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# The Operation of the Supreme Commander East Against Wilna.

1. The Battles in Lithuania and Courland until the End of August¹.

a) The Battles of the Niemen Army.

(Maps 6 and 7, Tables 26).

The July Campaign Against Mitau and Schaulen.

From the month of July onwards, the battles of the Niemen Army are no longer to be regarded as independent actions, but as preparations for a future offensive against Wilna, which the Supreme Commander East proposed as an effective support for the offensive in South Poland on July 2 in Posen, and which also received the approval of General von Falkenhayn for a later date². The Supreme Commander East kept this constantly in view. Should this breakthrough operation penetrate so deeply into the enemy's deployment that it had full effect, then on the one hand, the large fortress of Kowno had to be taken, which secured the northern flank of the Russian Niemen front; on the other hand, securing against the railway lines leading from the interior of the Empire to Dünaburg and Riga was necessary. The latter task had to be resolved first, with the approach to the lower Düna and the blocking of this power line being the most effective means and requiring the least forces over time. However, from the beginning of July, as all the strength of the Supreme Commander East had to be directed towards the Narew operation, only very limited resources were available; intentions and objectives had to adapt to this and therefore change repeatedly in detail.

On July 2, the 10th Army received the instruction to suspend the preparations already begun for the attack on Kowno³, and the corresponding order to cover the left flank of the Third Army in its previously established position; the Niemen Army, with the 41st Infantry Division as a new force ready to intervene, was to attack the Russian 5th Army, thereby relieving the German 10th Army and distracting the enemy's attention from the Narew operation.

¹ Connection to C. 130 ff. - ² C. 271 ff. - ³ C. 277. - ⁴ C. 280.

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# Task and Organization of the Njemen Army.

The Njemen Army under General of Infantry Otto von Below was at that time with around seven infantry divisions and five cavalry divisions in the area north of the Njemen from the lower Dubissa to the area east of Libau in a front width of about 250 kilometers. The current enemy seemed to be superior at the fence. General von Below wanted to launch the attack, similar to how the Supreme Commander had ordered at that time in the directive of June 14, avoiding the strong enemy positions at Schauen, which led the present cavalry-formed Russian northern wing, in order to then swing against the flank and rear of the Schauen position. Accordingly, he organized his troops under the weakening of the right wing as follows: Southern group under Lieutenant General Freiherr von Richthofen (Higher Cavalry Commander 1 with Department Esbed, 36th Reserve Division, Division Beckmann, 3rd and Bavarian Cavalry Division) from the Njemen to the Rakiewo Lake south of Schauen, Corps 3 Morning (General Command of the 1st Reserve Corps with Brigade Homeyer\* and 1st Reserve Division) in the positions before Schauen, Northern Corps under General von Lauenstein (General Command of the XXXIX Reserve Corps with 6th and 78th Reserve and 41st Infantry Division) northward following behind the course of the Windau up to north of the railway line Libau–Murawjewo, Cavalry Corps of Lieutenant General Egon Graf von Schmetton (6th and 2nd Cavalry Division) northward following, Group of Lieutenant General von Pappritz (Governor of Libau with 8th Cavalry Division and troops of the fortress\*) at Hasenpot and east of it. The implementation of this organization required considerable marches; the attack could therefore only begin around July 15. In doing so, the Northern Corps, accompanied by cavalry on the left flank, was initially to proceed in the general direction of Mitau, the left wing of the Pappritz group.

1) I. and ½ XXXIX. R.R. 41. I.D., 6. R.R.D., Div. Beckmann, Dept. Esbed and troops from Libau; 2., 3., 6. and Bavarian R.D. 2) In fact, about nine infantry and seven cavalry divisions, essentially the same forces as seen from p. 469. 3) p. 127. 4) Gren. Regt. 2 and Erl. Regt. Königsberg with artillery, etc. 5) Including 29th Abw. Regt. and two brigades of the 4th R.D.

