necked.”³⁹

III

The Polish troops departed Trier (called Treves by the Allies) in the occupied Rhineland and were misrouted to Cologne instead of Koblenz (Coblentz).⁴⁰ After a week of trains crossing Germany territory, the Chief of the Military Mission at Warsaw reported that a few incidents had occurred where Germans had molested the trains and had broken into boxcars and taken food and clothing. By 19 May 1919, 192 trains had departed France for Poland: each carried a

³⁶Ibid., 17 April 1919, 12.

³⁷*New York Times*, 18 April 1919, 3.

³⁸Minutes of the Council of Four, 7 March 1919, *FRUS*, Volume V, 40, (“report on Spa negotiations not in Department files,” 39).

³⁹*Times* (London), 7 April 1919, 14.

⁴⁰Ibid., 19 April 1919, 12.

battalion of infantry and a squadron of cavalry or a battery of artillery or only supplies. About one hundred trains remained to finish the task due to be completed during the next few weeks.⁴¹

In celebration of the negotiations that allowed the Polish Army to be transported across Germany, Haller issued the following eloquent statement to his men:

POLISH SOLDIERS!

The moment that we have been waiting for so long has eventually come. The Polish army will soon leave Italy, France and America for Poland. Just like a hundred years ago, Polish soldiers are going home. But we have good reasons to be happier than our predecessors a century ago. We are free and revived, we can go into the dawn and rebirth! For the Polish soldier going back to his homeland now is in quite a different position from those a hundred years ago. However, the objectives have remained the same; and no matter how few of them, wherever in the world they were, throughout all the century, Polish soldiers always meant Polish Army. They always kept in their hearts the same ideals and courage, bravery which cannot let one stay impartial and which will always provoke one to act and to reach the final victory- to reach Poland free and glorious, unbound by the three chains, for only free Poland can be a goal for a Polish soldier . . .

General Józef Haller
Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army.⁴²

For Haller and the leaders of the Polish cause of independence, the prospect of an army of Poles returning to their homeland was the culmination of their desires, even though the soldiers expressed quite different feelings that lacked their leaders' ultra-patriotic sentiments.

In the Spring of 1919 the Polish Army in France, including approximately 20,000 Poles recruited in America, began arriving in Poland to aid in the creation of a truly independent Polish state and to halt the spread of the Bolsheviks to the West. The arrival of the Army in Poland, however, coincided with the darkest aspect of their activities

⁴¹Minutes of the Council of Four, 19 May 1919, *FRUS, Volume V*, 152, 703.

⁴²*Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiego w Ameryce*, 710.



Passage of Haller's Polish Army through Germany, April, 1919. Photos from Donald Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young: A History of the Polish Falcons of America, 1887-1987*, I-19

during their tenure in Europe, that is, attacks on Jews. Although vehemently denied by Poles in the United States and representatives of the new Polish Government, an official American Commission uncovered information that atrocities against Jews had occurred in many Polish cities and had been perpetrated in part by Polish soldiers. General Haller admitted that men under his command had participated in these actions.

After the November 1918 Armistice, numerous reports from Poland claimed that Jews had been attacked by individual Poles and members of the Polish military. One such report from the Jewish Distribution Committee at Paris specifically named members of Haller's Army as participating in the atrocities: "Polish soldiers of the recently returned Haller army are among those killing and robbing Jews." The report went on to state that "Polish recruits and soldiers of Haller's army arranged pogroms in Yendzlov and Brzozow." The report detailed several instances where Polish soldiers or "recruits" had killed Jews and claimed that "shops were pillaged and goods carried away."⁴³

While prominent American Poles and representatives of the Polish military and government denied that any pogroms had taken place, General Haller acknowledged that Jews had been attacked by soldiers under his command when he issued the following orders to his men in June 1919:

Soldiers, I have been told by the Jewish population of this country that they have been treated by Polish soldiers in a way which is in keeping neither with the honor nor the greatness of the Polish Army; that they have been beaten, abused, and injured; that their property is being destroyed.

Such demeanor is unworthy of Polish soldiers, who are servants of a holy cause. All those guilty of persecuting any portion of the population will be severely punished and court-martialed by my orders.

The Polish soldier is bound to distinguish himself by his good behavior so as to leave behind in the hearts of all citizens of the Polish State, independent of nationality or creed, an idea of the reconstruction of their country.

To be read by all detachments now under my command.

⁴³*New York Times*, 26 May 1919, 1, 6.

HALLER⁴⁴

The reports of massacres and demonstrations against Polish Jews led the American Commission to Negotiate Peace to appoint a commission comprised of Henry Morgenthau, Brigadier General Edgar Jadwin, and Homer H. Johnson to go to the newly recreated nation and investigate the allegations. In his final report, Morgenthau, who had formerly served as American Ambassador to Turkey, detailed the occurrences in eight separate Polish cities of anti-Semitic activities: Kielce (November 1918); Lemberg (now Lwow) (November 1918); Pinsk (April 1919); Lida (April 1919); Wilna (April 1919); Kolbussowa (May 1919); Czestochowa (May 1919); and Minsk (August 1919). A total of 228 Jews had been killed in these actions with many more injured and great deal of property stolen or destroyed.⁴⁵ Only the last of these incidents occurred after Haller made his warning to stop the attacks.

The Morgenthau report briefly recapped the history of Jews in Poland, including their migration from Western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and their rapid rise to positions in trade and finance. Despite the fact that Poland came to be seen in Europe as a place of refuge for the Jews, various anti-Semitic movements had existed over the centuries. The most recent before the First World War occurred in 1912 when the Polish National Democratic Party nominated an anti-Semitic candidate to represent Warsaw in the Russian Duma; however, the Jews supported the Polish Socialist candidate and won the election. After this action, the National Democratic Party began a zealous anti-Semitic campaign. Morgenthau summarized the differences between the Poles and Jews in following passage:

Moreover, Polish national feeling is irritated by what is regarded as the “alien” character of the great mass of the Jewish population. This is constantly brought home to the Poles by the fact that the majority of the Jews affect a distinctive

⁴⁴Ibid., 21 June 1919, 11.

⁴⁵Ibid., 19 January 1920, 6.

dress, observe the Sabbath on Saturday, conduct business on Sunday, have separate dietary laws, wear long beards, and speak a language of their own. The basis of this language is a German dialect, and the fact that Germany was, and still is, looked upon by the Poles as an enemy country renders this vernacular especially unpopular. The concentration of the Jews in certain districts or quarters in Polish cities also emphasizes the line of demarcation separating them from other citizens.⁴⁶

The attacks on the Jews by the Polish army demonstrated the feeling that the Jews were not a part of the Polish community and could be abused or expelled from the new Poland.

The end of the war left a chaotic situation in Poland and the spirit self-determination that emerged after the conflict led many Poles to view the Jews as aliens. In addition to physical violence by Poles against Jews, acts that Morgenthau claimed were agitated by the Polish politicians and the Polish press, the National Democratic Party also called for the “economic strangling of the Jews.” Politicians not only wanted Poles to boycott Jewish businesses but also warned landowners not to sell property to Jews. Those that failed to comply had their names posted under the heading: “dead to Poland.” Adding to the conflict was fact that in post-war Poland prices had doubled and tripled, and the Polish population blamed the Jews who were involved in commerce.⁴⁷

While the Morgenthau report did not specifically name the members of Polish Army in France or Haller specifically as earlier press reports had done, it pointed out that the soldiers were the primary perpetrators of violence on the Jews. In addition to the reasons listed above, many of the soldiers believed the Jews to be Bolsheviks and this “inflamed” their prejudice toward them. Morgenthau concluded that the responsibility for the attacks on Jews laid squarely on the poor training of the Polish troops:

The responsibility for these excesses is borne for the most part by the undisciplined and ill-equipped Polish recruits, who, uncontrolled by their

⁴⁶Ibid., 6.

⁴⁷Ibid.

inexperienced and oftentimes timid officers, sought to profit at the expense of that portion of the population which they regarded as hostile to Polish nationality and aspirations . . .⁴⁸

In an interview that appeared in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* in July 1919, Haller offered his version of the Polish troops' attacks on Jews. According to the General, all of the men under his command enjoyed complete religious freedom; indeed, three percent of his men were Jews. As his men arrived in Poland, Jewish "money-exchangers and merchants" who were also Bolsheviks, mingled with his men and attempted to create a sentiment against "militarism" in order to demoralize the army. As more troops began to arrive from France, these propagandists found that the men were immune to the "Bolshevist infection." According to Haller:

The men often made it a point during the short stops at the stations to invite the propagandists in the wagons, and then to horsewhip them, or punish them in some other way. At those occasions many a Jew – for all these bolshevist propagandists were Jews – got a good beating; as also many a money-exchanger, who offered a Polish Mark for a French franc, and many a merchant who cheated the soldiers horribly . . . got a thorough horsewhipping . . .

Afterwards, the Jews who had been beaten told others that they had attacked because they were Jews and said nothing about spreading Bolshevik propaganda or cheating the soldiers.⁴⁹ Even though serious allegations of violence against Jews had been made against his men, Haller justified the acts since they had tried to demoralize the soldiers.

Haller also argued that any disturbance involving Jews, no matter how small, was reported in the foreign press as a pogrom. This was part of an overall campaign led by the Germans to discredit Poland in the eyes of her friends and neutral nations. In fact, Haller claimed, foreign agents incited the troops to violence against the Jews. Haller used a recent riot in Crakow as an example of how a minor disturbance was transformed into pogrom since it

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Report on Jewish Bolsheviks in Poland, 8 July 1919, Military Intelligence Division, 2057-2109.

involved Jews. The correspondent, however, pointed out that in Crakow, where there were so many Jews, stores that were looted naturally belong to Jews, but incidentally, it was almost always the most-hated Jews whose businesses were attacked. If a Christian owned a business, then there was a greater likelihood that his shop would not be targeted.⁵⁰

Of course Haller would be expected to diminish the responsibility of his men in any wrongdoing and attribute the source to others, but the reports reflect the fact that his men had indeed attacked Jews. While these events further show that all was not honorable in their activities in Europe, the men would face extreme difficulties and challenges in the months ahead as they would now fight not with the French on the Western Front, but against the Soviet Army on the battlefields of the Polish-Soviet War under the leadership of the Marshal Pilsudski.

*

After fighting ended the Western Front, the Allied leaders decided to send the Polish Army in France to the newly recreated Poland. Many members of the Army did not want to journey to former homeland but desired instead to return to the United States. This demonstrated that their commitment to Polish independence lacked the level that statesmen like Paderewski had hoped to create or they believed that their service to Poland had been completed and they simply wanted to return to their families in America and continue life as Americans. The declining commitment to fighting for a free Poland was exacerbated by poor conditions and the belief that promises made to them by recruiters had been broken. Since Germany was not occupied by the Allies after the First World War, they were reluctant to allow an armed force to travel through their nation and they did not view the Poles as part of the victorious Allies. Poland had been under the control of the Germans and the other partitioning powers and simply its recreation at Versailles did not mean that the Germans would immediately have respect for

⁵⁰Ibid.

their neighbor to the East. French General Ferdinand Foch insisted that Allies exercise their power over the defeated Germans and force them to allow the transfer of Polish Army from France through Germany to Poland. Once the men reached Poland, evidence shows that they attacked Jews and although General Jozef Haller condemned these actions, they demonstrated the intensity of anti-Semitism that existed in Poland and Europe in the first part of the twentieth century.



The Battle of Warsaw (the "Miracle at the Vistula"), the decisive battle of the Polish-Soviet War. Painting by Jerzy Kossak. Photo from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_Soviet_War; Internet accessed 10 February 2006.

Chapter 4. Veterans of the Polish Army in France in the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1920): Victory and Disillusionment.

The members of the Polish Army in France experienced the hardships of battle in the trenches of the Western Front and were then transferred across Germany to join the forces of the newly recreated Polish Army engaged in the early stages of the Polish-Soviet War. Section I of this chapter describes the events of the Polish-Soviet War that established the border between recreated Poland and the new Soviet Union and evaluates the leadership of Poland's head of state, Jozef Pilsudski. Section II analyzes the activities of the Polish Army in France once it became incorporated into the greater Polish Army, with emphasis on the growing sense of dissatisfaction felt by soldiers. Even though the volunteers had risked their lives in the name of their native land, many did not want to commit their futures to their recreated country. Section III describes and analyzes the lack of strong national awareness among the Polish peasant class which comprised the majority of the individuals who came to the United States before the First World War.

I

The First World War and its attendant revolutions shattered the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian states that had partitioned Polish territory, leaving a power vacuum. The victorious allies encouraged a revived Poland to fill this vacuum, and thereby limit expansion of communist-dominated territory westward and weaken Germany as a central European power. The Polish-Soviet war-after-the-war exhausted the resources of all participants and dimmed the expected glory of Polish national sovereignty. The Bolsheviks wanted Poland under communist control. The new German Republic wanted to avoid the onus of giving up control of Danzig,

West Prussia, and Upper Silesia. Lithuania wanted to reclaim Vilna (Wilno) and Belorus (Byelorussia or White Russia), and Ukraine wanted to occupy territories east of the originally proposed boundary of Poland, the so-called Curzon Line.

Poles had to fight numerous wars to establish their territorial integrity and the national boundaries of Poland: two against the Germans over the Poznan region (Poznan) and Silesia, one against Lithuania, one against Czechoslovakia over the Cieszyn region, one against the Ukraine over control of Eastern Galicia. Most important was the Polish-Soviet War (February 1919 until October 1920) for control of the newly recreated republic.¹ The Soviets desired to spread Bolshevism into areas formerly controlled by the tsars despite of the aspirations of recently liberated Poles for national sovereignty. Committed to the abolition of private enterprise, social class, and religion, Soviet Russia stood fundamentally opposed to the new Polish republic, which was overwhelmingly Catholic and run by men dedicated to private property and class interest. The ideological differences were compounded by the fact that the two nations had been historical enemies.²

The motivations for the Bolsheviks need to be understood in terms of the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk (December 1917-March 1918) which ended the war between Russia and the Central Powers and left the Russian Baltic and Polish provinces and a good part of Byelorussia and Ukraine in German hands. Until the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in October 1918 and the surrender of Germany in November 1918, these territories remained out of the reach of Bolshevik power. Russia in the meantime had been absorbed in its civil war, one complicated by American intervention in the Russian northwest and in Siberia and Japanese

¹Davies, *God's Playground*, Volume II, 394.

²Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star, The Polish-Soviet War, 1919-20* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 31.

occupation of Vladivostok until 1920. This left the Bolsheviks unable to concentrate on spreading communism into the Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, or Baltic regions the Paris Peace Conference established the new states of Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia in territories formerly claimed by Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. The Soviets prevailed in Russia but at great cost of lives and resources. Their efforts to extend their revolution to the west met resistance from anti-Bolshevik Cossacks, Ukrainians, and of course, Poles. The Soviet-Polish part of these hostilities proved to Lenin that the triumph of communism would have to wait. In 1921, Lenin announced the end of militant "war communism" and replaced it with a "new economic policy" (NEP).

Meanwhile, the Poles proclaimed an independent republic on 3 November 1918, days before the Armistice that ended the First World War on November 11. Later that month, Polish troops began marching into German-controlled Posen, now to be called by its Polish name Poznan, and Austrian-controlled Galicia under the direction of Pilsudski. On 28 June 28 1919, the Treaty of Versailles established Poland's western boundary while awarding the new nation a strip of land along the Vistula River. This so-called "Polish Corridor" gave the Poles access to the North Sea. At the mouth of the river was Danzig, primarily inhabited by Germans. The treaty called for it to be a "Free City" administered by the League of Nations. The Polish Corridor cut through West Prussia and left East Prussia without a land bridge to the main body of German land. It included many ethnic Germans within the borders of the new Polish state. In December 1918, the Supreme Allied Council laid down the so-called Curzon Line to establish Poland's eastern boundary. The Poles rejected it since it did not include all of the territories they held before the First Partition in 1772.³

³William L. Langer, *An Encyclopaedia of World History* (London: George W. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1968), 1037.

The Polish-Soviet War began with an unplanned encounter between Poles and Soviets at Bereza Karuzka in Byelorussia in February 1919. At that time, neither side was adequately prepared to fight a war. While the Soviets at least had a centralized command and a full year's experience coordinating military activity, the Poles did not even have a formalized military structure until two weeks after fighting with the Soviets had begun. Poland's military consisted of soldiers who had served on various fronts and in different armies on both sides of the conflict during the First World War. By 1919, the soldiers had two things in common: their loyalty to the new Polish republic and their commander-in-chief, Jozef Pilsudski.⁴

Born in 1867, Pilsudski attended the Russian gymnasium at Wilno and as a youth became immersed in Polish romanticism and nationalism. He resisted the disheartenment that followed the failed Rising of 1863 and devoted himself to "fighting the absolute power and oppression of Russia." He became an active leader of the Polish Socialist Party, but after the wave of strikes that followed the Russian Revolution of 1905, his devotion to socialism waned. He then involved himself in the para-military organizations that would one day help fight for Polish independence. His short-lived collaboration with the Central Powers as wartime leader of the Polish Legions ended with imprisonment after he refused to have his troops swear allegiance to the Germans and Austrians. But, according to Davies, his leadership in the movement for Polish independence during the war made him the "unchallenged and unchallengeable" leader of a recreated Poland.⁵

Pilsudski's had 110,000 soldiers at his disposal at the beginning of the Polish-Soviet War in 1919, but soon the number of men rose as Poles from various fronts returned to Poland to serve under their commander-in-chief. Nine thousand members of the *Polnische Wehrmacht*

⁴Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star*, 41.

