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The World War

1914 to 1918

Edited in the

Reichsarchiv

\*

The Military Operations on Land

Eighth Volume

Published by E. S. Mittler & Son

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The Operations of the Year 1915

Events in the West in Spring and Summer, in the East from Spring to the End of the Year

With thirty-nine maps and sketches

Published by E. S. Mittler & Son  
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Introduction to the Eighth Volume.

The present Volume VIII describes the operations in the West in the spring and summer of 1915, in the East from spring until the end of the year.

The previous practice of concluding the depiction of events on the various theaters of war at the same time had to be deviated from, as the operations in the East formed internally coherent actions until the end of the year, which could not be interrupted. This also results in the larger scope of the present volume. The review deals with the position of the German Supreme Army Command on the question of warfare in the East throughout the entire year of 1915.

The inclusion of military formations has been omitted, as a special volume "Military Formations" is being prepared as a supplement to the overall war work. The operational volumes will henceforth only provide brief information about the respective troop divisions of the armies in footnotes.

The historical commission has entrusted Mr. Major General a.D. Rudolf von Borries in Potsdam and Dr. phil. Hans Rothfels, Professor of History at the University of Königsberg i. Pr., with the review of Volume VIII. The Reichsarchiv expresses its special thanks to both reporters.

On October 31, 1931, the previous president of the Reichsarchiv, Dr. h.c. Hermann Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, retired upon reaching the age limit. He was succeeded by the director of the historical department, Dr. h.c. Hans von Haeften. Oberarchivrat Wolfgang Foerster was appointed as the director of the historical department.

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across all theaters of war.

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Abbreviations.

(Valid only for the notes.)

Army Group .......... = A. Gr.

Army Section ....... = A. Abt. or Abtlg.

Army Corps ........... = A. K.

Reserve Corps ......... = R. K.

Landwehr Corps ........ = Ldw. K.

Guard Corps ........... = G. K.

Group ............... = Gr.

General Command ...... = Gen. Kdo.

Corps Command ........ = K. Kdo. or Kdo.

Commander ........... = Kdr.

Higher Cavalry

Commander ........... = H. K. K.

Cavalry Corps ..... = K. K.

Infantry Division .. = I. D. or Inf. Div.

Reserve Division ..... = R. D. or R. Div.

Cavalry Division .. = K. D. or Kav. Div.

Landwehr Division .... = Ldw. D. or Ldw. Div.

Landsturm Division ... = Ldst. D. or Ldst. Div.

Replacement Division ...... = Ers. D. or Ers. Div.

Guard Infantry

Division ............. = G. I. D.

Infantry Brigade .... = I. Br.

Reserve Infantry

Brigade .............. = R. I. Br. or R. Br.

Landwehr Infantry

Brigade .............. = L. I. Br. or L. Br.

Landsturm Brigade .... = Ldst. Br.

Regiment ............. = Regt.

Battalion ............ = Btl.

Battery ............. = Bttr.

Squadron ............. = Est.

Cannons .............. = Kan.

Howitzers ............ = Haub.

Mortar ............... = Mör.

Mine Thrower .......... = Min. W.

Pioneer .............. = Pi.

composed ...... = zsgf.

reinforced ............ = verst.

independent .......... = selbst.

Austro-Hungarian = öst.-ung.

Riflemen ............. = Sch. or Schütz.

Territorial .......... = Terr.

Kuban ................ = Kub.

Coastal ............... = Küst.

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The Operations of the Year 1915

The events in the West in spring and summer, in the East from spring until the end of the year

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I. The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

Map 1 Volume VII, Map 5 and Sketch 1 Volume VIII.

I. The Intervention of Italy.

When General von Falkenhayn, in clear recognition of the threatening

military and political situation of the Danube Monarchy, decided on

April 13, 1915, to launch the major relief attack in Galicia, he believed

he should only temporarily abandon the realization of his offensive plans

in the West1). The task assigned to Generaloberst von Mackensen, to force

the Russians to evacuate their front in West Galicia up to the Lupkow Pass,

could already be considered solved by May 8 with the reaching of the Wisłok.

Thus, General von Falkenhayn faced the question of whether to be content

with the success achieved in the East and now resume his plans against

Serbia and in the West. The proposal of General von Conrad, to exploit

the victory on the Galician battlefield by pursuing the Russians to the San,

immediately found his approval2), as "the opportunity to deal the enemy

a blow from which they cannot recover" had to be seized3).

This decision meant for some time the abandonment of the offensive

plans in the West. It was to be expected that the enemies would exploit

the weakening of the German front there for major attacks, the outcome

of which remained uncertain given their growing numerical superiority4).

At the beginning of May 1915, there were about 97 German infantry

divisions on the French-Belgian battlefield, while the enemy was estimated

at 110 to 112 divisions, which were on average significantly stronger than

the Germans. In terms of reserves, the Supreme Army Command behind

the Western Front5) had about 7½ infantry divisions, as well as numerous

heavy batteries, so that in the event of an enemy attack, the artillery

combat strength of an army could be doubled in a few days.

1) Volume VII, p. 345 and 360/361. — 2) Volume VII, p. 419 ff. — 3) Volume VII, p. 421. — 4) p. 35. — 5) p. 56.  
† World War. Volume VIII.

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

The strength of the A-H forces stationed at the Serbian border totaled 234,000 men, while the Serbian army was estimated at 210,000 men³). Against Italy, 112 battalions⁴) provided border protection. The forces of the Danube Monarchy, surrounded by enemies, were thus stretched to their absolute limits.

From mid-March to mid-May, nine infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions from the Western Army had been transferred to the German Eastern Front. Whether additional forces could be withdrawn from the western theater of war in favor of the East was something General von Falkenhayn wanted to decide only during the course of defending against the expected enemy attack. His decisive consideration was that a return of forces from the East to restore the situation on the Western front had to be avoided if at all possible, as long as operations against Russia continued to show promising progress.

Additionally, the development of the political situation in Italy, Turkey, and the Balkans could have a significant influence on decisions at the Western Front and in Galicia. Therefore, in May 1915, it demanded particular attention from the military leadership of the Central Powers.

The great tension of those days was vividly expressed in the exchange of opinions between both Chiefs of General Staff. In two letters in quick succession to General von Conrad on April 30 and May 2, General von Falkenhayn urged new and urgent concessions to the demands of the Italian government⁵). On May 4, Kaiser Wilhelm supported this approach by taking a similar step with his imperial ally.

¹) The designation "Austro-Hungarian," which frequently recurs in troop specifications and descriptions of battles on the Eastern Front, has been abbreviated to "A-H" in this volume for space-saving reasons.  
²) Along the Romanian border, only A-H gendarmerie posts reinforced by Landsturm were stationed, totaling approximately 9,600 men.  
³) The total strength of the Serbian army was estimated at 232 battalions, 36 squadrons, 536 field guns and about 240 heavy artillery pieces. The Montenegrin forces, which were organized into small individual detachments, were estimated to comprise 53,000 men and 140 guns.  
⁴) Not including the security garrison of the Austrian border fortifications. Details on p. 26/27.  
⁵) Volume VII, p. 343/344.

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Diplomatic Negotiations between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy.

The Vienna cabinet declared itself on the same day ready for new, very far-reaching concessions. This concession coincided with the termination of the Triple Alliance treaty communicated by Italy to the Danube Monarchy on May 4. On May 5, the extraordinary German ambassador, Prince Bülow, reported from Rome that the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Baron Sonnino, had informed him after reviewing the Vienna offers: Just 14 days ago, everything could have been settled with these proposals; to his remark that this was still possible today, Baron Sonnino remained silent. On May 6, the news arrived in Vienna that the Italian Council of Ministers had described Austria-Hungary's proposals as "not a sufficient basis for negotiation." Subsequently, Emperor Franz Joseph declared in a telegram to Emperor Wilhelm on the same day that he had reached "the utmost limit of conceivable accommodation" with the latest concessions.

The seriousness of the Italian crisis prompted a discussion among the leading statesmen and general staff chiefs of the Central Powers on May 7 in Teschen. The latest reports from Rome were somewhat more hopeful. It was said that Italy had indeed concluded a treaty with the Entente on April 26, but reserved a four-week period for decision on whether this treaty should also come into force. Thus, there still seemed to be a faint hope of keeping Italy out of the war.

Until now, General von Falkenhayn had evasively answered all inquiries from Austria-Hungary regarding German military assistance in the event of Italy's possible entry into the war; this possibility could only be decided in the "concrete case." Determining for this stance was, apart from the military situation, which made any dispersal of forces undesirable, above all the effort to move the Danube Monarchy to the most extensive accommodation possible until the end.

1) These concessions involved, besides the cession of the largest part of Trentino, also considerable territorial cessions to Friuli including Gradisca, the establishment of an Italian university in Trieste, Austria-Hungary's disinterest in Albania; however, "guarantees against the establishment of a third power" would have to be created there.  
2) Volume VII, p. 343/344.  
3) In fact, the Salandra cabinet had already committed itself firmly through the treaty of April 26, but had set the condition that hostilities should not begin for four weeks. The Chief of the General Staff, General Cadorna, declared on May 6 that the army would be ready to march at the earliest on May 20. (Salandra: "Intervento", p. 174–176 and p. 242.) 4) Volume VII, p. 364.

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

Now the situation had changed. On the Eastern Front, one could hope, thanks to the great successes of the Galician operation, to make forces available within a short time; the Viennese government had indeed gone to the limit of what was possible in its concessions, perhaps even beyond. This explained why General von Falkenhayn, during the meeting in Teschen, was prepared to send German forces to the Italian border if necessary; however, their extent had to be made dependent on the general situation when Italy entered the war.

Regarding the political outcome of this discussion, Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg informed Prince Bülow in Rome on May 8 that the Viennese cabinet was ready to "ultimately approve everything."

Moreover, statements by the thrice former Italian Prime Minister Giolitti about the seriousness of the situation finally prompted the Austro-Hungarian and the extraordinary German ambassadors in Rome, without waiting for Vienna's consent, to inform the Italian Foreign Minister on May 10 of even more far-reaching Austrian concessions\*). These included the cession of all territories inhabited by Italians in Tyrol and on the western Isonzo bank with Gradisca, further declaring Trieste a "Imperial Free City" and a free port, as well as establishing an Italian university, and finally, Austria-Hungary's complete disinterest in Albania. Germany declared itself ready to guarantee the loyal execution of these offers to the Italian government.

Although these concessions went significantly beyond those previously made, indeed even beyond what Giolitti had suggested a few months earlier, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Baron Burian, subsequently declared his agreement to them upon their delivery in Rome. The question was merely whether the offers had not come too late, and whether the Italian government had not already committed itself too far to the Triple Alliance. Then everything depended on the domestic political development in Italy, which still seemed to favor the Central Powers at the last moment; for on May 13, Prime Minister Salandra, due to strong resistance threatening him in the Italian parliament against the war policy, had submitted his resignation. However, when it became known on the afternoon of May 16 that the King had not accepted Salandra's resignation, it was clear that the decision for war had been made.

\*) See p. 3, note 1.

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Exchange of Views of the Chiefs of Staff on Conducting Operations Against Italy.

Above all, it was expected that Romania would adopt a friendlier attitude towards the Central Powers. Furthermore, the hope of finally winning over Bulgaria was revived. The demand to secure a connection with Turkey by defeating Serbia became increasingly urgent due to the large landing operations of the British and French on the Gallipoli Peninsula, as raised by the Ottoman government. To finally secure Bulgaria's support against Serbia, both Chiefs of Staff agreed on May 12 in Pleß to inform Sofia that they were ready, given the favorable situation in Galicia and the currently favorable water levels of the Danube, to immediately prepare the campaign against Serbia; however, agreement on Bulgaria's military participation was a prerequisite. The Bulgarian government was therefore informed by the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, von Jagow, of the proposal to immediately send a high-ranking officer to conclude a military convention at the German Great Headquarters, where representatives of Austria-Hungary and Turkey would also be invited. However, the response to this offer was delayed due to the threatening developments in Rome. In fact, Bulgaria wanted to make its decision dependent on clarifying the general situation.

Meanwhile, General von Conrad proposed in a memorandum sent to Pleß on May 14 that if Italy's entry into the war became a reality, they should switch to defense in Galicia after reaching the Dniester-San line, but with the available forces — he calculated with ten Austro-Hungarian and ten German divisions — to attack the Italians; he believed that with sufficient German and Bulgarian forces involved, they could simultaneously conduct the campaign against Serbia.

However, General von Falkenhayn could only agree to this proposal regarding the defense in Galicia, as he considered a military success in the Balkans necessary given the Turks' precarious situation. He therefore planned to first attack Serbia and meanwhile remain on the defensive against Italy.

1) Volume VII, p. 364/365.

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

On May 16, he made the following counterproposal: In Galicia, apart from the German 11th Army, 17 to 18 Austro-Hungarian and seven German divisions — a total of about 35 divisions — should be freed for the operation against Serbia and Italy. The attack against Serbia should be prepared immediately. Against Italy, Austria-Hungary should take over the cover in Carinthia, Carniola, and the coastal region with about 10 divisions. In Tyrol, General von Falkenhayn was ready to assign the same task to German troops. The Austro-Hungarian detachments currently there would be subordinated to German command. How many German forces should be deployed in Tyrol could not yet be decided; in any case, efforts would remain to ensure what is necessary for an advance of the Italians into the Tyrolean land.

In his response the next day, General von Conrad maintained that only 20 divisions could be freed as the Galician front; he intended to deploy these against the Italians in a concentrated manner, to strike their 30 divisions, which were expected to advance in the general direction over Villach and Laibach against the Danube line Vienna—Budapest. However, he did not want to relinquish the defense of Tyrol; it would fall to the German forces under Austro-Hungarian command. The security against Serbia and, if necessary, against Romania was the responsibility of the Austro-Hungarian Balkan forces.

In response to these statements, General von Falkenhayn repeated his operational proposal, but the forces to be freed in Galicia could only be reduced to 29 divisions. Including the Austro-Hungarian Balkan Army with 20 divisions, he believed he could use 49 divisions against Serbia and Italy. Regarding the question of how they are to be deployed, — he wrote on May 17, "I do not want to address this until I have received Bulgaria's response").

1) The assumption that Austria-Hungary had over 20 divisions on the Serbian border was explained by the fact that General von Falkenhayn had learned from a statement by General von Conrad that the Austro-Hungarian Balkan Army was only 240,000 men strong. He included these forces. The Austro-Hungarian Balkan Army was noted at the beginning of 1915 as serving as a "reserve army" for the "Austro-Hungarian army stationed on the Serbian border".

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Differences in Views on the Conduct of Operations Against Italy.

In any case, one can already say today that it would be possible either to keep Serbia in check with nine divisions and strike against Italy with 40, or to launch a short strike against Serbia with 31½ divisions, which might bind Bulgaria as well as Turkey and thus Romania firmly to us, and with 17½ divisions to at least significantly delay the Italian advance until the Serbian matter is settled."

An agreement on the main issue was not reached. While General von Conrad maintained his view to "use all available forces exclusively against Italy for the time being" and considered a campaign in the Balkans "currently not feasible," General von Falkenhayn wanted to reserve his position on the question of whether the attack should first be conducted against Serbia or Italy.

Only through verbal discussions in Teschen on May 18 was a certain balance of the mutual views achieved: Five divisions of the Austro-Hungarian 5th (Balkan) Army were to be immediately moved to the area west of Agram, where they could be assembled by June 5. At the Serbian border, apart from border security and fortress garrisons, only two divisions were to remain, whose immediate reinforcement by three German divisions from Galicia was planned. Furthermore, on May 21, the Austro-Hungarian VII Corps was to be transported to Klagenfurt, as well as two German and one Austro-Hungarian division to Marburg-Pettau. These three were to join the five divisions of the previous Balkan Army to form the newly established 5th Army under the command of General von Borojevic. A newly to be established German unit, the "Alpine Corps," was to be subordinated to the Tyrolean Land Defense Command, General of Cavalry Dankl, and the supreme command on the entire Italian front was to be transferred to General of Cavalry Archduke Eugen.

Despite these decisions, which only concerned the immediately urgently necessary measures, the German Chief of General Staff advocated initially conducting a temporally and spatially limited advance against Serbia. The forces used for this were later to be used for the planned strike against Italy. How much General von Falkenhayn's campaign against Serbia was at the forefront of all considerations became evident from the fact that he also endeavored on May 19 to create the conditions for its execution.

1) Letter from May 18, 1915, to the German Chief of General Staff.  
2) Regarding the composition of the "Alpine Corps," see p. 18.

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Through the representative of the Foreign Office in the great

headquarters, envoy von Treutler, he demanded further diplomatic

steps in Sofia to finally obtain a clear answer to the inquiry

of May 12\*) regarding Bulgaria's participation. In a

letter sent to Teschen on the same day, he emphasized: "That the

Serbian issue can be resolved by the wishers of the Italian offensive

I consider certain. The Italians, according to all my

reports, will not march with their masses before the beginning of June and have

according to Your Excellency's personal information at least four weeks to

march and fight before they can become truly threatening. Before

the beginning of July, this is therefore not the case. By then, however, the Serbian question

can very well be decided."

Events then occurred that fundamentally influenced the decisions of the two general

staff chiefs: On the evening of May 19, it became known via

Teschen that Bulgaria had declined to participate in a campaign

against Serbia; furthermore, the Austro-Hungarian army command

was informed from Vienna that the declaration of war by Italy was to be expected

within 24 hours at the latest. General von Conrad

then wrote to Pleß, convinced that "we must now jointly

with all our might face the new, certain enemy

and must not paralyze this action by an enterprise based on

the possible future intervention of an uncertain third party for us (Bul

garia) and against us (Romania)."

On the same day, however, May 19, reports of extraordinarily heavy Russian attacks on

the 11th Army had arrived at the German great headquarters. These led General von Falkenhayn

in connection with Bulgaria's refusal to consider it advisable to

temporarily leave the focus of warfare on the Russian front

and to conduct the fight both against Serbia and against Italy

initially defensively.

He therefore sent an urgent request to Teschen on May 20,

apart from the five divisions of the Austro-Hungarian Balkan Army, i.e., VII Corps,

as well as the German "Alpine Corps" "under no circumstances to shift further forces

against Italy, which would still be in Poland and Galicia,

but to begin there, to prevent the Central Powers from

creating a burden in the middle of their body." The defensive forces there to begin, with which the goal, "the final overthrow of the Russian offensive power in Galicia," would be achieved.

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Agreement of the Central Powers on the Conduct of the Multi-Front War.

To gain clearer insight for future decisions, General von Falkenhayn on the same day requested information on how the Austro-Hungarian military leadership intended to conduct the strike against Italy in detail. He mentioned that, according to his estimation, "the beginning of the decisive battles could hardly be expected before about seven weeks from today," specifically east of the line Graz—Marburg—Agram. The immediate response indicated that General von Conrad anticipated an Italian advance in two directions, over Laibach—Marburg towards the Danube line Budapest—Raab and over Villach—Leoben towards Vienna. He intended to comprehensively attack and defeat the right Italian flank, while the enemy's left flank would be held back by border defenses and troops to be assembled in Carinthia. The attack was to be led by the 5th Army, initially assembled with five divisions west of Agram, with three divisions at Marburg. "I expect," emphasized General von Conrad, "the incursion of stronger Italian forces across the border immediately after the declaration of war, presumably on May 23 or 24, and must reckon with the exposure of the 200-kilometer stretch from the border to Marburg—Agram within three, at most four weeks, thus by about June 14, at the latest June 20... However, I am clear that the eight divisions are far too weak for the strike and that everything must be done to immediately follow them with additional forces. By June 20, with full utilization of the railways, about 20 divisions must be assembled in the area of Graz—Marburg and west of Agram, which appear to me as the necessary minimum for the decisive battle..."

However, General von Falkenhayn could not agree with these considerations. Given the situation in Galicia, it was by no means certain that 20 divisions would be available in the foreseeable future for the strike against Italy planned by General von Conrad. Under these circumstances, he insisted on deploying the available forces at the border for defense and went to Teschen on the afternoon of May 21 for further discussions. In a detailed discussion, an agreement was reached. Both chiefs of staff now agreed that the operation in Galicia should be brought to the "quickest conclusion." Since it was not foreseeable when this would be the case, the planned dispatch of three divisions each to Marburg and to the border was not in question.

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

During the discussion, it also emerged that

General von Falkenhayn assessed the situation on these two theaters of war

much more favorably than the Austro-Hungarian military leadership. He did not

expect an offensive from the Serbs and considered the offensive power of the Italians

to be low; he expected their arrival in the Marburg—Agram line — as he

mentioned — significantly later than General von Conrad. Since no further

reinforcements were expected, he considered the deployment of the

Austro-Hungarian divisions advancing from the Balkans in the

front line at the border to be urgently necessary, to hold back the Italians

at the Isonzo in pure defense. He succeeded in convincing

General von Conrad of this plan despite strong reasons and objections. The slow

progress of the offensive operation in Galicia may also have convinced the

Austro-Hungarian Chief of Staff that a quick release of the

local forces for a strike against Italy was no longer to be expected. In this sense, the following telegram was sent to

Plesk on May 22: “In accordance with the currently united troop forces against Italy,

I have decided, after thorough consideration of all circumstances, to

temporarily observe a defensive procedure against Italy and to

move the assembly of the Balkan war deployment

forces of the 5th Army as well as the forces advancing to Carinthia

as far forward as possible, thus relocating the first disembarkations to the Isonzo

and to Villach.”

After several days of conflicting opinions, the basis for the defensive procedure in the upcoming

fights with Italy was thus established at the last

hour on May 21, and clarity was also gained

on the question of continuing the multi-front war: continuation

of the offensive of the Central Powers on the Galician-Polish front, defense on all other theaters of war.

On May 23, at 3:30 in the afternoon, Italy declared war on

Austria-Hungary, but not on Germany. The

German Reich leadership limited itself to breaking off diplomatic

relations; meanwhile, the Italian government could no longer

be unaware that Italy, in its incursion into the Danube Monarchy, would also

encounter German imperial troops. As early as mid-January

1915, Prince Bülow had repeatedly informed the Italian Prime Minister Salandra

that in the event of a war between Italy and Austria-Hungary, "Germany would be found with all its might" at the side of its ally.\*)

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Italy Declares War on Austria-Hungary.

Hungary "Germany with full force" would be found at the side of its ally\*). If Germany now merely limited itself to breaking off diplomatic relations with Italy, this was due not only to the desire to maintain, if at all possible, the supply of raw materials across the Italian border, but above all to considerations regarding relations with Romania. The news from there did not currently suggest any immediate danger, but Prime Minister Bratianu had told the German envoy in Bucharest, Baron von dem Bussche, as late as May 21, that maintaining neutrality would be easier for him if not Germany, but Italy declared war. As the Chancellor informed General von Falkenhayn on May 21, King Ferdinand had assured the German envoy most emphatically that Romania had made no agreements with Italy, "so that Italy's actions would not result in Romania's entry." Although the situation was becoming difficult due to increasing pressure from the Entente, the King hoped to maintain neutrality. "On the other hand, Bratianu seems," the Chancellor continued, "to be conducting negotiations with Russia behind the King's back," which he denied. Despite all the talk, our victories in the Carpathians have made a strong impression in Romania. Thus, Romania's entry into the war is not to be expected initially, but this eventuality is by no means ruled out for later. Beldimann\*) considers joining us out of the question as long as there is no internal ministerial crisis in Bucharest, for which there is currently no prospect. In any case, an action against Serbia would mean further assurance that Romania remains calm." Thus, the situation in Bucharest seemed relaxed at the time. The German Chief of Staff therefore tried again to open the way through Romania for munitions transports to Turkey. However, he was not successful even now.

Reassuring news was currently coming from Greece.

\* Telegram from Prince Bülow on January 18, 1915, to the Foreign Office.  
2) Such negotiations have indeed taken place. Given Bratianu's very high demands, Sazonov became suspicious and believed that Romania was deliberately making unreasonable demands to avoid an agreement with Russia and "to evade the war." Fundamentally, the Romanian government had the right to occupy the Danube Monarchy territories inhabited by Romanians, which had already been recognized by Russia in the fall of 1914.  
cf. "The Official Material on the World War" (published by the Central Office for the Study of War Damages) pp. 178/179, 185, 207—210.  
3) Romanian envoy in Berlin.

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Of the 52 divisions of the Turkish army, eleven were deployed at the Dardanelles. The sent 65,000 French and English were unable to make further progress against their tenacious defense. However, it had to be assumed that the final outcome of the struggle depended not least on the unhindered influx of German war materials. However, General von Falkenhayn gained the impression from the reports available in Constantinople towards the end of May that the Ottoman Empire would succeed in maintaining the situation at the straits for the time being by its own efforts; a postponement of the offensive against Serbia could therefore also be justified from the standpoint of the situation at the Dardanelles.

In the question of declaring war on Italy, Turkey took the same stance as Germany; the outbreak of war had to be avoided as long as possible, as the political situation in the Balkans was still unclear.

In this development of events, Italy's declaration of war initially had no decisive influence on the military situation of the Central Powers. However, the economic consequences that Italy's entry into the war had for the Central Powers threatened to become noticeable immediately; above all, it was uncertain whether it would be possible to continue to receive supplies across the Italian border.

2. The Intensification of the Economic Situation of the Central Powers and the Submarine Trade War.

In the supply of foreign raw materials, Italy had previously played an important role. A significant portion of American cotton had been imported via Genoa since England declared the North Sea a war zone. Difficulties that Italy initially posed to this transit were resolved through negotiations by the United States. However, since the declaration of war by Austria-Hungary, Italy also blocked transit and export trade to Germany. The German economy was now dependent on imports through neutral states for the supply of raw materials, apart from the admittedly not insignificant, but overall small supplies from neighboring countries.

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The Economic Consequences of Italy's Entry into the War.

This extremely difficult situation had been addressed by the

military administration in further implementation of the measures

already taken earlier1). Under the leadership of Major Koeth, who in

the spring of 1915 succeeded Dr. Walter Rathenau, who resigned at his

own request, at the head of the War Raw Materials Department of the

Prussian War Ministry, the official management of war-critical raw

materials was to be systematically expanded for a long duration of the

war. Based on previous experiences, the Raw Materials Department

made a clear distinction between the needs of the army and the homeland

and sought to increasingly limit the population's needs to the absolutely

necessary level. Careful recording of domestic and occupied territories'

stocks, systematic expansion of existing and development of new

production sources, but above all, regulated distribution of raw material

quantities according to the importance of demand were intended to

meet the continuously increasing requirements for arming and equipping

the army. As a substitute for missing natural raw materials, artificial

substances often had to be used, for the production of which German

inventiveness and science earned great merits2).

The nutrition of the army and the homeland also experienced

further restrictions due to Italy's entry into the war. Some food and

fodder, which had been suitable to replace other scarce nutrients in the

homeland and had previously been imported from Italy, were now

unavailable. The closure of the Italian border was felt all the more

severely as it had already become necessary in the winter of 1914/15

to place the most important foodstuffs under state administration;

above all, the central management of bread grain had reminded the

public of the full seriousness of the situation and prompted measures

that affected all sections of the population noticeably.

The blockade of overseas supplies had also already led to a

serious shortage of fodder; consequently, large quantities of bread

grain and potatoes were used for livestock feeding. As feeding bans

were insufficient, the Reich government had to order pig slaughters

on a large scale, which continued into May. To prevent a potato

shortage in the summer, which was just affecting the poorest segments of the population, all available potatoes were purchased by a specially established Reich agency.

1) Volume VI, p. 430. — 2) More details in the later appearing Volume II of   
the special series "War Armament and War Economy".