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As the troops from Libau were involved here, the Navy was provided to protect the place against the sea, but also to provide immediate support through naval forces in the advance against Wilna. Due to the expected supply difficulties at Borridien, the further construction of the full railway Memel-Bahjoren across the border to connect with the Libau-Schallen railway was requested from the Chief of Railway Construction, who, however, estimated a construction time of six months; thus, little was offered for the upcoming operations. They also agreed on the Libau-Schallen railway. The enemy remains quiet; it seems that he is weakening his northern flank in light of the front in Poland. Northwest of Schallen, it was estimated that there were only about two Russian infantry divisions against the four German ones intended for the attack. There had also been signs for a long time that the Russians would clear the western Courland in the event of further German attacks. Since the attack of Army Group Gallwitz against the Narew was to begin on July 13, the advance in Courland was finally set for July 14 at the request of the Supreme Commander East, in order to ensure the desired distracting effect. On this day, the Northern Corps, with the left wing (41st Infantry Division) north of the town of Muranowo-Mitau, launched the attack, alongside the cavalry division. Over a front of about 30 kilometers, the crossing over Windau was forced, and the middle and left wings gained ground against Russian cavalry and landwehr up to 15 kilometers forward. Aircraft reported continued fires in the north as well as numerous refugee columns, thus creating the impression of significance that the enemy wanted to withdraw. On the other hand, on the right wing of the Northern Corps, the 6th Reserve Division made little progress against stronger enemy resistance. On July 15, the spatial successes along the entire attack front, especially on the northern wing, could be expanded. The attempt to cut off parts of the enemy succeeded, but just as little as it had days before. On July 16, the Russian resistance intensified. In the 78th Reserve Division, only the left wing advanced.

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# 41st Infantry Division encountered strong enemy at Alt Nuz

against which the decision was postponed to the following day. In the meantime, the Cavalry Corps Schmettoft was able to sight strong Russian cavalry about twenty kilometers northwest of the place in the afternoon and advance deep into the northern flank of the enemy; the foremost parts of the 6th Cavalry Division reached Doblen, thus already standing more than 30 kilometers east-northeast of Alt Nuz. Several thousand prisoners and some artillery pieces were the spoils of these first days of fighting. The attempt to destroy the enemy at Alt Nuz on July 17 failed, as he had drawn forces against the north in decisive strength. A battle ensued, which was necessary to extend so urgently to the east that it again lost 4000 prisoners and some artillery pieces. In the evening, the Mittel Bahn was in German hands up to south of Doblen. Thus, one had approached oneself to 25 kilometers at noon, while in the north the troops of the General Lieutenant von Pappritz had come close to Tukum. The successes on the northern wing faced a setback on the southern wing, where the attack of the corps had begun in the morning on July 17. Its 1st Reserve Division made little progress, while the 6th Reserve Division was forced to retreat under serious losses due to a counterattack by enemy reinforcements south of Otmany back towards the Windau.

In this situation, General von Below remained committed to the intention of continuing the attack against the enemy in the north, to drive him, if possible, away from Mitau; only then did he want to swing with full force south against the Schawlenker enemy. The German troops reached the Russian positions in the course of July 18, which covered Mitau at a distance of about twelve kilometers to the west. At Tukum, the western edge of the large swamp area of the Aa estuary was reached. The coast had already been occupied, while the Russian ships were being targeted. The joining of the planned attack from Courland was secured, the first section of captured and new artillery pieces had increased. For the upcoming operation against the Russian main forces, General von Below had given the first instructions at noon. The 6th Reserve Division was to maintain its position, that

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Corps were prepared for further attacks in the morning, while south of Lake Rakivno the southern group was set up on a front of about 40 kilometers wide, with the western wing prepared for the attack on Gudiwanz. The 78th Reserve Division Shagori and the Cavalry Corps Schmettow were to reach Groß Wilzen. The 41st Infantry Division and the troops previously under General Lieutenant von Pappritz were to cut off Mitau and, if possible, take it by hand; the command was given to the commander of the 8th Cavalry Division, Major General Eberhard Graf von Schmettow.