⁵Ibid., 62-63.

(Poles serving with the German Army) joined part of the Polish Army. They were joined by 75,000 volunteers, most of whom had served in Pilsudski's Polish Legions until their disbandment in 1917. To these numbers were added Haller's Polish Army in France that began arriving in Poland in April 1919. Other smaller units that had served on various fronts traveled to Poland and joined the unified Polish Army, a force that had not existed since 1831.⁶

Combining the members of various armies into one cohesive fighting force presented an enormous challenge to Pilsudski and the Polish high command. Old methods had to be done away with and replaced with a single official language and a unified system to train the men and conduct military operations. With their long relationship with France, the Poles decided in July 1919 to use the French model when they recreated their army. The logistical problems were enormous. Units with French rifles, for example, were issued German ammunition. Manuals, weapons training, and all the details that make an army function had to be re-organized. Conflict was inevitable, and personnel in chains of command required firm guidance. Austrian officers resented serving under colleagues from Russian forces which they had defeated; West Polish units disliked serving in the east when Poznan was still threatened by the Germans.⁷

The arms available to both sides during the conflict were severely limited. While the Soviets had obtained captured rifles from the Japanese and the English, the Poles were in a much better position since they received supplies from France and the other Allied nations. Distribution of these supplies proved problematic. In some cases, three men shared a single rifle. Many simply carried swords. Coming directly from the Western Front, the Polish Army in France was the only unit up to the standards of the First World War. Likewise, they were the only soldiers on either side who all wore the same uniform, the distinctive blue outfit they had

⁶Ibid., 41.

⁷Ibid., 43.

obtained in France (See Chapter 2). Soldiers in the Polish Army who still wore the uniforms of Austria or Russia simply pinned a white eagle on their cap, the Polish symbol with the eagle's head looking left or west, symbolic of looking toward Europe.⁸

In the first phase of the war in April 1919, the Poles captured Pilsudski's home city of Wilno in modern-day Lithuania. They took Minsk in Byelorussia in August. Peace talks in the latter part of that year disintegrated over the future of Ukraine.⁹ According to M. K. Dziewanowski, Pilsudski not only supported the formation of an independent Ukraine but had grand plans for a group of republics allied with Poland that would stand against Soviet expansion. It was no secret that Soviet military forces intended to spread Bolshevism to the west. In a speech on 30 October 1918, Soviet leader Leon Trotsky stated very plainly that Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, Finland, and Ukraine would form a "link" among Soviet Russia, Soviet Germany, and Soviet Austria-Hungary. After first fighting the Ukrainians over the status of Galicia and the Volhynia region, Pilsudski was determined not to allow Poland to become a bridge between Soviet Russia and Germany and Austria. This led him to begin discussions with Ukrainian leader Simon Petliura. This brought about a short-lived alliance between Poland and Ukraine. The Red Army defeated this alignment.¹⁰

The second phase of the war in 1920 saw an enormous expansion of fighting. More than a million soldiers were assembled on a front that extended from Latvia in the north to Romania in the south. Beginning in January 1920, the Soviets amassed an army of 700,000 men on the Berezina River in east central Byelorussia. In mid-March instructed General Mikhail Tukhachevsky to begin a major offensive against the Poles. Pilsudski negated this offensive

⁸Ibid., 45-46.

⁹Ibid., 396.

¹⁰M.K. Dziewanowski, *Joseph Pilsudski: a European Federalist, 1918-1922* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1969), 270. Also see Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 107.

with a series of attacks that began at Mozyrz in March, a deep strike at the Ukrainian capital city of Kiev in April, and finally a hard fight at Berezina in May. These encounters did not destroy the Red Army forces but did delay the Soviet advance.¹¹

The Soviets regained the momentum in the summer of 1920 when cavalry forces under General Semyon Budyonny broke through the Polish lines in Galicia in June. This was followed closely by Tukhachevsky crossing the Berezina River the next month. As the Soviet armies moved toward Warsaw, Tukhachevsky proclaimed: “To the West! . . . Over the corpse of White Poland lies the road to world-wide conflagration.”¹²

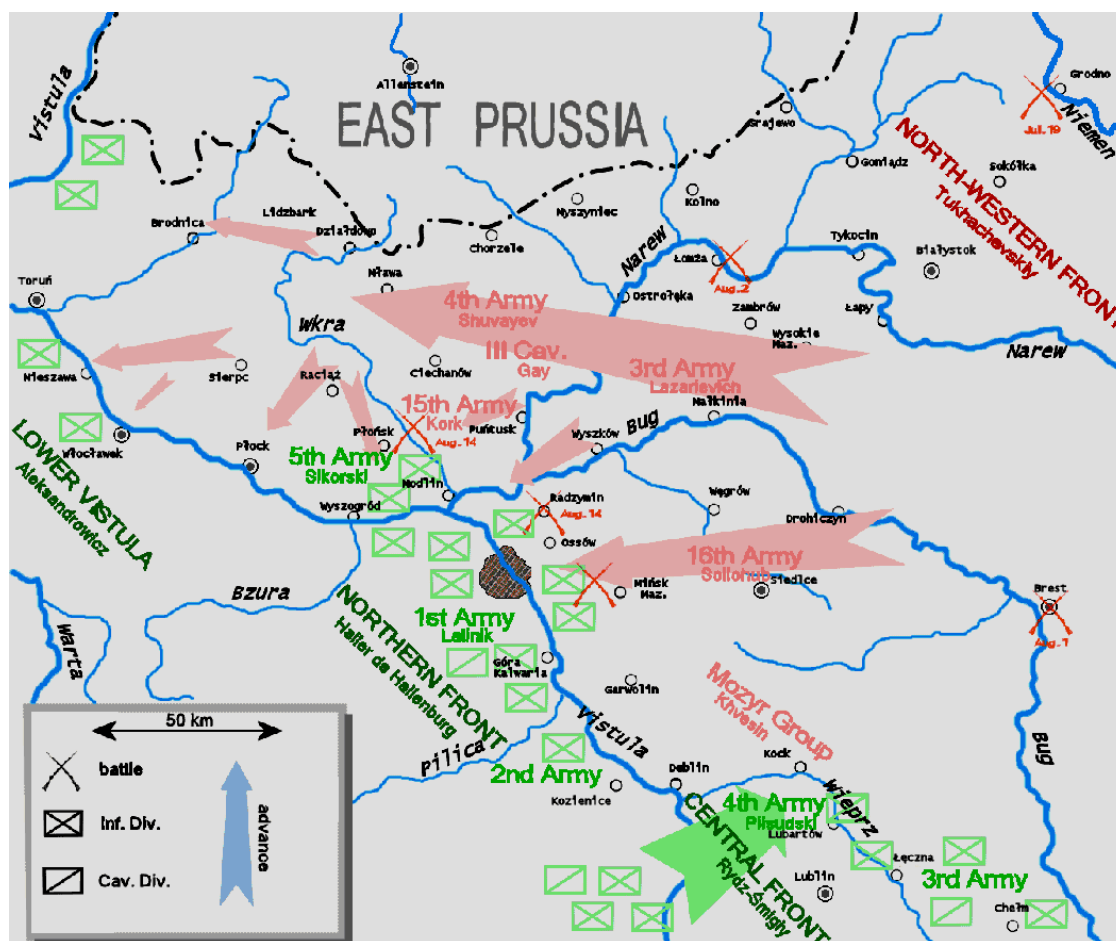
By early August 1920, the Polish situation was “critical”: five Soviet armies had approached the outskirts of Warsaw. Allied diplomats had failed to negotiate an armistice, and both the Poles and Soviets had rejected the so-called “Curzon Line” proposed by the British. The British and the French refused to give Poland further assistance, and the Germans delayed supplies for which the Poles had paid in cash. Soviet diplomats called for peace, while Lenin’s generals waged war.¹³

With the Soviets poised to crush Poland, Pilsudski reorganized the Polish Army for the defense of Warsaw. Soldiers traveled hundreds of miles to reinforce the city against the Soviet onslaught. Under the direction of General Wladyslaw Sikorski’s Fifth Army, the Poles repelled the Soviets to the North of Warsaw, while another Polish unit encircled Tukhachevsky’s Red Army. Polish military intelligence identified a gap between the two Soviet Armies, so Pilsudski organized six divisions of his most reliable soldiers into “shock groups” that exploited the

¹¹Davies, *God’s Playground*, 396

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*, 396-397.



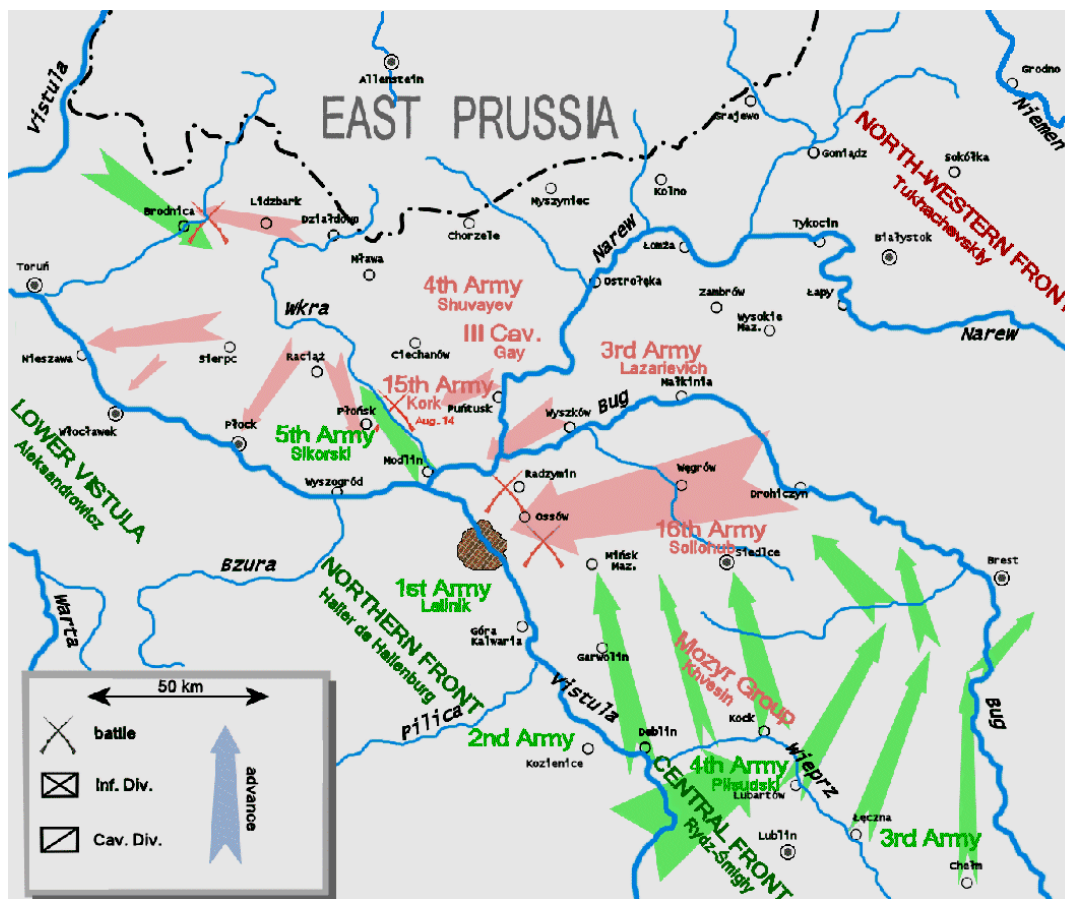
Battle of Warsaw, Phase 1. Map available from http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/99/ Battle_of_Warsaw_-_Phase_1.png; Internet accessed April 28, 2006.

opening and destroyed communication between the two forces.¹⁴ The Polish Army defeated the Soviets and took 100,000 prisoners.¹⁵

With Poland so close to annihilation but able to reverse the tide and defeat the Soviets, the Battle of Warsaw (13-25 August 1920) has been dubbed the “Miracle of the Vistula.” British Ambassador to Germany and member of the Inter-Allied Mission to Poland during the Polish-Soviet War, Lord Edgar D’Abernon compared the Polish victory at Warsaw with Charles

¹⁴Dziewanowski, 232.

¹⁵Davies, *God’s Playground*, 398.



Battle of Warsaw, Phase 2. Map available from http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9c/Battle_of_Warsaw_-_Phase_2.png; Internet accessed April 28, 2006



Polish soldiers displaying captured Soviet battle flags after the Battle of Warsaw. Photo available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_Soviet_War; Internet accessed 10 February 2006.

Martel's victory over the Islamic invaders at the Battle of Tours in the year 732. Martel had rescued western civilization from Islam, and the Poles halted the westward expansion of communism.¹⁶

The weeks following the Polish victory at Warsaw saw numerous victories by Pilsudski's forces against the retreating Soviet Army. At Komarow on 31 August 1920, Polish horsemen fought their Soviet counterparts in what Davies calls the last great cavalry battle of European history. By the end of the following month, the Soviet Army began to crumble with mutinies in garrison towns in Byelorussia. As the Poles prepared to march on Moscow, Lenin asked for peace. The Armistice went into effect on 18 October 1920, and the Treaty of Riga ended the Polish-Soviet War on 18 March 1921.¹⁷

II

Even though they became part of the regular Polish Army, the activities of General Jozef Haller's Polish Army in France can be distinguished from the larger fighting force. After arrival in Poland in Spring 1919, the First Division of the Polish Army in France became the Thirteenth Division of the Polish Army. They first fought against the Ukrainians and Soviets in the Volhynia region in northwest Ukraine where they captured and destroyed the town of Luts'k (Luck) on 16 May. In August, they captured Rowne and other villages in the area. In the midst of the conflict, Pilsudski agreed with the Ukrainian leader Symon Petliura that they would both fight the Bolsheviks. As a result, part of Haller's men began marching toward Kiev.¹⁸

In correspondence with his friends in America, Major Joseph Kowaleski, a medical officer under Haller's command, described the conditions in Poland during 1919. Kowaleski's

¹⁶Ibid., 399-401.

¹⁷Ibid., 399.

¹⁸Jerzy Walter, *Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiegow Ameryce: Zbiordokumentow i Materialow Historycznyc [The American Polonia's Armed Struggle: A Collection of Documents and Historical Materials]* (New York: The Polish Army Veterans' Association of America, 1957), Sections XXXVI and XXXVII.

regiment daily engaged in battles against the Bolsheviks and Ukrainians; at Luts'k (Luck) the inhabitants had fired on them from windows and machine guns "mounted on trees."

Kowaleski's comrades had leveled the town and captured over one thousand prisoners. He described numerous graves, devastated cities and villages, filth, hunger, and the "dreaded" typhus fever.¹⁹

Kowaleski also described the brutal practices of the Bolsheviks: "they saw their prisoners in half with saws, or cut their ears and noses off, or else gouge your eyes out." He and his fellow soldiers saw no purpose in taking prisoners in many cases: "we either shoot them or hang them."²⁰ Despite the cold, Kowaleski slept in the open and ate hardtack and canned meat from Argentina and Uruguay that he was glad to have. He always felt sick and longed to return to his family in Pennsylvania in "the only one grand country on the face of the globe and that is the U.S."²¹ He requested that his friends and family do all they could to obtain his release from service.²²

In December 1919, the Thirteenth Regiment fought against the Soviets in Romanow, twenty kilometers from the Slucz River. The town was continuously occupied by the Soviets despite several attempts by the Poles to dislodge them. Returning again and again to the town created some unusual situations, according to Lieutenant Colonel T. Kurcysz, who reported that officers would order a pair of boots made of from the "famous" Romanow leather at a shop while they attacked the town and picked them up during their next "visit." The Poles finally took the town on 20 January 1920, after ferocious fighting that drove the defeated Bolsheviks from the forests north-east of the town. Haller's veterans fought in heavy snowfall and endured

¹⁹Records of the Department of State relating to the Internal Affairs of Poland, 860c.2225/13, Record Group 59, National Archives/College Park, MD. Hereafter cited by file number only.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

temperatures that plummeted to minus thirty degrees. During one encounter at Rajce, a small Bolshevik unit attacked the Poles on their flank. Major Antoni Szylling and a private mounted horses and rode straight at the Bolsheviks, which greatly surprised them. Szylling killed two of the attackers; eleven others surrendered, while others fled in panic.²³

After Pilsudski made his agreement with Petliura that the Poles and the Ukrainians would fight together against the Soviets in Spring 1920, Haller's recruits from America began to move south in what came to be called the "Kiev Expedition." Many of Haller's men, according to one of its members, were not keen on the idea of fighting alongside the Ukrainians who had recently fought against them. They believed that by fighting in the Ukraine they were simply helping to establish an independent Ukraine under Petliura. While Petliura was anti-Bolshevik, Poles suspected that the Ukrainian people favored the Soviets and would not deliver the supplies they were supposed to receive from towns and villages along their route. According to one officer in the Haller's Army, the entire expedition was a "mistake."²⁴

In May 1920, the Thirteenth Division took up a position along the Dnieper River near Kiev and prepared to face the Red Army under the command of General Semyon Budyonny. As the Soviets approached, the Polish high command shifted the Thirteenth Division to a new position. This decision led to confusion among the Polish troops since there was not sufficient time to establish adequate communications and fortifications. Further disorganization resulted from the Polish decision to change commanders on the Ukrainian front. With the last minute changes, the Thirteenth Division occupied the weakest point along the Polish lines near the town of Koziatyn about 80 miles southwest of Kiev.²⁵

²³Walter, Section XXXVII.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., Section XXXVIII.