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

The poorest segments of the population had to be put in distress, as a specially established Reich office had purchased all available potatoes. In addition, there was a serious shortage of sugar, which forced requisitions for the army administration. As the oat shortage worsened, the harvest of 1915 also had to be requisitioned. Finally, the sugar shortage led to the central distribution of raw sugar. Beyond that, it had to be expected that further interventions in the free economy would be necessary to ensure the supply of the army and the population. The supplies from the agricultural areas occupied by German troops had so far significantly facilitated the army's nutrition, and the initiated systematic cultivation of enemy fields promised further help for the army with the coming harvest, but could hardly relieve the homeland effectively.

In the Danube Monarchy, too, food difficulties first arose in October 1914, which resulted in sparing the combat strength of the ally. Before the war, Austria and Hungary formed a customs union, where Hungary's agricultural overproduction covered the missing quantities of essential food and fodder in Austria. However, during the war, Hungary's economic situation became more difficult. Therefore, when the Hungarian government began requisitioning grain, flour, and corn at the beginning of 1915, while Austria's most important agricultural areas, Galicia and Bukovina, were lost as war zones, Austria was forced to take similar measures as Germany. In lengthy negotiations, attempts were made to continue obtaining supplies of food from Hungary and to relieve the Austrian economy in supplying the joint army. Nevertheless, the supplies from Hungary became increasingly sparse. The food situation in Austria also remained a subject of constant serious concern.

Given this situation, it was a palpable blow to the entire economic life of the Central Powers when one of the few remaining connections was closed by Italy's entry into the war. This disadvantage weighed all the more heavily as Germany's overall economic situation, especially due to the now almost ten-month interruption of shipping across the North Sea by the British blockade, had become extraordinarily difficult in recent weeks. Another significant exacerbation of Germany's economic situation at this time was the initiation of the submarine trade war1).

1) Volume VI, G. 425/426.

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Germany Opens the Submarine Trade War.

Immediately after the outbreak of the World War, the government of the United States of America proposed to the warring powers to commit to the observance of the London Declaration of Maritime Law of February 26, 1909, which had been unanimously accepted by the powers but not yet ratified, for the purpose of regulating maritime warfare under international law. While the German government readily agreed to the American government's proposal, it was rejected by the enemy powers. The reason for this became apparent in the months following the outbreak of the war, as England and France took comprehensive measures to cut off and starve Germany. They used, in particular, an arbitrary handling of the war contraband law in contradiction to the London Declaration, as well as an extension of the right to search and seize neutral ships, disregarding all previous international legal customs. The measures aimed at isolating Germany were particularly intensified by the British Admiralty's announcement on November 2, 1914, declaring the entire North Sea a war zone. This severely crippled neutral trade with Germany.

In view of the dangers this posed to the overall conduct of the war by the Central Powers, the Chief of the German Admiralty Staff, Admiral von Pohl, submitted a proposal to the Chancellor on November 7 to impose a blockade by submarines over the British Isles and the northern and western coasts of France as a countermeasure. The idea of using submarines for trade warfare had not been considered by the leading authorities of the German Navy before the war. However, already in the first months of the war and increasingly after the first submarine successes, the submarine front suggested that the most effective way to use this weapon would be against enemy trade. From the outset, it was believed that it would not be possible for submarines, given the expected enemy surveillance on shipping routes, to observe the forms of cruiser warfare, i.e., with surfaced submarines, to stop enemy merchant ships and examine their nationality and cargo.

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

to stop merchant ships and examine their nationality and cargo. As a precondition for a trade war with submarines, the authorization to sink enemy merchant ships by torpedo fire from submerged submarines without warning was contested. Such an examination of neutral ships from enemy ones, which was originally considered possible, was questioned when, at the end of January 1915, British merchant ships were officially advised to fly a neutral flag to deceive German submarines. However, the German Admiralty hoped to gradually overcome the difficulties by ensuring that neutral shipping would increasingly refrain from navigating the waters around England during the unannounced conduct of the submarine war, which on the German side was primarily intended as a countermeasure against the relocation of the special band around Vladivostok by England. The navy expected the main effect of the submarine trade war to be the deterrence of shipping. However, the idea of conducting the trade war in this way met with concerns from the Reich leadership, which feared complications with neutral powers, especially with the United States of America. In these disagreements, the Chief of the General Staff observed restraint. He contented himself with emphasizing the interest of land warfare in preventing enemy canal traffic. The exchange of views between the navy and the Reich leadership on the political and legal issues associated with the submarine trade war dragged on until the end of January 1915. It was not until February 1 that the Chancellor, in a meeting attended by the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, declared himself ready to set aside his concerns and accede to the demands of the Chief of the Admiralty. On February 4, after a presentation by Admiral von Pohl, the Kaiser gave his approval to the submarine trade war. Through an announcement by the Chief of the Admiralty, the waters around Great Britain were declared a war zone as a "countermeasure against the illegal measures to block German sea traffic by England." The submarine trade war was launched with a number of front-line submarines. Objections from neutral powers, particularly the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, and the United States of America, against the blockade measures of the Entente and the German countermeasures initially remained largely ineffective.

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The Submarine Trade War in Summer 1915.

A mediation proposal

from the American government on February 21, suggesting that both warring

parties refrain from the new methods of naval warfare,

Germany thus abandoning the submarine trade war, and the enemy powers

allowing its food supply, found approval from the German

Reich leadership, but was rejected by England.

The British government responded to the German declaration

of the submarine trade war on March 11, 1915, by further

tightening its blockade measures. They moved, with complete

disregard for the rights and interests of neutral countries, primarily

in the direction of intensified obstruction of German goods

traffic through the states neighboring Germany, Holland, and the

Nordic countries. Germany was to be completely cut off from the world like a besieged fortress, not only to

affect its military force but to fatally starve the entire population.

Thus, the submarine trade war continued. On the occasion

of the sinking of the British passenger steamer "Lusitania" on

May 7, where a number of American citizens lost their lives,

serious diplomatic disputes arose between

Germany and the United States. The American government

protested and demanded for the future that

sinkings should only occur after prior stopping and searching

of ships, observing all customary precautionary measures

to ensure the safety of passengers. However, the German admiralty

believed it could not comply with this demand

without questioning the effectiveness of submarines against the increasingly larger

number of armed enemy steamers.

The Reich leadership thus attempted to balance

the conflicting interests of politics and naval warfare by

imposing restrictions on submarines for the sinking of enemy passenger

steamers and allowing unrestricted

sinkings only for enemy merchant ships.

The Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army agreed

with this view, stating to the Kaiser on May 31, 1915,

in a lecture that the continuation of the submarine trade war

should depend on whether the risk of a

war with the United States could be avoided under all circumstances.

This consideration also determined his stance on the still hoped-for alliance of Bulgaria with the Central Powers, which seemed to be in question if the United States entered the war.

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

3. The Recruitment and Ammunition Situation until the End of 1915.

In accordance with General von Falkenhayn's demands for the provision of new combat reserves, the army administration continued to strive to create new units, as far as the replacement situation and the state of armament production allowed.

In the spring of 1915, immediately after Italy's declaration of war on Austria-Hungary, a unit suitable for mountain warfare was assembled from Bavarian and Prussian troops at the request of the Supreme Army Command under the name "Alpine Corps," which was expanded into a reinforced infantry division. The formation of its two Jäger brigades was carried out from the Bavarian Infantry-Leib-Regiment and three Jäger regiments, to which a number of Jäger battalions and snowshoe formations were combined.

In addition to the already mentioned 14 infantry divisions established in the spring, the Western Army formed infantry brigades No. 183, 185, 187, and 192 (fifteen) during the summer of 1915, which were initially reinforced only by pioneers and signal troops, later also by a section of light field howitzers. Due to the strained replacement situation, the desired expansion of these brigades into divisions had to be temporarily postponed, as did the establishment of additional troop units in the Western Army; for it was unavoidable to undertake new formations, while the existing units did not reach their planned strengths due to a lack of replacements.

In the Eastern Army, at the beginning of May 1915, the 4th Guard Infantry Division was established mainly from parts of the Guard Reserve Corps, and at the end of the month, following the already mentioned establishment of the 101st, 103rd, and 105th Infantry Divisions (according to the same procedure), the 107th Infantry Division was established. In October 1915, they remained there in a similar manner, using existing command authorities and troop units, as well as some new formations, to establish the 108th and 109th Infantry Divisions.

1) Further details, also on the supply of the army with weapons, technical combat equipment, war material, and equipment for replacement troops and field garrisons, can be found in the later published Volume IX as well as Volume II of the General Staff's "Warfare and War Experiences."  
2) Volume VII, p. 306. — 3) Volume VII, p. 305.  
4) Volume VII, p. 304.

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The Formation of New Units in the Year 1915.

At the same time, throughout 1915, efforts continued to expand the existing reserve and Landwehr divisions and to establish new Landwehr divisions from already existing and newly created units. By the end of 1915, the number of Landwehr divisions had increased to a total of 20. Alongside this, in the summer and autumn of 1915, there was also a reorganization and expansion of a number of previously makeshift units, mostly named after their leaders. The Posen Corps was formed as the 83rd and 84th Infantry Divisions, the Jastrow Corps as the XVII Reserve Corps, whose two divisions Wernitz and Breugel became the 86th Infantry and 85th Landwehr Divisions, the Dichthut Corps as the 87th, the Menges Division as the 88th, and the Westenhagen Department as the 89th Infantry Division.

By the end of 1915, the German field army comprised a total of 159 divisions — compared to 92 divisions at the outbreak of war1) —, in addition, there were eleven cavalry divisions, whose number had not increased; there were also some independent brigades.

In addition, and often in connection with these new and reorganizations, there were continued formations or mobile deployments of numerous smaller units, combat, stage, and Landsturm troops, columns and trains, military authorities, and service offices. These served to complete larger units that had not yet been systematically equipped or — notably the numerous foot artillery, aviation, and technical new formations — to strengthen existing field troops.

Finally, the reserve and training troops also experienced a continuous increase in response to the growing demands placed on them. By February 1915, the domestic infantry reserve battalions had been doubled and equipped with two recruitment depots each. The reserve formations of the other branches of service were also increased or strengthened. Based on very favorable experiences, the army administration continued to attach field recruitment depots to the corps or independent divisions at the front, where those from the domestic reserve battalions were transferred and completed their training under war-experienced personnel.

1) Including the main reserves of the fortresses, excluding the independent brigades (see "War Armament and War Economy", Volume I, Text Volume, p. 211 and Supplement Volume, Table 18).

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

The constant expansion of the army organization burdened the re-

placement situation in two ways, as each new formation added to the field army

demanded the replacement sources not only for its establishment but also for

its maintenance. This burden was all the more pressing as the replacement

needs of the existing field troops were already extraordinarily high due to

the unabated heavy losses. In the summer of 1915, an average of over 300,000

replacement troops'), of which about 250,000 men were for the infantry alone,

were sent to the field each month, a number in one month that was roughly

equivalent to the strength of two and a half war-ready army corps or the

peacetime strength of the German army as of 1913.

A particular difficulty in the replacement situation was caused by the

increasing number of leaves and deferments of conscripts for the war economy.

As other means to address the growing labor shortage at home failed, the

army administration was forced to comply with the requests of the war

industry for efficient labor to a large extent, to ensure the rapidly increasing

demand for armaments and thus the combat strength of the front. Thus, the

number of militarily fit men deferred from military service had already grown

to well over a million by the summer of 1915.

Although there was no immediate threat to the army's replacement

supply, the time was approaching when serious disruptions in the influx of new

replacement troops would have to occur. This point could only be postponed

without harming the other army positions by burdening the replacement

situation as little as possible with the formation of new units. The recruit

class of 1915, including the still available Landsturm I. contingent, was already

exhausted after a few months. In the autumn of 1915, the class of 1916 had

to be called up — significantly ahead of time. Maintaining the previous level

of replacements was a continuation

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The Personnel Replacement Situation.

Economy in satisfying the ongoing replacement needs was to be expected,

that this cohort, including the influx of convalescents and replacement

troops made available by the conscription of deferred individuals and by

amending military regulations¹), would last at most half a year. Thus,

by the end of 1915, the conscription of the 1917 cohort had already

begun.

In this unavoidable tightening of the replacement situation, the Deputy

Minister of War, Lieutenant General von Wandel, in full agreement with

the Minister of War, Lieutenant General Wild von Hohenborn, who was

at the Great Headquarters, insisted, unaffected by various demands from

the front, on economizing as much as possible with army replacements.

In September 1915, General von Wild explained to the Chief of the

General Staff of the Field Army that the army's replacement supply at

the previous level could only be maintained for about another year;

however, the circumstances compelled "the greatest economy with the

existing human material," particularly "in view of the consequences that

could arise if the influx of replacements were to dry up before all war

tasks were brought to a favorable conclusion."

The army and troop leaders were also repeatedly reminded by the

army administration to measure their replacement claims only according

to truly urgent needs and to limit their demands for new formations as

much as possible.

Through the unified regulation of replacement supply in their hands,

the army administration, in close cooperation with the Supreme Army

Command, was able to adequately meet the needs according to urgency.

Accordingly, replacement bans were imposed over troop units that were

sufficiently supplied, and eventually over entire army fronts for shorter

or longer periods. The same purpose of the most economical replacement

management was also served when, since the summer of 1915, infantry

troops were generally no longer filled to their full planned wartime

strength, but only up to a battalion strength reduced to 800 in the west

and 900 in the east.

Just as much as the provision of the armed forces and replacement

supply, the maintenance and enhancement of combat power were dependent on adequate coverage of its vastly increasing material needs.

¹) By law of September 4, 1915, the re-examination of conscripts declared unfit   
for service during peacetime conscription was made possible, who were exempt   
from military service under previous legal provisions.

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

In particular, ensuring the supply of ammunition remained one of the most serious concerns of the military administration; it also had decisive importance for the further operational decisions of the Supreme Army Command. It was still certain that the major offensive in the East and the expected defensive battles in the West on both extensive theaters of war would bring with them an extremely increased consumption of ammunition.

In accordance with the demands of General von Falkenhayn, the military administration had been striving with increased emphasis since the spring of 1915 to promote the production of more efficient pressed steel and cast steel shells, gradually reducing the mass production of gray cast iron shells, whose inferiority did not allow the artillery to fully develop its performance capabilities. This transition initially posed great difficulties, as their production was more challenging than the manufacture of simple gray cast iron ammunition. Thanks to the foresighted measures of the War Ministry and the capabilities of the German industry, however, these difficulties were soon overcome, so that the delivery of pressed steel and cast steel shells also increased rapidly. Meanwhile, their processing into new ammunition and thus the production of ammunition in general reached its limit in the available quantities of powder and explosives. After the extensive expansions of the powder factories, which had been initiated in a timely manner by the military administration, gradually became effective since March, the production of powder, and then also the production of explosives, set the measure for all deliveries. The main difficulty lay in the shortage of saltpeter and nitric acid. Although the production of artificial saltpeter had started in the spring of 1915 with larger deliveries in a timely manner, so that an immediate emergency did not occur. However, the performance of the new factories could only be gradually increased due to the numerous obstacles.

The regulation of ammunition production was now carried out in such a way that, depending on the situation, the provisions for field artillery or foot artillery were increased or restricted, and the weapons of one type of caliber were postponed in favor of the other. For infantry ammunition, due to the high artillery demand for powder production, it had to be relatively held back until the subsequent quantities of explosives were sufficient.

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The Ammunition Situation.

From May to July 1915, the monthly powder production increased as planned from 2.6 to 3.4 million kilograms, but in the following months, due to a lack of nitric acid and as a result of larger disruptions caused by explosions and fires at the powder factories, it fell significantly behind the planned increase rate, so that by the end of the year the monthly output was only 4.3 million kilograms instead of 5. Correspondingly, the following amounts of ammunition were sent to the field in the individual months:

May June July August September October November December

Inf. Ammo Trains (approx. 2.5 million rounds each) 42 45 42 42 42 42 45 43

Field Artillery Ammo Trains 101 150 157 142 142 1/4 171 1/4 151 135 1/2

Howitzer Ammo Trains (6000 rounds each) 79 1/4 105 89 1/2 104 1/2 97 126 111 114 1/3

Mortar Ammo Trains (2000 rounds each) 27 1/2 32 1/2 35 42 3/4 37 43 47 1/2 53

10 cm Cannon Ammo Trains (10,000 rounds each) 9 10 3/4 12 11 13 12 14 1/4 14

These deliveries were matched by the following ammunition consumption by the field army in the summer months of 1915:

May June July August September Average Consumption

Inf. Ammo Trains 47 43 41 32 47 42

Field Artillery Ammo Trains 133 135 105 128 160 136

Howitzer Ammo Trains 83 93 109 95 111 98

Mortar Ammo Trains 34 39 42 36 45 39

10 cm Cannon Ammo Trains 9 9 1/2 9 1/2 10 1/2 13 10

Ammunition supply and consumption were thus approximately balanced in the months when the main battles took place, with the temporarily higher consumption being covered by still available reserves of the Chief of Field Ammunition Services.

1) An ammo train for field cannons contained 26,880, an ammo train for light field howitzers 12,000 rounds.

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The Situation of the Central Powers in May 1915.

The supply difficulties that frequently arose, especially in the East during pursuit operations, were primarily due to unfavorable supply conditions. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of domestic procurement and production sites, it was possible, albeit with a significant reduction in consumption in quiet combat sections, to adequately secure the high ammunition needs of the main battlefronts.

Since the autumn of 1915, the decline in ammunition demand associated with the waning of battles allowed for the accumulation of larger reserves while maintaining consumption reduction on all non-decisive fronts, which by the end of the year had already reached a considerable level. Further increases in reserve stocks were anticipated if, by spring 1916, powder production, as planned, had increased to six million kilograms, for which all preparations had been made by the military administration.

keyno: 037

II. The Deployments and First Battles on the Italian Front.

General von Conrad therefore considered it necessary to form a defensive front against Italy. On August 13, 1914, the General of the Cavalry Rohr was tasked with "studying, preparing, and organizing the national defense on the southwestern border according to the respective situation."

At the beginning of September 1914, he had at his disposal in Tyrol, Carinthia, and the coastal land a total of 40 battalions, composed of marching and replacement troop lines, gendarmerie, landsturm, local defense forces, and volunteer associations, as well as over 20 guns. With this weak troop force, he intended to hold the national border to the utmost in the event of an enemy attack. The backbone of his defensive front was formed by permanent fortifications occupied by small but combat-capable units, which, although mostly outdated, were of great importance at the beginning of the fighting, as their defensive strength was greatly overestimated by the Italians. Most of these fortifications were located on the Tyrolean front, where they enclosed the southernly protruding national border in a semicircle. On the Carinthian border, the armored works of Malborgeth and Flitsch lay to block the advance roads leading over the Drava to Vienna, as well as the fortifications at the Predil Pass between them. The Isonzo front lacked any permanent works for holding. Only west of Tolmein were there some field positions established shortly before the war began. In the first months of the war, little was done here to secure the national border with fortifications, fearing that this would provoke Italy; only in the last days of April 1915 was serious work begun on the construction of defensive positions on the middle and lower Isonzo.

1) Conrad, IV, C. 378 f.  
2) The following information is mainly taken from the Austrian official war work: "Austria-Hungary's Last War" and the "Italian General Staff Work."

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The unfavorable course of events on the Galician front in

autumn 1914 forced the Austro-Hungarian military command to increasingly

rely on troop contingents from the Italian border area. Consequently, the

troop formations of the border defense presented a constantly changing

picture. In February 1915, these loose formations were consolidated into four

divisions, which were reinforced by four more in May,

90th to 94th Infantry Division.

When on May 23, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary,

the following troops of the Central Powers were assembled at the border for

defense or were about to march there:

In Tyrol, under the command of the

commander of the Tyrolean defense, General of Cavalry Dankl, the

91st and 90th Infantry Division, the 56th Mountain Brigade, and the

"German Alpine Corps" in transit(2).

On the Carinthian Front under the command of

General Rohr, the 92nd Infantry Division, the 57th Half-Brigade, and the

advancing units: 59th Mountain Brigade and VII Corps.

In the coastal region at the Isonzo, where under the command of

General of Infantry Boroevic, the new 5th Army was formed: the 93rd,

57th, and 94th Infantry Division and the two and a half corps in transit

(XV Corps with 1st and

50th Infantry Division, XVI Corps with 6th and 58th Infantry Division,

as well as the independent 48th Infantry Division).

In total, there were 14 infantry divisions, one

half-brigade, and two mountain brigades with which

the Central Powers marched against the enemy army at the national border;

of these, 128 battalions were at the border on May 23,

while 94 battalions were in transit. The strength of the enemy

was estimated by the Austro-Hungarian military command at 41 infantry and 3 cavalry

divisions(3). The command on the Italian

front was led by General of Cavalry Archduke Eugen, whose

headquarters were located from May 27 in Marburg on the Drava.

According to the instructions given to him by the Austro-Hungarian military command,

he was to "maintain any defense against border violations."(4)

1) G. 10. — 2) 6. 7 and 18. — 3) The actual strength of the Italian

army at the outbreak of war was only 35 infantry and 4 cavalry divisions, as well as 52 Alpini battalions.

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The Deployments.

The main thrust of the enemy was expected at the Isonzo Front. Therefore, the focus of the defense was placed there.

A difficulty for the leadership soon arose from the fact that Germany and Italy were not yet at war with each other1). Assuming that Romania had committed to intervene on the side of the Allied Powers as soon as Italy was attacked by Germany, the German side intended to make the Italians appear as the aggressors against the Alpine advance. This led to unpleasant disputes between the headquarters in Pleß and Teschen, during which the German Supreme Army Command insisted on its position.

On the Italian side, border security measures had already been established in August 1914. The Italian army was in such a weakened state due to the Libyan expedition that its early use in a larger European war could hardly be expected. On July 31, General Cadorna, appointed as the successor to the late General Pollio as Chief of the General Staff of the Army, presented a memorandum to the King of Italy, pointing out, among other things, the severe constraints to which the Italian army was currently subjected regarding its war readiness. For some time, the main task of the army had been to "form the replenishment depot for the Libyan expeditionary corps. This had deprived it of material and moral cohesion and the possibility of adequate training2)." When on September 20, the Ministry of War asked the Chief of the General Staff for information about the army's readiness, since "international and internal conditions did not rule out the possibility of general mobilization and the opening of the campaign" in the near future, General Cadorna had to declare that due to severe deficiencies in clothing, equipment, and organization, Italy was "not in a position to begin a campaign3)."

Now the preparation of the Italian army for the war was systematically initiated and the implementation of a fifteen-month armament program was undertaken.

1) P. 10 and 11. — 2) Cadorna: "Altre pagine sulla grande guerra." P. 15 to 23. — 3) Cadorna: "La guerra." Vol. I, P. 47/48.

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During the winter months, the border guard troops on the Austrian front were continuously increased and had reached a strength of 142,000 men by mid-April 1915. This border security was allegedly in response to the testimony that Austria-Hungary could invade Italy at any time during the weakened state of the Italian army to seize strategically important points.

On April 23, a few days before the alliance was concluded in London, the secret mobilization of three army corps was ordered; this was followed by the gradual conscription and mobilization of the remaining six corps until May 18. The deployment movement began on May 4, the day the Triple Alliance treaty was terminated, and concluded on June 15. The sluggish deployment process was the reason that the attacks undertaken by the Italians immediately after the declaration of war could only be carried out with insufficient means.

The war organization of the Italian army as of May 24 included the following distribution of forces:

the 3rd Army (six infantry, two cavalry divisions) on the lower Isonzo,

the 2nd Army (eight infantry divisions, a composite division of Bersaglieri and 14 Alpine battalions) on the middle Isonzo,

the Carnic Group (16 Alpine battalions) on the upper Tagliamento,

the 4th Army (five infantry divisions, six Alpine battalions) in Cadore at the upper Piave,

the 1st Army (six infantry divisions, 16 Alpine battalions) on the Tyrolean front.

The army command had not yet deployed over ten infantry and two cavalry divisions. They only arrived at the theater of war at the end of May, beginning of June.

General Cadorna's operational plan foresaw the offensive of the Italian army in the general direction of Vienna, with the main forces — the 3rd and 2nd Army with 15 infantry divisions — to attack over the Isonzo with the aim of first capturing the area around Laibach —Krainburg.

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The Italian Intentions.

To their left, the Carnic Group was directed towards Villach. The 4th Army was instructed to prepare the attack in the direction of Toblach, to cut off Tyrol's connections with the hinterland from the Puster Valley, or, advancing southeast, to clear the way for the forces attacking Villach.

As early as May 16, General Cadorna had issued the first army order. The operation was to have the character of a "vigorous and surprising incursion" for the two armies of the right wing. The immediate goal was the barriers in Carinthia (Malborgeth and Predil Pass), the mountains north of Karfreit on the left bank of the Isonzo, and further south the terrain between the border and the Isonzo. Only in the case of weak enemy resistance should the leap continue over the Isonzo. The Carnic Group was to limit itself to "vigorous demonstrations" due to a lack of offensive means. The supreme command placed special emphasis on the breakthrough intended for the 2nd Army in the direction of Tolmein. It was expected that the 1st Army, which had surrounded Tyrol, would "under all circumstances" cover the flank and rear of the main army. According to a telegraphic order from May 22, hostilities were to begin at midnight from May 23 to 24.

Since the Italians expected an attack on the Tyrolean front, especially from the area of the highlands of Folgaria—Lavarone, they attempted to seize the local works and directed heavy artillery fire against them from May 24. The bombardment was followed by an infantry attack on May 30, which, however, collapsed before the heroically persevering Tyrolean militia and stand shooters.

On the left wing of the Austrian Tyrolean front, from June 6, the leader of the German Alpine Corps, Bavarian Lieutenant General Kraft von Dellmensingen, took command. In this section of the front, south of Toblach, was one of the most threatened sections of the entire border line; for the important railway of the Puster Valley ran close behind the foremost positions. General Cadorna had therefore instructed the 4th Army to carry out the attack on Toblach. However, since the Italians needed more time for preparations, it was not until June 9 that fighting began in the high mountains north and west of Cortina d'Ampezzo, which continued for ten days and ended with a complete victory for the defenders.

1) Italian General Staff Work, Vol. II, Appendix 38.  
2) Italian General Staff Work, Vol. II, pp. 55 and 149.

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The Deployments and Initial Battles on the Italian Front.

Since the Alpine Corps was not to be tied down in a defensive attack, its main forces were held in reserve in groups; only one company was deployed at the front and had a glorious part in these battles.

Further east at the Plöcken Pass, Italian Alpini battalions attacked on May 24 against the Austrian border squadrons, securing a number of commanding border heights, but without capturing the Plöcken Pass itself. On the same day, reinforcements arriving from Galicia (i.e., VII Corps and 59th Mountain Brigade) began unloading at the Drauburg and Villach stations. This significantly reduced the threat of an enemy breakthrough for the 92nd Infantry Division on the Carinthian Front, which was initially only occupied by the 92nd Infantry Division and a few battalions of the 57th Salt Brigade. In the section of this front extending eastward, the battles in the first two weeks of the war brought the attackers only local successes.

In the coastal region, the Italian 2nd and 3rd Armies were to lead the main attack. On the Austrian side, the 93rd and 94th, as well as the 57th Infantry Division, which had been moved from the Serbian border on May 11, provided security. On the day of the declaration of war, the initial arrivals of the five divisions rolling in from the Balkan Front were expected. The XV Corps was directed at Tolmein, the XVI at Görz. The independent 48th Infantry Division was to be held in reserve behind the left wing of the army. On May 24, the Italians entered the battle from Görz. Between the border and the Isonzo, they initially encountered no resistance, were able to occupy the right bank of the Isonzo as far south as the designated target heights. They also managed to capture the summit on the eastern Isonzo bank south of Flitsch. The attacks on the plateau of Doberdò and the bridgehead of Görz were unsuccessful, often resulting in losses.

The result of the first sixteen days of the campaign was extremely limited for the Italians here. They had reached the front line of the 5th main position, which lay on the left bank of the Isonzo except at Tolmein and Görz. The major battle in the Isonzo section began.