Meanwhile, the O. f. e. t. r. i. k. k. r. ä. (after the events of the defeat on July 2) had been significantly reinforced by the IV. Squadron (seven older minesweepers) and light forces from the North Sea. The Supreme Commander East sent an officer to Kiel on the authorization of Grand Admiral Prince Heinrich, who was to present the prospects of the Niemen Army there on July 19 and point out that during the upcoming battles, naval operations in the Riga estuary were desired to bind Russian land forces beyond the Düna. However, the waterway had to be surveyed beforehand and cleared of mines, which took some time.

At the Niemen Army, the assigned encirclement troops crossed the Schwede River on July 19 without a fight and reached their designated objectives Shagori and Groß Wilzen; they were thus deep in the enemy's flank. On the rest of the front, the day passed with preparations for the attack. When this began on July 20 with the southern group under General Lieutenant Freiherr von Richthofen, where the enemy was retreating over the Dubissa to the east, it also began to withdraw north of Schaulen before the 1st and 6th Reserve Divisions. These two divisions were to remain at the edge without pressing, while the encirclement troops were driven by General von Below to the utmost urgency and reached the main road Schaulen – Mitau in the rear of the enemy. The 78th Reserve Division under Major General von Müller was positioned after a 30-kilometer march, while at Mechlisz and thus immediately in the rear of the enemy still holding at Schaulen, the Cavalry Corps Schmettow had reached Janischki.

General von Below was hopeful of capturing significant parts of the Russians stationed at Schaulen on the following day, July 21, thereby

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# The Victory of the Niemen Army at Schaulen. 461

when these – as was now to be assumed – were retreating in a more southeast direction, towards Poniewiez. He wanted to close the ring around them not only from the north but also from the south. He ordered the divisions of the Northern Corps (6th and 78th Reserve Division) and the Cavalry Corps Schmettow (Egon) to advance further on Schaulen and Radziwiłłki; the enemy was to be attacked from this direction. The southern group was to hold the Cavalry Corps in the direction of Radziwiłłki, while the corps was to prevent the nighttime withdrawal of its opponent and to attack anew on July 21.

In the early hours of this day, however, the Russians were flowing back sharply towards the German 78th Reserve Division, while they delayed the approach of the 6th Reserve Division, which had been deployed against them from the north, until the afternoon hours. The corps advanced in the morning into the Schaulen area, which had been vacated by the enemy during the night, but did not get beyond that. Thus, the 78th Reserve Division faced a rather heavy force and could not prevent strong Russian forces from fleeing eastward, especially past their southern flank. They had to confront the two cavalry divisions of Lieutenant General Count Schmettow (Egon), which were blocking the front from Kolati der Muiska to north of Rozalin. The 36th Reserve Division under Lieutenant General Krug reached the railway between Kiejdan and Schadow while fighting; further north, the Russian resistance was stronger, so that the Bednamm Division and the Bavarian Cavalry Division fell back significantly behind the 36th Reserve Division.

The ring around the enemy had not yet been closed; on both sides of Schadow, there was still a gap of 45 kilometers. The way to Poniewiez was open to the enemy. But even in the north, it was hardly to be expected that the combat power of the Cavalry Corps Schmettow (Egon) would be sufficient to hold back a determined Russian breakthrough. Fighting and marches, often with inadequate supplies and in great heat and during heavy thunderstorms, had taken a significant toll on the troops of the advance guard, which had been in continuous motion for several weeks. Nevertheless, the last strength had to be deployed to still achieve the great success that was aimed for.

The army order for July 22 set the I. Reserve Corps from Schaulen to the southeast, with the right wing along the railway to Schadow, to attack. Both wing groups were to close the ring against the enemy troops and thus effectively close the ring at Schadow.