Although they were in an extremely disadvantageous position, the Thirteenth Division received aid during the ensuing battle from a group of American pilots who also had served in France during the First World War and then joined the Poles in their fight against the Soviets. The “Kosciuszko Squadron,” as the flyers came to be known in memory of the Polish patriot who fought with United States during the American Revolution, was led by Merian C. Cooper. He headed American relief work in Southern Poland and decided to help the Poles after personally witnessing their sacrifices to achieve independence. After returning to Paris, Cooper received official permission to recruit other pilots that included his friend, Cedric E. Fautleroy, and more than a dozen others. Despite the difficult conditions and lack of food and supplies, the men flew numerous bombing and strafing missions against the Soviets. The hard-strapped Polish government could only afford used Allied and German airplanes left over from the First World War.²⁶ The Kosciuszko Squadron carried out reconnaissance missions, carried orders, and assisted ground forces by strafing the enemy during engagements.²⁷

On 28 May 1920, Budyonny’s forces began their attack. The fighting was horrific, and many soldiers fought to death rather than surrender. Some officers took their own lives rather than being taken alive by the Bolsheviks.²⁸ The fears of the Polish officers were later justified when they recovered a Bolshevik order from a retreating unit of Budyonny’s cavalry that stated: “prisoners-of-war should not be taken but killed at once.”²⁹

²⁶See Robert F. Karolevitz and Ross S. Fenn, *Flight of Eagles: The Story of the American Kosciuszko Squadron in the Polish–Russian War 1919–1920* (Sioux Falls, S.D.: Brevet Press, 1974).

²⁷Walter, Section XXXVIII.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.



Polish fighters of the 7th Kościuszko Squadron.



American pilots, Merian C. Cooper (left) and Cedric Fauntleroy, who fought in the Kościuszko Squadron of the Polish Air Force. Photos from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_Soviet_War; Internet accessed 10 February 2006.

General Haller's men of the Thirteenth Division faced Budyonny's attack until 5 June 1920. Overwhelmed, they then retreated from Ukraine to Polish soil. While Pilsudski reorganized the greater part of the Polish forces for the defence of Warsaw, the Thirteenth Division protected the city of Luts'k (Luck) in Galicia. The Poles repelled several attacks from Budyonny's cavalry from 19-21 August 1920. After one attack, the Soviets left two hundred

dead men and many wounded horses in the field. Budyonny finally called off the attack and went to join General Tukhachevsky's forces which were retreating from their loss at the Battle of Warsaw. The Thirteenth Division then chased the fleeing Budyonny forces to the Bug River where they fought the Soviets in towns and villages during September and October 1920.³⁰ Fighting finally ceased with the Armistice of 18 October 1920.

Poland ended its drive to the east by agreeing to the treaty of Riga, but the Soviets regarded this settlement as temporary. They yielded Ukrainian territory to Poland but defeated Symon Petliura's forces and established Soviet power in Ukraine. The Ukraine soon became a sort of charter member alongside the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) of a new political entity: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Poland still held much Ukrainian territory east of the so-called Curzon Line, which in 1939 under Joseph Stalin, the USSR reclaimed through a special arrangement with Nazi Germany (Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact) just before the beginning of World War II.

With the signing of the Treaty of Riga, the effort of the Poles recruited in America, trained in Canada, fought in France, were transported across Germany, and fought in Poland and the Ukraine came to an end. They had accomplished their mission to take part in the establishment of an independent Poland. But what would happen to them next? Should they remain soldiers? Was their task finished or just beginning? Were they needed to rebuild the Polish state? Were they wanted? Were they interested in staying in Poland at all? Many of these men desired to return the United States as quickly as possible. Certainly a large number of men, especially members of the Polish Falcons, saw the rebirth of Poland as a realization not only of their own dream, but that of Poles everywhere, one in which they were no doubt proud to

³⁰Ibid.

have played a role. They were a part of what Jacobson calls the “diasporic imagination” that nationalists leaders had hoped to create in the Polish peasant class.³¹

But for a large number of these men, service in the Polish army in France had not been a glorious episode in their lives. The *New York Times* had reported in December 1918 that Haller's men, mostly from America, were willing to support the effort to stop Bolshevik aggression in any way possible.³² However, some of these men displayed a different attitude in their correspondence with their family members and the United States government. The U.S. State Department had received letters from individuals in the Polish army requesting release from military service before being sent to Poland. One soldier had remarked that he was homesick and that when he observed the American soldiers preparing to return to United States, he longed to join them. As discussed in the previous chapter, the logic employed by these men and their families, in many cases, was that they had volunteered for service with the Polish army “in France,” not in Poland.³³ The United States' government informed them that the duration of their service in the Polish army lasted until a stable form of government existed in the new Polish state.³⁴ The nationalism that had inspired these men to join the Polish army did not last once they faced the reality of life in recreated Poland.

In December 1918 Polish officials in Washington announced that Polish soldiers from the United States had arrived in Poland and aided the process of refuting Bolshevik propaganda. According to the *New York Times*, the soldiers were “so enthusiastically American in their aspiration and beliefs,” that the task had naturally fallen to them.³⁵ This announcement did not go far enough in expressing Americanism of their mental outlook. Eleven months later after

³¹Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 7.

³²*New York Times*, 24 December 1918, 3.

³³Records of the Department of State relating to the Internal Affairs of Poland, RG 59, 860c.2225/3,9,13,14,108.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 860c.22/87.

³⁵*New York Times*, 24 December 1918, 2.

fighting on the Western front and in the Polish-Soviet War, many of these men contacted the U.S. State Department and requested help to return to the United States. A State Department official wrote: “. . . practically all of these men after their experiences in Europe are determined to become American citizens as soon as possible and remain in the United States.”³⁶ The United States represented a safe, prosperous nation, far from the battlefields of Europe, a place where men and women could raise their families in relative security.

III

The Poles successfully drove the Bolsheviks out of the newly recreated republic in 1920, but the Polish soldiers from America desperately wanted to return to their adopted homeland. Obviously, they desired to be reunited with their families, but the question remains why these men risked their lives to fight for an independent Poland, only to immediately abandon it. An explanation for this seemingly contradictory combination of supreme self-sacrifice and nonchalant abandonment may be found in the attitudes of the Polish peasant class. These lower-class people did not have the same passionate national patriotism of the nobility and intelligentsia. Instead, they were primarily concerned with providing bread for their families.³⁷ For centuries the Polish peasants did not have civil rights, and accordingly, they also lacked a national awareness until after the beginning of the First World War.³⁸

While the argument above offers an explanation for the lack of national awareness on the part of peasants in Poland, it does not offer a complete explanation of the sentiments of immigrants that came to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their national awareness was fundamentally altered by their experience in America. Three

³⁶Records of the Department of State relating to the Internal Affairs of Poland, RG 59, 860c.22/90.

³⁷Victor Greene, *For God And Country, The Rise of Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America 1860-1910* (Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1975), 22-23.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 24.

different levels of nationalism have been identified by Anthony D. Smith in his work *Theories of Nationalism* (1971), the first being that ethnic naiveté characterized the greater part of Eastern European, German, and Italian immigrants. These people practiced cultural traditions and shared a common language with the others but did not feel like members of a common ethnic nation. Although they may have sensed that they were from different nationalities, when asked their country of origin, they would more likely name their village or province. Few would identify themselves as “Polish,” “Lithuanian,” “German,” or “Italian.”³⁹ This was despite the nationalists’ efforts to create a “diasporic imagination” to keep the idea of an independent Poland alive in the minds of Poles, and was not enough to prevent the Poles, especially the member Polish Army in France, from viewing themselves as Americans.⁴⁰

A second, smaller group of educated individuals had a greater sense of ethnic consciousness than the masses, but like the larger group, shared common cultural traditions and spoke a common language. While they considered themselves part of a nation, it was an “aggressive, messianic attitude” that was not political in nature and did not include a vision of an independent nation. The third and smallest group, those with an advanced sense of nationalism, did desire this ultimate goal of an independent nation. Victor Greene describes this group as part of the late nineteenth-century migration, but they were “an elite segment, tiny in number, primarily refugee intellectuals.”⁴¹

The masses of Poles who came to America in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries arrived with no strong nationalistic feeling, but within a few decades supported the idea of an independent Poland with great enthusiasm, as volunteering to fight with the Polish Army in France certainly attests. While these patriots played an important role in the rapid

³⁹Greene, 3.

⁴⁰Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 7.

⁴¹Greene, 4.

“ethnicization” of Polish immigrant masses, Greene argues that their experience in America—in churches, the workplace and in ethnic enclaves—transformed values they brought from Europe played an even more important role.⁴² Likewise, Mathew Frye Jacobson argues that with Poland’s history of partition and conflict with its neighbors, Polish ethnic identity awaited “discovery” in America where nationalists could create a “diasporic imagination” and keep the idea of an independent Poland alive.⁴³

Scholars of nationalism generally agree that ethnic consciousness and the nationalistic feeling are, in part, rooted in hostility toward another group.⁴⁴ A group of people need to have a perception of “oppression and bitterness” toward another group before an effective nationalistic movement can take place. In the case of Poles in America, it emerged after conflict arose with the dominant Anglo-American majority. East Europeans were the subject of racist negative stereotyping by the Anglo-Americans that the newcomers were inferior to the dominant group due to their “lowly peasant origins, their intemperance, and their rigid adherence to Catholicism . . . high illiteracy, their chronic poverty, [and] their innocence of democratic traditions.”⁴⁵

Anti-foreign nativists tended to dislike immigrants and to treat them badly. Immigrants could return the hostility. But Poles also disliked other ethnic groups such as the Irish, Jews, Italians, Greeks, as well as Negroes and Chinese. Poles resented oppression by nativist Americans and may have intensified their nationalist feelings, but rivalry and distaste for other ethnic groups—especially Jews—also deepened group self-awareness.⁴⁶ Clubs like the Polish

⁴²Ibid., 5.

⁴³Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 18

⁴⁴Ibid., 6; Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, 1967), 12, 16, 18.

⁴⁵Greene, 9.

⁴⁶Alan M. Kraut, *The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1982), 148-155.

Falcons and neighborhood churches added formal structure and sharpened literacy in national heritages.

While Greene does not dispute that conflict between the dominant and subordinate groups may have led to increased ethnic awareness on the part of Poles, he delves deeper into the background of the Polish peasant class to understand the actions and level of nationalism among Polish immigrants, a point of view in agreement with the classic study by Florian Znaniecki and William I. Thomas, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918). Major characteristics of Polish peasant life were devotion to religion, a strong desire to own land, and attainment of the status that accompanied being a landowner; nationalism was not an important issue. If they were not passionate about belonging to a Polish nation, they were passionate about acquiring land and maintained this desire even after they crossed the ocean.⁴⁷ Agriculture was seen as more than just a way to earn a living, but as a way of life that was to be sought after and became incorporated into peasant folkways. To obtain a piece of land became the “dream” of the peasant; immigrants in America transformed this dream from owning and farming land into obtaining real estate.⁴⁸ In order to thwart a nationalistic uprising led by liberals in the various partitions of Poland that needed the backing of the peasant masses, Russia, Austria and Germany abolished serfdom in the mid-1800s and initiated land reform to avoid peasant discontent.⁴⁹

The theme of land-hunger could not be translated too readily into real estate. The great majority of all groups in America around 1910 were agricultural, and land-hunger was characteristic of every ethnic group that settled in rural or small-town environments. Poles were

⁴⁷Greene, 15.

⁴⁸Ibid., 15-16.

⁴⁹Ibid., 21.

in no way unique in this regard. Where Poles lived in great numbers in cities and mining towns, renting was the norm for personal residence; ownership of real estate came slowly.

The relative speed with which land-hungry immigrants embraced the idea of Polish independence by 1914 is connected to the devout Catholicism that the immigrants shared. Religion gave the superstitious peasant a way of understanding their uncertain world and offered a “measure of security for the uncertain future.” The holy sacraments helped the peasant through the joyful and sorrowful stages of life—birth, marriage, and death. God the Father, Jesus the Son, and numerous saints could be called upon for intervention at critical moments, especially Mary, the Holy Mother who holds an especially esteemed position in the Polish Roman Catholic Church. The peasant held the clergy in extremely high regard as “God’s mortal representatives on earth,” and families dreamed that their sons would become men of the cloth since it elevated the social standing of the family.⁵⁰ Indeed, “Religious attitudes prove . . . the most lasting of all traditional components of the peasants’ social psychology.”⁵¹ It must be recalled that a major force behind recruiting soldiers for the Polish Army in France were priests in various communities in the United States.

The theme of Catholicism was always strong among Poles since the Reformation wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Poland was trapped between Russian Orthodoxy in the East, militant Prussian and Baltic Lutheranism to the North, Hungarian Calvinism and Czech Hussite traditions to the South, plus infusions of Jews banished from the Holy Roman Empire to the Pale of Settlement in eastern Poland and Ukraine. Polish nationalists imagined themselves to have been oppressed by the ruling classes of all these religious persuasions. Men of peasant classes had been drafted into armies, and women worked in households and farmsteads of non-

⁵⁰Ibid., 24-27

⁵¹Florian Znaniecki and Williams I. Thomas, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, Vol. 4, 136.

Polish overlords. Whether bound by clan and locality in their self identification, Poles had been aware of the foreignness of their language, lineage, and religion long before they came to America.

Once in America, the Polish immigrant experienced the shocks, mental distress and sense of alienation experienced by all the individuals and groups who came to the New World under the same circumstances. Shortly after the Polish emigrants arrived they realized that others suffered the same hardships that they had during the journey and adaptation from a rural European setting to an urban American one. This was the critical moment, according to Greene, when Eastern Europeans realized they were members of a distinct nationality. This in turn led to “psychological torment” when they realized their own culture by confronting alien ones.⁵²

The church offered a sense of continuity to the immigrants, and they transformed their hopes of buying a farm in Poland into a desire for home ownership in America. The Poles maintained their rural values and culture in the urban and industrial areas in America by adapting their Old World lives to their new environment. Miners in Pennsylvania, for example, kept vegetable gardens outside dwellings that were no more than shacks, while Poles living in congested cities raised chickens, goats and sometimes even a cow. East Europeans steadfastly saved their money with hope of buying a lot in the city where they could build a home and garden. According to a Polish newspaper editor: “Industrial employers will tell you that Poles are good workers . . . but they dream at night of growing potatoes and cabbages.”⁵³

The phenomenon that is so striking about the nationalism that the Poles developed in America in just a few short decades before the First World War was that it actually subsided quicker than it came. It is generally accepted that the war was an important moment in the

⁵²Greene, 29-30; also see Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 18.

⁵³Ibid., 36-38

history of Polish-Americans in that once aided the creation of an independent Poland, the focused on a new concern, that of improving their lives in America. In the 1920s, Poles and other immigrant groups faced the rising nativism and racism of the Anglo-Americans that had for decades proposed a limitation on East European immigration. In 1921 legislation passed in Congress severely limited the number of Europeans who could come to the United States. Further adding to what was seen as problems that had to be addressed by Poles in America was the fact that their language came under attack. Some Roman Catholic bishops, including Archbishop Francis Mundelein of Chicago, became “assimilationist” and wanted to do away with speaking Polish in their parishes. As Donald Pienkos explains: “A new slogan summed up the feeling of the early 1920s—Wychodztwo dla Wychodztwa—Let the emigration look after its own concerns.” Even financial support for the new Poland dropped considerably on the part of Polish immigrants after the conclusion of the war.⁵⁴

Many factors contributed to changing nature of Poles and other immigrant groups in America during early twentieth century. As Lizbeth Cohen explains, immigrants in the early decades of the Twentieth Century encountered “mass culture,” or the access to store-bought goods and mass entertainment. This added to their sense of detachment from their homeland and increasing identification with the United States and of themselves as Americans. This “Americanization” had special significance with the Poles since they had an “intense but frustrated nationalism.” In Chicago, for example, they created the Polish Roman Catholic Union and the Polish National Alliance to unite either Polish “religionists” or “nationalists.” The popularity of both these organizations faded after Poland regained independence at the

⁵⁴Pienkos, *Polish American Efforts*, 69-70.

conclusion of the First World War and the Polish communities in America turned their attention to their future in America, not their nation of origin.⁵⁵

The sentiments of one group of Polish immigrants addresses the issue of immigrant nationalism. That group consisted of number of veterans of the Polish Army in France who had been transferred to Poland, had fought against the Bolsheviks, and then had to wait for months after the fighting in a demobilization camp before returning to America. Their experience caused their loyalty to shift from Poland to the United States and having fought for Poland they expressed their desperation to return to their adopted homeland; they had become Polish-American in mind and aspirations. The difficult process of repatriation will be discussed in the next chapter, but this group of nineteen men that appealed to Herbert Hoover, who headed East European Relief after the war, were like hundreds of others who were not able to board America ships with the their fellow soldiers because they had been demobilized too late, were in Soviet prisoner-of-war camps, or were ill in hospitals.⁵⁶ In order to assure Hoover that they did not remain in Poland simply for the prospect of receiving land as payment for service in the Polish military, a prime motivation for Polish peasants, the men recounted their numerous attempts to obtain transportation to America. They had “pleaded” with the Polish Government in Warsaw for months but had only received unfulfilled promises. They appealed to the Polish press, but they claimed that these attempts came to nothing because of the “incompetent, undecided officials” at the head of the Polish Government. The officials, according the men, added to their “misery and idleness” by forbidding the former soldiers from seeking employment while waiting in the demobilization camp.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 68, 157.