After the completion of the transport of the five divisions from the Balkan Front to the Isonzo, General von Boroevic, at the headquarters in Laibach, was able to take command of the new front. 40 squadrons and 188 batteries of the enemy: 76½ battalions. 14 squadrons and 75 batteries were opposed.

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The First Isonzo Battle.

The terrain reinforcements in the high mountains and especially in the Karst faced the greatest difficulties. Continuous trenches and shelters could not be constructed in the bare rock ground. The breastworks piled up from stone rubble did not provide sufficient cover, but rather increased the splinter effect of the projectiles. The mostly very limited field of fire of the infantry facilitated covered approaches for the attacker. Despite these difficulties, the defenders, whose self-confidence had been greatly boosted by the previously victorious defensive battles, faced the upcoming major battles with confidence.

Only on June 21, four weeks after the opening of hostilities, did the Italian army command give the order for the main attack on the Isonzo, which was to begin on the morning of June 23 and whose pressure was to be directed primarily against the bridgehead of Gorizia.

For seven days, heavy artillery fire lay on the Austro-Hungarian positions, scattered indiscriminately over the entire defense zone. The effect was therefore minimal. On June 30, Italian infantry attacks began. They reached their greatest intensity on July 5; the focus of the battle was now on the Karst plateau. But all the enemy's efforts were in vain; on the night of July 8, complete calm set in. At the end of the two-week battle, eight Austro-Hungarian divisions with 92 battalions, 300 field and 56 heavy guns fought against 18 Italian divisions with 225 battalions and about 700 guns, a total of 115,000 fighters against 250,000.

The Italians lost 15,000 men. Compared to these losses, the gain of the battle was small; only at Sagrado was the edge of the plateau climbed and south of it the foot of the Karst edge reached. The Austro-Hungarian losses amounted to 10,000 men.

Based on the experiences of this first Isonzo battle, General Cadorna ordered the artillery reinforcement of the 3rd Army and issued a new attack order on July 15.

On July 18, the second Isonzo battle began with a strong bombardment of the Karst plateau. On the same day, the infantry attacks began. Bitter fighting ensued in the following days. Attacks alternated with counterattacks by the defenders; positions were lost and cleared again in close combat with the bayonet.

1) Italian General Staff Work, Vol. II, Appendix 75.  
2) 3 Karst 15% of total forces. — Italian General Staff Work, Vol. II, p. 225. — According to the calculation given there, the Austro-Hungarian losses amounted to nine percent of the total strength.

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The Marches and First Battles on the Italian Front.

St. Martino was captured and had to be vacated by the enemy again.

Three times the Italians stormed the summit of Mt. S. Michele and were

thrown back down by the defenders. The Italian army command

made its last corps from the Serbreser reserve available and

even resorted to units from the rest of the front.

Generaloberst von Conrad also decided to send reinforcements;

from the already weakened Eastern Front, a division and a Landsturm brigade

were brought in, and finally a division from Galicia. In days of costly battles,

the defenders managed to hold the front. On July 26, the battle reached its

climax. Then the offensive power of the left Italian wing at

Mt. S. Michele and the right in the area of Selo-Wolfsbach

was exhausted. The burden of the battle was henceforth mainly borne by the

assault divisions of the center, which struggled in vain to take the advanced

part of the position at Redipuglia-Sagora. On August 3,

the Italian army command ordered the cessation of the attack. The

fights that followed in the next few days were aimed at expanding and securing

the small gains achieved; they were limited to

a few hundred meters wide strip on the advanced karst

edge east of Graufüina—Height 118; both sides held between the lines

unfortified. At Bermigliano—Selo, the forward edge position remained in the

hands of the Italians. The first territorial gain was bought with a

total loss of 42,000 men1), of which 31,500 alone were in the

karst battles. The losses of the Austrians were also considerable due to

the heavy enemy artillery fire, to which the defenders were exposed for weeks

on the insignificant rocky ground. They

lost over 46,000 men2), considering the force ratio of

129 i.s.u. to about 260 Italian battalions, more than

double.

The "armor of the enemy gave way here and there,"

writes the Italian General Staff1), "but was not yet

defeated. The resistance of the reinforced enemy front had been established as a result

of the superior means of destruction that the Italian army command

could use on the Isonzo front. The second Isonzo Battle marked for us in the summer of 1915 the peak of exertion.

1) including 1,296 officers; — Italian General Staff, Vol. II, p. 407.  
2) including 12,291 missing. According to the Italian General Staff, Vol. II,   
p. 407, the Italians captured 13,360 men.  
1) Vol. II, p. 287.

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The Second Isonzo Battle.

The battle marked for us in the summer of 1915 the peak of power deployment. Almost all reserves were deployed...“ The battle, it is further stated, revealed the "fundamental organic deficiency" of inadequate equipment with artillery, destruction material, and especially with aerial observation means. A pause in fighting was therefore necessary to at least partially fill these gaps.

The second Isonzo battle was the last major battle that took place on the Italian front in the summer of 1915. Although General Cadorna attempted in the following weeks to achieve success at the upper Isonzo. From August 12, the left wing of the 2nd Army and parts of the Carnic Group attacked to take control of the bridgehead of Tolmein and the Flitsch Basin. These battles dragged on for seven weeks but brought no significant gain to the Italians. Similarly, on the Isonzo, the Italian attacks on the Dolomite front reached their goal of reaching the Puster Valley railway; parts of the Alpine front were involved in these defensive battles. Also, the attacks directed further south against the Austrian fortifications on the plateau of Folgaria—Lavarone were unsuccessful.

The course of the battles on the Italian front had proven how accurately General von Falkenhayn had assessed the situation on this theater of war even before the hostilities began; his advice to confront the enemy in pure defense already at the national border1) had fully proven itself, and it was the special merit of the German Chief of Staff, General von Conrad, to have embraced the idea of defense at the Isonzo.

1) p. 10.  
† World War. VIII. Volume. 3

keyno: 046

III. The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

1. The Battles until the Beginning of the Spring Offensive Early May.

a) The Supreme Army Command and the Western Army in April. Map 1.

In the first months of 1915, the German Western Army had been engaged in heavy defensive battles, the climax of which was the Winter Battle in Champagne. Despite the deployment of the strongest forces and months of bitter struggle, the French had not succeeded in breaking through the front of the German 3rd Army. The attempt by the British to overrun the German 6th Army at Neuve Chapelle had failed with the heaviest losses, as had a comprehensive French attack in March against the salient of the 5th Army (St. Mihiel). The German Western Front was firmly established by mid-April, buoyed by the recent defensive victories, which had restored the troops' sense of superiority over the allied Western powers despite numerical weakness. At the Supreme Army Command, as General von Falkenhayn writes, "the conviction began to solidify that it would not be possible for the Western opponents to force a decision in the foreseeable future, even if parts of the newly formed units from the Eastern Front had to be deployed in the West to crush the Russian offensive power for the foreseeable future." This realization facilitated the decision of the German Chief of General Staff (from April 13) to temporarily shift the focus of warfare to the Galician theater of war, foregoing the execution of offensive plans in the West. By the end of March/April, the intelligence leadership of the Supreme Army Command had extensively commented in a series of memoranda on the necessary deployment of the allied Western powers' forces during the summer months.

1) Volume VII, p. 53/54. — 2) Volume VII, p. 58/59. — 3) Volume VI, p. 67 ff. — 4) Crid von Falkenhayn "The Supreme Army Command 1914—1916" p. 65 ff. 5) Volume VII, p. 360.

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German Assessment of Enemy Forces in the West.

Regarding the British army, it was assumed with certainty that the 1st Kitchener Army could appear at the front "at the earliest in April," and the 2nd and 3rd "not before summer." Overall, the formation of at least four Kitchener armies, each with six divisions, was expected. By summer, including Canadian and Indian troops, about 35 to 36 British divisions were expected to be assembled in France.

In the French army, the 1915 class had been at the front since mid-March; the conscripts of the 1916 class, about 180,000 men, were to be called up at the beginning of April, and those of the 1917 class were to be drafted in April and May. At the same time, several classes of previously deferred and unfit men were to report for re-examination. "The French military administration is ruthlessly calling up even the last half-usable man for service with the weapon," summarized the intelligence department in a memorandum dated March 24. The formation of three new army corps — XXXI to XXXIII — seemed to be confirmed. A reinforcement of the Belgian army was not expected in the coming months.

Although larger German offensive operations in the West had to be refrained from, the German Supreme Army Command was by no means willing to completely leave the initiative to the enemy and merely act defensively. Lively activity in the positions, combined with advances, "should conceal the transport departures to Galicia."

Such offensive undertakings were intended in Flanders as well as with the army detachments Strantz and Gaede. In the 4th Army, the long-planned gas attack was finally to be carried out, on whose early start the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army placed particular importance, as he wanted to form an opinion on the effect of this new weapon.

h) The Gas Attack of the 4th Army at Ypres. Maps 1 and 2.

Before the World War, only the French planned to use gas for combat purposes. In their army, a 26 mm rifle grenade with suffocating bromine acetate filling was used as an auxiliary means for fortress warfare.

1) by Faltenhayn, p. 72. — 2) Volume VII, pp. 54 f. and pp. 63 f.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

In Germany, however,

there was no preparation for gas warfare.

— At the beginning of the war, foreign newspapers repeatedly reported

— albeit without any impeccable stance — on the use of novel, eerie weapons

on the French side, which were supposed to be deadly without visible

injuries. The French chemist Turpin was named as the inventor. In fact,

he had offered such combat means to the French War Ministry at the

beginning of the war. They were also tested but found to be unusable. In

the Prussian War Ministry, similar proposals received at the outbreak of

war were ignored").

Since the beginning of trench warfare in 1914, the proximity of enemy

trenches often made it difficult to fire explosive shells, as the splinter effect

endangered one's own troops. It also became apparent that against a deeply

structured and entrenched enemy, the explosive effect was no longer

decisive. This led to a search for more effective combat means. The French

command requested the existing gas shells for the front in early January

1915. The French War Ministry issued a directive on February 21

regarding the use of gas shells and the necessary gas protection devices

introduced into the troops. It stated: "The fumes of the irritant shells are

not deadly, at least as long as they are not inhaled in excess. The

possibility of a lethal effect remains, however, as the extent of inhalation

depends solely on the will of the troop leader. Since the end of February,

almost daily new tests of these weapons were used by the troops

on the Western Front").

The German command had to reckon with the likelihood of the use

of chemical weapons on the enemy side and did not want to be caught

off guard. On the other hand, it eagerly sought to use gas to drive the

enemy out of the trenches and free the line of sight. By the end of March

1914, the development of an artillery shell (12-cm shell 12 IX) had been

completed, which contained a significant explosive charge and a gas

substance (Xylylbromide) corresponding to the irritants introduced by the

French.

1) See the Investigation Committee of the German National Assembly  
and the Reichstag 1919—1928, third series, IV. Volume, p. 33 f. 42.  
2) War Archive P. A. R. 27, October 28, 1915, and other troop museums.  
Further on gas warfare, Vol. IX.

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The Development of the Gas Weapon.

The so-called T-grenade was used for the first time at the beginning of 1915 on the Russian front — due to severe cold with insufficient effect. A prerequisite for a decisive success was that mass effect was achieved. Achieving this through gas shells was initially ruled out due to a lack of guns and propellants for such a special purpose. Thus, the method of gas discharge was adopted, where currents were supposed to carry the gas against the enemy.

The existing international agreements — the Hague Land Warfare Regulations of July 29, 1899/October 18, 1907, and the Hague Declaration of July 29, 1899 — generally did not anticipate a gas war. The Hague Declaration only prohibited the use of projectiles whose sole purpose was the dissemination of asphyxiating or poisonous gases. The question of whether this declaration was still binding for the belligerents due to the "all-participation clause" since November 3, 1914, the day when Turkey became a belligerent as a non-contracting power, could be disregarded. For even if one assumed that the declaration remained binding between the contracting powers, the use of grenades, which, like the German T-grenade, combined shrapnel effect with gas effect, complied with international law because the dissemination of gases was not the sole purpose. On the other hand, the French rifle grenade had no shrapnel effect and was intended solely to disseminate poisonous gases. Thus, the use of this French rifle grenade represented the first case of a violation of international law in the field of gas warfare. The gradually developed gas discharge method was an invention of the German war industry and did not contradict previous international agreements. The introduction of the gas weapon also did not contradict the laws of humanity; for the percentage of deaths from projectile effects was and remained significantly higher than from combat gas. Gas casualties could almost entirely and permanently be trained without leaving mutilations.

Chlorine was initially chosen as the combat gas, whose production was possible without impairing domestic ammunition production to a sufficient extent. The release of liquid chlorine from numerous steel cylinders built into the foremost trenches promised to roll out a chlorine cloud, which, despite the smell of gas, had to move over the enemy's battlefields in sufficient density in the open air. The chlorine gas also had the property, due to its volatility, of leaving no significant residues in the flooded zone, and thus enabled an immediate advance of the own troops.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

In its effect on the human body, chlorine was weaker than the substances used by the French, such as bromoacetate and chloracetone. In addition to the production of this offensive agent, gas cylinders were created. On the German side, it was possible to introduce a gas mask to the troops in 1915 that protected the face and respiratory organs.

By January 1915, the experiments had progressed to the point that General von Falkenhayn decided to make about 6,000 large chlorine gas cylinders ready for use available to the 4th Army. Another 24,000 smaller ones were in production. The Supreme Army Command had ordered the 4th Army Command to use the new weapon in an operation in the Ypres salient. On 600 running meters, one large or two small cylinders were calculated on average. The technical supervision was in the hands of Secret Government Councillor Professor Dr. Haber, who was entrusted with the direction of a specially designated Chemical Department of the Prussian War Ministry. The execution was entrusted to the newly established Pioneer Battalion under the Easter Point for this purpose, to which meteorologists were assigned. However, considerable difficulties still had to be overcome. Leadership and troops found the unburned combat agent almost universally met with mistrust, if not outright rejection. The Supreme Army Command also considered the gas weapon to be of little importance and rejected its use in the intended breakthrough offensive on the Galician theater of war, as it still wanted to convince itself of the apparently quite unreliable role of the gas. The operation in the Ypres salient was to first test its military usability.

April 21.

On the morning of April 21, General von Falkenhayn had a meeting in Thielt with the Commander-in-Chief of the 4th Army, Generaloberst Albrecht Duke of Württemberg, and urged the early execution of the gas attack. The 4th Army was not to set too wide a target but to make the attack at the first reasonably favorable opportunity. As a result of the art of weather conditions, the operation could already be ordered for April 22 at 6 a.m.

The execution of the attack was entrusted to the XXIII and XXVI Reserve Corps by the 4th Army Command. The latter combat sections worthy of Ypres from Steenstraete to Poelcapelle were assigned the available gas cylinders. As army leader, apart from parts of the 43rd Reserve Division, larger units were not available to exploit a success.

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The Gas Attack at Ypres on April 22.

The XXIII Reserve Corps was tasked with the difficult task of fighting for the crossing over the Yser Canal. The first targets were set: for the XXIII Reserve Corps a line northwest of Steenstrate—southwest of Pilkem, for the XXVI Reserve Corps the heights on the road Boesinghe—Pilkem—Langemarck—Poelcappelle. Another attack target was "the capture of the Yser Canal up to and including Ypres."

Due to the calm that occurred early in the morning of April 22, the attack had to be postponed to the late afternoon hours. This meant an even more serious difficulty, as all preparations for an advance at dawn had been made. The commanding general of the XXIII Reserve Corps, General of Infantry von Kathen, immediately expressed concerns about an attack in full daylight, while the commanding general of the XXVI Reserve Corps, General of Infantry Freiherr von Hügel, emphasized that success of his corps could only be expected if the flank protection by the XXIII Reserve Corps was carried out offensively at the same time. The Chief of Staff of the 4th Army, Major General Ilse, sought to dispel these concerns by telephone; in addition, the following clear instruction was issued: "The Commander-in-Chief expects most definitely that the XXIII Reserve Corps will reach height 20 near Pilkem in connection with the XXVI Reserve Corps."

At 6 p.m., the installed gas cylinders opposite the French 87th Territorial and 45th Infantry Division were opened. The Belgian General Staff had pointed out to the French high command a few days earlier the possibility of a German gas attack; however, it seems that not enough importance was attached to this warning.

1) General of Artillery a. D. Ilse reported in a letter dated November 16, 1931, to the Reichsarchiv: "The High Command of the 4th Army had requested the provision of a division from the supreme army command in order to be able to really push deep in the event of a possible success of the gas attack and to roll up the Ypres salient. General von Falkenhayn had rejected this request, firstly because he did not have the necessary forces in the spring of 1915, and because he doubted the success of a gas attack. Also decisive for the rejection of the request for the allocation of a division as a reserve was the fact that many weeks could pass without the gas attack being carried out. For such a long time, Falkenhayn could not and did not want to free up a division." Nothing is known about this from the files of the Reichsarchiv; it therefore seems that the request and rejection were made orally.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

The wind blew from the north, with a strength of about two meters

per second. A continuous white-yellow cloud wall rolled towards

the enemy trenches. Even before it reached them, the

enemy was seen retreating in places after firing a few shots. At the same time,

lively enemy artillery fire was directed against the occupied trenches.

Immediately behind the gas cloud, at 6:15 in the evening, the German infantry

launched an assault.

In the area of the XXIII Reserve Corps, near Steenstraete,

the release of the gas was not completely successful, so that the left wing of the

45th Reserve Division, led by Lieutenant General Schöpflin, could only slowly gain ground under heavy

enemy defensive fire. It was only late in the evening that the town of Steenstraete was taken by parts of the 45th and 46th Reserve

Divisions with considerable losses. The next morning,

the forces of the already heavily weakened troops pushed in the direction of Lizerne. The bulk of the 46th Reserve Division under

Lieutenant General Hahn quickly pushed through to the canal and north of

Jet Gas, crossed it with parts of the 45th, and took the western

canal bank. Opposite Boesinghe, however, they could only reach the canal in places.

On the right wing of the XXVI Reserve Corps, the

moral effect of the gas was extraordinarily great. The assault detachments

of the 52nd Reserve Division, under the command of Lieutenant General Waldorf,

formed extremely shot through and had already reached their target,

the heights near Pilkem, by 6:30 in the evening. There they were initially

halted, as the neighboring division could not advance. The

advance of the 51st Reserve Division, which was adjacent to the east,

was significantly more difficult. In front of their front, the gas had either not penetrated

east of Langemarck or the troops had not pursued it relentlessly. Thus, the far right wing of the

French and the Canadians adjoining to the east could offer stubborn re-

sistance. It was only around 7:30 in the evening that the fiercely and bloodily contested village of Langemarck was in German hands. The

commander of the 51st Reserve Division, Major General Grone-

rich von Kleist, received the order to take possession of the

bridges over the canal south of Langemarck and north of

St. Julien on that day.

The 37th Landwehr Brigade, held in reserve by the General Command,

was made available to the successful 52nd Reserve Division

and advanced on Pilkem. By 7:45 in the evening, the division was engaged in advancing on the heights south of Pilkem.

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The First Success of the Gas Attack at Ypres.

In front of them, the artillery and reserves of the enemy had apparently also been swept back in panic flight. However, the enemy had brought reinforcements against the 51st Reserve Division to St. Julien, which made further advance difficult. Air reconnaissance detected railway traffic on the Hazebrouck—Poperinghe line, suggesting that the enemy was bringing further reinforcements to the battlefield. The 102nd Reserve Infantry Brigade, held back in the Houthulst Forest, was brought forward to Keukel late in the evening. At around 9:30 p.m., the 51st Reserve Division reported that the two Haanebeek crossings southwest of Langemarck had been taken; further south, fighting was still ongoing for another crossing. Both divisions were now ordered to hold their positions and continue the attack the next day, with the 37th Landwehr Brigade instructed to establish a fallback position on the heights near Pilkem. The commander of the heavy artillery received orders to move the artillery forward and reorganize during the night to be able to target the enemy west of the canal and the town of Ypres.

Thus, on April 22, the XXIII Reserve Corps had thrown the enemy across the canal between Steenstraate and het Sas; the XXVI Reserve Corps had advanced to a line south of Pilkem—northwest of St. Julien. The spoils included approximately 1800 uninjured French and 10 British prisoners, as well as 51 guns, including four heavy ones, and about 70 machine guns.

On the evening of April 22, there was a wide gap between the canal and St. Julien on the enemy side. Only weak French forces remained south of Bosinghe and, mixed with Canadians, north of Kersselaere. The gap was inadequately secured by British troops, and a continuous position was no longer present. As the canal crossings near Ypres were simultaneously under heavy German fire, which hindered troop movements and supplies through the town, the situation for the enemy in the Ypres salient had become precarious.

Under the impression of the success of this first day of fighting, the High Command of the 4th Army believed it could significantly expand the originally set attack objective, which was only up to the Yser Canal, and issued orders on the morning of April 23 for the continuation of the attack "towards Poperinghe." The XXIII Reserve Corps was assigned the next target of the line Aypegeale—area southwest of Bosinghe. The XXVI Reserve Corps was to continue the attack in a southerly direction, with the right flank along the canal, to encircle the enemy positioned by the XXVII Reserve Corps from behind.

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To carry out this task, the XXIII Reserve Corps was reinforced with the army reserve under Major General von Rundel (parts of the 43rd Reserve Division), whose 86th Reserve Brigade was unobtrusively placed in the position of the brigade of the 45th Reserve Division, thereby freeing it for offensive tasks. Additionally, 3 regiments from the Marine Corps were moved into the Staden—Houthulst area.

In the sector of the XXIII Reserve Corps, the left wing of the 45th Reserve Division was attacked several times by its own forces during the night of April 22 to 23. Although the German troops repelled the advances, they were no longer able to carry out the ordered attack with sustained force. Thus, on April 23, the 45th Reserve Division could only reach the eastern part of the Yperlee stream west of Steenstraete. In front of the 46th Reserve Division, the enemy had reestablished a front on the Lizerne—Boesinghe road and brought up counterpositions. Consequently, the attack of this division could only gain ground to a limited extent.

The troops of the XXVI Reserve Corps had to initially repel British counterattacks early on April 23. To promote the advance of the 51st Reserve Division, General Freiherr von Soden had already ordered the commander of the gas troops at 8:30 a.m. to install the still available gas cylinders in the sector of this division. From the army order for attack received at noon, the commanding general of the XXVI Reserve Corps understood that the army high command considered "the operation on Poperinghe as the main operation, the advance of the XXVI Reserve Corps only as a secondary operation. Since there were not enough forces available for the advance over the canal towards Poperinghe, the success of this operation was questionable from the outset. Similarly, the advance of the army corps with the right wing along the canal was impossible as long as the neighboring corps did not possess Boesinghe and further advance on Poperinghe. Only then could the strong enemy artillery activity beyond the canal be eliminated." According to reports received by the afternoon at the general command of the XXVI Reserve Corps, the enemy had retreated along the entire front from the Yser estuary to Steenstraete and Ypres and was being pursued. By 6 p.m., French forces were identified opposite the Ypres—Pilkem road. The troops of the XXVI Reserve Corps advanced over the bridges at Boesinghe. Although the enemy attack was repelled, the forward movement of the XXVI Reserve Corps also came to a halt.

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Further German Successes at Ypres on April 23 and 24.

For April 24, the 52nd Reserve Division was ordered to hold the positions gained. The 51st Reserve Division and the 102nd Reserve Infantry Brigade, which had meanwhile been subordinated to it, were to capture the ridge north of Wieltje-Frezenberg following a gas attack to be carried out early on April 24.

Meanwhile, however, the Supreme Army Command had intervened and explained to Army Command 4 that "Poperinghe as an operational target was not at all in question for the time being and it was merely a matter of cutting off the Ypres pocket"1).

In the early morning of April 24, parts of the 45th and 46th Reserve Divisions, with a leading hand, captured the fiercely contested Lizerne. The left wing of the 46th Reserve Division managed to gain the eastern canal bank opposite Boesinghe in heavy, loss-making battles lasting deep into the night.

At the XXVI Reserve Corps, gas was released north of St. Julien at 5 a.m.; the 102nd and 101st Reserve Infantry Brigades followed closely on the developed wolf. Their attack pushed further west of Kersselaere in the course of the morning after stubborn fighting, and later gradually further east. The fate of this place, defended by the enemy with dogged determination, was only sealed in the midday hours. South of it, in the bushes and hedges of St. Julien, the enemy offered new resistance. In the afternoon, Army Command subordinated the two regiments of the Marine Corps to the XXVI Reserve Corps. General Freiherr von Hügel then issued another order at 24° in the afternoon to push through west of St. Julien. But it was only around 7 p.m. that the regiments of the 51st Reserve Division reached St. Julien fighting, but soon had to vacate the place again before attacking British battalions. At the 52nd Reserve Division, located to the west, the day had generally passed quietly.

1) Probably ordered by telephone on April 23, only recorded in writing on April 29.  
2) General Ilse notes in a letter dated November 16, 1931, to the Reichsarchiv: "This report is correct ... recorded. However, the Supreme Army Command was mistaken and admitted this error, because the Army Command had not set Poperinghe as an operational target, but explicitly indicated the road to Poperinghe, which itself lay on the road leading in the general direction from Ypres to the west. This was only intended to indicate the general direction of the attack of the XXIII Reserve Corps. ...

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The day generally passed quietly. For April 25, General Freiherr von Hügel planned the continuation of the ordered attack. The preparation for this was set for 5:30 in the morning. Colonel Petzern was instructed to install gas cylinders this time in the section of the 52nd Reserve Division from the Ypres—Pilkem road eastward to the forest edge west of St. Julien.

Following the XXVI Reserve Corps, the right wing of the XXVII Reserve Corps also launched an attack on April 24. Its participation was agreed in such a way that a brigade of the 53rd (Saxon) Reserve Division, assembled behind the left wing of the 51st Reserve Division at dawn, would join the counterattack, continue to flow in, and roll up the enemy from the northwest in front of the 38th Landwehr and Reserve Infantry Brigade. During this attack, however, the brigade advancing from Poelcappelle encountered an unweakened enemy and had to proceed to a frontal attack. Only after overcoming this resistance was it possible to turn southwards. By the evening of April 24, the right wing of the brigade was in continuous combat on the heights northwest of 's Gravenstafel.

Against the troops of the XXIII Reserve Corps west of the canal, the enemy fire had intensified by April 25 to such an extent that a successful continuation of the attack was no longer conceivable.

On April 25, the XXVI Reserve Corps early in the morning captured St. Julien, which had been vacated by the enemy. The 51st Reserve Division was ordered to reach the objectives of April 24, the ridge north of Wieltje—Frezenberg. The 52nd Reserve Division was primarily to support and engage in the battle of the neighboring division. Then, unexpectedly, around 7 a.m., British battalions advanced southwest of St. Julien against the storm troops ready for attack. The enemy attack, carried out with great force in various waves, could only be finally thwarted by 8 a.m. However, the striking power of the Saxon combat line was also exhausted; only the regiments of the left wing of the 51st Reserve Division later gained some ground south of St. Julien in old trenches.

On the right wing of the XXVII Reserve Corps, the road Torhout—Moorslemt was occupied with a battalion, while about 1000 Canadians were captured.

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French-British Counterattacks at Ypres.

The enemy, however, was able to offer new resistance south of this path with the help of reinforcements brought in.

The further intentions of the Commander-in-Chief of the 4th Army emerged from the instructions given during a discussion with the commanding general of the XXIII Reserve Corps on the afternoon of April 25. General von Kathen emphasized the necessity of continuing the attack and taking Boesinghe. However, the army leader opposed this intention with the following reasoning: "The success of this attack is questionable. It would cost very large sacrifices, and it would be difficult to hold the west bank later on such a wide front. The corps should be content with what has been achieved... The aim of the army's operation is initially to close the sack east of Ypres by advancing the XXVI Reserve Corps. Only then would an advance over Boesinghe be considered."