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# New Orders for the 10th and Niemen Army.

In the battles and marches, the troops have achieved remarkable results." Accordingly, the Supreme Commander East reported on this day to the Supreme War Command. He himself assessed the situation as follows: "For the further execution of the operation towards Wilna, which is solely decisive for the forces here, the Niemen Army is too weak; a withdrawal of forces is not possible at this time). However, this operation can be prepared, as it is intended according to this side's view of the Narva operation. This includes: the connection from Mitau, as the call over Riga can bring forces across, and preparations for the capture of Kowno. The possession of this fortress is necessary both for an offensive towards Wilna or publicly for the opening of the main road and securing the supply on the railway, as well as for any other operation at another location. Only if we have this fortress and Mitau in our possession and the intermediate line between both locations is secured by a strongly developed line, can stronger forces be withdrawn from here," it was said: from Courland for deployment against Wilna. In the afternoon, it was ordered for the continuation of operations: "The 10th Army is to close this fortress on the western front as much as possible with its left wing at the Niemen below Kowno. - The Niemen Army similarly takes the outflow over the Niemen below Niedriau and forms a bridge at Wilk. Furthermore, the Niemen Army is preparing with its main forces at Keibam for the Bornasch at Janow and sends the bulk of its cavalry against the Kowno-Wilna railway and towards Wilna." With this order, the Supreme Commander East was in full agreement with the Supreme Army Command, which the next day, while rejecting reinforcements for the 10th Army, stated: "The Niemen Army should be the most important for the secret operations, if the connection with the stronger cavalry against the presumably remaining forces under the command of the Supreme Commander East, that the left flank of the Niemen Army should be secured by troops at Poniewiez. For this, it was said in extension of the plan of General von Below, the previous dispatch of an additional infantry division from the main forces of the Niemen Army should not be avoided.

1) G. 319. - 2) Award in the War Diary. - 3) G. 316 ff. - 4) 27 kilometers below (northwest) of Kowno. - 5) G. 320.

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These instructions did not allow for the intended rest of the troops of the Njemen Army. They sharply consolidated the mass to the south against the northern front of Kowno, while other units were sharply directed to the north against Mitau, especially the cavalry to the east, primarily towards Wilna. The movements were only feasible if the defeated enemy above was not allowed to rest. The frontal pursuit had to continue despite the fatigue of the troops. It led to almost uninterrupted fighting against the Russian rear guard and, considering several thousand men, until July 25 on the right wing to the line of Niewiaz, with the center about 15 kilometers beyond Poniewiez, which was taken by the now reunited I. Reserve Corps, from the left wing to Postwol on the Muscha. Thus, the essential limit was reached, up to which the supply for stronger forces could initially be provided. It also seemed that the enemy was now so weakened that the further pursuit of smaller units was transferred. General von Below, who moved his headquarters to Schawlen on July 28, had to reorganize his army for the tasks assigned by the Supreme Commander East. While the Eberde unit secured the northwest front of Kowno, the I. Reserve Corps with the assigned Brigade Homeyer and the Lauenstein Corps (78th Reserve Division and Division Beckmann) was to be prepared at Poniewiez to advance against the northern front of the fortress. The cavalry corps Richtofen and Schmettow (Egon) had quickly and suddenly advanced from Poniewiez to push southeast towards Wilna and east towards Dünaburg. Against Mitau, in addition to the group Schmettow (Eberhardt) already deployed there, the 41st Infantry Division, the Libau Detachment, the 8th Cavalry Division, and the 6th Reserve Division were also designated. On July 29, the operation against Mitau began with the movement of the 6th Reserve Division towards Bausf, to gain the right bank here. However, the Russian resistance was so strong that the division commander, since June Major General Hans von Below, decided to attempt the crossing below there. The Army Commander East requested the Brigade Homeyer as reinforcement. In the night of July 31, the operation succeeded ten kilometers west of Bausf at Mespol. The newly deployed Russian 53rd Infantry Division withdrew to the north.