⁵⁶Frank Krawzyk, et al, to Herbert Hoover, Director of East European Relief, 26 April 1922, 860c.22/150.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

Far from heralded and respected as returning patriots dedicated to Polish freedom, the men had to tolerate all types of “humiliation and outrage.” When any sort of crime had been committed in the nearby town, from theft to robbery and even murder, the police would come straight to the camp and arrest any group of men who in any way resembled the actual criminals. After a few months imprisonment, the men were invariably found innocent to the point that not a single demobilized soldier had been found guilty. As a result of this policy on the part of the police, the men feared arrest “both day and night.” Caught in this situation, the men did not consider themselves Polish patriots, but rather as prisoners-of-war.⁵⁸

In a most telling statement about their level of nationalism, the men stated that their patriotism had been “aroused and fired by polish agitators.” After their experience in Europe, they did not refer to the men who recruited them as fellow patriots, but instead used the negative label “agitators.” These “agitators” had persuaded them to join the Polish Army in France instead of the American Army, a decision that they clearly regretted. The letter to Hoover concluded:

In the end we wish to proclaim to you, dear Mr. Hoover, and you generous Americans, that we do not want polish [sic] land or money, food or clothes; we do not demand anything of Poland as a reward for our polish-american patriotism, [sic] but we simply demand and justly demand of her an immediate return to our homes, our families in the U.S.A.⁵⁹

The above account underscores that many Poles came to identify home as the United States and not Poland. Their arrest by the Polish police also demonstrates that they were no longer even considered to be Poles, but foreigners. The majority of the 20,000 veterans had a far easier time returning to America than the men who appealed to Hoover for help, but it was not a smooth process. When the time came for them to return to their homes, the Polish government

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

and the Polish organizations in the United States did not have the funds to finance their repatriation. Consequently, they turned to the United States government for help.

*

Fighting during Polish-Soviet War was extremely brutal and conducted under terrible conditions. By the end of that War, the members of the Polish Army recruited in America desperately wanted to return in the United States and identified themselves as Americans. The Polish peasants who came to America did not have a high level of national awareness and the soldiers that fought in the Polish Army in France did not want to remain in Poland, even if the Polish Government awarded them free land, but instead wanted a future in the safe and prosperous adopted homeland of the United States. Some of the veterans actually expressed hostility toward Polish nationalists for encouraging them fight in Polish Army in France. These men had become aware they were Polish when they came to America, but identified themselves as Americans when they returned to Poland.

Chapter 5: The Decision to Return the Veterans of Haller's Army to the United States.

The return of the Polish Army in France to the United States was difficult and complicated. The Polish government could not afford to fund their transportation to America, and United States Government officials were initially reluctant to transport the men to homes in America since many of the men had joined the Army illegally. In the end, it required presidential intervention and congressional legislation to fund repatriation of the Polish Army in France. In this chapter, Section I describes Secretary of War Newton D. Baker's opinion that the transportation of the soldiers should not be funded by the United States since many of the men were American citizens and had joined the Polish Army illegally. Haller's veterans had an influential advocate in Secretary of State Robert Lansing, a close associate of Ignacy Paderewski. Lansing brought the issue directly to President Woodrow Wilson, who advocated returning the soldiers at American expense. Section II describes the debate in Congress concerning the repatriation of the soldiers. Section III discusses the disinfection and transportation of the soldiers from Poland to their homes in the United States.

I

The demobilization of about twelve thousand of General Haller's Polish-American troops began in September 1919 and lasted until February 1920. The nascent Polish Government desired that these men be returned to the United States on American ships, at Polish expense.¹ In August 1919 American Second Assistant Secretary of State Alvey A. Adee informed the War Department of this request. He recommended that the U.S. should comply since these men were

¹Telegram from the American Mission in Poland to the Secretary of State, 28 August 1919, Records of the Department of State 860c.22/76, RG 59, NA/College Park, MD

either United States citizens or aliens entitled to return to America after their terms of service had been fulfilled.²

Secretary Baker had been familiar with the Polish-American soldiers since the controversy in 1917 over who could join the Polish Army in France.³ The question of Polish-Americans in Haller's Army had come to Baker's attention again in 1919 when in February he informed Lansing that American citizens who had volunteered for the Polish Army and desired to be released from service were obliged to remain in the fighting force because hostilities in Poland had not ended. He added that these American citizens recruited for the Polish Army were in violation of Section 10 of the U.S. Penal Code that prohibited American citizens from joining foreign armies.⁴ So the rationalization used by the State Department that these men were American citizens and should be returned on American ships turned out to be the very reason Baker did not want to comply with the request.

Secretary Baker responded to the request for U.S. ships to transport American citizens (whom he knew had violated the Penal code by volunteering for the Polish Army) by distancing himself and his office from the situation. Baker informed Lansing that the War Department was rapidly demobilizing all ships not needed for the transportation of American troops. The demobilized ships were under the control of the U.S. Shipping Board and therefore Lansing would need to contact them for assistance. In an interesting twist of logic, Baker ended his letter to Lansing by recognizing the citizenship of the Polish-American volunteers but not their status as members of a demobilized army: "The War Department, as you know, under the law is not

²Adee to the Secretary of War, 30 August 1919, 860c.22/76.

³See Chapter 1 above.

⁴Baker to the Secretary of State, 7 February 1919, 860c.22/66.

permitted to transport civilians on its transports."⁵ Baker did not comment on the resident aliens to be returned, but as civilians, the War Department could not legally transport the soldiers.



Newton D. Baker. Photo available from <http://law.wlu.edu/alumni/bios/baker.asp>. Internet accessed 26 May 2006.

Such bureaucratic quibbling left American representatives in Warsaw with requests they could not fulfill. In late September 1919 they advised the State Department that Haller's men showed signs of unrest. Many men refused to carry out their duties and in one incident "one shot was fired into the barracks." Their primary complaint was lack of payment, which was due to lack of records, but the men also were homesick for America. The American representatives in

⁵Baker to the Secretary of State, 10 September 1919, 860c.22/77.

Warsaw advised that the process of repatriation should begin as soon as possible and they requested information about what steps had been taken up to that point.⁶

Under pressure from Polish-American families and from Congress, the State Department instructed the American Legation in Warsaw to obtain the release of individuals from Haller's Army. But for some months the authorities in Washington could neither find a way to transport the men to America nor support them until they could be repatriated. As it was impossible to send the men home, Hugh Gibson, head of the American Legation, and E. E. Farman, the military attaché, wrote that "it is unwise and unkind to ask for any more demobilizations until such time as provision can be made for their return." Discharge from the army, according to Gibson, "merely serves to leave them in idleness and to foment discord."⁷

Gibson devised an innovative solution to the problem. He was aware that American ships were being used to transport Bolsheviks from the United States to Soviet Russia and reasoned that the U.S.A.T. (United States Army Transport) *Buford*, could be used to repatriate Haller's troops on its return voyage. The expense incurred would be relatively low, and the advantage of sending the "discontented Americans" home would be obvious.⁸ Lansing relayed this idea to the Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, who responded that the War Department had jurisdiction over all transports operating regularly across the Atlantic Ocean.⁹

Taking into consideration Baker's attitude at the War Department, this was not good news. As Gibson probably expected, Baker stymied the idea; the War Department had already planned the entire voyage aboard the *Buford*. The ship was by this time already on the way to

⁶American Mission in Warsaw to the Secretary of State, 20 September 1920, 860c.22/79, also see Lieutenant Colonel Walter O. Boswell to Colonel McKenney, 29 September 1919, Military Intelligence Division (hereafter cited as MID), War Department General Staff, Record Group 165, NA/College Park, MD.

⁷Telegram from Gibson, American Legation in Warsaw to the Secretary of State, 11 January 1920, 860c.22/90.

⁸Telegram from Gibson to the Secretary of State, 15 January 1920, 860c.22/91 and 92.

⁹Josephus Daniels to the Secretary of State, 28 January 1920, 860c.22/94.

Kiel and would then go to Antwerp and then on to New York with passengers and cargo of the American forces in Germany. Baker informed Lansing that commercial operating companies planned to establish service between Europe and the United States and suggested that it would be "preferable" to use this method to return any Americans from Poland. Baker reminded Lansing once again that the War Department did not have the authority to incur any expenses for the movement of the troops without direct authorization from Congress.¹⁰

State Department officials took Baker's advice and inquired at the United States Shipping Board about the availability of ships that could be used for the repatriation of Haller's men. None were available. W.F. Taylor, the Assistant Director of Traffic, informed Lansing, however, that the International Mercantile Marine operated their own passenger steamers, the *Mongolia* and *Manchuria*, in regular service between New York and Hamburg. If the Polish Government could arrange the point of embarkation to be Hamburg instead of Danzig, the International Mercantile Marine could provide transportation at a "reasonable rate."¹¹ Perhaps due to the added expense of ground transportation, this suggestion was never given serious consideration.

From the beginning, the Polish Government had agreed to pay for the repatriation of Haller's Army, but as time passed, this possibility faded. The Polish-Soviet War no doubt took priority in Warsaw over demobilizing and sending the soldiers to America. The War Department had agreed to transport members of the Czecho-Slovak Army from Vladivostok since the Czecho-Slovak Government agreed to pay the expenses. As of August 1919, no formal

¹⁰Baker to the Secretary of State, 23 January 1920, 860c.22/96.

¹¹W. F. Taylor, Assistant Director of Traffic, Division of Operations, United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation, Washington to the Secretary of State, 30 January 1920, 860c.22/95.

agreement had been reached between the Polish and the United States governments for payment of transportation of Haller's Army.¹²

In January 1920 the Polish Ministry of War would not consider appropriating more than a small amount of money for the transportation of the demobilized soldiers. Hugh Gibson responded by suggesting to his superiors in Washington that the United States extend credit to the Polish Government to fund the transports. He reasoned that the United States had more of a direct interest in the repatriation of the Poles who were American citizens, or future citizens, than in "Czech-Slovak [sic] and other foreign troops in Siberia, an operation where no direct American interest is involved."¹³

Lansing felt strongly about the Polish-American effort. During the war, the Polish National Committee had requested that the United States recognize the Polish Army as autonomous and cobelligerent, which Lansing did with "a feeling of genuine satisfaction." The Secretary of State also recognized the "zeal and tenacity with which the Polish National Committee has prosecuted the task of marshalling its fellow countrymen in supreme military effort to free Poland from its present oppressors."¹⁴ Lansing had long enjoyed a fruitful relationship with Paderewski, with whom he shared many of the same opinions on the situation in Poland after the war.¹⁵

Lansing appealed directly to President Wilson to overcome resistance from the War Department and the Shipping Board. In February 1920 he informed Wilson that the men in Haller's Army had been in demobilization camps since the previous November and dissatisfaction among the men had become increasingly intense. The men felt that they were

¹²Department of State, Division of Near Eastern Affairs, to the Secretary of State, 23 August 1919, 860c.22/89.

¹³Telegram from Gibson, American Legation in Warsaw to the Secretary of State, 11 January 1920, 860c.22/90.

¹⁴*Congressional Record* (hereafter cited as *C.R.*), 66th Congress, 3 March 1920, 3823.

¹⁵See Paderewski to Lansing, 18 June 1921, and Lansing to Paderewski, 30 June 1921, "The Papers of Robert Lansing," Container 57, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Secretary of State Robert Lansing. Photo from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Lansing; Internet accessed 10 February 2006

being held against their will and that only with American intervention could they be brought home without further delay. Lansing proposed that either Congress make an appropriation or that the President himself authorize the War Department to return the soldiers on American ships.¹⁶

Baker's attitude changed dramatically once Lansing contacted the President. In a memorandum to Wilson on 7 February 1920 he agreed with Lansing that the men ought to be

¹⁶Lansing to the President of the U.S., 6 February 1920, Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Volume 64, November 6, 1919-February 27, 1920 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 372-373.

brought back to the United States since they were, in many cases, American citizens who had fought against the Germans. He offered his "glad" cooperation with the State Department to secure whatever authorization from Congress was necessary for repatriating the Polish-American troops.¹⁷ In his correspondence with the President, Baker omitted any reference to the allegation that these men had violated the U.S. Penal code, a dramatic shift from the earlier position he had taken with the State Department when he refused to acknowledge these men since they had violated the law.

The significant role of U.S. State Department and the War Department in the repatriation of the members of Haller's Army is not fully reflected in the historiography of the Polish-American involvement in the First World War. One of the most influential scholars of the Polish-American Army, Stanley R. Pliska, states:

The Polish government had no means to transport them [the demobilized soldiers] back to the United States; the Polish organizations in the United States were unable to finance the passages; and the United States government had no jurisdiction over them. When all appeared lost, Congressman John Kleczka of Wisconsin and Senator James Wadsworth, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, succeeded in passing through the United States Congress a bill which would permit the Atlantic Transport Fleet to bring these men back to the United States.¹⁸

What Pliska does not reveal is that the State Department did accept responsibility for the soldiers and worked diligently to bring the men home. The State Department even began planning the shipments of the soldiers before Congress passed legislation authorizing them to use American ships.¹⁹ In his defense, Pliska's article appeared in the *Polish Review* in 1965, before the Records

¹⁷Baker to Wilson, 7 February 1920, Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Volume 64, 389.

¹⁸Pliska, "The 'Polish-American Army' 1917-1921," 57.

¹⁹State Department officials began coordinating shipments of the men with the War Department as early as 10 February 1920, one month before Congress passed the resolution authorizing them to use American ships for this purpose on 10 March 1920, 860c.22/97.

of the Department of State relating to the internal affairs of Poland, 1916-1944, were declassified and made available for research in 1979.

On 7 February 1920 Wilson agreed to ask Congress to approve the use of American transports.²⁰ Wilson was sensitive to the Polish-American vote since he had a weak appeal to them in his 1912 presidential campaign. To improve his appeal to this group, he had repudiated remarks he had written during his days as a political scientist. His *History of the American People* criticized unrestricted immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe. This had caused problems which Wilson tried to remedy before his reelection campaign in 1916. Wilson made an effort to solidify Polish-American support by speaking out against literacy tests for immigrants and by making appeals to the Central Powers for relief of starvation in Poland. He called for a “united, independent, and autonomous Poland” in his “Peace Without Victory” speech in January 1917 and as one of the Fourteen Points in 1918.²¹

II

Less than a week after he received authorization from Wilson, Baker initiated legislation in Congress to allow the War Department to use American ships to return the members of Haller's Army. In his request, Baker pointed out that the Secretary of State desired the use of War Department transports and that he needed Congressional approval to grant the request. Senator James Wadsworth of New York, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, introduced the legislation on 13 February 1920. It passed after only a few questions, primarily about cost. Wadsworth told the Senate that Secretary Baker believed that current appropriations

²⁰E.B.W. (Edith Bolling Galt Wilson) [for Woodrow Wilson] to Lansing, 9 February 1920, Link, 389.

²¹Joseph P. O'Grady, ed., *The Immigrants' Influence On Wilson's Peace Policies* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1981), 277-280.

were sufficient to cover the expenses of transportation to New York and that Polish-Americans societies would aid the men's return to their homes from New York.²²

The House of Representatives referred the request to its Committee on Military Affairs and on 26 February 1920, they held a hearing to discuss the return of the Polish-Americans. Secretary Baker, accompanied by Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, Chief of the War Department Transportation Service, offered statements that detailed the process of repatriation to the committee members. Baker recapped the events of the previous three years: how Paderewski obtained authorization to form the Polish Legion from the War Department and the State Department and how the men trained at an unused American camp in New York and in Canada. Baker told the committee that the men had first fought in France and after the Armistice then went to Poland to assist in the settlement of the Polish boundary with the Soviet Russia.²³

Baker explained to the committee that many of the 10,000-12,000 soldiers, who were citizens of the United States or resident aliens, had been released from the Polish Army and were awaiting transportation to their homes and families in the America. The Polish government offered to transport the men from their place of encampment outside Warsaw to the port city of Danzig if the United States would bring them home on American transports. Since the men had on more than one occasion shown signs of unrest and the possibility of an insurrection existed, the State Department suggested that the War Department bring the men home on American ships.²⁴

Baker recommended that the American Atlantic Transport Fleet that carried reinforcements, replacement troops, and supplies to the American Army of occupation could be diverted from its normal route between New York and Antwerp, to Danzig. The ships included

²²C.R., 66th Congress, 13 February 1920, 2835.