On the afternoon of April 26, several fierce French attacks were launched against the Steenstraate—Het Sas front. They were led by territorial troops and parts of the newly deployed 153rd Infantry Division and effectively supported by British and Belgian artillery. The 46th Reserve Division faced a difficult situation; the position west of Het Sas was taken by the enemy, but the lock itself could be held. Meanwhile, around 6 p.m., Bixschoote was also attacked in a northerly direction and fell into enemy hands. The Germans occupied the old French trench east of the place. An intended counterattack did not come into flow under enemy fire.

Reports received during the morning at the XXVI Reserve Corps indicated that the enemy had assembled one to two fresh corps east of Ypres and was apparently planning a counterattack, which was prepared by strong fire. Soon after noon, strong enemy forces — parts of the English 28th and the newly drawn 4th, 50th Territorial and Labor Divisions — advanced from the canal to St. Julien for an attack. However, all advances failed due to the steadfastness of the German infantry.

As at St. Julien, counterattacks in the area of 'sGravenstafel on April 26 also prevented further advances by the XXVII Reserve Corps.

In the following days, the enemy unsuccessfully attempted to push the already extraordinarily weakened regiments of the 46th Reserve Division of the XXIII Reserve Corps back to the eastern canal line.

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to repel. Once again, waves of attacks surged against the German front. However, the division, supported by the 45th Reserve Division, was able to hold the new position at the Yperlee Brook.

The General Command of the XXVI Reserve Corps refrained from continuing the attack these days because the number of gas cylinders installed so far seemed too small. An attack without the use of gas was almost hopeless given the strong enemy and the weakness of their own artillery. Consequently, the further advance of the XXVII Reserve Corps, whose intention was to push through with a strong right wing from the north to the Ypres road, was also delayed.

Meanwhile, the English commander-in-chief, Field Marshal French, had concerns about further holding the endangered bulge at Ypres. As early as April 27, he had instructed the local commander to prepare for a retreat to a rear position still located east of Ypres. However, at the insistence of General Foch, the implementation of this intention was postponed regardless of the subsequent development of the combat situation. An English radio message received on the evening of April 29 stated: "The situation of our troops, both the English and the French naval sector at Ypres, is very serious. We must prepare for bad news." The German 4th Army's high command then received confirmation of its own view that the salient east of Ypres would become more and more untenable for the enemy and that a quick acceptance could be expected with continued pressure.

On May 2, the battle group of the 4th Army launched a new attack north of Ypres using gas.

The two divisions of the XXVI Reserve Corps reported shortly after 6 p.m. that the gas cylinders installed between Pilkem and St. Julien had been opened. However, their effect on the enemy was adversely affected by the fact that the command facilities were severely disrupted due to extraordinary telephone services and, as a result, simultaneous execution was prevented. The gusty wind also impaired the gas density and thus an effect on the enemy, who was already equipped with flawless protective equipment. The attackers encountered insurmountable resistance.

On May 3, the 51st Reserve Division, which was now to shift the focus of the attack to its left wing, was provided with another infantry regiment. However, the enemy offered there, aided by the confusing terrain covered with numerous isolated farms, stubborn resistance.

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The British Retreat East of Ypres.

On the right wing of the XXVII Reserve Corps, however, the 38th Landwehr Brigade succeeded on May 2 in gaining some ground on the Moorslede—Fortuin road. The 105th Reserve Infantry Brigade (Schmieden), located to the east, was stuck in front of a stubbornly defended earthwork in the woods north of 'sGravenstafel. In view of these minor, hard-fought successes, the commanding general, General of Artillery von Schubert, proposed to the army command to abandon the costly preliminary work on Zonnebeke and to gather the forces thus freed, at least one division, in the area of Keerselaere at the disposal of the army leader, to help advance the attack of the XXVI Reserve Corps in the decisive direction towards Ypres. However, the army command did not accept this proposal. Thus, the 105th Reserve Infantry Brigade had to attack the enemy-occupied earthwork again on May 3. The assault, carried out with determination, was accompanied by full success.

Under the pressure of these attacks, the British evacuated the position arc from Fortuin to southwest of Geluvelt during the night of May 3 to 4. The command of the XXVI Reserve Corps immediately ordered the 51st Reserve Division to attack. In continuous combat, only the line Vambeek—Fe.—Haanebeek Valley could be reached by evening against stubborn resistance.

The XXVII Reserve Corps and the neighboring XV Army Corps, located in the southern part of the Ypres arc, initially encountered no resistance. General von Schubert directed the right wing of the 53rd Reserve Division towards Frezenberg, the left wing of the 54th (Württemberg) towards Eksternest. From the XV Army Corps came the message that the 39th Infantry Division was also advancing with its right wing towards Eksternest. By afternoon, however, the divisions were already facing a strongly fortified and occupied enemy position in the area northeast of Wieltje—Frezenberg—east of Stoye, which required a new carefully prepared attack; this was ordered for the afternoon of May 6.

The command of the 4th Army, driven by the fervent desire to push the enemy back behind the Yser as quickly as possible, wanted to continue the attack with full force and from three sides simultaneously. In doing so, the XXVI Reserve Corps was to advance southwards and take possession of the heights in many places.

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Frequently taking possession, the XXVII Reserve Corps attacked the forward

position to the west, the XV Army Corps pushed the enemy back between the ponds

of Bellewaarde and Zillebeke in a northwesterly direction. The start of the artillery

preparation shooting was set for May 8 at 8 a.m.

The main burden of further attacks was carried by the XXVII Reserve Corps.

On May 8, after about three hours of artillery preparation, at 10 a.m. in favorable

weather, the regiments advancing evenly against the British 27th and 28th Infantry

Divisions found the foremost trenches vacated by the enemy. However, as they

advanced further in the open terrain, the advance soon came to a halt under heavy

enemy defensive fire. Nevertheless, by nightfall, the commanding ridge west of

Frezenberg — Effernich was in German hands.

The next day, around 2:30 p.m., the Army High Command 4 sent a message

to the General Command of the XXVII Reserve Corps: "His Royal Highness

informs that, based on an intercepted English retreat order\*), all indications are

that the English have abandoned serious resistance on the eastern Ypres section.

Currently, the 5th Army is being attacked by strong English forces"). It is

certainly to be assumed that the English are concentrating all available forces here.

General von Schubert then ordered a new opening of fire from 3:30 to 5 p.m.,

which facilitated the attacking troops' gain of terrain advantages up to the line

Verlorenhoek—Leidhoek towards Bellewaarde. However, the goal of "pushing

the enemy back to its last position at Potijze" was not achieved despite the

self-sacrificing bravery of the attacking regiments.

On May 9, besides the troops of the XXVI Reserve Corps and the right wing

of the XV Army Corps, which could only make imperceptible progress, parts of

the XXXII Reserve Corps also joined the battle on the coast. However, the attack

failed due to the strong occupation of the enemy trenches.

With May 9, the combat operations at Ypres largely came to a conclusion. The overall attack had cost the Germans more than 35,000 men in losses.

\*) As far as established, a retreat order was not issued. Such assumptions were  
made for the event of a retreat and even the evacuation of Ypres itself on new  
positions, orders were issued by the British Army Command, General French, for  
April 29 and May 1. See British official report III, p. 6, diria 40. — 2) 58 f.

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Further German Attacks at Ypres until Early May.

The British estimate their own from April 22 to May 31 at 59,275 men; the French losses are described as high according to their own reports, losing 18,000 men on April 22 alone.

The attack at Ypres did not go beyond initial successes, the goal of cutting off the Ypres salient was not achieved despite the use of the new gas warfare agent. The reasons for this were mainly that on April 22 the surprise of the enemy due to the early onset of night could not be fully exploited. When the enemy then retreated to the prepared position Wieltje—Klein-Zillebeke at the beginning of May, this happened under the pressure of the repeatedly attacking troops of the XXVI and XXVII Reserve Corps despite considerable losses. The initial successes north of Ypres were undoubtedly primarily due to the combat gas, which thus proved its military utility as a new weapon in the eyes of the leadership and troops despite initial inadequacies.

c) The Attack Battles of the Army Detachments Strantz and Gaede.

Map 1, Sketch 2 and Volume VII, Maps 7 and 8.

The heavy attacks that the French directed against both flanks of the Army Detachment Strantz from the end of March to mid-April were considered to have failed; the German defensive front stood firm. Only on the Combres Heights had the situation escalated. There, relief was to be brought by an advance of the V Army Corps — led by General of Infantry von Oven — for which the 9th and 111th Infantry Divisions were available for this task.

The army order of April 18 designated the advance of their own positions on the Meuse Heights on both sides of the Grande Tranchée de Calonne northwards to the line Côte des Jurres–Les Taillis de Saur.

1) Generaloberst a. D. von Schubert emphasizes in a letter dated August 30, 1931, to the Reichsarchiv that the gas in the battles at Ypres was fully effective only once, namely on April 22 north of Pilkem. A deficiency in the use of the gas was mainly due to the fact that due to the diversity of the soil conditions, a uniform effect could not be achieved on a broader battlefront. In addition, the use of the gas was also impaired by the fact that the set time for the release was almost never adhered to.  
2) Composition of the Army Detachment Strantz see Map 1.  
3) Volume VII, p. 67 ff.

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Grande Tranchée de Calonne northwards to the line Côte des Jurres–Les Taillis de Saur. On April 24, the 111th and 8th Infantry Divisions launched an assault. It was a complete success. About 1600 prisoners and 20 guns fell into German hands. The following day, attacks by the 10th Infantry Division against the Combres Heights did not achieve their goal due to very strong enemy resistance. In other combat sections of the V Army Corps, French resistance soon increased, so that the German attack, despite the deployment of the 13th Infantry Division, gained little ground. Although the set goals were only partially achieved, a significant part of the positions southwest of the Combres Heights was lost to the enemy again, and this front was significantly improved. The booty increased to 2500 prisoners and 30 machine guns. On the evening of May 3, General von Strantz ordered the continuation of the attack east of the Grande Tranchée de Calonne. However, the storm carried out with great tenacity on May 5 achieved only slight territorial gains in the middle of the attack front with the 33rd Reserve Division, which had been inserted in the meantime. On May 7, the advances here came to a temporary conclusion.

Simultaneously with these battles, stronger French attacks developed on the southern front of the army detachment near and west of Spremont since April 22. On May 5, parts of the III Bavarian Army Corps, with the previously subordinate 80th Infantry Brigade of the VIII Army Corps, launched a counterattack. In a determined rush, the attack target, the enemy trenches in the Allly Forest, was partially reached after bitter close combat; about 2000 prisoners fell into German hands.

In the area of the Army Detachment Gaede, the French succeeded in taking possession of the Hartmannsweilerkopf at the beginning of April and now taking the Colmar–Mülhausen railway line under observed fire. After an initial failed attempt, the recapture of this commanding height was completely successful on April 25; however, the summit was abandoned again the following day. The French had developed fierce fighting in the section of the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division southwest of Münster, which forced the withdrawal of the division's left wing on April 17. Mittag and the Schnepfendreieckkopf were lost in the process.

1) Summary of the Army Detachment Gaede (see Map 1.  
2) Volume VII, p. 72. — 3) Volume VII, p. 72.

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The Plans of the Allied Western Opponents in Spring.

In the course of April, the majority of Division Fuchs and the 42nd Cavalry Brigade of the 7th Cavalry Division, provided by the Army Division Falkenhausen, left Upper Alsace. As replacements, a total of 15 battalions arrived, including the 1st Bavarian Landwehr Brigade and two Jäger battalions previously sent to Antwerp, as well as ten batteries. These troops were partly integrated into the existing Landwehr divisions, and partly used to form a new, the 12th Landwehr Division, so that by early May, the Gaede Army Division consisted of one reserve and four Landwehr divisions.

2. The Measures of the French and English Leadership until Early May.

Maps 1 and 3, Sketches 3 and 4. Appendix 1.

The French high command had not succeeded in the heavy winter battles of 1914/15 in realizing their major offensive plan, the concentric attack in Champagne and Artois aimed at cutting off the bulging German front arc. The execution of the intended attack in Artois primarily failed due to Field Marshal French's refusal to promptly replace the French IX and XX Corps designated for the offensive with British forces. Meanwhile, preparations in Artois continued with the French 10th Army in spring 1915. A prompt execution seemed promising, as the German army command, as assumed with certainty by the French general staff, was about to shift the focus of warfare to the east due to the situation on the Russian front. The numerical superiority of the Western powers had to be exploited to simultaneously relieve the Russian front.

The commander of the "Provisional Army Group North," General Foch, had submitted detailed proposals to the supreme commander, General Joffre, regarding the conduct of operations. A decision, as stated in a memorandum presented by him on March 19, could only be achieved through attack. Under the current conditions of trench warfare, such an attack promised success only if it consisted of a broadly based action générale and a tactically advantageous action decisive.

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As part of the former, the armies positioned between the sea and Verdun would have to undertake attacks with limited objectives early on or at least tie down the enemy by threatening an offensive. The main thrust as an action decisive was to be led by the French 10th Army in the area north of Arras. The attack operation would find effective support if the British troops carried out a diversionary advance south of Armentières in the direction of Warneton—Messines) and simultaneously attacked at La Bassée. Furthermore, it was crucial that the Belgians took advantage of Dunkirk in time. General Joffre had approved these proposals and requested the participation of the English on March 24. He emphasized to the English commander-in-chief that the prior relief of the French IX and XX Corps, whose deployment in the attack of the 10th Army was necessary, must now be carried out by British troops without fail.

On March 29, a meeting took place at the French Grand Headquarters in Chantilly between the French Minister of War Millerand and General Joffre, as well as the English Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, and Field Marshal French, during which the start of the joint attack was set for May 1. Lord Kitchener promised to send new divisions to the British commander-in-chief in time, with whose help the relief of the two French corps could be completed by April 20.

Already on March 24, General Foch had presented the attack plan for the French 10th Army to the supreme commander. The main thrust was to be directed from the area of Carency—Roclincourt towards the heights southwest of Givenchy; subsidiary attacks would be carried out on the slope of the Loretto Height and in the direction of the height west of Vailuettel. Before the assault, an artillery preparation lasting several days was to take place with special involvement of the heavy artillery. A reinforcement of the 10th Army by three fresh corps and about 72 heavy guns was required. About 91,000 rounds for the heavy and 600,000 rounds for the field artillery had to be available. For the attack in the southern area, a duration of ten days could suffice, while for the main thrust on the Loretto Height, six days were calculated. The supreme commander, who agreed with these proposals, informed General Foch on April 6 that he could now count on the deployment of the IX and XX Corps for the execution of the offensive, both of which would be reinforced to three divisions each; furthermore, the deployment of an additional division was intended.

1) Messines 3½ km northwest of Warneton.

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The French-British Attack Preparations in Artois.

According to a communication from Field Marshal French to General Foch on April 9, ten infantry divisions and five cavalry divisions, these as reserves, as well as 500 field and 100 heavy guns, were to participate in the attack of the British troops. The main attack was to be carried out from the line Neuve Chapelle-Festubert with the aim of reaching the road Fournes-La Bassée after forcing a breakthrough through the German front. Further north, a simultaneous advance in the area of Fromelles would take place. The attack was to begin on the same day as that of the French army.

The reports arriving at the French Grand Headquarters in the second half of April confirmed the supreme command in their view that considerable German forces had been withdrawn from the front line. By mid-April, larger parts of the Prussian Guard Corps had been identified in reserve in Alsace. On April 20, the supreme commander informed the high commands of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Armies that the number of battalions and batteries on the German front between Arras and the Meuse had been significantly reduced. Whether these troop units had been withdrawn to be transferred to another location or to form new reserves was unclear. The French supreme command was of the opinion that the Germans would not change their purely defensive stance on the French-Belgian theater of war in the near future. By April 21, the French army command had learned of the formation of 13 new German divisions from troops of already existing units; they seemed to be intended as reserve troops for the German supreme army command.

Meanwhile, the deployment of the units designated for the attack was carried out by the 10th Army, whose command had been taken over by General d'Urbal on April 2¹). The IX and XX Corps arrived behind the front of the 10th Army after being relieved by the English between April 9 and 16. Of the newly assigned divisions, the 152nd joined the IX, the 153rd the XX Corps. By April 25, the Moroccan Division was to be unloaded at St. Pol for General Foch's disposal.

¹) The previous commander-in-chief of the 10th Army, General de Maud'huy, had become the leader of the 7th Army.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

It joined the XXXIII Corps.

Then an event occurred that threatened to disrupt the deployment of the assault formations at the last moment. Completely unexpectedly, the German 4th Army attacked in the Ypres salient using gas. Only with the utmost effort could the troops fighting here fend off the impending danger. To prevent a breakthrough, the rapid deployment of the IX Corps' general command and the 18th, 152nd, and 153rd Infantry Divisions from the 10th Army was urgently necessary. As compensation, the supreme commander ordered on April 27 the transfer of the XVII Corps and the 53rd Infantry Division from the 2nd Army to the 10th. The XVII Corps took over the section north of Arras intended for the IX Corps, and the 17th Infantry Division remaining there joined the XVII Corps. Only after the combat situation at Ypres eased could the supreme commander order the return of the IX Corps' general command and the 18th Infantry Division to the 10th Army on May 4. General d'Urbal, who had prepared the 17th Infantry Division as an army reserve, then replaced this division with the 18th and moved the IX Corps, now consisting of the 17th and 58th Infantry Divisions, into the combat front on the left army wing between La Bassée.

On April 30, General d'Urbal reported to the supreme commander that the 10th Army would be ready to attack on May 7. The English commander-in-chief had sent a message on May 3 that the attack could take place there on May 8. General Foch then set May 9 as the attack date for the 10th Army and agreed with the timing chosen by the British. However, due to unfavorable weather, the start of the attack had to be postponed to May 9.

To support the attack of the 10th Army and tie down the enemy's forces in line with General Foch's proposals, the French high command ordered attack investigations for the armies of the center and right wing. King Albert of Belgium was asked for his consent to release a significant combat echelon to the French 10th Army in the decisive days before Ypres. The attack from Poix de Picardie took the French command — rightly — four infantry divisions; with the transport of three and a half German divisions soon after the start of the offensive was expected.

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The Deployment of Enemy Forces in Artois.

In contrast, the French 10th Army had, on the eve of the attack, 18 infantry divisions and a cavalry corps. Of these, two and a half infantry divisions and the cavalry corps were initially in reserve, and a territorial division was assigned to earthworks. The British 1st Army consisted of nine infantry divisions, one of which was in reserve, and two were not involved in the advance. Additionally, the commander-in-chief had another infantry division and two cavalry corps ready for intervention. The French 10th Army had 780 light¹) and 310 heavy²) guns, while the British 1st Army had 516 light and 121 heavy guns³). Shortly before the start of the offensive, on May 9th in the early morning, General Joffre ordered the immediate deployment of two more divisions⁵). At the same time, he instructed the command of the 2nd Army to have the 1st Cavalry Corps available northwest of Amiens. Finally, the 7th Army was ordered to transport the 6th Cavalry Division under its command as an army reserve to the Hesdin—Anvin area.

In the attack orders, the goal was designated as a breakthrough through the German front. All attack units were to push forward with utmost force from the start and prevent the enemy from reestablishing themselves by quickly initiated pursuit.

3. The Beginning of the Spring Battle in Artois.

When shifting the focus of warfare from the western to the eastern theater and transferring strong forces in mid-April for an offensive to Galicia, General von Falkenhayn had anticipated that the Western powers would exploit this weakening of the German Western Army for major relief offensives⁶). After the transfer of nine infantry divisions to the east, the total strength of the German Western Front had been reduced to around 97 infantry divisions by early May, which were opposed by an estimated 110 to 112 enemy divisions, superior in strength to the Germans, resulting in an advantage for the opponents of about 13 to 15 divisions.

¹) 90 mm caliber and less.  
²) 95 mm caliber and more.  
³) According to the information from the French official work, Volume III and X. See overview, Appendix 1.  
⁴) According to the information from the British official work, Volume IV.  
⁵) Reinforced 6th I.D. from the 5th Army and 55th I.D. from the 6th Army.  
⁶) See 1.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

Of the 97 divisions of the Western Army, the Supreme Army Command had direct control over 7½ divisions as army reserves. Of these, the 58th and 115th Infantry Divisions were in the area of the 6th Army, each a reinforced infantry brigade behind the 2nd and 7th Armies, the 117th Infantry Division in the area of the 3rd Army. The VIII Army Corps1) was stationed behind the Army Detachment Strantz, while the X Reserve Corps was in reserve in the section of the Army Detachment Falkenhausen. At this time, the right group extended the Western Front over approximately 4000 field guns of medium type — cannons and light howitzers — alongside 350 old field cannons and 10 heavy guns over 615 indirect fire, 210 direct fire guns of new type, 190 guns of the heaviest indirect fire. Additionally, a heavy artillery reserve of the Supreme Army Command was being formed, which at the time consisted of 128 heavy field howitzers, 68 mortars, and 80 heavy direct fire guns.

To compensate for the numerical inferiority and to increase security against enemy attacks and thus enhance the readiness of the Western Front, it was necessary to improve the expansion of the defense system as much as possible. Before his departure to the eastern theater of war on May 4, General von Falkenhayn once again pointed out to the army units particularly threatened between the sea and Yser, as well as in Champagne, to create increased security through the construction of extensive positions. In addition to deep positions of the forward line, the construction of rear positions was prescribed, which should be at least two kilometers back. However, the means of the armies to carry out these instructions were inadequate. Except for the few reserves, their combat troops were tied to the front line and its expansion, and labor detachments were available to them only to a limited extent. When pressing for the creation of sufficient positions, the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army did not discuss a rigid second line system in the broader sense of the entire theater of war, as General v. Bülow and von Hohenborn had recommended in his memorandum from December 1914). It was still to be firmly maintained that in the event of enemy attacks, the forward position should be held or, if lost, retaken.

1) Without the 80th S. Br., which was assigned to the III Bavarian R. A. — 2) p. 50.

2) Volume VII, C. 18.

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The Balance of Forces in the West.

In this view, General von Falkenhayn was in agreement with the leaders of the Western armies.

There were still no definite signs of the time and place of a major offensive by the allied Western powers; the behavior of the enemy in front of the German 6th Army's front most likely indicated offensive intentions.

a) The Battles of the 6th Army from May 9 to 14.

Maps 1 and 3, Sketches 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Appendix 1.

The 6th Army¹) under Colonel General Rupprecht Crown Prince of Bavaria held a front section with 13 infantry divisions extending about 90 kilometers west of the Menin—Cambrai line; behind them stood as reserves of the Supreme Army Command the 58th and 115th Infantry Divisions. The artillery combat strength of the 6th Army amounted to around 520 field guns, 140 light field howitzers, and 150 heavy guns, in addition to 60 field guns, 12 light and 12 heavy field howitzers with the 58th and 115th Infantry Divisions. The German combat positions in Artois were generally where the offensive front of the 6th Army had stalled in the autumn of 1914. They therefore still largely met the requirements for a favorable defensive line. West of Lille, the German front initially ran to the La Bassée Canal in the very opaque Flemish lowlands. The groundwater level there reached just below the surface. Even further south of La Bassée, the ground, crisscrossed by numerous water veins, posed the greatest difficulties for expansion and endurance in the positions. To the south, flat hilly land joined, which was densely populated, especially in the coal area of Lens. In the widely open land south of Lens, the German position arched westward and thus covered the ridge of Vimy. This ridge dominated the plain of Douai and therefore had extraordinary significance. At the low-lying village of Souchez, the towering Loretto Heights jutted wedge-like into the front of the 6th Army from the west. The German lines encircled the suburbs of the city of Arras on both sides of the Scarpe in a semicircle, then ran from Tilloy on a flat ridge. In the southern half of the 6th Army's front section, a clay layer of varying thickness overlaid chalk and limestone soil. The clay made any movement difficult in wet weather, and the exposed white chalk shone far and revealed the fortifications to ground and air observation.

¹) Composition of the army see Map 1.

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The effect of the numerically significantly inferior German artillery could only be slight. The army had only o n e position; a "second" had only been able to be created as a support line, with continuous trenches still missing.

Apart from the failed attack by the English at Neuve Chapelle in March1), the opponents had not undertaken any major advances since the December battle in Artois. The rainy months had passed with continuous trench warfare, which had brought neither side any significant territorial gains. Only since the end of April did preparations of all kinds and reports of newly assembled units make it likely that a major enemy attack aimed at breakthrough north of Arras was imminent.

Since the beginning of May, enemy fire activity increased day by day. The mostly cloudy weather hampered reconnaissance, but in good weather, superior enemy air forces, especially fighter planes, dominated the skies. The situation was assessed differently by the troops. This was also due to the lack of sufficient experience in recognizing enemy attack preparations. Several divisions did not yet consider the impending enemy attack likely, mainly because the foremost French trenches were sometimes more than 200 meters away, and an advance over open ground under heavy defensive fire seemed to offer little prospect of success.

Suddenly, on the afternoon of May 8, an advance by troops of the French 43rd Infantry Division occurred west of Liévin, which failed after heavy fighting. On the night of May 8 to 9, enemy fire, particularly noticeable from heavy, new types of mortars, swept intermittently over the German trenches. As May 9 dawned, it subsided. Only isolated artillery strikes interrupted the morning calm. Clear and fine weather favored visibility.

At 6 a.m., a sudden, combined heavy fire began, particularly on the sectors of the VII and XIV Army Corps as well as the I Bavarian Reserve Corps, which increased in intensity. Gradually, it escalated to drumfire by around 10:30 a.m. Repeatedly inserted short fire pauses were intended to lure the now enemy-expected German defenders out of their cover. Resuming, the drumfire then inflicted losses on them.

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The British-French Assault on May 9.

A black-yellow cloud of smoke and dust enveloped the German combat position. The enemy's preparation for the assault was so skillfully executed that it was nowhere clearly recognized. Thus, the enemy attack, advancing after numerous mine explosions, hit the German troops and leadership somewhat unexpectedly.

North of the La Bassée Canal, the British troops were relatively weak in combat. They directed only intensified fire against the II Bavarian and XIX (Saxon) Army Corps. However, by 6 a.m., they had already advanced against the section of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division and the center of the VII Army Corps. North of Fromelles, parts of the English IV Corps managed to break into the position of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division. Bitter close combat ensued. By evening, the intruding English were either destroyed or captured. At Richebourg l'Avoué, the English I and Indian Corps made repeated advances. They reached the trenches of the VII Army Corps in places but collapsed there.

The main carriers of the attack were primarily the French. Their main thrust hit the left wing of the XIV Army Corps and the I Bavarian Reserve Corps between Lens and Arras around 11 a.m. Additionally, a secondary attack by the French IX Corps at Loos was directed further north against the center of the XIV Army Corps (29th Infantry Division). The enemy penetrated both sides of the Béthune—Lens road but was thrown back by a vigorously conducted counterattack. However, in the section of the 28th Infantry Division, a Baden regiment located on the Loretto Heights was pushed back into a rear trench after heavy losses. As reinforcement, a Saxon Jäger Battalion was supplied to it by evening. This was to retake the previous position on the orders of the division commander, Major General von Trotta gen. Treyden, together with the Baden regiment. South of the Loretto Heights, the villages of Ablain-St. Nazaire and Carency, battered by the waves of battle, could be held.

While the XIV Army Corps was thus able to maintain its position with the exception of the trenches at the Loretto Chapel, in the command area of General of Infantry Ritter von Fasbender, commanding general of the I Bavarian Reserve Corps, the 5th Bavarian Reserve Division of General of Infantry Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein was forced out of its front south of Carency to the general line Cabaret rouge-Neuville-St. Vaast and southwards despite determined resistance.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

This division, positioned in the middle of the main attack field, had been particularly weakened by transfers to surrounding units; in place of the withdrawn troops, a Prussian Dragoon Regiment and relieved cavalry had stepped in. Parts of the Moroccan Division advanced up to the German artillery positions at and south of Givenchy-en-Gohelle. Hastily brought up reserves entered the fray just in time to counter further enemy advances. The southern closing 1st Bavarian Reserve Division under Lieutenant General Count Bothmer held its section — in places after fierce close combat — against the attacker. The right wing successfully sealed off the enemy who had penetrated at La Targette.