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# Back to Riga.

For August 1, the 6th Reserve Division and the 8th Cavalry Division were deployed on both sides of the Aa at Mitau. The enemy did not wait for the Hermann, but had already begun to evacuate the city during the night, into which the 41st Infantry Division fought in the afternoon; the factories were set on fire, the Aa bridge destroyed. In the pursuit, General Count Schmettow allowed his troops to follow up to Riga on August 2; about 2000 prisoners were visibly the total capture. Then the personally arriving A. r. e. t. s. c. h. e. r ordered to transition to defense at the Aa. The 6th Reserve Division, Brigade Homeyer, and the Libau Detachment were designated for this, while the 41st Infantry Division and the 8th Cavalry Division were to prepare for the march south.

With the capture of Mitau, a strong stronghold near the coast was gained for the left wing of the army. Furthermore, the almost impassable swamp and forest area at the mouth of the Aa provided secure support. The extended coast, which had fallen into German hands with the capture of the western part of Courland, lay, however, on the side of the Riga bus under the guns of Russian warships. Soon, the German troops were fired upon from the sea. Landings were also possible but could not take on any significant extent as long as the Russian land forces were tied down by the attack of the Central Powers.

The situation of the two main forces of the Niemen Army had changed in the meantime, as one had expected after the conclusion of the fighting on July 25. The enemy showed surprising activity and pushed into the gap between the two cavalry corps Richthofen and Schmettow (Egon) on July 30 at Rupišči, which on the following day began their movements against Wilna, while they refrained from attacking Dünaburg. The proposal of General Moroz to support the cavalry by having his I. Reserve Corps advance in the gap initially found the approval of General Belov, as the corps was intended to move south towards Kowno and the enemy seemed to be moving east. However, when the enemy pressure increased in this direction on August 1, the army commander decided to initially focus on the east to do a whole lot of work. The I. Reserve Corps, as well as the Ziemens Corps, counted on the two cavalry corps to attack. About 30 kilometers east of Poniemo, fighting occurred on August 2 over a wide front. Despite this strong deployment of forces, the enemy only relinquished their positions on

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On August 3rd, further resistance was encountered during the course of this day's pursuit. The Supreme Commander East had designated the line Dnitschty–Kwiatki on the Niemen as the boundary for the pursuit. Furthermore, he had already assigned the 4th Cavalry Division from the 10th Army to the army on July 31st, which, below Kowno, was crossing the Niemen, now advancing together with the Esleben unit against the northern front of Kowno. On the left flank, the 41st Infantry and 8th Cavalry Divisions were now advancing from Mitau; however, the division composed of troops from the 10th Army, Betmann\*, was to be withdrawn to this army shortly.

In combat, it was possible to push the Russians back into position on August 4th and 5th and to reach the line Dnitschty–Kwiatki. In doing so, growing difficulties in supply became apparent; the troops also complained that the success of the attacks was being hindered by the inferiority of the transferred ammunition. Meanwhile, the enemy seemed to be bringing new forces to the entire front. Reports available on August 5th reported strong Russian troop concentrations over Grodno towards Wilna and even simultaneously created the impression that the enemy was now preparing to encircle both flanks of the Niemen Army; in the south of Wilkomierz as well as in the north of Friedrichstadt, a new enemy was reported to be advancing from Riga. Numerically, the Russians seemed to be clearly superior. Thus, there was indeed consideration for the execution of further operations assigned to the two cavalry corps against the deployment at Kowno, as well as for the involvement of the army in the encirclement of Kowno. The cavalry corps Richthofen encountered far superior Russian forces at Wilkomierz and had to be withdrawn to Kowno to the north on August 7th. General von Below prepared a new counterattack.