²³C.R., House Committee on Military Affairs, 26 February 1920, 66th Congress, Volume 237, 3.

²⁴Ibid., 4.

the *Antigone* (passenger capacity 2,793), the *Buford* (capacity 970), the *Kilpatrick* (capacity 947), the *Northern Pacific* (capacity 2,316), the *Pocahontas* (capacity 1,877), the *Powhatan* (capacity 2,717), and the *Prince Matoyke* (capacity 3,207). When these ships returned, they could bring the Poles back to the United States. With an aggregate carrying capacity of 14,827 persons, each ship might have to make only one voyage to Danzig. Baker told the Committee that once in New York, agents of the Polish government would see to the soldiers' railroad transportation to their homes in the various states. General Hines estimated the cost of transporting the men during the diverted journey from Antwerp to Danzig to be \$81,000. This amount included the cost of coal and crew wages. An additional \$55,000 to \$60,000 would be required for subsistence, calculated at 55 cents a day for each soldier.²⁵

California Congressman Julius Kahn, Chairman of the Committee, suggested to Baker that one large ship, the *Leviathan*, be used to repatriate the soldiers all at one time. Baker responded that the *Leviathan* was out of commission and thus its use would require assembling a new naval crew, a great expense for only one voyage. Furthermore, the *Leviathan* was too large to pass through the Kiel Canal and the Danzig harbor. This led to a number of questions about the route the ships would take from Congressmen John Miller of Washington and John McKenzie of Illinois. Baker informed the Congressmen that the German mine fields were practically all intact in the strait between Denmark and Sweden, the route that ships would need to take to reach the Baltic Sea from the North Sea. Although an opening existed, transport ships utilizing that route had to be convoyed. The course through the strait was well mapped but very narrow. The *Buford*, for example, had gone through the strait but had to be preceded by a destroyer. Baker and Hines explained that the peace treaty signed by the Germans required them

²⁵Ibid., 4-5.

to remove and destroy all the mines, but they had not as yet complied with this requirement.²⁶

The alternative route was through the Kiel Canal that crosses Schleswig-Holstein, Germany and connects the mouth of the Elbe River with Baltic Sea.

Some members the committee expressed concern that Poles who had never been in the United States would attempt to come to America aboard the transports, but Baker assured them that only members of Haller's Army who were United States citizens or former residents would be allowed to return. Miller questioned Baker as to how it would be possible to identify these men as coming from the United States if replacement troops from Poland had "filtered" into the Army. Baker responded with optimism that exceeded firm data, that "their military records are perfectly complete" and that the Polish Government could be trusted to insure that replacements would not be allowed aboard the ships.²⁷

Wisconsin Congressman John Kleczka addressed the committee after Baker and Hines. Kleczka told the committee that of the 24,600 men recruited in the United States for the Polish Army, 15% were American citizens who had not been subject to the draft or rejected from military service due to physical disqualification, 20% had been declared exempt from the draft and 65% were aliens. A great number of these men had wives, children, or other dependents. Patriotic organizations were providing for their families while they were away. Kleczka stated that the situation was serious in the demobilization camps and read a telegram the Polish National of Alliance of America received from the Skierniewice camp on 16 February 1920:

Demobilized soldiers mostly fathers of families waiting 4 months for transportation. Please inform interested organizations and take care in that matter at both Governments.²⁸

²⁶Ibid., 4-7.

²⁷Ibid., 8.

²⁸Ibid., 9.

The committee recommended on 28 February 1920 that the House of Representatives pass the legislation proposed by the Secretary of War.²⁹

On 3 March 1920 the House debated whether to bring the demobilized soldiers home. Phillip P. Campbell of Kansas introduced the resolution and informed his fellow members that the Committee on Military Affairs unanimously supported its passage. A number of Congressmen, mainly from states with large Polish-American populations, endorsed the legislation with rousing patriotic rhetoric. Representative Kleczka had served as a government appeals agent during the war and was acquainted with many men who had volunteered for the Polish Army in France.³⁰ He gave a highly impassioned speech that described the "inspiring spectacle" of the Polish-American army:

We were told that the period of the World War was [the] "time that tried men's souls." There were many slackers who because of cowardice and disloyalty offered the sickening excuse that they would not engage in a fratricidal war. What a comfort and inspiration did the Poles afford in striking contrast. There were very many Poles compelled by force to serve in the German and the Austrian armies. Did this deter the Poles in America from answering humanity's call? Did they cringe and shrink and falter? Emphatically no! They understood full well the uncontrollable decrees of cruel fate. They heard the summons of duty and heedless of home and family ties, and grief and heartaches, they answered mankind's prayer. The Poles did not hesitate one moment to respond when the battle cry was sounded to make the world safe for democracy.³¹

Kleczka beseeched his fellow Congressmen to return these men who "have proven themselves most worthy to become a part of this great and glorious Nation of ours."³²

Congressman John MacCrate of New York also had first-hand knowledge of the men who were to benefit from this legislation. The New Yorker had served on the draft board in his home district and personally knew volunteers of the Polish Army in France. Like Paderewski,

²⁹C.R., House of Representatives Report No. 687, 28 February 1920, 66th Congress, 2nd Session.

³⁰C.R., House Committee on Military Affairs, 66th Congress, 26 February 1920, Volume 237, 9.

³¹C.R., 66th Congress, 2nd Session, 3 March 1920, 3823.

³²Ibid.

MacCrate compared the courageous spirit of these men with Pulaski and Kosciusko who had fought for American freedom. The United States should bring these men back because "on the field of battle these men paid their passage back to us, for their service was given in the fight against our enemy as well as theirs. Let us speed the transport to Poland, knowing well that she will return laden with men who forever will declare there is no other land like this land."³³

John J. Babka of Ohio proclaimed that he knew "of no nobler act that we can do than to give our assistance to these valiant men."³⁴ Connecticut Congressman Augustine Lonergan echoed these comments and added that the Polish efforts had been "prodigious" in view of their being "caught between the Russian autocracy, the Germany bureaucracy, and Austrian monarchy." They had kept the light of freedom alive. Lonergan hoped that Congress would pass the resolution and bring home the men from New Britain, Hartford, other Connecticut cities, and cities throughout the United States.³⁵

Congressman Walter Newton of Minnesota argued that the members of Haller's Army followed in the footsteps of their ancestors who had served during the Middle Ages as the "chief bulwark of Christendom against the Moslem Turks." King John Sobieski, he alleged, had turned back the invading Turks from Vienna and had saved Christian civilization. As compatriots and contemporaries of the "American Doughboy," Congress should pass the resolution to bring the worthy successors to Sobieski home.³⁶

The members of Congress who gave passionate speeches in favor of the resolution came from states in the northeast and midwest that had large Polish-American populations, but the outpouring of sentimentality impacted others from outside these areas. Congressman Percy E.

³³Ibid., 3824.

³⁴Ibid., 8883.

³⁵Ibid., 8885-8886.

³⁶Ibid., 8908.

Quin of Mississippi had no knowledge of the efforts of the Polish-Americans during the war until the issue of repatriation came before the Committee on Military Affairs. He saw no reason why the United States Government should not bring back these "poor fellows" free of charge to their wives and children in America. Since they voluntarily fought against the Germans, Austrians, and Turks alongside the Allies, it was the "duty" of Americans to bring them home. All parties involved, the State Department, the War Department, the Chief Executive and the Committee on Military Affairs, favored passage of the resolution, and he urged his fellow members to do the same.³⁷

The only resistance to the resolution in either house of Congress came from Representative Royal C. Johnson of South Dakota. The Congressman did not oppose bringing the Poles back but questioned the need for Congressional authorization. He informed the House that the Secretary of War was currently returning 36,000 Czecho-Slovaks to the United States without special approval. Why did he need it to transport Poles? Congressman Campbell, who introduced the resolution, did not have an answer; he only knew that Baker desired authorization to transport these men.³⁸

Thomas Gallagher of Illinois, who represented the largest Polish settlements in the United States and the headquarters of the Polish National Alliance and the Polish Roman Catholic Union of American, both in Chicago, responded to the issue of American transportation of Czecho-Slovak troops that he was not opposed to it even if Baker did so without the authority of the law. If Secretary Baker desired official authority in this situation, it should be given without hesitation. "No troops in the allied army," according to Gallagher, "fought more bravely or rendered more patriotic service than did this Polish Volunteer Army raised in the United

³⁷Ibid., 3822.

³⁸Ibid.

States." Several Polish-American organizations in Chicago had communicated their desire that he support the resolution and he hoped that his fellow members would do so as well.³⁹

The United States Congress approved Public Resolution Number 31 on 10 March 1920, authorizing the War Department to repatriate the "residents of the United States of Polish origin who were engaged in the war on the side of the allied and associated powers."⁴⁰ Forwarded by Congressmen with large Polish-American constituencies, the resolution sailed through Congress with little resistance. But the question posed by Representative Johnson as to why Baker had asked for official authorization remains open to historical interpretation.

At the outset, Baker desired that the Polish-Americans use other forms of transportation than the United States Trans-Atlantic Fleet, since many of the men, as American citizens, had violated the law by volunteering for the Polish Army. The Secretary next turned to the argument that the War Department could not incur any expenses in transporting these men. Instead of suggesting that the United States extend some form of credit to the Polish Government to cover these expenses, he asked for Congressional authorization, which led to the outpouring of support in Congress described above.

According to the federal legislation, the War Department officials had to go before Congress to detail the cost of an operation at the time of a request for additional financial appropriations.⁴¹ In this situation, however, Baker did not need any additional funds and may not have needed to go before Congress. Because the problem was not financial, he obviously chose to maintain his position that American ships should not be used to transport individuals who had violated the penal code by joining a foreign army. By obtaining official authorization,

³⁹Ibid., 8887.

⁴⁰Public Resolution-No. 31-66th Congress, Records of the Department of State, 860c.22/99.

⁴¹Memorandum from Brigadier General Frank T. Hines to the Assistant Chief of Staff, Director of Purchase, Storage and Traffic, 8 March 1920, "The Papers of Newton D. Baker," General Correspondence, Container 12, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

he avoided any future criticism that may have been directed at him for transporting individuals on American ships that he should not have. Even after the Senate approved the resolution he dismissed the suggestion of a friend that the War Department assist in transportation of the men from Warsaw to Danzig. The United States, according to Baker, did not have the authority to enter Poland beyond access to the free port city of Danzig and had to rely on the Polish Government to supply interior transportation.⁴² So despite Baker's reluctance to use War Department ships to repatriate the Polish-Americans, it was to take place on American ships at American expense.

III

Organization of the transports fell to Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, Chief of the War Department Transportation Service.⁴³ His job was to specify arrangements and to propose solutions to specific problems. Without delay, he sought clarification of the logistics of returning the men to the United States including who was in charge of the men, and if officers would accompany them on their voyage. Who would feed the men while they waited to embark? Of special concern was the whether they would be permitted to enter the country according to immigration laws.⁴⁴

Sheldon Whitehouse of the State Department, Near Eastern Division, responded that the Polish government had agreed to release the men, but the State Department had not received authorization from the immigration authorities that the men would not encounter any problems entering the country. Whitehouse relayed Hines's other questions to Hugh Gibson, the State

⁴²Baker to James Metzenbaum, 1 March 1920, *ibid*.

⁴³Memorandum from Brigadier General M. Churchill, Director of Military Intelligence to Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, 10 February 1920, 860c.22/97.

⁴⁴Hines to Whitehouse, 14 February 1920, 860c.22/100.

Department representative in Warsaw.⁴⁵ Gibson responded that the Polish Government recognized the right of these men to return to the United States and Admiral Borowski and Lieutenant Colonel Kockanski would be in charge of handling the embarkation at Danzig. Several officers from those returning would ensure discipline aboard ship and the Polish War Office would supply cooks for the voyage. However, the Polish Government would not be able to supply provisions or coal for the return trip. Gibson warned that numerous people who had never been in the United States would probably try to board the ships bound for America and that such persons should not be allowed to do so without proper authorization from the American Consulate. Because the Polish Government had no interest in keeping these individuals in Poland, Gibson requested additional staff members to supervise the operation. He also recommended an interval of at least two or three weeks between shipments to reduce confusion.⁴⁶

American anxiety about the spread of contagious disease became a chief concern of the officials handling the repatriation of the Polish-Americans. In March 1920, Gibson reported to the State Department in Washington that there existed many cases of venereal disease among men planning to return to the U.S.⁴⁷ Officials from the War Department decided to treat these men in the same manner that American soldiers with similar diseases were treated: they were to be placed in hospital accommodations where necessary or segregated from the other men in a separate part of the ship. An American medical officer would use his discretion as to the accommodations.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Telegram from Gibson to the Secretary of State, 27 February 1920, 860c.22/103.

⁴⁷Telegram from Gibson to the Secretary of State, 8 March 1920, 860c.22/105.

⁴⁸War Department to the State Department, 18 March 1920, 860c.22/107.

State Department officials informed the American Legation in Warsaw that the War Department would transport the men infected with venereal disease to the U.S. under the same regulations as American troops. They then would be detained upon arrival by American health authorities until cured of the disease. He asked that special care be taken to ensure that large numbers of infected men not arrive in the U.S. at one time, because it would likely become publicly known and "create an unfortunate impression." State Department officials in Washington also proposed an innovative strategy to combat the problem. They suggested that if the medical facilities existed in Poland to cure the disease, the officials in Warsaw should let it be known that no one infected would be permitted on American transports until they were cured. They surmised, "Would not such a declaration induce them to obey doctors orders strictly?" Nevertheless, they suggested that soldiers not infected with contagious diseases be transported before the others.⁴⁹

More life-threatening forms of contagious diseases led to more drastic measures on the part of U.S. Government. Since typhus existed in the areas where Haller's men had served, the Treasury Department advised the State Department to perform medical inspections for the presence of vermin on their bodies and clothes and to destroy such vermin when necessary. Inspections of this nature would prevent an outbreak of disease on board ship and accelerate the passage of the men through quarantine once in the United States.⁵⁰

Typhus is transmitted by lice. In Eastern Europe during this period, the scarcity of soap aided in its spread. Animal fats ordinarily used to produce soap were consumed as food out of necessity and the overcrowding, filth, and famine in East European cities decreased natural

⁴⁹Telegram from the Department of State to the American Legation in Warsaw, 22 March 1920, 860c.22/107.

⁵⁰Treasury Department to the Secretary of State, 29 March 1920, 860c.22/110.

resistance to disease.⁵¹ Poles saw their country invaded numerous times during the war as armies destroyed millions of homes and hundred of thousands died of starvation. In his memoirs, Herbert Hoover described the devastation in the battered country,

Their agricultural implements were depleted, their animals been taken by armies, their crops had been only partly planted and even then only partly harvested. Industry in the cites was dead from lack of raw materials. The people were unemployed and millions were destitute. They had been flooded with rubles and kronen, all of which was now valueless. The railroads were barely functioning. The cities were almost without food; Typhus and diseases raged over whole provinces. Rats, lice, famine, pestilence--yet they were determined to build a nation.⁵²

Coordination and preparation of the men for sea transport became the responsibility of the American Consulate in Warsaw. The men resided in demobilization camps at Camp Modlin (sometimes referred to as Pomiochówek), 20 miles from Warsaw, and Camp Skierniewice, 60 miles from Warsaw. The initial step taken was to divide the men into military units containing an adjutant, six to eight non-commissioned officers, one hundred enlisted men, and three cooks. State Department officials then provided each man with an inquiry card that asked his name, age, nationality, place of residence in the United States, dependents, and references in America, along with a statement of his military service in the Polish Army.⁵³

After completion of the inquiry cards, members of the consular staff then went to the camps to examine every man in person. The consulate officials recorded the names of all men who, following examination, were entitled to repatriation under the State Department's qualifications. From the information on the inquiry cards, consular staff prepared an

⁵¹Herbert Hoover, *An American Epic, Famine in Forty-five Nations; Organization Behind the Front, 1914-1923*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960), 441.

⁵²Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure, 1874-1920*, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 356.