The headquarters of the 6th Army Command, La Madeleine near Lille, and the stations at Lille were bombed by enemy aircraft early in the morning, without causing significant disruptions. The Commander-in-Chief, Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, received later incoming reports confirming that a large-scale attack was underway. He then urgently requested from the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army the release of the 115th and 58th Infantry Divisions, which were held as reserves by the Supreme Army Command behind the battlefront. This request was granted. The 115th Infantry Division was made available to the 1st Bavarian Reserve Corps and was quickly moved behind the 5th Bavarian Reserve Division, while the 58th (Saxon-Wurttemberg) Infantry Division was designated as army reserve and sent to the area east of Lens. Additionally, the army received a number of heavy batteries from the army artillery reserve. On the afternoon of May 9, the elimination of the enemy breakthrough was to be considered. The left wing of the XIV Army Corps, particularly Carency, remained completely in hand. The lieutenant colonel intended to regain as much ground as possible with the remnants of the 5th Bavarian Reserve Division in a counterattack on the same day. On the 10th, the 115th Infantry Division was finally to be deployed for the counterattack.

However, this plan was not carried out. The 5th Bavarian Reserve Division was no longer capable of attacking after heavy losses. On the day of the entry of the 115th Infantry Division under Major General Alfred von Reißt onto the battlefield, it was immediately deployed with parts on the right wing of the 1st Bavarian Reserve Corps for support.

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The British-French Assault on May 9.

A German counterattack from

the area of Souchez stalled at 8 p.m. after initial advances

under heavy enemy fire.

In the evening, the Army High Command was clear

that the enemy had deployed at least three and a half fresh

corps for the assault in addition to the garrison troops; in total, about twelve

reinforced French divisions attacked four German ones.

Nevertheless, the leadership of the 6th Army believed "that today's attack by the

enemy had stalled, and that it would be possible to push him back again."

To meet all demands, the Supreme Army Command ordered the transfer of the 117th Infantry

Division from the area of Rethel to Douai; it was to remain at their disposal for the time being.

Crown Prince Rupprecht was by no means unclear

that the conditions for the urgently needed counterattack at Souchez

would be extraordinarily difficult. He therefore assigned the 1st Bavarian

Reserve Corps two more infantry regiments and a field

artillery regiment of the 58th Infantry Division and ordered, "under the personal

leadership of the commanding general, to conduct the attack with united

force and to keep the power in hand." Since the new German

artillery deployment behind the heavily shelled, steeply descending heights of Vimy

to the east took a lot of time, the attack could only begin in the evening¹).

Meanwhile, the enemy at the XIV Army Corps

had again occupied the trenches on both sides of the road Béthune—Lens during the night of May 9 to 10.

¹) Regarding the extraordinarily difficult terrain and combat conditions, it is stated  
in a letter from General von Fasbender dated August 18, 1931, to the Reichs-  
archive: "The steep, wall-like slope of the Vimy Heights, dropping about 70 m  
between Givenchy and Farbus, divides the entire territory into two sharply separated  
combat areas. We, coming from the east, had to push the French back at least  
far enough over the crest to have enough space on the western slope for  
full depth development including artillery. Now the breakthrough had  
taken three-quarters of this hard-won depth area from us again and thus relegated a large  
part of our rear echelons to the eastern battlefield, where they now stood before  
a high wall. On the other side (French), the combat conditions had not changed at all.  
While we had to withdraw all batteries to the eastern battlefield, thus forced into a ceasefire,  
even the foremost French lines remained under the protection of their entire  
artillery, indeed the trajectory of the batteries was even sufficient to pursue  
the enemy deep into the territory without new deployment."

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The commanding general, Lieutenant General von Hänisch, subsequently assigned the last reserve depot battalion to the commander of the 29th Infantry Division, Lieutenant General Freytag. Already in the course of the morning, the German trenches could be cleared of the enemy again. Southwest of Souchez, Turcos had penetrated the communication trench between Carency and Souchez, now developed as a combat position, in the first night hours. This almost cut off the town of Carency. The army command, in agreement with Lieutenant General von Hänisch, saw only one possibility to eliminate the threat to the left wing of the XIV Army Corps: the full frontal counterattack from the line Souchez—Vermelles—St. Vaast. Voluntary evacuation of the threatened positions was not considered due to tactical concerns and with regard to the morale of the troops. Crown Prince Rupprecht ordered the attack of the I Bavarian Reserve Corps with the attached 58th and 115th Infantry Divisions. The left wing of the 28th Infantry Division was necessarily supported by a regiment of the 58th Infantry Division that had advanced into the area of Souchez. Around 4 in the afternoon, the enemy advanced with strong forces on the Loretto Heights after heavy artillery preparation. Again, the attack waves surged against the German front, but without achieving significant success. Carency was also attacked several times in the afternoon by the French 70th Infantry Division from the southwest and east. In stubborn defensive fighting, the German troops managed to hold their ground there.

At 7 in the evening, the 58th Infantry Division, under the leadership of Lieutenant General von Gersdorff, with two infantry regiments, and parts of the 115th Infantry Division to the south, launched a counterattack on the right wing of the I Bavarian Reserve Corps and initially made good progress. However, this advance also stalled against an overwhelming opponent. The 58th Infantry Division expressed concerns about whether the line Ablain—Carency could still be held, especially as the enemy gathered strong forces near Carency in the evening.

The 1st Bavarian Reserve Division maintained the occupied defensive lines from May 10. The focal point of the battle now lay on its right wing in the area of Neuville-St. Vaast. In the following days, Bavarians and parts of the IV Army Corps and the 115th Infantry Division, which had been brought up, attempted to restore the situation in continuous, sometimes fierce counterattacks.

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The German Counterattack on May 10.

In summary, on the morning of May 11, the General Command of the I Bavarian Reserve Corps reported that the situation had generally deteriorated, and it was uncertain how long Ablain and Carency could still be held. Subsequently, the Army High Command reported to the Supreme Army Command that "under these circumstances, troops must be available to hold the rear lines before the evacuation of the front line." General von Falkenhayn then made the 117th Infantry Division available and announced that the General Command of the VIII Army Corps with the 16th Infantry Division as a reserve of the Supreme Army Command would be transferred to Douai. The 117th Infantry Division under General of Infantry Kunze was moved to the area southeast of Lens.

Meanwhile, the army leadership left no stone unturned to prevent the imminent surrender of Ablain and Carency; because the evacuation of these places would likely also entail the final loss of the commanding Loretto Heights. Therefore, Crown Prince Rupprecht, accompanied by his Chief of General Staff, Major General Krafft von Dellmensingen, went to a meeting with the commanding generals of the XIV Army Corps and the I Bavarian Reserve Corps in Hénin-Liétard at 8 a.m. Their result was that "the holding of this part of our position was ordered." This decision was facilitated for the commander-in-chief by the fact that no new enemy attacks had occurred on the morning of May 11. They only resumed in the afternoon hours, but no longer uniformly, but spatially and temporally separated and could be repelled with considerable losses for the enemy.

At Loos, an order was found on a captured French officer, indicating that the enemy wanted to break through here at all costs¹). Since the XIV Army Corps no longer had any reserves, an evening regiment of the 117th Infantry Division had to be transferred to it, but it could only be used "in the utmost emergency." The 28th Infantry Division urgently requested the relief of their troops, worn out and shaken in the heaviest attrition battle, at the Loretto Heights, where parts of the French XXI Corps had firmly entrenched themselves.

¹) In fact, General d’Urbal, the commander-in-chief of the French 10th Army, had ordered a decisive, general attack for May 11. French official work, III, p. 48.

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XXI. Corps firmly entrenched.

The support of this threatened combat section was initially carried out by units of the 58th Infantry Division.

On May 11 at noon, the following message from the Supreme Army Command arrived at the commander of the 6th Army: "His Majesty expects that the army will maintain its current position under all circumstances. Whether this task, as well as the flanking maneuver, can be solved must be left to the local troops. In any case, the forces transferred there in infantry and heavy artillery are so strong that they should be sufficient for a satisfactory solution with determined use, preventing further enemy advance. In the recent battles, newly distinguished brave troops are recognized by His Majesty with thanks." The response from Crown Prince Rupprecht was: "His Majesty the Emperor has seen that the 6th Army must muster everything to repel enemy attacks. The decision to act in this sense was upheld by everyone. The enemy will indeed suffer a terrain loss. A larger counterattack is currently not promising success, remains reserved."

On May 12, the heavy fighting continued. Already during the night from May 11 to 12, General von Fasbender reported that a breakthrough by the enemy threatened at Neuville-St. Vaast, endangering the artillery. Consequently, he was subordinated to the staff of the 117th Infantry Division with two infantry regiments. The 6th Army Command requested and received from the Supreme Army Command the right to dispose of the corresponding parts of the VIII Army Corps, whose unloading had been moved forward to the area of Sains-ét-didat. Additionally, the withdrawal of a reinforced brigade of the 15th Infantry Division as a relief force to Douai was ordered. At the same time, General von Falkenhayn recommended transferring the command of the attack group for the recapture of the lost terrain to "someone thoroughly familiar with local conditions, who has faith in success and interest in the matter, e.g., the commanding general of the VII Army Corps."

Crown Prince Rupprecht ordered the XIV Army Corps again in the morning to hold the hotly contested place Carency under all circumstances. The commanding general, Lieutenant General von Hänisch, passed this order to the 28th Infantry Division, which but at the same time, to secure against setbacks, was to excavate a trench behind its endangered left flank with rapidly brought-in pioneer companies.

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The Fall of Carency on May 12.

Meanwhile, the situation seemed to have improved at least at the Loretto Heights. The 28th Infantry Division reported that a Saxon regiment of the 58th Infantry Division had apparently retaken the old position on the northern slope. However, the combat situation at the heavily contested location of Carency remained tense. The 1st Bavarian Reserve Corps was not in a position to make a relief attack. It saw its main task in holding its own threatened front Souchez—Neuville-St. Vaast—St. Laurent. In fact, new strong but unsuccessful attacks by the French took place there around 4 p.m.

On the evening of May 12, the Army High Command, taking into account the suggestion of the Supreme Army Command for a unified consolidation of forces at the focal point of the battle, ordered the formation of an "Army Group Fasbender" from all troops deployed in the area of the XIV Army Corps and the 1st Bavarian Reserve Corps. The army order designated the preliminary task of Group Fasbender as: "Absolutely hold the current positions and as soon as possible gain a closed and permanently sustainable line of resistance between Carency and Neuville-St. Vaast." However, a German attack undertaken on the evening of May 12 at the cemetery south of Souchez failed. The expected support from Carency did not materialize, as the almost completely encircled location fell into the hands of the attacking French XXXIII Corps after heroic defense at nightfall.

After the loss of Carency, the commanding general of the XIV Army Corps, Lieutenant General von Hänisch, found the situation threatening. He therefore went to the commander of the 28th Infantry Division, Major General von Trotta, in Lenz during the night to jointly make the necessary arrangements quickly and appropriately. He ordered the digging in along the general line Loretto Heights—Church of Ablain—Souchez. The artillery was instructed to immediately take Carency, captured by the enemy, under mortar fire. On the soon-to-follow, later as incorrect report that colored French troops had also broken in north of Ablain, a battalion of the 117th Infantry Division was made available to the 28th Infantry Division.

1) p. 64.  
\* World War. Vol. VIII.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

The General Command received an infantry regiment of the 16th Infantry Division from Lens upon its request.

On the morning of May 13, a clarification of the extremely tense combat situation occurred. On the right flank of the 28th Infantry Division, the Baden troops held their old trenches. On the northern slope of the Loretto Heights, Saxons firmly held their original position. On both sides of the Loretto Chapel, the French were in possession of the former German position between the Mud Hill and the connecting road to Ablain. Adjacent to the eastern embankment, grenadiers flared up in close defense at a hollow way. Further south, Ablain had to be largely evacuated under strong enemy pressure, but the attacker did not advance beyond the location. Their forces were also exhausted in heavy, loss-ridden engagements; apart from a local advance at Neuville-St. Vaast, the French did not seriously attack anywhere on that day. However, there could hardly be any doubt that it was only a temporary pause in fighting; for at the 6th High Command, prisoner reports indicated the involvement of the French III Corps1) at the attack front.

The forces of the 6th Army were extremely strained. The commander-in-chief assessed the combat value of the attacked divisions as follows: the widely dispersed 29th Infantry Division was heavily battered, the 28th Infantry Division nearly at the end of its strength, the 5th Bavarian Reserve Division completely spent. The 1st Bavarian Reserve Division, the 58th, and the 115th Infantry Division had also suffered heavily. The total losses of these units, which had borne the brunt of the fighting, amounted to about 20,000 men from May 9 to 13. Therefore, Crown Prince Rupprecht requested on May 13 the immediate exchange of a mixed infantry brigade each to Pont à Vendin and to Artois, as well as the subordination of the reinforced brigade of the 15th Infantry Division. He intended to replace the exhausted troops with fresh ones to be prepared for the upcoming battles, which had to be expected.

1) In fact, the French III Corps, without the 5th and 9th, had arrived at Neuville le Comte since May 10; parts had already been incorporated from May 13 by the XXI Corps.

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The Strain on the Western Army in Favor of the 6th Army.

To meet all requirements, he recommended to the Supreme Army Command to bring in another army corps. General von Falkenhayn agreed to these suggestions. Already in the afternoon, the 85th Reserve Infantry Brigade of the 4th Army was unloaded for the XIV Army Corps at Pont à Vendin, the composite 52nd Reserve Infantry Brigade of the 2nd Army for the I Bavarian Reserve Corps at Bitry en Artois, and the arrival of a division of the X Reserve Corps, the 2nd Guard Reserve Division, from Alsace in Douai was announced. Additionally, the Supreme Army Command made the commanding general of the III Army Corps, General of Infantry von Lochow, "available to lead an army group formed from the numerous troops now amassed in the area of the XIV Army and I Bavarian Reserve Corps."

In the section of the 28th Infantry Division, the first replacements by regiments of the 117th Infantry Division could begin on the night of May 13 to 14. The 5th Bavarian Reserve Division, weakened by almost two-thirds of its strength, was gradually withdrawn over the following days. In its place, the VIII Army Corps (16th, 58th, 115th, and ½ 15th Infantry Division) under the leadership of General of Infantry Riemann was to take over in the Souchez-Neuville-St. Vaast section.

The Supreme Army Command had met the demands of Army Command 6 for the allocation of new combat-ready units and had provided ample reinforcements to the 6th Army, using almost the entire army reserve and exposing the other combat fronts. Further forces were initially unavailable. Therefore, on May 14, General von Falkenhayn urged the commander-in-chief, in response to a request for the transfer of at least one more division: "The 6th Army was in a considerably more favorable position when the attacks began north of Arras, in terms of the number of rifles per running meter of the front, than, for example, the 3rd Army in Champagne or the Army Detachment Strantz between the Meuse and Moselle under similar circumstances. Also, the superiority of the enemy facing it, neither in number nor in quality, as far as I know," was greater than it was there. Nevertheless, the 6th Army reinforcements both in completely fresh units of all arms and in heavy artillery and ammunition were supplied much faster and more abundantly than in those cases.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

Currently, for a combat front of just under 20 kilometers in width, no fewer than 9½ divisions are available. Several of these may have been almost paralyzed for reasons not to be discussed here, but based on all previous experiences, we must expect that such a troop force is sufficient to hold the somewhat broader front against any attack for the foreseeable future. (as we both may perhaps experience earlier resolution. But that cannot be changed. For it is out of the question that all army reserves will be completely exhausted to bring relief to every oriented front section. At any moment, a much more urgent need may arise at some other location. In fact, the division of the X Reserve Corps in Douai remained the last effective reserve available to the Supreme Army Command. Under these considerations, I ask that the submitted proposal be reviewed once more and then a report be made. The opinion of General von Lochow should be heard in this regard."

Crown Prince Rupprecht responded to this presentation of the Supreme Army Command: "The request for the transfer of the division of the X Reserve Corps was made not only with regard to the situation with Group Fabeck (General von Lochow has not yet taken command), but also with regard to the entire army, with impending attacks also expected from the English (thus in about 50 kilometers of front width). Also, immediate continuation of the attacks was anticipated. Since no major attacks occurred yesterday evening, the enemy has first gathered new forces. That the 15th Army Commander would have or attempted elsewhere is impossible. If the Army High Command does not want the last reserve on the Western Front to be completely exhausted, it must be noted that north of the La Bassée Canal, only weak reserves are available, which would hardly suffice to restore the situation in the event of a serious breakthrough attempt, should it have any significant success at any point. Therefore, I requested, in the approach,

1) Between May 9 and 14, the 6th Army was made available by the Supreme Army Command:

4½ infantry divisions (115th, 58th, 117th, 16th, and 19th Inf. Div.) with 42 heavy batteries,

2 infantry brigades (together 15th and 4th Jäger Brigades) with 4 heavy batteries,

15 heavy batteries from the army artillery (including 4 batteries of 21 cm mortars),

31,000 rounds for field artillery, 6,000 rounds for heavy artillery in ammunition depots.

34,000 rounds for heavy artillery.

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General von Lochow Takes Command in the Combat Area.

It is known to me that General von Lochow considers the relief of all troops who have gone through the heavy fighting necessary. It can only be imperfectly accomplished with the troops currently available ..."

The communications from General von Falkenhayn on the 12th and 14th of May gave Crown Prince Rupprecht cause to complain to the Supreme War Lord on the 16th of May, who decided in an order on the 23rd of May in all essential points in favor of the High Command of the 6th Army and prompted General von Falkenhayn to address a letter to the army leader expressing regret for the "misunderstandings."

The responsible leader of the overall operations had, according to proven leadership principles, not only the right but also the duty to intervene in the command relationships at the threatened front if he believed there was imminent danger. It was then his task to act in a balancing and invigorating manner to facilitate the actions of the responsible personalities commanding at the front, whose mental, emotional, and physical forces were already heavily taxed. In the present case, the intervention of General von Falkenhayn did not sufficiently take such considerations into account; in form, it was certainly suitable to read out to the leaders at the combat front, who had without exception shown themselves fully equal to the extremely difficult situation so far.

b) The Assumption of Command by General von Lochow in the Main Combat Section and the Battles until Mid-June.

Maps 1 and 3, Sketches 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Appendix 1.

General von Lochow, who was to take command of the previous "Army Group Fasbender" on the orders of the Supreme Army Command, arrived at the 6th Army on the evening of the 13th of May and established his headquarters in Douai with his newly formed staff on the 14th. Chief of the General Staff was Major General von Bergmann. General von Lochow, based on his reconnaissance conducted on the 14th and 15th of May, gained the following picture of the situation on the main combat front: North of the Loretto Heights and in the section of the 1st Bavarian Reserve Division, the old trenches were indeed heavily damaged, but mostly still in German hands.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

In between, north of the Carency Brook, the

XIV Army Corps still held parts of its position in the "Mud Hollow," in the

"Barricade Path," and in the section of Ablain. The breach at the

Loretto Chapel had not yet been cleared of enemies. South

of the Carency Brook, in barely defensible trenches, partly

completely mixed, stood the 58th and 115th Infantry Divisions as well as remnants

of the 5th Bavarian Reserve Division and a regiment of the 52nd Reserve

Infantry Brigade. The 16th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General

Fuchs was about to take over the section Souchez — Height 123 (two kilometers

south of Souchez). The 5th Infantry Division was

only partially on the march, as were the rearward standing

Mortar Battalion 1.

In this difficult situation, General von Lochow took command

on the night of May 15 to 16. His first task was

to carry out the reorganization of the mixed-up units already initiated by General von Fasbender

and to prepare combat-ready reserves. The last parts of the 5th Bavarian Reserve

Division were withdrawn, the 58th Infantry Division was to be

accommodated in the Douai area after being relieved by the 16th Infantry Division.

The combat front was divided into three corps sections:

the XIV Army Corps with the attached 117th Infantry Division

and 85th Reserve Infantry Brigade on the right wing up to the

Carency Brook,

the VIII Army Corps with the attached 115th and initially still the

58th Infantry Division from the Carency Brook to the Arras—

Lens road,

the I Bavarian Reserve Corps (1st Bavarian Reserve Division

and 52nd Reserve Infantry Brigade) from this road to

the Scarpe.

The command relationships of the artillery had become very disordered due to the numerous

troop movements. They were reorganized so that each section had a sufficient number

of field and heavy batteries under unified command

to carry out the barrage and combat the enemy artillery,

and that flanking support of the sections was ensured.

General von Lochow, like the Army High Command of the

6th Army, was of the opinion that the Loretto height, which dominated the battlefield after the battle, should be completely taken back into German hands.

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The German Counterattack at Neuville-St. Vaast on May 22.

Accordingly, the XIV Army Corps was instructed to close the gap that had arisen

there through advances. However, the attempts made in the nights from

May 15 to May 17 were not successful. The reserve regiments of the 117th

Infantry Division, exhausted by daily battles, had to be temporarily relieved

on the night of May 18 to 19.

Aerial reconnaissance had detected strong enemy artillery on the march,

so that, especially since troop disembarkations were reported west of Arras

at Doullens, a new attack between the Loretto height and Arras had to be

expected. It was to be considered how the enemy's plans could be thwarted.

The capture of the high-lying village of Ecurie had to undoubtedly disrupt

the French artillery march, but the existing forces were not sufficient for an

attack against this naturally and defensively strong position. The least

promising success was an advance against the Loretto height, because it

could be flanked by hard-to-find enemy artillery. Also, just south of Souchez,

the conditions for a German attack were initially unfavorable because there

were no covered assembly possibilities. On the other hand, the houses and

cellars of Neuville-St. Vaast favored the deployment of assault troops.

Therefore, General von Lochow decided to order a relief attack there.

Major General Vollbrecht, the commander of the 15th Infantry Division

deployed at Neuville, to which the 115th Infantry Division was also

subordinated for this purpose, was tasked with carrying out the attack.

However, the assault, which took place after preparatory fire on May 22 at

8 p.m., succeeded only in places. Due to difficult population conditions, the

assigned mortar battalion was unable to shoot the southern part of

Neuville-St. Vaast, held by the enemy, into submission. Therefore, the

infantry could not advance in the fortress-like built-up area despite the

addition of light flamethrowers.

Meanwhile, the enemy's attack axis had again extended northwards. The

English, who had ceased their attacks in their sector north of the La Bassée

Canal since May 10, advanced at two points south of Neuve Chapelle on the

night of May 15 to 16. These operations were prompted by vigorous

representations of the French high command, who during a visit on May 12 to the English headquarters expressed his disappointment over the results of the previous English offensive and had emphatically demanded that the British 1st Army either immediately resume the attacks or take over further front sections from the French south of the La Bassée Canal.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

General Staff French decided to continue the offensive. Subsequently, the British 1st Army, between Richebourg l'Avoué and Festubert, initially advanced with three infantry divisions, which were later replaced by five more, to attack the front of the VII Army Corps anew. In stubborn, fluctuating battles, they managed to push back the German lines by more than three kilometers by May 18. Then, alongside the Saxon regiments, hastily brought forward battalions of the 58th Infantry Brigade from Saxony and the mixed 38th Landwehr Brigade of the 4th Army opposed them. The imminent threat to this battlefield was averted. On May 20 and 21, British troops again advanced against the German front on the Estaires—La Bassée road. However, all attacks failed due to the unwavering stance of the defenders.

The almost uninterrupted battles since May 9 had taken a heavy toll on the forces of the 6th Army. New units constantly had to be supplied by the Supreme Army Command to the heavily embattled defensive front in Artois. The 2nd Guard Reserve Division of the X Reserve Corps, whose arrival had already been announced, was made available to the VII Army Corps to be advanced into the battles between the 13th and 14th Infantry Divisions on May 18. Since the other division of the X Reserve Corps, the 19th Reserve Division, had already been assigned to the Army Detachment Gaede on May 15 at their request, General von Falkenhausen instructed the army command to make the 111th Infantry Division and the 80th Infantry Brigade of the VIII Army Corps, which had already fought through the St. Mihiel salient for several days, available. The 111th Infantry Division was to be held ready as a reserve, albeit not yet fully combat-ready, and the 80th Infantry Brigade was to be supplied to the VIII Army Corps, already deployed to reinforce the 6th Army. The higher-level considerations required deploying the 103rd Infantry Division, which was in the process of formation in Poland, to the west on several transport journeys to deceive the enemy about the transport of strong forces, but General von Falkenhayn soon abandoned this plan.

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Further Reinforcement of the 6th Army.

Instead, on May 17, the 7th Army received orders to withdraw the 123rd (Saxon) Infantry Division from the front; it was immediately dispatched to Lille. Thus, there were once again two divisions ready for deployment behind the battlefront in Artois; however, the entire remaining western front was largely stripped of reserves. Besides the 111th and 123rd Infantry Divisions, the Supreme Army Command now only had the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division, recently withdrawn from the Vosges, and the newly forming units at its disposal.

Significant were also the a r t i l l e r y r e i n f o r c e m e n t s that the 6th Army had received since the beginning of the defensive battle. The heavy artillery had increased by May 22 from 100 high-angle and 74 flat-trajectory guns to 209 high-angle and 98 flat-trajectory guns. The number of heavy rapid-fire guns had doubled. The Supreme Army Command was able to meet the demands for ammunition. From May 9 to 19, the 6th Army's ammunition consumption was about 508,000 rounds for field and 105,000 rounds for heavy artillery.

On May 19, Colonel Freiherr von der Wenge Graf von Lambsdorff, previously in the chief position of the X Army Corps, was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the 6th Army. The previous chief, Lieutenant General Krafft von Dellmensingen, was assigned the leadership of the newly formed Alpine Corps against Italy, to which the 6th Army also had to transfer four Jäger battalions.

After the insignificant battles of the previous days, large-scale enemy attacks resumed north of Arras on May 23. Against the position of Army Group Lochow, heavy fire from the Loretto Heights southwards almost to the Scarpe began again at noon on Whit Monday, May 23. It was the preparation for the attack ordered by the French Commander-in-Chief of Army Group North, General Foch, to gain a new starting position. The main targets were Souchez and the surrounding heights, as well as Neuville-St. Vaast and the protruding position wedge, referred to as the "Labyrinth" due to its trench confusion, between Neuville-St. Vaast and Écurie.

1) G. 50. — 2) G. 18. — 3) See Appendix 1. However, the losses of guns, mostly due to overstrain of the barrels, were high. — 4) G. 29.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

At Curie and further south, the deployment

of enemy assault troops was detected in time and artillery fire was

taken; as a result, the attacks on this part of the front collapsed.

Further north, however, the Bohemian lines managed to advance

and gain a foothold in the German trenches at numerous points. Only

at night could the enemy be repelled again after fierce close combat with

significant enemy losses.

General von Lochow, in view of the severity of the fighting, requested

the deployment of fresh troops from the army command. The

army group was then provided with the previously separate IV Army

Corps against the enemy divisions pushed eastward, which were to be deployed

in the previously quiet area of Arras. To avoid adversely affecting the

course of the rifle battle by exchanging units, on May 24, the Supreme

Army Command made the 111th Infantry Division assembled at Douai

available to the 6th Army. The replacement was ordered by the Lochow

army group as follows: the 111th Infantry Division

took over the section of the 8th. The 115th Infantry Division, which had

suffered heavily at Neuville-St. Vaast, was replaced by the 58th Infantry

Division. The 5th Bavarian Reserve Division initially remained in

reserve at Liache and relieved the 7th Infantry Division at the beginning of June.