It became increasingly clear what value the enemy placed on maintaining his position on the left bank of the lower Dvina. As his front in Poland was pushed back, he was otherwise free to reinforce the troops north of the Niemen. Flights reported a large transport movement from the south to Wilna, and extensive confirmations emerged. At the Supreme Commander East, Captain von Waldow noted on August 7th:

1) Parts had already been present with the Niemen Army (G. 457).

2) Gen. 121.

3) Communication from Colonel von Waldow from summer 1931 to the Reichsarchiv.

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# Defense Task for the Niemen Army.

“North of the Niemen, the Russians have naturally long recognized the danger, and they are advancing as much as they can towards Wilna, Dünaburg, and Riga. Hopefully, we will soon succeed, when Gallwitz moves forward, in extracting forces from there.” In light of these circumstances, the Supreme Commander decided to reorganize the tasks of the 10th and 10th Niemen Army. The allocation from Kowno was to fall exclusively to the 10th Army for five days. Instead of Division Beckmann, only the Schébed detachment from the Niemen Army transferred to it, which had to take over from the 4th Cavalry Division down to it. This, as stated in the order, “is to defend the left flank of the army against any potential enemy advance from the lower Dvina. The retention of Mitau and the occupied enemy territory is of significance.”

Accordingly, General von Below took the I. Reserve Corps along with the 78th Reserve Division back to the area south and north of Rupiškis, where a position for sustainable defense was to be established. The extension to the south was soon assigned to the Cavalry Corps Richtofen, the Beckmann Division, and the 4th Cavalry, which connected to the left flank of the 10th Army (1st Cavalry Division) north of the Wilna bend from Janow. In the north, the 43rd Infantry Division moved between the I. Reserve Corps and the Cavalry Corps Schmettoff (Egon), while the 8th Cavalry Division advanced on its left flank. All these movements, which were to conclude by about August 13, took place under constantly changing conditions and often amidst fighting against the enemy pressing forward everywhere.

To relieve the Russian pressure at least temporarily, General von Below ordered another attack on the right flank of the I. Reserve Corps on August 14. The 78th and 1st Reserve Divisions advanced northward into the enemy positions and achieved full success. On August 15, the commander surveyed the center of his command, continuing eastward, but presumably not significantly beyond the Swienta-Niemen line reached on August 5. Nevertheless, a total of four German divisions had pushed the enemy back another 15 kilometers along a front of about 60 kilometers; they had also taken over 3000 prisoners.

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Supreme Commander East the further expansion of defensive positions. Thus, since mid-August, a series of appropriate installations has emerged on the left side of the Rupiškis, following earlier positions of the I. Reserve Corps, extending northward over the Birštonas Lake and the lower Niemen to Wa.

To protect the left flank, it would have been desirable to drive away the Russian ships located in the Riga Bay, including the 30.5 cm gun-armed battleship "Slawa"; however, this was not absolutely necessary. Therefore, in light of the difficulties, the command on land also made such a request to the naval command. Cooperation with their own naval forces was only considered in their view if the attack on Riga-Dünamünde was to be continued. This had occasionally been stated as possible by the Supreme Army Command, but was still far off for the time being. The Supreme Commander of the Baltic Sea Forces, Grand Admiral Heinrich Prince of Prussia, had been aware since July 19 that, according to the view of the Supreme Commander East, the capture of Riga and Dünamünde was a matter of opportunity; if necessary, flame protection for the troops designated along the coast was desired. On the other hand, General von Falkenhayn had pointed out at that time that an operation of the fleet in or around the Riga Sea bays was also very welcome, so the Grand Admiral had arranged for preventive reinforcement by parts of the High Seas Fleet from the North Sea in all cases. As the hope for a prompt advance of the army from Riga faded, while about half of the German fleet was in the Baltic Sea, he decided to take advantage of this opportunity for at least a thrust into the Riga Bays. Although there was no equipment to hold there without a port and without simultaneous action of the army, he hoped to damage and disturb the enemy. However, the operation encountered such difficulties on August 8 already at the mine barriers in the Irbe Strait that the commanding Byzantine Schmidt initially abandoned it. On August 9, it was resumed; light forces advanced on August 20 through the bay to Pernau, others against the northern access to the bay, the Moonsund. Two Russian gunboats fell victim to the German attack. However, it was not possible to inflict decisive damage on the Russians in the Moonsund.