⁵³American Consulate-Warsaw to the Secretary of State, 7 April 1920, 860c.22/124.

embarkation permit for each man, which was signed and sealed at the Consulate. The staff then prepared company lists for use by the transport officers.⁵⁴

After the final quarantine measures had been taken in camps near Danzig, consular staff members gave the embarkation permits to the Polish-American company commanders to distribute to the former soldiers just prior to embarkation. The medical officers of the American Typhus Relief Expedition to Poland under the command of Colonel Harry Gilchrist retained the permits of all men who failed to conform to the quarantine regulations and later returned these permits to the Consulate. The American Consulate would have preferred that each man to have a document bearing his photograph, but the Polish military authorities stated that this was not feasible. Under these circumstances, the American representatives took every possible precaution to ensure that only those men with a legal right to return to the United States were given embarkation permits.⁵⁵

The Treasury Department received information about the conditions in Poland that increased awareness of the presence of typhus among the men returning on the military transports. A report by the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, through the American Red Cross and the American Typhus Fever Expedition in Poland, stated that "Poland is threatened with one of the worst epidemics of typhus in the history of the world, and the situation at present is getting beyond control." The report claimed that typhus was present in every home in northeast Poland. The Treasury Department urged the Secretary to State to take every possible precaution against the transmission of the disease to the United States not only directly from Poland, but from passengers coming from Poland through other ports in Europe as well.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Assistant Secretary of the Treasury to the Secretary of State, 15 April 1920, 860c.22/121.

To comply with the State Department requirements that the men be free of contagious diseases, Gibson requested that Colonel Harry Gilchrist of the American Polish Relief Expedition (A.P.R.E.) "undertake to supervise the sanitary control."⁵⁷ The U.S. created this organization in 1919 to aid in reduction of the raging typhus epidemic that existed in Poland and other Eastern European countries at the end of World War I. At the request of Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, then director general of relief and rehabilitation, took command of the expedition.⁵⁸

Hoover did not have experience in this type of venture, so he turned to General John J. Pershing, commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) for aid in obtaining supplies, equipment, and trained personnel. Pershing was an obvious choice for the A.E.F. had created a special detachment to free American soldiers from vermin picked up on the battle fields of Europe. Colonel Gilchrist of the United States Army Medical Corps headed this special unit, and General Pershing directed him to continue his operation in Poland. In his request to Pershing for Gilchrist's services, Hoover stated, "I know of no way in which our sympathy for the distressed peoples of Central Europe can be better expressed than in the transfer of American Officers to this service for temporary duty."⁵⁹ The expedition obtained delousing equipment from the American, British, French, and German armies, and as a gift from the U.S. Army 1,500,000 suits of underclothes, 3,000 beds, 10,000 hair clippers, 250 tons of soap, and 500 portable baths. Hoover arranged, with the President's approval, for the United States Army Liquidation Commission to sell second-hand clothing and medicine to the Polish

⁵⁷Gibson to Gilchrist, 12 March 1920, in "Report on Polish Relief Expedition," compiled by Colonel Gilchrist, Warsaw, 31 October 1920, in "The Harry L. Gilchrist Papers," U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Hereafter cited as Gilchrist Papers.

⁵⁸Alfred E. Cornebise, *Typhus and Doughboys, The American Polish Typhus Relief Expedition, 1919-1921* (East Brunswick, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1982), 17.

⁵⁹Hoover, *An American Epic*, 445.

Government for a nominal sum.⁶⁰ The Americans were to check the general health of the men, delouse them, and supply them with certificates indicating that they were free from communicable diseases and vermin.⁶¹ Gilchrist placed the operation under the charge of Major Lee R. Dunbar of the Army Medical Corps, who had formerly been the Chief of the Bathing and Delousing Division of the Third Army following the signing of the Armistice.⁶²

Major Dunbar arrived in Danzig on 18 March 1920 and met with Admiral Borowski of the Polish Navy, head of the Polish Mission in that city. Fortunately for the A.P.R.E, Borowski had spent seventeen months in a German prison camp and was familiar with the requirements of a delousing operation. He had already contracted with the Danzig Municipal Authorities for the use of the Danzig-Troyl bathing and delousing plant to be used for the final delousing immediately before the men boarded ships bound for the United States. During the War, this delousing plant had been part of a prisoner of war camp for captured Russians and was later used for delousing German troops returning home from the Baltic region. Germans, most of whom worked at the plant during the War, were hired to run the facility.⁶³ The U.S.A.T. *Antigone* arrived in Danzig on 19 March 1920 and prepared to transport the first contingent of Polish-Americans to the United States.⁶⁴

*

Secretary of War Newton D. Baker initially rejected any suggestion that the American fleet be used to transport the Polish Army in France to their homes in the United States since many of the men had joined the fighting force illegally. Once President Wilson and the

⁶⁰Ibid., 445-446.

⁶¹Cornebise, 103.

⁶²Harry L. Gilchrist, "Report on Polish Relief Expedition," in the Gilchrist Papers.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴*The Amaroc News*, 21 March 1920, 1. This was the newspaper of the American Army of occupation headquartered in Coblenz, Germany, see Alfred E. Cornebise, *The Amaroc News: The Daily Newspaper of the American Forces in Germany, 1919-1923* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981).

Congress became aware of the problem, however, the fact that the men had violated the law was inconsequential because they had fought the common enemy of the United States. Had Secretary of State Robert Lansing not been an outspoken advocate of the Polish cause and a close associate of Ignacy Paderewski, the issue of the soldiers would not have been as easily brought to the attention of the President and the Congress. Lansing' access to the highest levels of the American Government brought about the transportation of the men to their homes in the United States aided by the fact that Wilson wanted to gain favor with Polish-American voters.

Chapter 6: Transportation to the United States: Return to a Mixed Welcome.

The American Polish Relief Expedition (A.P.R.E.) prepared troops of the Polish Army in France for their journey across the Atlantic to their homes in the United States. American ships had transported the men from Danzig to New York City until the Americans decided to send one large ship to transport all of the remaining men in one voyage. Section I of this chapter describes the disinfection process and the preparation of the men for their journey. Section II argues that because the one large ship sent to retrieve all the remaining soldiers in one voyage returned two-thirds empty, the United States decided to suspend further transports. This section explains why this happened and how missing this ship created enormous hardships for the remaining soldiers who wanted to return to their homes in America. Section III describes the changing treatment of immigrants and the rise of nativism in the United States. Nativism and other forms of anti-immigrant politics had long been strong in various segments of American public opinion and led to immigration quotas and further complicated the return of the remaining veterans to the United States.

I

The first Polish-American troops departed the Pomiochówek and Skierniewice demobilization camps on 20 March 1920 and arrived at Dirschau on the Polish-Danzig border the following day.¹ The soldiers were held at the border, however, until 27 March at the request of Sir Reginald Tower of the British mission in Danzig. German workers planned a large labor

¹Harry L. Gilchrist, "Report on Polish Relief Expedition," in the Gilchrist Papers.

demonstration and Tower was “afraid that trouble might result between the Poles and Germans.”¹

Major Lee R. Dunbar and the A.P.R.E. deloused 1168 men by 28 March 1920. The men embarked on the *Antigone* as quickly as they were deloused, going directly from the dressing room to a steam launch that took them to the ship. The vessel departed on 29 March. The U.S.A.T. *Pocahontas* arrived the same day. By 2 April, the A.P.R.E. deloused and embarked 1705 men on the second transport.

The American Red Cross in Poland, headquartered in Warsaw, arranged to have each deloused soldier of Haller's Army given food, clothing, soap, and cigarettes. Dunbar reported,

If ever men needed the supplies given out, these men did. Many of them had no money, and only the old ragged clothes on their backs. They certainly appreciated the underclothing and supplies given out by the American Red Cross.

While Dunbar and the men in his command deloused the Poles scheduled to sail on *Pocahontas*, Gilchrist and Major G.L. Converse of the United States Public Health Service inspected the Danzig-Troyl plant. Major Converse informed the A.P.R.E. that U.S. quarantine regulations required a twelve day quarantine period immediately prior to embarkation of individuals exposed to typhus. Gilchrist chose Camp Gruppa, 15 kilometers west of Grudziadz, Poland, and 100 kilometers south of Danzig for this operation. The A.P.R.E. moved the entire delousing operation to this new location, and after “some difficulty,” it obtained railroad cars to transport their equipment.

Dunbar found Gruppa to be “excellent for a quarantine camp.”² Located in a pine forest with sandy soil, Gruppa had served as a German artillery post during the war.³ The campgrounds had four large pre-existing two-story brick barracks with a capacity of 250 men

¹Report, Dunbar to Gilchrist, 31 October 1920, *ibid.*

²*Ibid.*

³Cornebise, *Typhus and Doughboys*, 106.

each, and two smaller barracks for 100 men each. One additional had “iron barracks” for 100 could be used as a receiving camp. Although supplies were hard to obtain, Dunbar made arrangements with the Polish government or purchased disinfectants in Grudziadz. He divided Gruppa into two separate camps, the first a “dirty camp,” where the men were held after their arrival, and the second a “clean camp,” where they were sent after delousing for the twelve-day quarantine period.⁴

The initial train load of 1,000 men arrived at Gruppa on 17 April 1920. After the men assembled, Dunbar gave a preliminary instruction speech at which time he explained that Camp Gruppa was under strict rules to fulfill the requirements of United States quarantine laws against typhus. Anyone that did not comply with the regulations would not be allowed to travel with his company to Danzig and onto the U.S. He explained that the camp would maintain military discipline and that “all orders of the Polish and American Officers and of the Adjutants and non-commissioned officers in their own companies must be carried out.” Dunbar explained that the procedures were for the good of the men and that if anyone did not care to abide by the rules, he was free to leave. He would not however then be allowed to return on the United States Army transports. To aid in maintaining order, he prohibited “spirituous liquors” from entering the camp, but he did allow beer to be sold at canteens located inside Gruppa.⁵

Polish interpreters translated Dunbar's instructions to the demobilized soldiers. The Major asserted that most of the men that required disciplinary actions, “were as a rule uneducated Poles who could not understand English and hence did not understand the reason certain things were required of them.” The majority of the men, however, had resided in the

⁴Report, Dunbar to Gilchrist, 31 October 1920, Gilchrist Papers.

⁵Ibid.

United States for a long enough period to speak and understand English very well.⁶ During the early days of the camp, the American officers encountered many difficulties. The chief problem was that there were not enough Polish officers and personnel to operate the camp effectively. Even the ablest leaders could not overcome the lack of supplies and bedding. Dunbar explained that the Polish Army was poorly supplied, so it could offer “very little” help.⁷ The camp had only four wagons to make the daily round trip of thirty kilometers for supplies. Food was adequate, if one could overlook the lack of fats and meat. All the men received bread and weak barley coffee for breakfast. Lunch consisted of soup and barley with some meat, and dinner was again weak barley coffee and bread.⁸

During their stay at Camp Gruppa, no more than 80% of the men ever had beds. The remaining 20% had to sleep on the floor or on “bedsacks” filled with straw or wood shavings. During the four months that Gruppa operated, no new straw could be obtained for changing the bedsacks. Dunbar and his staff relied on careful delousing before admission to the clean camp and weekly inspections for lice infestation thereafter. If a man was found to be infested, his bedding and clothing were deloused immediately.⁹

As the weeks went on, the A.P.R.E. established the following routine. After each group of men arrived at Camp Gruppa, Dunbar explained the strict quarantine rules. The staff then “casually” inspected the men to ascertain whether or not their hair had been clipped and they had been shaved as required at the Pomiochówek and Skierniewice demobilization camps prior to boarding trains bound for Gruppa. If not, they were given two or three hours to shave and get their hair cut by A.P.R.E. barbers. Then one company at a time, they marched to the delousing

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Cornebise, 110.

⁹Report, Dunbar to Gilchrist, 31 October 1920, Gilchrist Papers.

station where they stripped and bathed and received examination by A.P.R.E. staff for venereal and infectious disease. After the delousing was complete, each man received a new suit of clothes.¹⁰

After this process, the men marched to the clean barracks where staff members gave them laundry soap to clean their dirty underclothes and uniforms. The Red Cross distributed needles and thread to make repairs “as far as possible.” Approximately three days after arrival, company commanders inspected their men to insure that all clothing had been adequately washed and their underclothes clean. One week after arrival at Gruppa, the men took a second bath, and the staff inspected them for nits and lice. After successful completion of this second bath, the Red Cross issued each man a “luxury ration” containing the tobacco and other rations described above.¹¹

To encourage exercise, Dunbar required two hours of physical drill, foot drills, or mass games during weekday mornings. During the afternoons, the men were free and could play “ball” or other games. Dunbar required the drills because he could not “let them lie around and do nothing as hell could be raised generally then.”¹² The American Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) operated a canteen at the camp with a writing room where chocolate, cocoa, and cigarettes were sold inexpensively. The Y.M.C.A. also provided athletic equipment for the men and the athletic director came to the camp from Grudziadz to plan and supervise physical exercises and games.¹³

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Corneise, 108.

¹³Report, Dunbar to Gilchrist, 31 October 1920, Gilchrist Papers.

At the end of the quarantine period the A.P.R.E. gave the former soldiers one final bath and delousing and medical officers once again inspected them for lice, infectious, contagious and venereal diseases. If the soldiers were clean, the officers stamped “DELOUSED, CAMP GRUPPA” on the front of their left arm. After all of the men in the company completed this procedure, they marched to the trains and were placed under guard to prevent them from mixing with those not deloused. Staff members warned the soldiers that if they left the trains to go into restaurants or mixed with people infested with lice, they would not be allowed to reboard the trains and would have to return to Gruppa and undergo another twelve-day quarantine period.¹⁴

Dunbar arranged with the Polish authorities that trains used for transporting the deloused soldiers be placed on side rails or in freight yards forty-eight hours before the time of troop movement to Danzig. The train cars were swept out and thoroughly scrubbed inside with water and allowed to dry. The following day they were sprayed inside with 5% cresol, an oily disinfectant to insure a clean and disinfected transport, and allowed to dry from twelve to twenty-four hours before the troops boarded them.¹⁵

About one week before the departure of each contingent for Danzig, General Roje, the Polish Department Commander, reviewed the former soldiers. The general presented each man with the “Commemorative Medal of Poland” for volunteering in America to return to Europe and fight in Haller's Army for a free Poland.¹⁶ Recognition by the Polish government did not weaken the soldiers desire to return to the United States a fact which underscores the extent to which their ethnic identity had shifted from Poland to America. Despite receiving medals for their sacrifice to the fatherland, their future was in the United States.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

On 19 May 1920, Dunbar began a dental prophylaxis campaign, “in order to carry out further the plan of putting these men in the best physical condition for the trip on the transport and also make them fit physically to earn their living in the United States.” From that date on, all the soldiers with gingivitis, about 70% of the total, had their teeth “scaled” and treated and those with roots beyond repair had them extracted. The staff issued the men tooth brushes and cleaning powder and instructed them how to clean their teeth properly. Although the men's mouths were in “dreadful” condition when they arrived, through the work of American and Polish doctors their gums and teeth improved remarkably by the time of their departure.¹⁷

The A.P.R.E processed a total of 2,873 former soldiers at the Danzig-Troyl delousing plant and 8,304 at Camp Gruppa. Major Dunbar and his staff prepared the 11,177 men for the following ships:

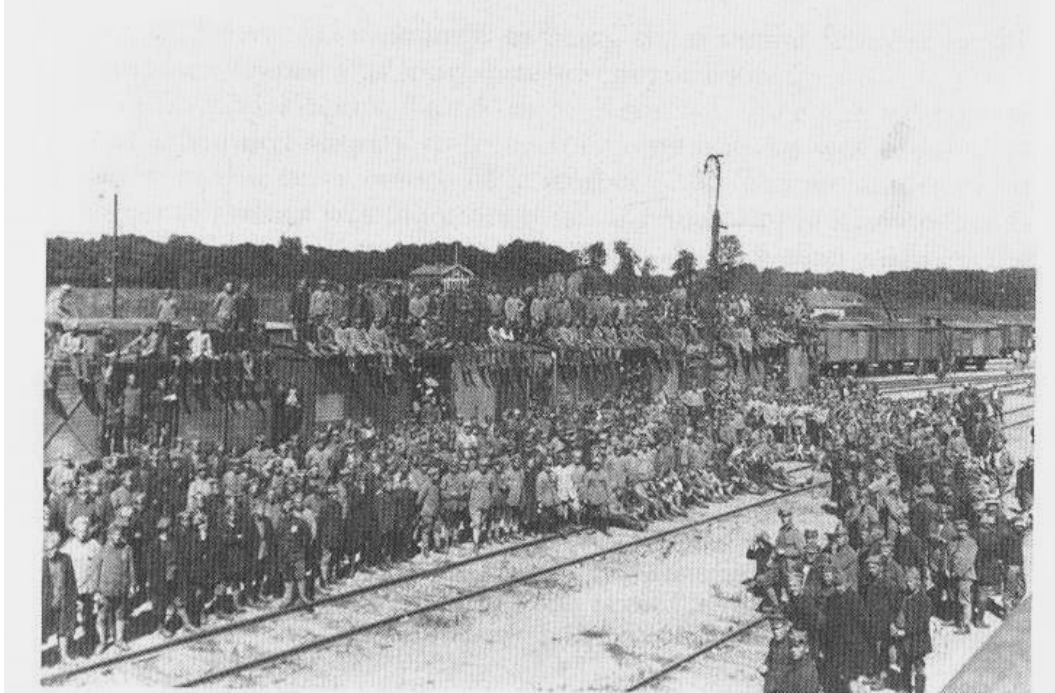
<i>Pocahontas</i> (3 voyages)	4,304
<i>Princess Matoyke</i> (2 voyages)	3,831
<i>Antigone</i>	1,168
<i>Mercury</i>	<u>1,874</u>
Total	11,177 ¹⁸