The IV Army Corps under the command of General of Infantry Sixt

von Armin was to be deployed west of Douai in the second line

to be used offensively at the appropriate time.

The French attacks, advancing with renewed force on May 25 and 26,

were mainly directed at the heights of Lievin—Souchez;

they began on the 25th already at noon, and the following day around 4 p.m.

Without regard for their own losses, the infantry of the

French IX and XXI Corps repeatedly stormed forward in dense masses.

At Lievin and on the Loretto Heights, the foremost trenches were temporarily

lost, but were eventually recaptured in a counterattack by consolidated

units of the 85th Reserve Infantry Brigade, the 28th and 117th Infantry

Divisions. Notably, French fire was particularly fierce. On May 27, the French 70th Reserve

Division took the cemetery of Ablain and the trenches adjoining to the south.

As strong enemy fire made the recapture of the trenches

very difficult and the enemy still holding out in the southern part of Ablain

threatened the left flank, General von Lochow decided to use the 58th Infantry Division,

which on May 28, with the support of General von Lochow, cleared the contested area on May 28 and occupied a blocking position thrown up on both sides of the sugar factory west of Souchez.

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New Enemy Attacks Since May 23.

The battles continued in the last days of May.

Early on May 29, a French attack on the Aix-Noulette-Souchez road was repelled by the 85th Reserve Infantry Brigade.

In the morning of that day, strong enemy infantry columns advancing on the roads from Béthune to Lens and Souchez were observed. Among the population, it was — apparently through agents — spread that Lens was to be heavily shelled on May 30, as a French breakthrough in this direction was intended. General von Lochow, who had considered reinforcing his right wing as a precaution, recognized in time that it must be a deliberate deception. On May 30, only a few shells actually fell on Lens; similarly, there was relative calm on the front of the XIV Army Corps.

In contrast, heavy fire had been on the entire section of the 1st Bavarian Reserve Division since early morning. Gradually, it extended further north to the VIII Army Corps. Around 5 p.m., a strong attack occurred between Souchez and Roclin- court, which could be repelled in close combat. According to prisoners, the French 19th, 20th, and 53rd Divisions had been held ready for the attack. Behind them, the French III Corps was ready to complete the breakthrough. New heavy attacks — there could be no doubt about that — were to be expected.

On the evening of May 31, parts of the French XXXIII Corps advanced between Angres and the Carency stream and stormed the German trenches on both sides of the sugar factory west of Souchez. In fierce battles that lasted throughout the night and into June 1, Baden troops of the XIV Army Corps managed to retake the position north of the factory with storming hand. The factory itself and the trenches south of it remained in French possession.

On the evening of June 1, the enemy renewed their attacks on Neuville-St. Vaast and the "Fingtau Trench" south of it. In Neuville, a Saxon regiment of the 58th Infantry Division pushed back the initially successful French¹) in a counterattack. However, the "Fingtau Trench" was finally occupied by them. To ensure unified, tight management in the "Labyrinth," General von Lochow placed the defense of this confusing trench network in the hands of the Commanding General of the I Bavarian Reserve Corps, General Ritter von Fasbender, and subordinated the consolidated 58th Infantry Division for this purpose.

¹) The newly deployed French 5th I.D. of the III Corps.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

To ensure management in the "Labyrinth," General von Lochow

entrusted the defense of this confusing trench network to the

Commanding General of the I Bavarian Reserve Corps,

General Ritter von Fasbender, and for this purpose subordinated the

combined 58th Infantry Division1). The 15th Infantry Division was

assigned the previous section of the 58th Infantry Division at Neuville-

St. Vaast. Thus, the VIII Army Corps was reunited under the command

of its Commanding General, General of Infantry Riemann.

New British advances southwest of Lille also required

continued close attention. However, they retained only the character of diversionary operations

within the overall action as before. West of La Bassée, several regiments

of the VII and XIX Army Corps deployed there in succession had to

repel heavy attacks in the first half of June. However, the Westphalian

and Saxon troops managed to hold their position despite severe damage.

The dominant village of Givenchy lez la Bassée became the focal point

of the fierce and costly fighting.

The main focus of the battle in June was also with the Army

Group Lochow. In the "Labyrinth," hardly a day passed without the

fiercest battles2). Every inch of ground was contested with the French.

The almost continuous combat activity severely tested the strength of the

brave defenders, who often could not even be supplied with food and

water. Time and again, the enemy launched attacks to force a breakthrough

through the thinned German lines. On June 4 and 5,

Neuville-St. Vaast was again heavily stormed. The fighting lasted

there the entire night until June 6, then subsided, only to flare up again on June 8

with a new intense artillery preparation. On June 6, General Foch

had called for a continuation of the French attacks with increased emphasis.

As the day waned, the companies of a Rhineland regiment, heavily thinned

by overwhelming mortar fire, evacuated the eastern part of Neuville-St. Vaast

and occupied a trench east of the village. The other regiments of the 15th Infantry Division

were also severely affected by the heavy fighting on June 8.

1) One I.R. each from the 8th, 58th, and 115th I.D.  
2) The costly French 53rd I.D. used no less than 24,000 hand grenades from May 30 in three days. French official work III, C. 70.

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Continuation of the Battles in Artois Early June.

In close connection with the advances against Neuville-

St. Vaast and the "Labyrinth," French attacks were taking place at the

Loretto Heights. There too, the forces of the troops subordinated to the

General Command of the XIV Army Corps were so exhausted by the

ongoing battles that a relief was necessary. The Army High Command

was forced to decide to replace them with troops from the IV Army Corps;

as a result, the planned offensive use of this corps had to be abandoned.

The 117th Infantry Division and the 85th Reserve Infantry Brigade were

placed under the command of the commanding general of the IV Army

Corps, General Sixt von Armin, when taking over the section. The 115th

Infantry Division was placed as a reserve of the Supreme Army Command

instead of the 5th Bavarian Reserve Division deployed south of the Scarpe.

On the evening of June 7, General von Falkenhayn, coming from the

eastern theater of war, arrived in Douai to gain a personal understanding

of the situation through discussions with the leaders of the combat troops.

He could not ignore the realization that fresh units had to be brought to

the 6th Army, whose forces were consumed by nearly continuous defensive

battles, to prepare them for new fights; for, considering the extraordinary

numerical superiority of the allied enemy forces by about 600 battalions,

the introduction of the major offensive in Artois was certainly to be

expected. General von Lochow assured the Chief of the General Staff of

the Field Army that the position of the Army Group would be held even

against new attacks by superior enemy forces, provided that the possibility

was created to withdraw exhausted troops before their complete exhaustion

for deployment in quieter fronts to replace them with rested units. The

German Chief of the General Staff therefore ordered on June 9 the

exchange of the 115th for the 5th Infantry Division of the 1st Army and

the 117th for the 123rd (Saxon) Infantry Division stationed at Lille.

Furthermore, as already mentioned, the XIV Army Corps was initially

prepared with the IV Army Corps positioned behind the army front, later to be exchanged with the VI Army Corps of the 3rd Army, which was initially to remain at the disposal of the Supreme Army Command.

1) Already on June 10, the Chief of the General Staff returned to the eastern   
theater of war.   
2) In agreement with the A. D. R. I., an infantry regiment of the 115th I. D.   
initially remained in the section of the combined 58th I. D., as it was urgently needed   
for their battle "Labyrinth."

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

The 5th Prussian Infantry Division was already deployed on June 11 to relieve the completely exhausted 15th Infantry Division, which was the army reserve, at Neuville-St. Vaast.

4. The Battles of the Other Armies of the Western Front from Mid-May to End of July.

Maps 1, 2, 4, Sketch 2 and Volume VII Maps 7 and 8, Sketch f.

The leadership of the allied Western powers sought to support the major offensive in Artois through attacks or threats of attack on other battle fronts, so that almost all German armies on the Western Front experienced significant combat activity during those weeks.

With the 4th Army of Generaloberst Albrecht Duke of Württemberg, the German leadership continued to dictate the law of action. Even though the attack battles2) that began on the evening of April 22 had essentially concluded by May 9, the High Command still hoped to "throw the enemy into his bridgehead position, with suitable wind with bottles, otherwise without them" and to reach the line Yser Canal—Ypres—St. Eloi. A new advance of the XXVI and XXVII Reserve Corps in the direction of Ypres between the road Pilkem—Ypres and Hooge was planned.

On the morning of May 13, these two corps accordingly launched an attack, but due to unfavorable weather conditions, they were unable to use combat gas. It soon became apparent that, given the enemy's unyielding stance3), success was not achievable. The Supreme Army Command was generally opposed to further offensive operations by the 4th Army and urged the next day: "The attacks in the direction of Ypres cost so much blood and ammunition that their continuation is only advisable if either the desired success can be expected with certainty, or very significant parts of the enemy are thereby prevented from entering the battles north of Arras."

1) The exchange between the XIV and VI.A.K. was arranged in such a way that battalions and field batteries were exchanged step by step; the heavy artillery and the air force units initially remained in the previous sections.  
2) C. 39 ff.  
3) This involved the British 4th and 27th J.D. as well as detached cavalry units.

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The Waning of the Battles at Ypres.

Despite this

indication, the Army High Command planned to continue the attack in the hope of achieving

smaller successes. However, before this could happen, the enemy attacked north of Ypres itself. After repeated

stubborn advances by French troops on May 15 and 16 against

the Steenstraat—Het Sas line, the German positions on the

western canal bank had to be abandoned. The enemy cautiously followed up to

the canal.

A final larger German attack east of Ypres occurred

on May 24. Initially, the 54th (Württemberg) Reserve Division under the command of General

von Schaefer achieved significant territorial gains in a powerful advance, but soon the

British resistance stiffened to such an extent that the German attack north of

Hooge stalled. On the same day, the Supreme Army

Command wired all armies in the West that the Western Army, considering the necessity

to seek a decision on other battlefields first, should adopt a defensive posture. The 4th Army

now only prepared for defense and offered, in

consideration of the overall operational situation, the

Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army on June 1 the XXII Reserve

Corps for use on other fronts. General von Falken-

hayn immediately accepted the offer "in sincere recognition" and decided,

despite the ongoing heavy fighting on the Western Front,

to transfer this corps along with the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division as reinforcements

to the eastern theater of war. This decision was

all the bolder as, after the transfer of these two and a half divisions, the

Supreme Army Command at the Western Front, at a time when the

heaviest storms were raging over the Artois battlefield, had only the 123rd Infantry Division and

the 123rd Infantry Brigade immediately available.

After the heavy fighting in April and May, a certain lull in activity

now set in within the Ypres Salient4); only in the area around

Hooge did combat activity flare up repeatedly in July. On the northern flank of the 4th Army, the extensive floodplain ruled out larger combat operations.

1) Parts of the French 153rd and 45th Infantry Divisions, which belonged to the Army Detachment Belgium.  
2) Without the 85th Reserve Infantry Brigade, which had been fighting with the XIV Army Corps in Artois since May 13.  
3) See note 2 on page 68.  
4) In the Ypres Salient, after the relief of the French, almost only  
British troops remained.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

While relative calm prevailed north of the Artois battlefront in June and July, to the south, in the area of the XIV Reserve Corps of the German 2nd Army e¹), parts of the French XI and XIV Corps launched an attack on the left wing of the 52nd Infantry Division led by Lieutenant General von Borries on June 7 at 5 a.m. In the dense morning twilight, the superior enemy succeeded in breaking into the German position. However, in seven days of fighting, with the help of quickly brought reinforcements²), the enemy's success was limited to the advanced position west of Serre. German losses in the stubborn fighting amounted to around 4000, while the enemy's losses from June 7 to 15 were 10350 men. Further weaker attacks by the French against the height southwest of Fricourt, disrupted by explosions, were repelled by the 28th Reserve Division on July 10 and 19³).

The enemy also attacked the neighboring 1st Army e²). On June 6, parts of the reinforced French XXXV Corps advanced at Moulin-sous-Touvent, 10 km west of Nouvron, and captured some trench sections. Varied battles raged back and forth on June 6 and 7. The 18th Infantry Division, hit by the attack, lost about 43 officers and 1720 men⁴). Although the fighting continued until mid-month, there was no doubt that this was merely a diversionary maneuver by the enemy and a larger attack was not expected. Nevertheless, the High Command of the 1st Army, given the tense combat situation, had to deploy its last reserve, an infantry regiment of the 123rd Infantry Division assigned to it a few days earlier — a measure that General von Falkenhayn prompted, ordering the transfer of the 183rd Infantry Brigade, which was in the process of being formed, to the 1st Army in mid-June.

¹) Composition of the army see map 1.  
²) Parts of the 26th and 28th R.D. and the 185th I.Br.  
³) Since the end of July, replacements of the French by the newly formed British 3rd Army were observed in front of the northern half of the 2nd Army, whose right wing gradually extended into the area of Libyons. In fact, the British 3rd Army replaced the northern parts of the French 2nd Army on both sides of the Somme between July 18 and August 8.  
⁴) The enemy had losses of 7905 men from June 7 to 16.

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French Attacks at Hébuterne and Moulin-sous-Touvent.

In the 3rd Army²), the months following the winter battle in Champagne were relatively quiet trench warfare. However, smaller skirmishes above and below ground did not cease. The 3rd Army²) considered large-scale enemy attacks as unlikely as the neighboring 5th Army¹).

Here, the initiative was clearly on the German side. After extensive preparation by artillery and mortars, on the morning of June 20, the left wing of the XVIII Reserve Corps (9th Landwehr Division) and the right of the XVI Army Corps (27th Württemberg Infantry Division) advanced at the western edge of the Argonne using flamethrowers and seized part of the enemy's position. From June 30, the XVI Army Corps, under the command of General von Mudra, stormed the heavily fortified positions of the French 42nd Infantry Division north of La Harazée in three days of fighting. On July 13, west of Boursielles, north of the 33rd Infantry Division, parts of the French V Corps occupied and heavily fortified heights were taken after careful preparation in a powerful attack, while a simultaneous subsidiary operation by the 34th Infantry Division north of Le Four de Paris brought further parts of the enemy position into German possession. The total booty since June 20 amounted to 6663 prisoners and 117 machine guns and mortars. All French counterattacks were repelled.

As in the fiercely contested forest terrain of the Argonne, there was also lively combat activity in the St. Mihiel salient. On the northern flank of the Army Detachment Strantz³), parts of the French II and VI Corps attacked the V Army Corps on the afternoon of June 20 after heavy artillery preparation on both sides of the Grande Tranchée de Calonne. Repeatedly repelled by the regiments of the 9th Infantry Division, the enemy succeeded in breaking through to the second position east of the main road during the fifth assault. In day-long back-and-forth battles, which also extended to the section of the 10th Infantry Division, the reinforced V Army Corps essentially held its trenches.

1) Summary see Map 1.  
2) In mid-June, the XIV Army Corps replaced the VI in the area of the 3rd Army. See p. 77 ff.

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To relieve the troops fighting at the Tranchée, the High Command decided to capture a commanding height southwest of Les Eparges. A regiment of the 10th Infantry Division took most of this hill on June 26 and gained excellent observation against the French positions on the Combres Heights. Strong counterattacks by the enemy, undertaken on July 3 and 6, were bloodily repelled in stubborn defense. More serious battles took place mainly south of St. Mihiel in the middle of the army front. After French advances were repelled there on May 8 and June 19, the III Bavarian Army Corps, under the leadership of General Freiherr von Gebsattel, launched a counterattack on July 7 and broke into the enemy position west of Apremont on a broad front. French attempts to retake the position, which continued until July 12, failed with heavy losses. On the southern front, in the Priesterwald, the 121st Infantry Division had to fend off numerous enemy advances; in the second half of May and on June 8, the French succeeded in establishing themselves in the western part of the Priesterwald. On July 4, the reinforced 121st Infantry Division, under the command of Lieutenant General Wagner, launched a counterattack. The enemy was thrown back over a width of 1500 meters; the spoils amounted to over 1000 men captured, several mortars, and three guns. Strong French counterattacks were repelled.

In the section of the Army Detachment Falkenhausen¹), business activity was more lively in the second half of June. On June 21 and 22, the enemy succeeded in taking part of the position at Gondrexon in the section of the 1st Bavarian Landwehr and 19th Ersatz Division. On June 22, the 30th Reserve Division of the XV Reserve Corps stormed the height of Ban de Sapt, but lost it again when the enemy launched a superior counterattack on July 8 and 24. In Alsace, with the Army Detachment Gaede²), the French continued their advance begun in mid-April in the Fecht Valley. After heavy fire, they attacked the heights west of Metzeral with the 47th and 66th Infantry Divisions on May 5 and 7. The enemy, initially penetrating under the cover of smoke clouds, was repelled by the infantry of the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division in bloody close combat.

¹) Composition of the Army Detachment. See Map 1.

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French Attacks in Alsace.

On June 14, the positions of the

19th Reserve Division, which had taken over the front section of the 8th Bavarian Reserve

Division2), were heavily attacked. The heights west of

Metzeral and Sondernach as well as the group of the Hilserkopf were lost despite

determined resistance, and in the following days Metzeral also fell into enemy hands. Without interference from the enemy, only

the evacuation of the western Fecht bank took place in the night of June 22.

Before the new defensive line, which ran from Müllbach over the heights

east of Metzeral to the Hilserfürst, the French

advance came to an end. The losses of the 19th Reserve Division and the troops assigned to it3) amounted to 111 officers and 3565 men. The enemy

suffered heavy bloody losses — according to French reports over

6000 men — and lost 580 prisoners.

On July 20, the enemy advanced further north in the direction of

Münster to attack in Upper Alsace again. After hours of

artillery fire, the French 129th and 47th Infantry Divisions advanced against

the section of the 6th Bavarian Landwehr Division at Barrenkopf as well as

the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division4) at Reichackerkopf. In

heavy fighting, lasting until July 22, the heights were held;

however, on July 27, despite brave resistance, the commanding position of the Lingekopf, 5 kilometers north of Münster, fell into enemy hands. The situation threatened to take a serious turn, but

the Bavarians, reinforced by parts of the 19th Reserve Division and the 187th Infantry

Brigade, managed to largely repel the enemy who had penetrated at and north of

the Barrenkopf.

On July 31, the high command of the French 7th Army abandoned the

attack in the Vosges. Only the French 129th Infantry Division

was to continue trying to take possession of the German position at Barrenkopf.

1) In view of the worsening situation, the 187th Infantry Brigade was moved as a reserve of the D.H.L. from Laon to the area of Schlettstadt on June 2. Two  
regiments of this brigade were temporarily made available to the 6th Army from June 17 to 20. See p. 90.  
2) See p. 79. The Bavarian 9th Reserve Division had temporarily stood as a reserve of the D.H.L.  
and had been moved east on June 2. On June 12,  
the general command of the X Reserve Corps was recalled from the area of Strasbourg to Guebwiller. See p. 199 and 242.  
3) The 187th Infantry Brigade stationed in Strasbourg.  
4) The 8th Bavarian Reserve Division had returned to Upper Alsace from the eastern theater of war in early July.

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The Western Front from Mid-April to Early August 1915.

5. New Major Attacks in Artois from June 16 to 18 and the Conclusion of the Spring Battle.

After the failure of the breakthrough in Artois in May 1915, there could be no doubt for the French high command that, considering the precarious situation of the Russians, the offensive would have to be resumed as soon as possible. Moreover, the advantage of numerical superiority was clearly on the side of the allied Western powers; the French General Staff estimated on June 12 the total strength of the German Western Army at 1128 battalions, opposed by 1764 French-British-Belgian battalions; the estimate was approximately accurate.

The participation of the "British troops" in the continuation of the offensive could be counted on. Field Marshal French had initially even given assurances in response to inquiries to attack simultaneously with three divisions north of the La Bassée Canal, perhaps also with another one south of it, while at Ypres an advance with one division should not be avoided. The great shortage of heavy artillery ammunition soon forced the originally intended attack on a broader basis to be limited to the advance of one corps (IV.). On the French front, in close connection with the main attack, which the 10th Army was again to lead, subsidiary operations were to take place with the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Armies, which have already been described on the German side in the battles at Hébuterne, Moulin-sous-Touvent, and in Alsace. At the 5th and 4th Armies as well as at the XXXVI Corps, feints and increased artillery effect were planned for deception purposes. The Belgians had also promised increased activity in their sector.

Based on the experiences of the previous battles, General Joffre focused particularly on simplifying the command relationships on the entire front and strengthening the 10th Army. On June 13, the already existing two provisional army groups "North" and "East" were definitively transformed and a new army group "Center" was formed under General de Currières de Castelnau.

1) Simultaneous estimate on the German side. Appendix 2.  
2) See Appendix 3 for British troops.  
3) P. 80 and 82/3.  
4) The XXXVI Corps was formed on May 22 from the Army Detachment Belgium.

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New Attack Preparations of the Enemies in Artois.

The commanders of the army groups were to

independently carry out the operations ordered by the supreme commander,

distribute sections and troops within their command

area to the subordinate armies and establish their own army group

reserves. General Foch also received the task of ensuring the

uniformity of the operations of the allies in close cooperation with the English and Belgians. The French

10th Army was significantly reinforced by mid-June, so that it

now had a total of 23 infantry

and 3 cavalry divisions available for the new offensive — compared to 18 infantry and 3 cavalry

divisions at the start of the first Artois attack. The army group reserve of General Foch included the

I. Colonial Corps and five cavalry

divisions arriving at Doullens from June 15. In addition, the

152nd Infantry Division was available to the supreme command behind the XXXVI Corps southwest of Hond-

schote, the 51st Infantry Division behind the northern wing of the 2nd Army

south of Doullens, and from June 16 the XII Corps at Amiens

was ready.

For the execution of the new attack operation,

the experiences of previous battles were to be taken into account. The supreme commander placed special

emphasis this time on bringing reserves close, on the simultaneous start of the storm

columns, on thoroughly defeating the German machine gun

nests and destroying obstacles before the advance of their own infantry.

The date for the start of the new offensive was initially set for May 31.

But the absolutely necessary reorganization in some troops and the required preparations in the field repeatedly

made a postponement necessary. General Joffre emphasized

that the attack should not begin until all

preparations were completed. Thus, the assault could only be set for June 16.

The French leadership explicitly designated the breakthrough through the German front

as the goal of the attack. The attack of the 10th Army was to be conducted with the greatest emphasis from the start, according to a secret

instruction from the supreme commander to General Foch on June 14,

10 a.m., and all

measures for achieving and most effective exploitation of the successes were to be taken.

1) p. 55.

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However, if the hoped-for results

were not achieved after a few days, the attack was to be immediately

abandoned, to be resumed later on a broader basis.

On the German side, on the battlefield of the 6th Army,

the commanding general of the IV Army Corps, General of Infantry

Sixt von Armin, took command on June 14 in the previous section of the

XIV Army Corps. North of the Béthune—

Lens road, there was relatively calm. Therefore, the 117th Infantry

Division had been deployed after several weeks of use at the Loretto Heights.

Further south in the sections of the 7th and 8th Infantry

Divisions, however, the trenches, especially near Liévin

and Angres, were often in a barely defensible state.

In the short, bright nights, their expansion was extremely difficult

and led to significant losses due to the frequent enemy harassment fire given under searchlight illumination. South of the Liévin—

Noulette—Souchez road, the so-called "Mudhen Position"

was not excessively exposed to enemy fire. However, the persistent attacks

of the enemy had turned this valley into a field of corpses;

burial of the fallen had not been possible due to the continuous combat activity.

The constant stench of decay there made it almost impossible for the defenders to eat

and bothered them more than the enemy fire. A subsequent

gap of about 300 meters to the barrier position had not been closed despite continuous

infantry attempts. The barrier

position ran in a passable state in the direction of the much-contested sugar factory and from there was makeshift defensible along the

Ablaincourt—Souchez road. At the shattered castle park, there were

two shattered, sandbag-made defensive

lines. The village of Souchez itself was heavily fortified. In the section of the

VIII Army Corps, the position of the 16th Infantry Division

between Souchez and Height 123 had been expanded, as no significant attacks had taken place here since

Pentecost week; however,

the trenches of the newly deployed 5th Infantry Division were in very

poor condition. At the I Bavarian Reserve Corps,

the composite 58th Infantry Division had so far defended the "Labyrinth"

with unshakable bravery despite significant losses.

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New Major Attacks in Artois Mid-June.

Despite multiple damages to the position, all French attacks had been repelled there so far.

The artillery continued to fight in division groups, whose unified cooperation was constantly checked and improved. Several batteries were united south of the Scarpe with the purpose of keeping the French artillery north of Arras under flanking fire.

Meanwhile, General von Lochow had a second position created in the approximate line Loos—Lens—Bimy—Thelus, a third was prepared in the line east of Lens—Oppy—Freschy. The latter was so far back that in the event of an enemy attack against it, the heights at Bimy could no longer be utilized artillery-wise.

Since June 12, signs of new major attacks became noticeable. On June 14 at noon, enemy reconnaissance units advanced along the entire front Angres—Neuville-St. Vaast, but nowhere reached their target in the German defensive fire. The French artillery fire constantly increased in strength. In Souchez, Givenchy, Thelus, and Farbus, the heaviest shells also destroyed concrete shelters and cellars; as a result, a large part of the command posts and reserve accommodations were lost.

At the break of the clear, sunny June 16, the obstacles and trenches of the German combat position were heavily damaged. The infantry had already suffered heavy losses in the enemy fire, which had increased to the utmost. Then, around noon, deeply echeloned infantry attacks began on the front from Lievin to the Scarpe. The barrage of the German artillery could only have an insufficient effect, as it had also already suffered heavily. The rich equipment of the French with observation planes and the lack of German fighter planes was particularly noticeable. Wave after wave crashed against the German front. The ever-renewing and strongly reinforced enemy finally succeeded in breaking through the German defensive line in many places. As the day waned, the following picture of the battle situation emerged:

At Lievin and Angres, the French from the XXI Corps had gained a foothold in the position of the 7th Infantry Division. The connection to the "Mud Nose" was missing. At the Loretto Heights, the troops of the 8th Infantry Division had to vacate the blocking position. The enemy had also stormed a newly dug trench about 300 meters behind it.

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The village edge of Souchez had been overrun by the attacker, the XXXIII Corps, and fierce fighting took place in the streets. At the 16th Infantry Division, aside from smaller breaches south of Souchez, the Moroccan Division broke through to a depth of more than a kilometer to a rear position, entrenched itself there, and reached the German batteries standing close behind with detachments; further defensive lines were missing here. The Brandenburg 5th Infantry Division under its leader, Major General von Gabain, was also heavily attacked by the French IX Corps; some of its companies had lost almost three-quarters of their strength; however, the attacks failed. At the composite 58th Infantry Division in the "Labyrinth" and further south at the 1st Bavarian Reserve Division, parts of the French XX, X, and XVII Corps had broken in at numerous points; everywhere, man-to-man fighting took place. The situation was extremely tense.

But in brave, unwavering defense, the German front held its ground. Under the cover of night, parts of the Lochow Army Group could already be prepared for a successful counterattack. West of Liévin Angres, the trenches were captured by the 7th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Riedel; however, their recapture south of Angres did not succeed. In the "Mud Hollow," the regiment deployed there repelled all attacks. From the second Loretto trench line and Souchez, troops of the 8th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Freiherr von Hanstein, drove the enemy out again. The 16th Infantry Division only managed to drive the enemy out of the smaller breaches; the wedge south of Souchez remained in the hands of the Moroccans. The construction of a trench line also succeeded only partially due to the strong French fire. To at least prevent further advances of the enemy here, the German batteries laid down continuous fire on the breach point, so that new French assault waves failed and the cemetery of Souchez fell back into enemy hands. The "Labyrinth" and the position at the 1st Bavarian Reserve Division were held by the enemy until dawn. About 700 French were brought in as prisoners from these close combats.

The breakthrough attempt undertaken with the greatest exertion of force and highest increase of attack fury, disregarding the heaviest losses, was again thwarted by the tenacious will to defend of the heroically fighting German position troops.