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# Measures of the Russians).

Soon after the attacks of General von Below had subsided in mid-June, the Russians began to clear the area west of Riga and this important city itself. They took away a large part of the resident Jewish population and removed everything that was important for the conduct of the war, especially the machines of the Riga factories. At the same time, they were forced by the abundance of needs of the main battle routes to weaken their military forces north of the Niemen. All three infantry divisions were relocated by the end of June from there to the Niemen fortifications of Kowno, Olita, and Grodno, with 2½ more being assigned in the first half of the jubilee to other fronts. Thus, General Plehwe had at his disposal, as of July 14, when the new German attack broke through the Windau in the direction of Mitau, a total of about 7½ infantry divisions and seven cavalry divisions. Of these, only about three infantry divisions (XIX and ½ II Corps) were in the area of Omtjany–Rakitten Lake facing the German 6th Reserve Division and the 1½ divisions strong corps in the morning, about 2½ infantry divisions (½ III and XXXVII Corps) visible up to the area of Bethgola. On the flanks, four in the north and the cavalry divisions of the VII Siberian Corps, which were available as reserves in Mitau and Riga, had previously suffered so much on the southwestern front that they were mutually deemed unfit for use. General Plehwe initially intended to strike the German advance on Mitau from the south into the flank, but he soon abandoned this plan as it proved impossible to gather the necessary forces from the widely extended front in time. When, on July 16, the resistance of the hastily gathered, numerically small, combat-effective parts of the VII Siberian Corps from Mitau and Riga collapsed surprisingly quickly due to German encirclement, he could

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The XIX Corps was to be withdrawn further, which still held northwest of Schaulen; he preferred instead to launch a counterattack for this wing. The 1st running rifle brigade, the only reserve available in the meantime, executed it on July 17 and pushed back the northern wing of the German 6th Reserve Division. After this success, General Plehwe left the Schaulen front, despite the further rapid advances of the Germans in the direction of Mitau, standing for the next two days. When he finally saw on July 19 that the right wing, the XIX Corps, could be withdrawn further, he decided to carry out the movement only for the night of July 21. But already on July 20, the German 78th Reserve Division struck deep into the rear of the Russian XIX Corps at Meschtchisk, while the German southern group advanced over the Dubissa. Nevertheless, General Plehwe, who was well supplied with information, did not want to believe in the impending danger even on that day. However, he moved his headquarters from Riga to Poniewiez behind. Only on the way there did he decide at noon on July 21 to order the evacuation of Schaulen and the general retreat, in order to continue to resist in a position west of Poniewiez, while reinforcements rolling in from Mitau were to flow into the flank of the Germans from there. But this plan soon proved to be unfeasible. West of Poniewiez, the left wing was hit hard by the German attack on July 25, so that the XXXVII Corps retreated in great disorder. All in all, the July operations in Courland and Lithuania are among the most interesting of the year 1915. In an area that still offered room for operational movements, strong and aggressive leadership on both the German and Russian sides sought to impose law on the opponent. The German general had generally accurate judgments about the situation and prospects; at the same time, as is occasionally stated in a Russian account, "on the German side, there was greater maneuverability and greater ammunition supply." On the Russian side, one was continuously informed about the strength and distribution of the German forces, it seems, mainly through agents who had relatively easy work in the vast areas, which were only thinly occupied by troops. This may have contributed to General Plehwe maintaining his belief even in the most difficult situation...