No epidemic of infectious diseases developed during the operation of Camp Gruppa from 18 April to 15 August 1920. Dunbar attributed this success mainly to the “excellent” warm weather during most of this period that allowed the men to remain outside nearly all the time except when they were asleep or on rainy days. The sandy soil of the area dried quickly after rains and very little bronchitis and very few cases of influenza developed. Dunbar stated that, “conditions were really ideal for a typhus quarantine camp.”¹⁹

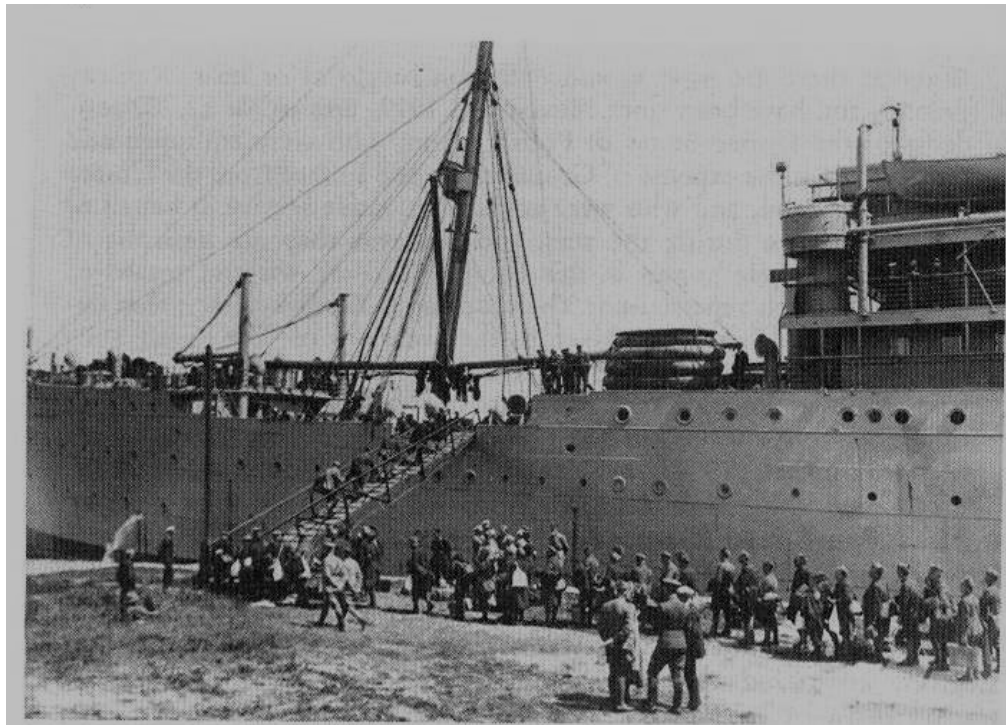
¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.



“Haller Men Awaiting Transportation.”



“Haller Men Embarking.”

Photos from Alfred E. Cornebise, *Typhus and Doughboys, The American Polish Typhus Relief Expedition, 1919-1921*, 102.

Two cases of typhus did develop on the *Pocahontas* on its first trip from Danzig to Antwerp. This was not unexpected, explained Dunbar, since the first two transports were not quarantined for twelve days. The men had arrived from demobilization camps that were heavily infested with lice and arrived at Danzig in very bad condition. The delousing and medical inspection of the men at the Danzig-Troyl plant before embarking ensured that no secondary cases of typhus developed. Medical officers eliminated all men who had elevated body temperature. But individuals in the incubation period of the disease would have normal temperatures and thus elude detection. The twelve-day quarantine period used at Gruppa prevented those in the incubation period from boarding the transports.²⁰

Following the arrival of the *Pocahontas* in New York in April 1920, Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker received a troubling report from the U.S. Army officer in command of the troops aboard ship that demonstrated the fear of communism that existed in early 1920s America. Baker reported to Secretary of State Robert Lansing that the identity cards issued to the returning veterans were “virtually useless” since they did not have photographs, finger prints nor signatures and that almost anyone could have joined the troop train enroute from Modlin to Danzig. Adding to these problems, British intelligence reported that the Bolsheviks would pay \$1000.00 in gold for a passport. No suspected Bolsheviks had been detected thus far, but Barker insisted that trouble might develop unless safeguards were placed around the issuance of passports. Baker recommended that the men not be treated as returning veterans, but rather be sent through Ellis Island, the main entry point for European immigrants coming to the United States.²¹

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Baker to the Secretary of State, 30 June 1920, Records of the Department of State, 860c.22/130, RG 59, NA/College Park, MD.

The State Department responded that these men were not to be treated as ordinary immigrants; the formal visa and passport requirements in their cases would be waived. State Department officials assured Baker that the strict system devised to verify the identity of the soldiers had been carefully carried out with the realization that many individuals might attempt to enter the United States illegally. As of late July 1920, the State Department had not received any reports of individuals who had falsely obtained transportation to this country and assumed the process worked efficiently.²² While the International Workers of the World and labor agitators, especially in mines and stockyards, had received substantial public notice, before 1917 Marxism and Communism were abstractions to most Americans, but the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the violence, nationalization of industry and loss of personal property created intense fears in the United States and many influential groups and leaders believed that the possibility of radicals entering the country had to be curtailed.

In late July 1920, the Bolshevik Army's drive into Poland had become so serious that the Polish Government needed every available soldier and consequently ceased the demobilization of Polish-Americans in Haller's Army. On 15 August General Maxime Weygand, a French military advisor to Poland, on a tour to inspect Grudziadz, informed Dunbar that the Bolsheviks were 35 kilometers outside the town and advancing 25 kilometers per day. Weygand stated that there were less than two regiments of Polish troops between the Bolsheviks and the garrison at Grudziadz. He expected the Bolshevik Forces to arrive in three or four days. Weygand advised that all American personnel and property be evacuated to Danzig. Dunbar followed this advice and on 16 August 1920, the five American officers and forty-eight enlisted men departed for Danzig. Thus ended the A.P.R.E. operations at Camp Gruppa.²³ Dunbar made

²²Adee to the Secretary of War, 24 July 1920, 860c.22/130.

²³Report, Dunbar to Gilchrist, 30 October 1920, Gilchrist Papers.

arrangements on 16 August with the Danzig Y.M.C.A. for warehouse space to store the expedition's equipment.²⁴

II

At the end of 1920 Polish authorities informed the Secretary of State that the process of sending the remaining men, approximately 6,000, to the United States could resume.²⁵ Secretary of War Baker arranged for one of the larger army transports, the *President Grant*, to make the final trip to Danzig to retrieve the entire contingent in one voyage.²⁶ The men were to be deloused before their embarkation at Danzig and again their arrival in New York. Such a large number of men landing at the same time led War Department officials to plan on accommodating 1,500 at Camp Dix, New Jersey, and transporting 3,000 to Camp Meade, Maryland. After five days, the remaining 1,500 could be sent to Camp Dix for disinfecting. All cost of transportation and delousing would be charged to the Polish Government.²⁷

The *President Grant*, the last U.S.-funded transport, departed Danzig for New York on 28 January 1921 with 1439 passengers on board. They included five companies of demobilized Polish-American troops, 65 officers, and 1,341 enlisted men, 3 family members of officers, 25 family members of enlisted men, and 5 Polish White Cross nurses.²⁸ The Polish troops were thoroughly deloused in Danzig prior to embarkation and frequently bathed and inspected during the voyage and were free from lice.²⁹ The A.P.R.E. returned from Coblenz in January 1921 to

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Minister of Poland to the Secretary of State, 3 November 1920, 860c.22/138.

²⁶Baker to the Secretary of State, 20 November 1920, 860c.22/139.

²⁷Colonel M. C. Buckey, Office of the Chief of Staff, War Department to the State Department, Near Eastern Division, 27 November 1920, 860c.22/140.

²⁸Baker to the Secretary of State, 2 February 1920, 860c.22/142.

²⁹Telegram from the Transport Quartermaster to the Assistant Chief of Transportation Service, 15 February 1921, Office of the Quartermaster-General Army Transport Service, General File 1914-1940, Record Group 92, Box 1298, NA/College Park, MD.

disinfect this last group.³⁰ Since the total number of persons on this transport was far less than the 6,000 expected, the War Department sent the entire group to Camp Dix for another delousing.³¹ At Camp Dix, Acting Polish Military Attaché, Major Casimir Mach, and the Second Secretary of the Legation of Poland, Dr. Joseph Sulkowski, carried out the final demobilization of the Polish-American troops. The Polish National Committee shared in the cost of demobilization by paying the soldiers part of their bonus.³²

Since only 1,439 of the expected 6,000 arrived in America on board the last transport, several thousand Polish-American men remained in Poland. At this time, the Soviet-Polish War raged on Poland's eastern and southern frontier and the Polish government needed the men for the fighting. The Polish government adopted a policy that all soldiers born between 1896 and 1901, whether or not they had enlisted in America, had to remain in the Polish army until they were officially demobilized. Since the Poles from America had been fully integrated into the Polish army, they were under its authority and therefore bound to remain in Poland until the government released them.³³

Early in 1920, the American legation in Warsaw recognized that a problem might exist whenever the United States ended funding for the transports. The men released from service thereafter would have no means of returning to their homes and families in America. The State Department officials predicted a great amount of ill feeling in the Polish-American "colony" in the United States which monetarily aided the Polish government.³⁴

³⁰H. L. McBride, Acting Military Attaché, American Legation, Warsaw to Director of Military Intelligence, 8 March 1921, MID, 2034-129, 2, RG 165, National Archives/College Park, MD.

³¹Baker to the Secretary of State, 2 February 1920, 860c.22/142.

³²Minister of Poland to the Secretary of State, 9 February 1921, 860c.22/143.

³³Pienkos, *One Hundred Years Young*, 107.

³⁴Telegram from the American Legation in Warsaw to the Secretary of State, 23 April 1920, 860c.22/122.

The American Legation's foreboding was correct, for not only did the remaining soldiers have to contend with the lack of American aid, but also with the nativist legislation Congress enacted in 1921. It severely limited the number of immigrants allowed freely into the United States. Even though they had been confined in demobilization camps, endured multiple delousings, quarantines and the long sea voyage, the individuals who returned to America on board the U.S.-funded transports had a relatively easy process of repatriation when compared to their countrymen who returned without American aid.

III

The unfortunate members of Haller's Army unable to sail on the U.S. transports that departed Danzig in mid-1920 and early-1921 encountered extreme difficulty returning to America. The legislation passed by Congress on 19 October 1918 that allowed the earlier transports to enter the United States expired one year after the conclusion of the war.³⁵ Their return to America would require congressional intervention once again and aid from the fledgling Polish government.

Several factors contributed to the failure of these men to make passage on the American transports. Incomplete or nonexistent records and bureaucratic disorganization in the Polish War Department caused many of the men to miss the final transport. Some were not notified of the transport due to inadequate means of communication, and others could not be found in time. The Bolsheviks held some in prisons; others were sick or had died. And at the last minute, some veterans decided to remain in Poland.³⁶

The Polish Government forced the men to remain in demobilization camps for over a year awaiting repatriation to the United States, during which time they were forbidden to obtain

³⁵Joint Resolution, 67th Congress, 2nd Session, 27 July 1922, 860c.22/152.

³⁶H. L. McBride, Acting Military Attaché, American Legation, Warsaw to Director of Military Intelligence, 8 March 1921, MID, 2034-129, 2, RG 165.

employment by the Polish War Department. Instead, they waited in idleness month after month.

According to one Polish-American veteran:

In the meantime we must undergo all sorts of humiliation and outrage, because whenever any murder, theft or robbery is committed in the vicinity of Graudziadz [a nearby town], the Polish police file straight to our camp, and without much ado arrest any score of men who in any way resemble the real culprits. After two or three months imprisonment, the victims declared innocent--not a single person arrested, was as yet found guilty. Why we are afraid of arrest both day and night.³⁷

These men who had returned to their homeland to fight for a free Poland felt like “prisoners of war” instead of patriots.³⁸

U.S. Government sentiments toward aiding the marooned soldiers soured after the U.S.A.T. *President Grant* returned to the United States with less than one third of the intended number of passengers. The unused space and the great expense incurred greatly “annoyed” the American authorities, and no adequate explanation was ever given for the failure of the Poles to have the men prepared to depart at the appointed time.³⁹

In October 1921 the Chief of the Polish General Staff inquired with the American Military Attaché, E. E. Farman, about the possibility of returning the remaining members of Haller's Army to the United States. Farman reported that since the budget for the American Army had been so reduced that it did not cover its own expenses, he considered it “most improbable” that a transport could be obtained. Farman reminded the Poles that the U.S.A.T. *President Grant* had returned half empty, but despite the unlikelihood of the United States

³⁷Frank Krawzyk, et al, to Herbert Hoover, Director of East European Relief, 26 April 1922, 860c.22/150.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Benjamin Thaw, Jr., Charge d'Affaires ad interim, American Legation-Warsaw to the Secretary of State, 29 December 1921, 860c.22/145.

providing the desired transports, he would forward the request to his superiors at the War Department.⁴⁰

Farman informed the Director of Military Intelligence in Washington that according to Polish authorities, 600 men, women and children were at Camp Gruppa awaiting transportation to the United States. Since precise figures were not available, Farman estimated that there were probably a total of 1500 persons “scattered all over Poland” who had found jobs while awaiting an opportunity to return to America. Many of the men had married since returning to their homeland and obviously desired to bring their wives and children to the United States.⁴¹

Little activity followed this request until February 1922 when William R. Castle of the U.S. State Department asked Major Marlborough Churchill of the Military Intelligence Division about the possibility of returning the soldiers.⁴² Churchill subsequently consulted with General William Lassiter (Chief of the Operations and Training, U.S. Army General Staff) concerning the repatriation of the remainder of Haller's Army. Lassiter had his staff perform a study to ascertain the expense if the War Department cooperated in this matter.⁴³ The Quartermaster General of the Army calculated the cost of transporting 1,800 men of Haller's Army from Poland to their homes in the United States would be approximately \$200,000, including food, sea, and ground transportation.⁴⁴ Major Churchill informed Castle, that General Lassiter believed that it would require additional funds from Congress in order to fund the transportation of the rest of

⁴⁰E. E. Farman, U.S. Military Attaché-Warsaw to the Chief of the Polish General Staff, 21 October 1921, MID, 2034-129, 7., RG 165, NA/College Park, MD.

⁴¹Farman to the Director of the Military Intelligence Division, United States War Department, 31 October 1921, MID, 2034-129, 7.

⁴²Memorandum from William R. Castle, State Department, Acting Chief, Division of Western European Affairs to Major Marlborough Churchill, War Department, Military Intelligence Division, 17 February 1922, MID, 2034-129, 11.

⁴³Churchill to Castle, 18 February 1922, MID, 2034-129, 12.

⁴⁴Brigadier General C.H. Krauthoff, Acting Quartermaster General, to the War Department, Assistant Chief of Staff, 28 February 1922, MID, 2034-129, 16.

Haller's Army.⁴⁵ The remaining soldiers would be exempted from immigration laws designed to reduce the number of immigrants allowed into America. The failure of the Polish Government to fill the *President Grant* with demobilized soldiers, however, had prevented any future U.S.-funded transportation for the members of Haller's Army.

The long delays that prevented the members of Haller's Army from returning to the United States unfortunately coincided with anti-immigrant legislation that appeared in 1921. Although industrialists in America desired inexpensive immigrant labor and urban politicians conspired to obtain their vote, there existed a growing sentiment in the United States that wanted to halt the unfettered flow of immigrants from foreign lands. Nativists resisted the immigrants who had come to the U.S. in the 1840s from Ireland and Germany and other now "whitened" immigrants, and their resistance intensified as the immigrants came from Eastern and Southern Europe in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Strong elements of the American political scene also believed that the United States had made too many sacrifices for foreigners by going to war and trying to give too much power to the League of Nations.⁴⁶

The immigrants who began arriving in the early 1880s came in increasing numbers from eastern and southern Europe, countries that did not have the tradition of a democracy that Americans cherished. Accustomed to laws and forms of government that indulged sovereigns and the upper classes, the immigrants brought with them a distrust of political authority, something very alien to those who honored America's republican legacy. Possibly their greatest irritant lay in their religion. The immigrants that arrived in the late-nineteenth century were

⁴⁵Churchill to Castle, 18 February 1922, MID, 2034-129, 13.