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New Major Attacks in Artois Mid-June.

The combat situation of the 6th Army remained serious. The Supreme Army Command had, upon the report of the Army High Command of the heavy enemy attacks, made the VI Army Corps, which was on the move from the 3rd Army, available. The arriving parts, the 22nd Infantry Brigade, which was on alert at the Vitry and Biache train stations, were transferred to the Lochow Army Group, offered by them to the VIII Army Corps on the evening of June 16 in case the 16th Infantry Division was no longer able to hold its position. The commanding general, General Riemann, however, did not yet consider the assistance necessary.

On the same day, when the heavy French attacks occurred — on June 16 —, an order was issued to all armies of the Western Front by General von Falkenhayn, pointing out the seriousness of the overall situation: "According to reliable reports, the French and English will continue their offensive at Arras and also attack our front at other points. This will partly involve serious breakthrough attempts, partly only demonstrations to divert forces. His Majesty expects that the armies will thwart the breakthrough attempts everywhere with proven bravery and skill and hold their positions. In general, the armies cannot expect reinforcements from the Supreme Army Command from the only weak army reserve area. They must be reserved for the utmost emergency. I ask that this circumstance be taken into account before making requests to the Supreme Army Command. Furthermore, the general situation urgently requires that the armies return any parts of the army reserve that may have been assigned to them to the Supreme Army Command as soon as possible. A withdrawal of forces from the east to reinforce the western army would paralyze the offensive in the east, which is progressing most successfully. Every man on the Western Front must know that his tenacious endurance contributes to achieving successes that cannot be achieved without him."

In the course of June 17, the French renewed their attacks against the Lochow Army Group. This time they succeeded in penetrating the shattered trenches of the 5th Infantry Division. However, they were thrown back here, as well as at the 7th Infantry Division and the I Bavarian Reserve Corps, after initial successes. On the road Aix-Noulette—Souchez in the section of the 8th Infantry Division, the French XXI Corps had advanced further.

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Thus, it became pointless to hold the "mud hollow" any longer; it was therefore evacuated during the night.

In the fire of the almost continuously raging battle, the defensive forces were strained. The General Command of the I Bavarian Reserve Corps reported that the composite 58th Infantry Division under its command was no longer combat-ready. However, General von Lochow considered the withdrawal of the 16th Infantry Division to be even more urgent. He therefore initially ordered its replacement by the 11th Infantry Division of the VI Army Corps.

In view of this situation, the Supreme Army Command was also striving to supply new forces to the 6th Army. At the request of General von Lochow, it placed the recently relieved 15th Infantry Division "for all cases" under its command on June 17 and authorized Army Command 6 to use the 123rd Infantry Division¹) "in urgent emergencies." However, accelerating the transport of the 12th Infantry Division of the VI Army Corps, whose last infantry units could only arrive at the 6th Army on the evening of June 19, proved impossible. In agreement with Army Command 5 and Falkenhausen, the 187th Infantry Brigade²) and the 5th Reserve Brigade of Army Detachment Strantz were therefore immediately transferred to the 6th Army on June 17. The 4th Army, by order of the Supreme Army Command, made the 53rd Reserve Division available and thus freed the 3rd Bavarian Infantry Division on the northern wing of the 3rd Army, which replaced the 58th; this division transferred to the 4th Army. In addition to these troop units, 13 heavy batteries were also transferred, which were to arrive at the 6th Army on June 19 and the following days³).

Since the commanding general of the VI Army Corps, General of Infantry von Pritzelwitz, was senior in rank to General von Lochow, the Supreme Army Command ordered on the evening of June 17 that after the deployment of the VI Army Corps, the Lochow Army Group was to be dissolved. However, Army Command 6 considered it urgently desirable that the requested reinforcements be deployed and the troops to be relieved or exchanged be withdrawn beforehand. For this reason, the General Command of the VI Army Corps was not yet used but kept at the disposal of the Army Command.

¹) See p. 73.  
²) Without an infantry regiment remaining with Army Detachment Gaede.  
³) See p. 83, note 1 and 3.  
³) See Appendix 1.

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The Waning of the Spring Battle in Artois.

General von Lochow now initiated a reorganization of the units based on the following points: The northern section was retained by the command of the IV Army Corps. On its right wing stood, with the infantry of the 123rd (Saxon) Infantry Division now deployed at the front, the 117th Infantry Division. Southwards followed the sections of the 7th and 8th Infantry Divisions; the corps reserve was the 5th Ersatz Brigade.

In the middle, the 11th and 5th Infantry Divisions remained initially under the command of the VIII Army Corps, familiar with this section. As further battles soon necessitated a close consolidation of the already heavily weakened IV Army Corps, the insertion of the 12th Infantry Division north of the 11th soon enabled the unified deployment of the VI Army Corps. The 6th Infantry Division of the III Army Corps, expected shortly, was to be retained as an army reserve near Douai. In the southern section, General of Infantry Ritter von Fasbender commanded three Bavarian Infantry Divisions (3rd, 1st Reserve, 5th Reserve) before the gates of Arras. The 15th and 16th Infantry Divisions of the VIII Army Corps were to be withdrawn to the area around Douai and transferred to the 1st Army.

On June 18, the enemy attacks weakened, so that the Supreme Army Command gained the impression that the situation in Artois was relaxing and the enemy's offensive power had been broken. To have the strongest possible reserves available for upcoming events, the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army on June 21 instructed the command of the 6th Army to withdraw forces from the combat front. "Since the breakthrough attempts of the French and English" — he explained — "have been broken for more than a month by the stubborn resistance of the 6th Army, it is not excluded that soon calm will prevail in front of the army front, and the enemy will shift his forces to attack again elsewhere. Currently, the entire western front is devoid of reserves to reinforce the 6th Army. The Supreme Army Command must ensure that new reserves are provided in any case. This can only be achieved by withdrawing parts from the 6th Army to relieve exhausted units in other armies. For preparation, I request ..., at least two infantry divisions — apart from the VIII Army Corps and the 123rd Infantry Division — to be withdrawn from the combat line as soon as the situation permits and assembled behind the army front at suitable railway points. The war organization of these units is to be established.

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In the same way, I ask to initiate the withdrawal of strong parts of the mounted army artillery reserve. ... On the same day, General von Falkenhayn ordered the return of the 187th Infantry Brigade from the 6th Army to the Army Detachment Falkenhausen, as the battles in Alsace with the subordinate Army Detachment Gaede urgently required the relief of the infantry of the 19th Reserve Division.

Crown Prince Rupprecht and General von Lochow, however, could not initially agree with the Supreme Army Command's view regarding a relaxation of the combat situation in Artois. General von Lochow submitted an assessment of the situation on June 22, according to which the enemy's attacks were by no means over and were expected to resume with renewed intensity. In the event that the Supreme Army Command was not able to continuously advance fresh forces for relief, he considered, in view of the heavy consumption of forces, the occupation of a newly developed rear position. The Army High Command forwarded this report to the Supreme Army Command on June 24, adding that "there were no indications of a cessation of the French offensive, that there was no other decision than to hold the current positions, but that further troops for relief and more artillery were necessary."

In the conflict of opinions between the Supreme Army Command and the local higher command, General von Falkenhayn's view proved to be correct. Larger enemy attacks initially did not occur on the front of the 6th Army.

On the French side, General Foch, in view of the poor results of the latest attacks, after consultation with the corps commanders and in agreement with the commander-in-chief, General d'Urbal, decided on June 18 to temporarily halt the offensive in Artois. He instructed the 10th Army to hold and expand the positions gained and reported to the high command that the corps involved in the battle urgently needed a few days of rest. After that, the three northern corps (XXI., XXXIII., IX.) were to prepare systematically against Souchez and the height 140 south of Souchez, to bring this front section into their possession as the starting position for a new offensive. Once this was achieved, the three southern corps (XX., X., XVII.) would again launch an attack.

1) See p. 90, note 2.

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The Dissolution of Army Group Lochow.

In this way, it would probably be possible to achieve the goals initially set for the 10th Army.

The losses on the French side were extraordinarily high; they amounted to around 100,000 since May 9, while the British troops lost 32,000 men, and the Germans lost 1,560 officers and 71,512 men.

In the area of the German 6th Army, the aim was to clear the position of enemy forces that had penetrated by the end of June.

Attempts by the IV Army Corps to eliminate French nests on both sides of the Aire-Noulette—Souchez road failed. The troops of the 8th Infantry Division had already suffered too much from the previous battles at the Loretto Heights. Since June 19, the French had concentrated artillery fire against the position between Angres and Souchez. To increase the resistance of this endangered section, General von Lochow decided to insert the 12th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Chales de Beaulieu into the front at Souchez. On June 25, a stronger attack took place there again. After initial successes, the French were thrown back everywhere by the Silesian regiments. Once more, the enemy attempted a push north of Souchez on the evening of June 27, which also failed. The section of the 16th Infantry Division had been taken over by the 11th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Webern since June 18. Here, it was successful in throwing back the French who had penetrated south of Souchez on June 16 in costly trench fighting. Fighting continued around the "Labyrinth" until June 24. Then the struggle subsided there as well, so that the 3rd Bavarian Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Ritter von Wenninger could take over the trench network in an orderly manner and make it somewhat defensible. On June 25, with the approval of the Supreme Army Command, the heavily exhausted 52nd Reserve Infantry Brigade was exchanged for the 185th Infantry Brigade of the 2nd Army and deployed northward adjacent to the 3rd Bavarian Infantry Division in the combat ring. Thus, firmly structured, internally ordered command relationships also emerged here. By June 28, all necessary preparations for the deployment of the VI Army Corps command had been completed. The following day, command was taken over by General von Prizelwitz and thus simultaneously the dissolution of Army Group Lochow.

1) See p. 96, Note 2.

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Even though the Supreme Army Command maintained the impression

that the battles in Artois were subsiding, the area north of Arras had to be

considered the most important combat zone of the Western Front for the time being.

Temporarily, General von Falkenhayn, in view of the possibility of new French

attacks with the simultaneous deployment of strong British forces, considered the

situation in Artois so serious that he decided to withdraw parts of the Eastern Army

to the French theater of war. On June 26, he informed the 6th Army Command

that the XXXXI Reserve Corps and the 56th Infantry Division would be

accommodated behind the front of the army. The 8th Bavarian Reserve Division,

which had only recently been transferred to the Eastern theater of war, was to be

returned to the Reich territories. However, the Army Command saw in this measure

an impairment of the offensive in Galicia, which was in the most favorable

development, and reported to the Supreme Army Command that even with the

renewal of enemy attacks, which had so far only been indicated by intelligence

reports as imminent, the army could hold its positions without reinforcements from

the east. Consequently, on June 27, General von Falkenhayn changed his orders

and kept the XXXXI Reserve Corps on the Eastern theater of war. Only the 56th

Infantry and 8th Bavarian Reserve Division were transferred back to the west.

In July, there were only local advances against parts of the IV and VI Army Corps.

The area around Souchez was the focal point of these battles, which particularly

strained the forces of the VI Army Corps.

6. Considerations.

The enemy attacks in Artois, which had begun in early May, could be

considered concluded by the end of June. They had aimed at breaking through

the German defensive front. The conditions for the success of this major Franco-

British offensive had by no means been unfavorable. The German 6th Army had

received no reinforcements before May 9; of the 7½ divisions of the army reserve,

only one was in its area at the beginning of the spring battle. The German

defensive alignment north of Arras as well as the excellent observation capabilities invited a comprehensive enemy attack from both sides.

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Reflections on the Spring Battle in Artois.

The arrival of British reinforcements had freed French assault divisions and also allowed for additional attacks by the English. The terrain and railway lines favored the inconspicuous deployment of stronger enemy forces.

The Western opponents, however, were unable to fully exploit their significant superiority in infantry during either the first or second assault in Artois. From May 9 to June 18, around 20½ German infantry divisions deployed at the front blocked the path of the 33½ opposing infantry divisions of the British 1st and French 10th Armies. The allied opponents had not, as planned at the beginning of the winter battles¹), been able to launch a simultaneous attack in Champagne, which, if set for mid-June, would likely have placed the German Western Army in an extremely difficult situation. Despite enormous sacrifices, the enemy armies fighting in France and Belgium were unable to achieve a noticeable relief for the heavily pressured Russians.

The meager results of the offensive were all the more surprising, as the Western opponents, who were highly valued in military terms, had a numerical superiority of about 600 battalions over the Germans. The explanation for their failure is primarily found in two circumstances. First, the enemy's top leadership did not decide to ruthlessly weaken the secondary fronts in favor of the main battlefront from the outset, and then, despite all the experience of the winter battle in Champagne, they apparently still had no clear ideas about the enormous difficulties of a breakthrough operation on the Western Front. Already the calculations made by the Germans in March regarding the need for forces and resources for this had reached higher numbers than were available to the French 10th Army at the start of the offensive. A comparison of the attack plans of General Foch for the French 10th Army in the spring of 1915 with those of several German general staff chiefs, particularly Generals von Kuhl and Krafft von Dellmensingen, as well as Colonel von Seeckt, presented to General von Falkenhayn, reveals how much more foresighted the German Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army was advised than the French Generalissimo.

1) 6th Bavarian R. D., 13th, 14th, 29th, 28th I. G. D., 1st and 5th Bavarian R. D., parts of the II. Bavarian and XIX. A. K., 52nd, 115th, 113th I. G. D., 52nd and 85th R. J. Br., 38th Ldw. I. Br., 2nd G. R. D., 5th, 123rd, 11th, 7th, 8th I. G. D.  
2) In the British 1st Army: 49th Terr., 8th, 7th, Lahore, Meerut, 1st, 47th Terr., 2nd, 51st Terr., French in the French 10th Army: 58th, 17th, 92nd Terr., 43rd, 13th Moroccan Infantry Division, 84th Terr., 39th, 11th, 33rd, 34th, 19th, 20th Army: 18th, 53rd, 5th, 6th, 55th, 48th, 153rd.  
3) See G. 51.

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particularly the generals von Kuhl and Krafft von Dellmensingen as well as Colonel von Seeckt, presented to General von Falkenhayn, reveals how much more foresighted the German Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army was advised than the French Generalissimo. The deployment of personnel and material forces that the German leaders deemed necessary for a decisive operation on the Western Front significantly exceeded the forces demanded by General Foch and provided by General Joffre for the attack of the French 10th Army.

The French leadership, for its part, identified the effective fire of the German artillery and the often intact machine guns until the start of the assault as the main cause for the failure of the attacks. From the battles, they had gained the impression that under the current conditions of trench warfare, a breakthrough could only be hoped for at the beginning of an offensive. With each day of continued attacks, increasing reinforcement of resistance was to be expected. The extraordinarily high bloody losses of the French 10th Army²) and the enormous consumption of artillery ammunition had, especially since a similar consumption of forces had occurred among the British troops, forced a temporary halt to the attacks.

Nevertheless, the French and English high command continued to believe in the possibility of a breakthrough through the German Western Front; however, they were aware that given the expansion of the German trench system and what they perceived as superiority in machine guns and particularly in heavy artillery, a new attempt at a breakthrough would only promise success after the most careful preparation and with the deployment of significantly greater attack forces and means, and above all on a broader basis — a thought that General Joffre had already considered in mid-June before the start of the second offensive, in case the cessation of the unsuccessful battle would be necessary⁴).

1) Volume VII, p. 307 ff.  
2) The losses of the French amounted to 102,500 men from May 9 to June 18.  
3) The total consumption of artillery ammunition by the French 10th Army alone amounted to 1,813,490 rounds for field artillery and 342,372 rounds for heavy artillery from May 3 to June 18. During approximately the same period, the German 6th Army supplied around 1,903,000 rounds for field artillery and 272,000 for heavy artillery.  
4) p. 85/86.

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Reflections on the Spring Battle in Artois.

The main burden of the successful defense was borne by the infantry of the German positional divisions melting together under enemy fire, which, with unshakable, brilliant bravery, repeatedly brought to a halt the attack of an enemy numerically far superior. As the battle progressed, the energetic and prudent German leadership succeeded, with the help of quickly brought reinforcements from the entire Western Front, in restoring the balance of forces and averting the initial breakthrough danger.

The German artillery, especially the heavy artillery, also played a significant role in repelling the enemy attacks. Due to the peacetime equipment of the German army, partly also of the fortresses, with modern material and the presence of considerable, still usable stocks of older equipment and associated ammunition, the Artois front was able to be sufficiently equipped with heavy artillery during the course of the defensive battles (while at the beginning of the battle) a numerical ratio of the respective artilleries of about one (for the Germans) to two (for the enemy) existed, which by the end of May succeeded in improving this ratio to about two to three. From the 1 cm caliber upwards, it seems that even at this time, especially regarding the quality of the material (rapid-fire guns), a German superiority had emerged. The supply of ammunition had proven sufficient. The German heavy artillery, which was high in tactical and shooting technical terms, had again proven its great combat value in the battles.

The railways also effectively supported the defense. The expansion of the railway network carried out by the head of the field railway service in the winter of 1914/15 was carried out with the aim of compensating for the numerical inferiority on the western theater of war through operational mobility and thus being able to quickly reinforce the forces at threatened fronts. The further systematic expansion of the most important transport routes for increased performance, the increasingly tighter operational management, and the increase in travel speed led to a significant increase in speed and punctuality in troop movements. The reliability with which the required troop transports were handled strengthened confidence in the performance of the railways and allowed the Supreme Army Command to strip the Western Front of reserves to a considerable extent in favor of operations conducted on the eastern theater of war.

1) Appendix 1.  
2) World War. VIII. Volume. 7

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The German Western armies could look back on their hard-won successes with proud satisfaction. Without their self-sacrificing dedication, the great victories on the eastern theater of war could not have been achieved. The brave fighters, especially in Artois, therefore deserve an indirect significant share in the glorious victories in the East.

6. The Reorganization of the Western Army by Early August.

Map 4.

In view of the necessity to continue the offensive in the East, the German Western Army had to remain in a relieving strategic defense for a long time. Consequently, special attention had to be paid to the strength and defensive capability of the trench system. On July 3, the Supreme Army Command informed the Western armies' high commands that the Supreme War Lord had reappointed the former commanding general of the VII Army Corps, General of Infantry von Claer1), as General of the Engineer and Pioneer Corps at the Great Headquarters and tasked him with gaining an overview of the trench construction on site and coordinating the necessary measures with the army high commands, "to ensure the uniformity of the expansion of the trenches on the Western Front and to promote the practical application of the latest experiences in this field." General von Claer was to later report to the Supreme War Lord on the impressions he gained. The General of Foot Artillery at the Great Headquarters, General of Artillery von Lauter, was also tasked with arranging a supplement to the existing regulations for the use of artillery in trench warfare and convincing himself of their effects through the fighting troops.

In addition to the increased expansion of the entire trench system3), the reorganization of the German Western Army, whose units had been torn apart in the emergency of the defensive battle, was immediately initiated.

1) In place of General von Claer, General von François, previously commanding general of the XXXXI R. K., was tasked with leading the VII A. K. See C. 382.  
2) Volume IV, C. 472.  
3) Further details on the technical development of trench construction will appear in the forthcoming IX volume.

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The Reorganization of the German Western Army.

With the end of the battles in Artois, the Supreme Army Command had the reinforcements that had been drawn from other front sections in recent weeks sent back to their armies. The Guard Cavalry Division, stationed behind the 4th Army and in the General Government of Belgium, was to depart for the eastern theater of war on July 6, so that now only the 7th Cavalry Division remained in the West.

At the same time, General von Falkenhayn began to once again prepare a number of larger combat-ready units at his disposal behind the Western Front. The execution of the orders aimed at this lasted until the beginning of August.

While a consolidation and reorganization of the German Western Army was thus being carried out, a noticeable relaxation had occurred in the northern flank since mid-July. Until July 15, the intelligence department of the Supreme Army Command had only been able to detect isolated signs of the weakening of the French forces standing in front of the 6th Army in the area around Arras. Up to that point, they expected that the French would undertake a new larger offensive north of Arras or between Arras and Albert, assuming that the enemy forces, heavily battered in the battles in Artois, were now largely replenished and operational. From July 15 to the end of the month, however, numerous front reports, especially from the 2nd and 1st Armies, indicated enemy transport and marching movements south over the Somme. In addition, Crown Prince Rupprecht, based on the results of aerial reconnaissance and important agent reports, concluded that the enemy had withdrawn strong parts from the Artois combat area; he therefore expressed to the Supreme Army Command on July 24 his view that the "Battle of La Bassée and Arras" had now found its preliminary conclusion. Two days later, the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army telegraphed back: "Own observations of the army and reports received here confirmed the view of the Supreme Army Command that a revival of the offensive in front of the left wing of the 6th Army was temporarily not to be expected."

1) After the deployment of German combat aircraft, the enemy's air superiority was no longer as strongly felt.  
2) This mainly concerned the report about the unloading of the French XX Corps, which had previously been located in front of the army front, in Nancy.

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Also, the construction of positions will now be so advanced that the army is able to provide significant forces to the Supreme Army Command. An enemy offensive elsewhere is becoming more likely. Provisions must be made for this case. I therefore request, in addition to the 185th Infantry Brigade1), to consider the withdrawal of the III Army Corps in the very near future."

As a result of the end of the fighting in Artois, General von Falkenhayn did not hesitate to address this changed situation by relieving and providing stronger forces as army reserves. In addition to the 185th Infantry Brigade, the following were to be available to the Supreme Army Command: the 123rd Infantry Division of the 6th Army and a number of heavy field howitzer or mortar batteries, as well as the 183rd Infantry Brigade. The 54th and 58th Infantry Divisions and the Mortar Battalion 1 were transferred from July 20 to the eastern theater of war.

On July 29, General von Falkenhayn summoned the chiefs of the general staffs of the western armies to a meeting in Metz2). He began with warm recognition for the western army and expressed the thanks of the Supreme War Lord: "The achievements of the western army in this difficult time stand worthily alongside those of the eastern army, indeed a fair military history will one day judge and appreciate them as the higher3)." In the overview he gave of the situation on the eastern theater of war, he pointed out that the tenacity of the Russians, who, exploiting natural obstacles and their almost inexhaustible supply of manpower, repeatedly offered resistance in new positions, did not yet allow a judgment on the conclusion of operations. Even if a new offensive by the eastern army, which would tie up its forces into the winter, was not intended, the western army would still have to remain on the defensive for a longer period.

1) The 185th I. Br. (three regiments) was made available to Army High Command 2 on May 26. At the end of June, the O.H.L. agreed that two regiments of the brigade would be assigned to the 6th Army in exchange for the return of the combined 52nd R. J. Br. See p. 93.  
2) Also attending this meeting were: the Quartermaster General, General Freiherr von Freytag-Loringhoven, the General Intendant, General von Schöler, as well as the Chief of the Air Service, Major Thomsen. The Chief of the Operations Department, General Tappen, was not included due to operations on the Eastern Front.  
3) Diary entry of the then First Lieutenant of Metz from July 29, 1915.

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The Chief Meeting in Metz on July 29.

The "iron wall in the West," against which all enemy attacks had so far shattered in victorious defense, must continue to hold.

There was still no clarity about the intentions and plans of the allied Western powers. The English seemed to want to bring strong forces and especially a lot of ammunition to the Dardanelles1). The French attack group at Arras had been dissolved. However, it was by no means clear whether the exhausted corps there would be replaced by fresh ones or whether a new enemy breakthrough attempt would be made at another point on the Western Front. There were also no signs that the enemy intended to initiate a major offensive operation in Alsace or Lorraine, which would be very difficult to carry out2). Although it naturally seemed difficult to understand that the Western powers would watch Russia's defeat passively3), General von Falkenhayn, in agreement with all the chiefs of staff of the Western armies, came to the conclusion that larger attacks by the allied Western powers were not to be expected in the coming weeks.

The Chief of the General Staff concluded his meeting4) in Metz with the note on the necessity of gaining clarity about the enemy, especially the English, whose strength was estimated at 27 infantry divisions5), through frequent small attack operations, but above all to provide reserves behind the Western Front for the disposal of the Supreme Army Command.

How favorably General von Falkenhayn assessed the situation on the Western Front at this time is evident from a diary entry by General Tappen from July 30: "There" (in the West), it was said here, "very good mood. Reserves can still be made available."

1) Diary entries of then Lieutenant Colonel von Mertz from July 29, 1915.  
2) In a letter from General von Kuhl dated February 9, 1931, to the Reichsarchiv, it is explicitly stated that General von Falkenhayn said, "a major offensive in Alsace or Lorraine is not likely."  
3) Regarding the discussion about the German offensive in Upper Alsace, see Part V.  
4) According to a calculation by the intelligence department of the O.H.L. from July 27, 1915, about 15 British divisions were at the front. The Belgian army was still estimated at six infantry and two cavalry divisions.

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In preparation was also the provision of the:

115th Infantry Division at Mézières,

113th Infantry Division at Metz,

183rd Infantry Brigade at Mörchingen,

185th Infantry Brigade at Mülhausen.

Thus, at the beginning of August, General von Falkenhayn could again dispose of an army reserve of approximately nine infantry divisions on the Western Front, with further reinforcements planned for the course of the month of August. The foot artillery reserve of the Supreme Army Command consisted of 21 heavy field howitzer, 19 mortar, and 9 heavy flat-fire batteries. Without endangering the Western Front in an inadmissible manner, it seemed at this time that part of the army reserves stationed there could temporarily be used for tasks on other theaters of war.

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IV. The War Against Russia in the Summer and Autumn of 1915.

A. The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

1. The Directive of the Supreme Army Command from April 16.

In the communication that the Supreme Army Command sent to the Commander-in-Chief East on April 16 regarding the intended operation in Galicia, it was stated that his cooperation through the longest possible deception and binding of the enemy north of the Pilica was a prerequisite for the success of the operation.

When this directive was issued, the Commander-in-Chief East had at his disposal along his approximately 750-kilometer front from the Pilica to the Baltic Sea at Memel a total of 38 infantry divisions, all stationed on Russian soil, most densely on the right flank, while the extreme northern flank was almost unoccupied over a stretch of about 200 kilometers. The battles that followed the conclusion of the winter battle in Masuria and were particularly fierce in the foreland of the East Prussian southern border had subsided since the beginning of the month. Strength and combat power, however, were not yet fully restored everywhere, especially in the infantry, and artillery ammunition was constantly scarce. The formation of three new infantry divisions (101st, 103rd, and 105th) from contributions of the existing divisions was underway.

Specifically, the situation was as follows:

From the Pilica east of Tomaszów to the Vistula halfway between Płock and Nowogeorgiewsk, the 9th Army was positioned along the Rawka and Bzura. Its front thus advanced 20 to 30 kilometers compared to the neighboring armies. As the successor to Generaloberst von Mackensen, Generalfeldmarschall Leopold Prinz von Bayern led the command.

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The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

He had a total of 11½ divisions of infantry, of which 7½ were active and

reserve divisions, and three cavalry divisions. These forces

had been in close contact with the enemy (Russian 5th and 2nd Army)

since the December battles over a front width of about 100 kilometers,

which was estimated at about 15 divisions, in well-developed continuous

positions.

To the right of the Vistula from Plot to the Szwa north of Ostrolenka,

the Army Group Gallwitz covered a front width of about 260 kilometers

with 12½ divisions of infantry, of which 7½ were active and reserve divisions,

and two cavalry divisions. The enemy's deployment was denser here, the

distance from him greater than with the 9th Army. It was estimated that

there were at least 14 divisions of the Russian 1st Army as opponents.

East of the Szwa, the 8th Army under General of Infantry Otto von Below

joined in similar conditions, holding a section almost 100 kilometers wide

east of Dvovice with 6½ divisions of infantry, of which only three were active

and reserve divisions. The opposing Russian 12th Army was estimated at 14

divisions; of the formations identified in front of the front in March, a corps

was already missing.