⁴⁶Alan M. Kraut, *The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1982), 148-149.

predominately Catholic and Jewish whereas most intensely anti-foreign Americans were Protestant.⁴⁷

Nativists asserted that the new immigrants posed an impending threat to their way of life. They condemned the would-be Americas as an “alien menace” responsible for unemployment, low wages, and urban problems like vice and violent crime.⁴⁸ Nativist authors like Edward Alsworth Ross (*The Old World in the New*, 1914), Madison Grant (*The Passing of the Great Race*, 1916), and others espoused the dangers of mixing the American population with allegedly racially inferior Eastern Europeans, while the Protestant minister Josiah Strong (*Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, 1885) provoked anti-Catholicism and warned of papal influence in America. Nativists assigned themselves credit for having established American culture and claimed the right to protect that culture from foreign influences. By the late-nineteenth century, nativists also became increasingly concerned about the threat from Jewish immigrants because of their “cunning and avariciousness in the marketplace,” and their alleged radicalism.⁴⁹

The First World War represented a “turning point” in the history of nativism as the desire for unconditional allegiance to the United States during the war carried over into peacetime. The success of the Bolsheviks in Russia contributed heavily to the “Red Scare” of 1919 when American politicians blamed labor unrest on Eastern European immigrants. Since the majority of American communists had come from recent European backgrounds, they became the focus of the anti-radical actions taken by the federal and local government. Employers added to the fear by equating labor unrest with class conflict and accusations that immigrant radicalism intended to launch a revolution similar to the one in Russia. Under the

⁴⁷Ibid., 149-151.

⁴⁸Ibid., 150-151.

⁴⁹Ibid., 152-155.

leadership of Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer, the federal government began to raid communist party gatherings and deport massive numbers of Russian and East European immigrants. Because they were not citizens, immigrants were Palmer's primary target. By early 1920, much of the labor strife had subsided and industrialists remembered the economic value of the immigrant and recognized that the "Red Scare" was nothing more than temporary excitement. Palmer failed to have a sedition law enacted that would allow him to punish citizens and non-citizens for political radicalism, but nativism would continue in the 1920s in the form of immigration restriction.⁵⁰

First World War propaganda had led to heightened sensitivity to immigrants in postwar America, and nativist rhetoric led to formal government restrictions on immigration. A joint Senate-House committee, headed by Senator William Dillingham, declared that the "new" immigrants were less "fit physically, intellectually, economically and culturally than earlier American settlers" and urged passage of a literacy test and consideration of immigration restriction based on nationality, in 1911.⁵¹ Dillingham introduced legislation in 1920 that permitted only 3 percent of the number of foreign-born of any particular group that existed in the federal census of 1910 to enter the country annually. This quota system was to last only one year, but Congress renewed it in 1922 and 1923 and replaced it with the more restrictive Immigration Restriction Act of 1924.⁵²

In order to repatriate the remaining members of the Polish Army in France, the United States Congress passed Joint Resolution 233. It extended the deadline of a previous resolution of 19 October 1918 that allowed the members of Haller's Army to return to America. The resolution exempted these men and their wives and children under eighteen years-of-age from

⁵⁰John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 2nd Edition. (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 222-233.

⁵¹Kraut, 176.

⁵²Ibid.

the “Act to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States” that passed Congress 19 May 1921. The resolution exempted the soldiers and their families from the Polish quota, but it did not bypass other requirements stipulated by the immigration laws.⁵³

The wording of Joint Resolution 233 was ambiguous. On one hand it stated in Section 1 that the aliens who enlisted or were recruited in America for the Polish Army in France were not held to the one year time limit after the conclusion of the war to make application for readmission to the United States. They now had two years from 3 March 1921 to return. On the other hand, Section 2 of the resolution complicated this procedure. It stated that “all aliens who while lawfully resident in the United States were recruited or enlisted for service in the Polish Army in France and who return to the United States on or before March 3, 1923, and are found to be admissible under the immigration laws” will be admitted.⁵⁴ This final requirement meant that the returnees would have to prove their literacy in English in order to be readmitted to the United States.

The failure of the resolution to bypass the literacy requirement caused immediate concern among State Department officials. They contacted the Secretary of Labor to find out if illiterate members of Haller's army would be excluded from entering the United States.⁵⁵ The Department of Labor responded that the only exceptions to the illiteracy clause were those aliens who had been lawfully admitted to the United States and had resided here continuously for five years and who had returned to the United States within six months from the date of their departure. The Labor Department officials realized that the Polish-American volunteers obviously were not entitled to readmission under this proviso since they had been in Europe for several years. They added, however, that the Secretary of Labor had personal discretionary

⁵³Joint Resolution 233, 67th Congress, 2nd Session, 27 July 1922, 860c.22/152.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Robert Woods Bliss, Third Assistant Secretary of State, to the Secretary of Labor, 26 July 1922, 860c.22/152.

power to admit aliens returning from a temporary absence without the alien proving his or her ability to read English.⁵⁶

The immigration authorities did not allow all the members of the Polish Army in France to return to the United States. One hundred and fifty illiterate soldiers arrived in New York in October 1922 aboard the Baltic American steamer *Polonia*. American authorities deported the men and fined the company two hundred dollars per head. The Polish government had sent the men to the United States on assurances from its legation in Washington that the American Government “would find some way of letting them in.”⁵⁷ Unfortunately for the men, American benevolence had run out.

American officials sent all of the veterans of Haller's Army to Camp Dix or Camp Meade, Maryland. Since they had come from eastern Europe where a typhus epidemic still existed, American authorities prohibited welcoming demonstrations at piers for soldiers returning from typhus infested countries. The returning soldiers received only “official” welcomes from delegations representing Polish-American organizations. Despite the multiple delousings in Poland, the soldiers had to undergo another delousing at Camp Dix or Camp Meade. The returnees were at best ill-clad and the delousings further ate away at the few pieces of clothing they did possess.⁵⁸ The Polish National Department purchased new clothing to remedy this situation. It also paid each man a mustering-out bonus. Each enlisted man received \$15 (officers received \$30), and the Polish embassy provided railway fare plus an additional \$10 for the journey home.⁵⁹

⁵⁶E. J. Henning, Assistant Secretary of Labor to the Secretary of State, 1 August 1922, 860c.22/155.

⁵⁷Telegram from Gibson to the Secretary of State, 4 October 1922, 860c.22/158.

⁵⁸Pliska, “The 'Polish-American Army' 1917-1921,” 58.

⁵⁹Pienkos, *Polish Falcons*, 110-111.

The Polish government found the resources to fund repatriation of the remaining members of Haller's army in August 1922. The Polish-funded S.S. *Latvia* arrived in New York with 734 males and 307 females, 37 of whom were detained in the hospital for observation. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the passengers on this ship did not require special legislation for admission to the United States since the “great majority were found to be admissible under the immigration laws.”⁶⁰ American immigration officials were indifferent to the feelings of hundreds of relatives and friends who awaited their arrival at a pier at the foot of Forty-sixth Street in Brooklyn and diverted the soldiers to Hoffman Island for fumigation.⁶¹

The assistance extended to the returning members of Haller's Army did not prepare them for the typical problems encountered by soldiers reentering civilian life. After the War, the United States experienced an economic recession that intensified their problems finding jobs. Many volunteers had had poor prospects in the labor market when they enlisted, but employment opportunities had been better in 1917 than after they returned from the army in 1919-20. Polish-American volunteers who had jobs before they departed for training camp, had to find new jobs after they returned in a less favorable market. In a few cities, such as New York, Chicago, Milwaukee and Toledo, the Polish community helped the former soldiers find employment. Although Paderewski offered to turn his California estate into a center for disabled veterans, the plan came to nothing, since it was simply too far from the large Polish-American communities in the northeast and Midwest.⁶²

The experience of the veterans enhanced the community consciousness among Poles in America. In 1921, the former members of Haller's Army formed the Polish Army Veterans Association (Stowarzyszenie Weteranow Armii Polskiej) to assist the men in their “successful

⁶⁰Robe Carl White, Second Assistant Secretary of Labor, to the Secretary of State, 25 August 1922, 860c.22/157.

⁶¹*New York Times*, 18 August 1922, 12.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 111.

reintegration into community life.” They also established veterans' homes. In New York, Chicago, and Milwaukee, Polish merchants during the 1920s frequently donated groceries, clothes, and other items to help support the veterans' homes. For a number of years after the War, larger Polish communities held “Let's not Forget” tag days for the benefit of the homes.⁶³

The difficulties the veterans encountered returning to the United States were aggravated by the anti-immigrant sentiments that steadily grew during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gary Gerstle argues that Theodore Roosevelt's vision of America dominated the Progressive Era. Roosevelt's highly racist vision accepted, but tried to make second-class citizens of, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans and the “inferior peoples” of Eastern and Southern Europe. These individuals were welcome to assimilate into American society, but only if they would discard their “Old World” traditions.⁶⁴ Likewise, in his study of American citizenship law, Rogers Smith, explains that during the Progressive Era, most policymakers believed that in order for America to be successful and take its place among the great civilizations of the world, its “real” citizens were white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants.⁶⁵

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The American Polish Relief Expedition worked diligently during 1920 to prepare the veterans of the Polish Army in France to return to the United States. Due to mandatory extension of their service in the Polish-Soviet War, many of the soldiers were not able to embark on the American vessels to return the United States. After the *President Grant* returned to America two-thirds empty in early 1921, the United States stopped funding further transports.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible, Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 79.

⁶⁵Rogers M. Smith. *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 466-469.

The Polish government funded one transport in 1922, but this occurred after the United States had enacted anti-immigrant legislation that placed quotas on foreigners entering the country. Just as it required Congressional intervention to fund the transport of the men to their homes in the United States, it required further Congressional intervention to suspend the limit on Polish immigrants to allow the veterans to return to their adopted homeland.

Chapter 7. Conclusions.

Poland ceased to exist with the third and final partition of Poland in 1795. The Polish Army in France was the last in a long history of attempts by Poles to regain their independence from the partitioning powers by armed insurrection. Earlier efforts to regain control of their country had failed because they were attempted within partitioned Poland. The Germans, Austrians and Russians could thwart these attempts since they had direct control over the Polish people. The First World War presented a unique opportunity for Poles to fight the warring partitioning powers for Polish independence. But this did not weaken the partitioning powers enough to end their control of Poland. Jozef Pilsudski's Polish Legions are a prime example of this phenomenon. Pilsudski tried to create an army to fight for Polish independence while collaborating with Germany and Austria-Hungary. This collaboration ended when Pilsudski refused to have his men take an oath of allegiance to the Central Powers and the Polish Legions ceased to exist.

Enormous changes to the Polish way of life occurred during the late nineteenth century that led to the migration of millions of Poles to the United States. This fundamentally altered the quest for Polish independence. Far from the partitioning powers, expatriate Poles could openly work for the liberation of their nation. But they could not regain Polish territory. The Germans, Austrians, and Russians had systematically suppressed all forms of nationalistic expression in Poland which limited the growth of nationalistic awareness, particularly among local-minded peasant villagers. Once these individuals crossed the Atlantic Ocean, they began to see themselves as Poles who had strong common interests with people who spoke their language and

recognized the same cultural and religious heritage. Although they came as foreigners to America, great numbers of them began to see themselves as becoming American while trying to remain loyal to their homeland. Their war experience intensified their loyalty to the United States and encouraged them to seek their future there rather than in the land of their origins.

By the time the French government created the Polish Army in France in 1917, a fighting force primarily comprised of Polish-American immigrants, the Polish Falcons of America already had been preparing for armed conflict with the partitioning powers for over a decade. In the United States, far beyond the reach of German, Austrian, or Russian power, the Falcons could openly prepare for liberation of Polish lands. Ignacy Paderewski, the world-famous pianist, statesman and the leading proponent of Polish independence, envisioned an army of 100,000 men recruited from the millions of Polish immigrants in the United States. In his speeches he utilized the memories of Thaddeus Kosciuszko and Kazimierz Pulaski, Poles who had aided the United States during the American Revolution, to inspire Polish Americans to fight for Polish independence.

The American government limited the number of men eligible for service in the Polish Army in France by stating that men who had become naturalized citizens could not join the new fighting force. Recruits to the Polish Army were limited to two groups: recent immigrants who had not yet acquired citizenship and Poles born in the German or Austrian partitions and designated by the United States as enemy aliens. This led to abuses by the recruiters. Severely limited in their pool of potential volunteers, recruiters used unscrupulous tactics to obtain recruits. Their methods included sending false draft notices to aliens and using intimidation and alcohol to obtain enlistments. Men who claimed to have been tricked or forced into enlisting tried to obtain their release before being sent overseas. Some were successful, and some were

not. Recruiters even appealed to the long-standing anti-Semitism that existed in Eastern Europe. The told recruits that they could attack Jews and take their property once they reached Poland. When this came to fruition, it resulted in the darkest episode of the activities of the Polish Army in France.

Poles under the command of General Jozef Haller fought alongside the Allies in the trenches of the Western Front during the final eighteen months of the First World War. At the conclusion of the war, the recently created Polish government desperately needed troops to help establish and defend of its borders, and the Allied leaders turned to the Polish Army in France to assist in this process. Its transfer to Poland would be the subject of much discussion at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The Germans did not want a hostile army to be transported across unoccupied territories in Germany because they feared renewed fighting. German nationalists resented its loss of territory to the newly created Polish state and they did not accept the Poles as legitimate members of the victorious Allied Powers. Under heavy pressure by Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the Allies forced the Germans to allow the Polish Army in France to be transported by trains through their territory. Evidence exists that the soldiers attacked Jews once they reached Poland and this led their commander, General Jozef Haller, to condemn these actions.

After Haller's Army reached their newly recreated homeland, it ceased to exist as an independent fighting force and became part of greater Polish army. They fought in brutal engagements against the Soviets. The hardships of this campaign led many of the men to request release from the military. Letters to the American State Department expressed their desire to return to the United States and demonstrated that they identified themselves as Americans. They did regard themselves as proud Poles who fought to restore Polish independence but they did not

want to live in the land of their ancestors. Their service in the army only intensified their attachment to America and enhanced their desire to return to their families in the United States.

In the midst of the Polish-Soviet War, Pilsudski's government in Warsaw allowed the demobilization of the volunteers from America. Because many of the men had joined, or been coerced to join, the Polish Army in France in violation of the American penal code that forbade citizens to serve in foreign armies, the United States War Department initially refused to aid the repatriation of Haller's soldiers to America. The policy was overruled when Secretary of State Robert Lansing brought the issue to President Woodrow Wilson and he approved requesting Congress to fund the transportation. Representatives from states with large numbers of Poles made impassioned speeches asserting that, although some of the men had violated the law, they had fought against America's enemies. The legislation passed with overwhelming support. Had Lansing not been sympathetic to the Polish cause and an associate of Ignacy Paderewski, the American funded-repatriation may not have taken place.

The American Polish Relief Expedition deloused and prepared the men for their return to the United States. American ships made numerous voyages until the United States government decided to send one large ship to transport all the remaining veterans at one time. Unfortunately, many of the men from America could not reach Danzig to embark on this final shipment as they were in Soviet prisoner-of-war camps or had not yet been released from the Polish army. The final American ship returned from Poland only two-thirds of its passenger berths empty. This led American officials to suspend further transports. The remaining men had wait for the Polish government to transport them home. This did not occur until 1922, five years after the first soldiers initially arrived in France. The final transport occurred after the United States had reduced immigration quotas and exposed stricter qualification standards for

admission. This made veterans of Haller's Army ineligible to return to the United States. This situation required further action by Congress and entailed more waiting before the men could return to their homes in America.

The men who fought in the Polish Army in France are an excellent example of what Donna R. Gabaccia calls "nowhere men," since they had left their native country but had not yet assimilated into their adopted homeland. They were "transnational" since "they link[ed] human experience in more than one nation."¹ They sought better lives and greater opportunities in America but were connected to Poland through family, language, religion, tradition and history. The battlefields of Europe and the quality of life in Poland tested the strength of this link. Most chose to return to their adopted homeland rather than remain in Poland, the nation they had risked their lives to help recreate.

The story of one volunteer illustrates this point. Jan Kostrubala was a seventeen-year-old Polish immigrant living in Chicago in 1917 who lied about his age to enlist in the Polish Army in France. After his discharge in 1921, he returned to Chicago and sold shoes, then sold insurance and finally worked as a reporter for the Polish-language newspaper, *Dziennik Chicagoski*. He was executive editor at the time of his death in 1958. His grandson Dr. Paul Valasek, president of the Polish Genealogical Society of America, said in reference to his grandfather's service in the army that he "was motivated by patriotism to help liberate Poland but was always proud to be an American." Kostrubala and the other members of the Polish Army in France had to come to America to discover they were Polish, but had to return to Poland to realize they had become Americans.²

¹Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," 1115-1116.

²Jan Lorys, *Polonia rich in history*; available from <http://www.suntimes.com/century/m1917.html>; Internet accessed 6 March 2006.



Jan Kostrubala, a 17-year-old Polish immigrant from Chicago, who lied about his age to enlist in the Polish Army in France. Photo from Jan Lorys, *Polonia rich in history*; available from <http://www.suntimes.com/century/m1917.html>; Internet accessed 6 March 2006.

This study of the Polish Army in France has been based upon previous research published in English and Polish and has used American archival materials to balance the nationalistic hyperbole of sponsored histories against the hard-bitten realities of anti-Semitic atrocities, disillusionment with the new Polish state, and desire to return to the United States. Further insights might be gained by detailed research in French, Polish, and Russian archives. Intensive

historical comparisons could be made with other military enterprises involving special volunteer legions in revival or creation of national states. Further research into the Polish Army in France can make a valuable contribution to transnational studies.

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