The 10th Army under Colonel General von Eichhorn stood with 7½ divisions

of infantry, of which six were active and reserve divisions, and two cavalry

divisions, in a front width of about 120 kilometers forward of the line Rajgrod—Suwalki—Marjampol.

1) Volume VII, p. 295.  
2) 9th Army from the right: Reinforced XI. A. K. (Corps Plüskow with Div. Menge's\*  
22nd and 38th I. D., 29th Ldw. B.), Corps Frommel (S. R. R. 3 with two brigades of  
Corps Posen, 9th and 8th R. D.), XXV. R. R. (50th and 49th R. D.), XVII. A. K. (35th and  
36th I. D.), reinforced III. R. R. (Corps Beseler with ½ Corps Posen, 5th and ½ 6th R. D.),  
Ldw. - Ldt. Westenthagen). — The units marked with \* consisted mainly of  
Ldw. and Ldt. troop parts.  
3) Army Group Gallwitz from the right: Corps Dichhuth (Corps Thorn  
with three brigades of Corps Posen, 37th and 36th I. D.), Group Albrecht (2nd R. D.  
and 1st G. R. D.), Corps Surén (formerly Saßtroin with Br. Pfeil\*, Div. Breguet and Div.  
Wernitz), Corps Watter (Gen. Rdo. XIII. A. K. with 3gl. 3rd and 26th I. D.), I. R. R.  
(1st and 36th R. D.), Corps Koch (Gen. Rdo. I. A. K. with 2nd and 25th R. D., 11th R. D., 37th S. D.),  
4) 8th Army from the right: 75th G. R. D., 76th G. R. D., 10th Ldw. D., Corps Scholtz  
(Gen. Rdo. XI. A. K. with 41st G. R. D., 1st Ldw. D.), 37th R. D., 11th Ldw. D., 11th Ldw. D.  
5) 10th Army from the right: XXXX. R. R. (79th and 80th R. D.), Corps Lauenstein  
(Gen. Rdo. XVII. A. K. with 3rd and 4th R. D.), 2nd R. D., 1st R. D., XXVII. A. K. (31st and 42nd S. D.),  
6) 4th R. D., 16th Ldw. D., Ldt. Ejebed, 7th G. R. D., 5th Ldw. D., 1st Ldw. D.  
Behind the front: S. R. R. 1 with 3 and 3rd Bavarian R. D.

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Overall Situation and Task.

From this place northwest to north of Memel, only Landwehr and Landsturm secured a width of 200 kilometers in the total strength of a weak division and a cavalry division. Similarly, as far as was known, the Russian 10th Army was also positioned south of Marjampol with about 15 divisions, while north of it essentially only second-order troops in the strength of at most two divisions were assumed.

At Memel, the German Eastern Front leaned against the sea, which continued to be dominated by the weak German Baltic Sea forces under Grand Admiral Heinrich Prince of Prussia. The Russian Baltic Fleet was still held in the ports due to ice conditions.

Reliable experiences in trench warfare were still lacking at that time. In view of the overall situation at his front, Field Marshal von Hindenburg had doubts whether the deception of binding the enemy demanded by the Supreme Army Command would be possible. His Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Ludendorff, also considered "such frontal attacks to be of little value"¹). Above all, the task of holding the enemy was — as he wrote to General von Gallwitz on April 19 — "contrary to our previous views, difficult to carry out against a strongly entrenched enemy and without sacrificing our own troops; this should not happen according to the opinion of the Field Marshal"²). Field Marshal von Hindenburg had already reported to the Kaiser on April 17³) that he would deceive and hold the enemy to the best of his ability. However, since this was explicitly designated as a prerequisite for the success of the operation in Galicia, he had to dutifully report that he could not guarantee that the enemy, who was currently almost twice as superior in infantry, would not free up forces for other uses.

To solve the assigned task as best as possible, the Commander-in-Chief wanted to engage the Russians at several points. As a larger, long-term binding operation against the enemy, he could only envisage a deep thrust into the thinly occupied area north of the Njemen, roughly as had been under discussion since the end of March³). In addition, only smaller local skirmishes were considered, which should temporarily mislead the enemy.

¹) From a communication by General Ludendorff to the Reichsarchiv from March 1931.  
²) Volume VII, p. 362.  
³) p. 106 and Volume VII, p. 296.

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The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

The 9th Army was ordered by the Commander-in-Chief East, from April 27, to "create the impression of an impending general German attack through lively fire from groups of heavy artillery concentrated at suitable locations, increased reconnaissance activity, and the advancement of saps." The execution of this order temporarily increased combat activity, which was then suspended on May 3, the day after the start of the attack in Galicia.

In the Gallwitz Army Group, the diversionary operations were conducted in a similar manner as with the 9th Army. They brought the I Reserve Corps on April 27 at Jednorozec north of Przasnysz about 500 prisoners and three machine guns as booty.

The 8th Army wanted to solve the task by an advance of its right wing. The attack planned for April 29 between Sziwa and Pissa, led by General of Cavalry Burggräf and Count zu Dohna-Schlobitten, by the 75th Reserve and 10th Landwehr Division, however, only achieved a gain of ground on the extreme right wing at Lipnitza and had to be abandoned otherwise, without having reached the enemy position. The artillery effect was not strong enough. However, it seemed that the enemy, under the impression of this operation, temporarily halted the already initiated transport of his XV Corps.

In the 10th Army, they sought to deceive the enemy with strong artillery fire, which suddenly began on the night of April 27. Subsequently, the 76th Reserve Division under Major General Elstermann von Elster pushed back Russian advance troops east of Suwalki over a width of about 20 kilometers. This advance was also intended to distract the enemy from the main operation beginning at the same time north of the Njemen.

2. The Attack on Lithuania and Courland.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketches 10 and 11, and Map 18 Volume VII.

a) The Operation against Schaulen, April 27 to May 3.

When the Supreme Army Command inquired on March 25, immediately after the Russian incursion against Memel, whether an advance by two specially equipped cavalry divisions past Kowno to Wilna and thus into the northern flank of the Russian overall deployment promised success, the Commander-in-Chief East

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Intentions and Force Deployment.

this question was affirmed and an advance north of the Njemen was envisaged. The cavalry units brought in from the west by the Supreme Army Command, the 3rd and Bavarian Cavalry Division, were initially stationed at the East Prussian southern border, where the operation was not yet feasible due to the snowmelt.

Since the insignificant March battles, calm prevailed north of the Njemen. Landwehr and Landsturm under Lieutenant General von Pappritz, with the strength of a weak division, and the 6th Cavalry Division kept watch here. A 12 to 15 kilometer wide strip was free up to the foremost Russian positions; they stood east of Jurburg, and their line extended northwards from there over Konstantinowo to the coast north of Polangen; the very extensive deployment had a total length of 150 kilometers. Stronger forces were assumed behind this, especially near Schaulen, where half of the 68th Infantry Division was supposed to stand. Everything else seemed to be less combat-effective Landwehr troops, which, according to the view of the Commander-in-Chief East, were not even an equal opponent for the German Landsturm. All in all, they reckoned with a strength of only about 25,000 men with 20 machine guns and 22 guns. This enemy enjoyed the protection of the large Njemen fortress Kowno on its southern flank, while its northern flank, the former war port Libau, was virtually unoccupied.

The Commander-in-Chief East wanted to push the Russians back with a surprise attack from the Njemen and from Kowno with the aim of intercepting their main forces. Given the numerical weakness and low combat strength of the enemy, this seemed to be a particularly rewarding task for cavalry. The infantry was only to serve as a backup and intervene only if stronger resistance hindered the expected rapid advance.

The forces designated for the operation were only assembled in the attack area immediately before its start. There were a total of about three infantry and three cavalry divisions¹), which were directly subordinated to the Commander-in-Chief East as a special "Army Group" under the commanding General of the XXXIX Reserve Corps, Lieutenant General von Lauenstein. Each cavalry division was assigned an infantry battalion, as in the mobile warfare of old, and the vehicles were exchanged for lighter ones as necessary. Nevertheless, the extremely unfavorable road conditions required the supply to be difficult; however, it was hoped that in the vast area, which had so far been scarcely affected by the war, sufficient provisions for the small troop strength could be found.

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The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

Supply was difficult to arrange; however, it was hoped to find sufficient provisions for the small troop strength in the vast area that had been scarcely touched by the war. The Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Sea forces requested the involvement of a cruiser squadron.

On April 22, the Commander-in-Chief East instructed Lieutenant General von Lauenstein in Libau to "destroy as much as possible" the Russian forces north of the lower Njemen; under protection against Kowno and Libau, the railway connecting these places and all telegraph lines were to be thoroughly destroyed. Since the later reuse of the assigned troops south of the Njemen was expected, the bulk of the cavalry was to cross the mentioned railway, while the mass of the infantry was not to exceed the line Njemen—Telsche. These objectives meant a distance of 90 kilometers in a straight line for the cavalry, while the infantry was assigned about 30 kilometers less.

Lieutenant General von Lauenstein wanted to envelop the enemy primarily through sharp pressure from the south. The right wing group was therefore the strongest; it consisted of the cavalry corps of Lieutenant General Freiherr von Richthofen (3rd and Bavarian Cavalry Division) and ⅔ of the 78th Reserve Division, which were to assemble at Jurborg. Furthermore, the following were prepared: at Tauroggen the 6th Cavalry Division, at Langen Pappeln, at Tenenie the 45th Brigade of the 6th Cavalry Division, at Wieznyzany the 12th Reserve Infantry Brigade of the 6th Reserve Division, and at Russian-Rottington as the left wing again a stronger group: ½ of the 6th Reserve Division and ⅔ of the 6th Cavalry Division. To protect the right flank of the attack, the 10th Army was to occupy Schütz. In front of the left flank, the fleet was to drive away the Russian forces reported near the coast at Budwendingshof by fire. Additionally, the commanders on land wished to distract the enemy by feigning a landing at Libau and other feigned operations in front of Windau and Riga. However, the available naval forces1) were not sufficient for such extensive operations. The navy had to limit its commitment to shelling Budwendingshof and a demonstration in front of Libau.

On the evening of April 26, all parts of the Lauenstein army group were ready. The situation with the enemy seemed unchanged. Lieutenant General von Lauenstein demanded "strong marches from the wing groups so that the enemy does not escape."

1) For more details, see "The War at Sea," Offsee, Volume II, p. 49 ff.

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The Attempt to Intercept the Enemy.

This mainly concerned the Russian 1/2 68th Infantry Division reported at Stawidille. It was positioned on the main road from Tilsit via Tauroggen to Schaulen, which, alongside the coastal road Memel—Libau, was the only solid road in the entire operational area at that time. Against this most combat-effective part of the enemy's formation were deployed: the cavalry corps to advance into its rear, 2/3 78th Reserve Division to attack from the south, the Appartix detachment, starting later, from Tauroggen towards Stawidille. The cavalry detachment was to advance independently of the infantry so that its greater marching speed could be fully effective.

On the night of April 27, movements began.

The Richthofen Cavalry Corps, which was to "in a wide encirclement ... particularly disrupt the retreat on the only major road Tilsit—Schaulen," had already covered an advance of about 20 kilometers when it set out from Turborg. During the day, the Bavarian Cavalry Division under Lieutenant General von Hellmuth reached Roflienie after another march of 50 kilometers without combat. The 3rd Cavalry Division under Lieutenant General Kurt von Unger had been delayed by disturbances at the Niemeu crossing. Lieutenant General von Richthofen himself rode with them. After an advance of about 40 kilometers, the division encountered the enemy east of Stawidille in the afternoon, which they assessed as a flank cover, while other Russian forces were supposed to be retreating northeast on the main road towards Kielmy. General von Unger attacked the Russian flank cover and pushed it back. Only at night around 11 o'clock, when the foremost parts of the 78th Reserve Division had already arrived, did the 25th Cavalry Brigade, deployed against the main road itself, continue. In the middle of the combat section, the weak enemy had vacated the field everywhere in time before the advancing German detachments.

On the extreme left flank, the 6th Cavalry Division under Lieutenant General Egon Graf von Schmettow had already encountered resistance in the morning section at Korciany, which they could not break. In view of the difficult terrain conditions sideways of the main road, they awaited the intervention of half of the 6th Reserve Division, which, under Lieutenant General von Schickfus and Neudorff, launched an attack at noon, while the bulk of the cavalry division rested behind their front. Only in the evening could the infantry cross the Minje, the cavalry remained behind. Two Russian Landwehr battalions had held up the German advance 15 kilometers from its starting point for a full day.

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The Front of the Supreme Commander East until July 2.

At dawn, two small cruisers of the Baltic Sea forces briefly shelled Budendingshof and then advanced towards Libau.

General von Lauenstein in Tilsit, based on the reports received on the evening of April 27, believed that the enemy was still standing at and east of Stawdwile and that the road from there to Schawlen had already been relocated. The detachment Pappritz, deployed from the southwest on the main road against Stawdwile, reported after dark that it had encountered "strong enemy" before Stawdwile. Thus, General von Lauenstein set the 3rd Cavalry Division, the 78th Reserve Division, and the Pappritz detachment for an all-encompassing attack on Stawdwile on April 28, with the Bavarian Cavalry Division moving from Rossiliene north to Kielmy.

At 2 a.m. on April 28, the 25th Brigade, dispatched by the 3rd Cavalry Division, reached the enemy's retreat road at the Rzyborg crossroads, nine kilometers northeast of Stawdwile, and learned that a strong enemy had already marched through in the direction of Schawlen. By 5 a.m., the 3rd Cavalry Division had reports indicating that the enemy had marched northeast from their front at Stawdwile. A delayed radio message from General von Lauenstein also arrived, ordering the blocking of the main road to Schawlen "with strong forces still on the 27th."

At the General Command in Tilsit, the completely changed situation was learned too late. But even the leader of the cavalry corps with the 3rd Cavalry Division did not see it so clearly that he would have felt compelled to now set both divisions past Kielmy for a far-reaching pursuit. Thus, the Bavarian Cavalry Division advanced on Kielmy on April 28, according to the General Command's orders, with the 3rd Cavalry Division and 78th Reserve Division following the enemy along and on the main road. At Kielmy, the enemy offered resistance. The Bavarians under Lieutenant General von Heilingrath attacked him from the flank around noon. An attempt to overtake him was not made. Also, a reconnaissance detachment advancing east of the Dubissa (two squadrons and a gun), which had already received a report of the enemy's continued march on Kielmy by 10 a.m., did not attempt to reach the front Dubissa bridge before him, but instead moved against his flank.

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The Attempt to Intercept the Enemy.

When the Russian resistance

ceased in the evening, the 3rd Cavalry and 78th Reserve Division had also

arrived on the left next to the Bavarian cavalry.

On the rest of the front of the army group, the operation, which had begun

with great hopes, had also turned into a purely frontal pursuit. The 6th Cavalry Division was, on the evening of April 28,

with its foremost parts six kilometers west of Telsche, only

ten kilometers from the foremost infantry. The enemy was everywhere

in full retreat, having also lost several hundred prisoners.

The goal of the operation, to decisively strike him, was not

achieved. Parts of the Baltic Sea fleet had, as long as the weather

made a landing attempt seem credible, cruised off Libau at noon.

The Commander-in-Chief East expressed his dissatisfaction with

the results of the operation so far. He expected, as

General von Richthofen conveyed to his divisions on the evening of April 28,

"more tomorrow" as well as a report on why the main road

Stawidille—Schaulen had not been blocked as ordered on the evening of April 27.

As a new pursuit target, also for the infantry, he now gave

the line Radziwillischki—Schaulen—Popeljany, thus the course

of the railway Wilna—Libau.

General von Lauenstein deployed the 78th Reserve Division and behind

it the Pappritz detachment on the main road against Schaulen; the

cavalry corps was to extend right and left of the road to get behind the enemy.

The 78th Reserve Division found

the bridge of Bubje destroyed in the afternoon and the east bank of the Dubissa occupied;

Major General von Müller immediately turned north over the Windau edge

to gain the enemy's flank and the way to Schaulen.

The Bavarian Cavalry Division was also held up by destroyed bridges.

Thus, by the evening of April 29, only the line Szawlany

(Bavarian Cavalry Division)—Area six kilometers west of

Bubje (78th Reserve Division, behind it Pappritz detachment)—Kurschany

(3rd Cavalry Division)—Strisch (6th Cavalry Division, behind it 6th Re-

serve Division) was reached. Cavalry patrols succeeded in

interrupting the railway Wilna—Libau on both sides of Schaulen by demolition.

Reports from residents and agents about Russian reinforcements,

which were supposed to be advancing on foot and by rail from Kowno,

were not confirmed by aerial and cavalry reconnaissance.

The 78th Reserve Division resumed its advance after a short rest in the

night of April 30, but was held up by Russian resistance and therefore only reached Schaulen at noon; the enemy had already withdrawn.

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held up and therefore only reached Schaulen at noon; the enemy had already withdrawn. The Bavarian Cavalry Division, which was deployed via Radziwilischki against its southern flank and rear, only managed to harm troops marching north on the main road with artillery fire, and then withdrew not east of Schaulen. The 3rd Cavalry Division, deployed from the west against the Russian retreat route, had already exhausted part of its forces in the area of Kurschany in skirmishes against smaller Russian detachments. With 13 squadrons and 2½ batteries, the division command still reached the main road north of the wide and often swampy Muscha section before the enemy; by dispatching the 25th Cavalry Brigade to Janischki, where it was to block with its front facing southwest, the division's position was further secured. The parts remaining at Muscha were surprised by Russian artillery fire; the enemy seemed to be deploying in the forest southwest of the section; it began to get dark. Without knowledge of the situation and the whereabouts of the other units, the division commander now considered his forces too weak to hold off the enemy. Losing three guns¹), he withdrew to the northwest. The crossing over the Muscha section was free for the enemy, who now drove away the 25th Cavalry Brigade at Janischki during the night and thus finally escaped. The line given as the advance target by the Commander-in-Chief East was reached. Due to the threat from Rowno, the right wing had to be held. On the left flank, Libau posed a certain danger. With the cooperation of the fleet, it could probably be taken easily and thus a port potentially important for later operations could be secured. Thus, General von Lautenstein received the order on the evening of April 30 to hold the land west of the Dubissa; only the 6th Cavalry Division and smaller infantry units were to remain advancing on Mitau. The operation against Libau was to be prepared so that it could begin by May 5 at the latest. These instructions had no influence on the events of May 1. The day passed with pursuit operations by the entire cavalry. However, new enemy forces seemed to be advancing from Rowno. On May 2, parts of the 3rd and 6th Cavalry Divisions managed to intercept a scattered Russian battalion with four guns north of Schaulen. In the evening, the cavalry corps was positioned east of the Schaulen—Mitau road on both sides of the Muscha; the 6th Cavalry Division was located 20 kilometers southwest of Mitau at Grünhof and advanced to within two kilometers of the city the following day.

¹) Two of these guns were later recovered.

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Conclusion of the Operation against Schaulen.

Thus, the pursuit concluded on the evening of May 3.

In total, about 20 Russian battalions, 20 squadrons, and 30 guns, mostly landwehr, were stationed north of the Niemen. The preparations for the German operation had not gone unnoticed by them, as reliable blocking was not possible given the vastness of the area. The main Russian forces, ½ 68th Infantry Division, had left Stawdwile on the afternoon of April 27 and diverted the German 3rd Cavalry Division from further marching in a decisive direction through a flank cover. Intercepting them would have only been possible if the entire cavalry corps had immediately taken up the overtaking pursuit east of the Dubissa on the morning of April 28 to position itself near Buhje. Whether this would have succeeded given the partly groundless paths remains uncertain, raising the question of whether it might have been more expedient to direct the cavalry corps more eastward at the start of the movement, towards Schaulen and Buhje instead of Rossienie and Stawdwile.

The enemy was able to march unhindered on the main road from Kielmy to Buhje on April 28 and hold here and later at Schaulen for a full day. It was only towards the evening of April 30 that they reached the Muscha section, which they also crossed undisturbed in the night of May 1 after evading the German cavalry standing in the way there. Thus, despite the enemy's hasty withdrawal, the Germans, who were numerically and in combat power far superior and positioned from a favorable direction, including more than 40 squadrons and six mounted batteries, failed to capture the enemy despite extreme efforts by riders and horses. Across the entire front of the army group, the spoils were limited to about 2000 prisoners and four guns by May 3. The tactical goal of the operation, intercepting and destroying the Russian forces north of the Niemen, was not achieved.

b) The Capture of Libau, May 1 to 8.

On May 1, the Commander-in-Chief East reported his further intentions to the Supreme Army Command: "The goal of the Lauenstein expedition with the capture of Schaulen has been provisionally achieved. The further intention is to hold the Dubissa line and to launch a coup against Libau

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The Dubissa line is soon to form the basis for the raid of the

cavalry divisions towards Wilna. After the deployment of the new divisions

promised by the Supreme Army Command, it is intended to strengthen

Group Lauenstein as much as possible to launch another offensive." General

von Falkenhayn replied the next day: "His Majesty has ordered: According

to the considerations under which the crossing of the 3rd and Bavarian

Cavalry Division was carried out at the time, the most important goal of

Army Group Lauenstein is to secure the enemy's rear connections on the

right bank of the Njemen. Whether a coup against the difficult-to-access

Libau from the land side is advisable must be left entirely to Your

Excellency's consideration." Since this involves the participation of a large

part of the fleet, early notification of the intended action is required.

Regarding a later new offensive by the group to be strengthened, it was

pointed out that given the difficult overall situation, it is not necessarily

certain whether the new divisions to be set up by the Commander-in-Chief

East could remain with him. It is rather assumed that he will also draw

reserves for his own use from the front as much as possible from the new

formations.

The former Russian naval port of Libau had been removed from the list

of fortresses since 1910, but still had significance due to its location on

railway and road, its port facilities, and, although outdated, works. These

were supported by the natural strength of the place; between sea and lakes,

three narrow passages formed the only accesses to the city. The attack had

to be conducted over partially swampy terrain crossed by watercourses, so

that a tenacious defender could also hold off a strong superior force. The

garrison was expected to be very small at the time. Since the capture of

Schaulem, an important land connection of Libau was in German hands,

German warships dominated the sea. Thus, the Commander-in-Chief East

considered the moment particularly favorable for the capture of the place;

he believed that by reaching it with few forces and thereby gaining a

Russian railway point, he could improve the rather unfavorable rear

connections of Group Lauenstein. Upon request to the Commander-in-Chief

of the Baltic Sea Forces, he readily assured his cooperation. He reported

to the Supreme Army Command that the desired cavalry operation would not be hindered by the attack on Libau in any way.

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The Capture of Libau.

In total, only five battalions, nine squadrons, eight batteries¹) were to be deployed, which had been gathering in the Salanty—Budendingshof line since May 1. General von Lauenstein entrusted the command to the commander of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, Colonel von der Schulenburg, who received the order to begin the advance on May 5 and to quickly enclose Libau; the attack itself would be best directed through the eastern front, where the heavy artillery could be brought to bear most quickly. He was to be supported by Rear Admiral Hopman, who had seven cruisers at his disposal after reinforcement by the IV Reconnaissance Group from the North Sea²). The 6th Cavalry Division was to secure against Mitau.

Without a fight, the main forces of the Schulenburg division approached the Bartan section east of Libau by May 6, which was unoccupied; a side detachment advanced along the coast. Reconnaissance minesweepers and naval aviators encountered weak fire from light and medium artillery at Libau itself. The fortifications of the land front appeared to be blown up. Even on May 7, the advance met no resistance, but was delayed by bridge destructions. In the afternoon, German artillery opened fire from land and sea; it was not returned. After completing all preparations, the assault was to take place the next morning. Meanwhile, the third side detachment, consisting of Landtrum and supported by the fire of the ships, had already occupied the southern fort and the southern part of the city. On the morning of May 8, the main division also entered the place. 1600 prisoners, 12 mostly older guns, 4 machine guns were the spoils of the operation; valuable raw material stocks were found. Weak enemy forces had retreated north.

Libau had been under the command of the commander of the Russian Baltic Fleet, Admiral von Essen, who, however, on April 30, in view of the German advance on Schaulen and the appearance of German fleet units before the city, ordered the withdrawal of the garrison (3½ battalions and auxiliary weapons) and the destruction of the fixed guns and defense installations.

¹) A Saxon J.R. of the 6th R.D., two Ldst. Btle., 3 K. Br. (from the 8th Army), five light, three heavy (including a mortar) batteries, a Pi. Btl. with siege train.  
²) For more details on the involvement of the fleet, see Geerieg, Baltic Sea, Volume II, p. 57 ff.

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Upon the objection of the Commander-in-Chief of the

Russian Northwest Front, he then received the order from the Supreme Army Command

to reoccupy Libau and, if necessary, support land operations from the sea. To what extent

these orders have been attempted to be carried out is not yet known.

c) Defense against Russian Counterattacks, May 3 to 14.

The Lauenstein Army Group continued to hold the area

west of the Dubissa1). As the advance against Libau was imminent on May 3,

their troops were organized as follows: 70th Reserve

Infantry Brigade of the 36th Reserve Division (I Reserve Corps), previously

Army Reserve, arrived at Jurburg; the bulk of the former Pappritz Detachment,

about a brigade, under Major General Baron von Esebeck

at Rossienie; 6th Reserve Division at Kielmy; 78th Reserve Division at

Schaulen; Cavalry Corps Richthofen northeast of Schaulen on both sides

of the Muscha, including the 1st Bavarian Cavalry Brigade at Schadown and

Strednik; 5th Cavalry Division in front of Dvinsk; Schulenburg Detachment at

Salanty, ready to advance against Libau.

The attempt to intercept a Russian infantry and a cavalry division,

which advanced from the east against Rossienie on the morning

of May 4 through encirclement from all sides, failed. The Russians

retreated in time, but still held the western Dubissa

bank. A new enemy had appeared at Schadown and had engaged the cavalry

corps in indecisive battles. Before Mitau, the 6th Cavalry

Division had to retreat; it has since covered the operation against Libau.

On May 6, it succeeded in pushing the enemy east of Rossienie over the

Dubissa and gaining the eastern bank; however, blocking the Russians' retreat

failed again this time. The cavalry corps assigned for this purpose had suffered

considerably from the previous marches and battles at

various locations, its already low combat strength was severely reduced by

frequently changing reconnaissance tasks. Now it found itself bound by a new enemy

appearing at Rejstany.

The Commander-in-Chief East prepared the rest of the I Reserve

Corps under Lieutenant General von Morgen to reinforce the army

group. He was soon to take over the defense against Mitau.

On the southern flank, the eastern bank of the Dubissa was to be temporarily held to maintain the impression of German superiority for as long as possible.

1) See p. 112.

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The Defense in Lithuania and Courland.

On May 7, the Bavarian Cavalry Division of the Richthofen Cavalry Corps advanced deep into the rear of the local enemy east of Kieydany and interrupted the railway to Vilna near the Wilia. However, breaking the Russian resistance in the area of Kieydany itself was not successful. Three Russian cavalry divisions were supposed to face them, and according to prisoner reports, a Russian corps was also to be unloaded. From Mitau, where the unloading of a corps was also reported, the enemy advanced on the main road, reaching Janischki and also advancing with at least seven battalions north of the Mitau—Murawjewo railway towards Libau, which was already on the verge of falling by the evening of the day. It became apparent that the enemy could bring reinforcements on four main railways, each from Vilna, Dünaburg, Jakobstadt, and Riga, while the Germans had to rely on marching on foot from the border. The Russians apparently assembled 2½ corps and three to four cavalry divisions in the Rowno—Poniewies—Mitau area. Thus, the operational goal of the German operation against Courland, diversion of the enemy and withdrawal of his reserves, was achieved. Already, apart from the forces previously stationed in the section, a total of four infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions were deployed, which were absent elsewhere.

The Commander-in-Chief East wished to hold on to the successes achieved. This was all the more difficult as the front had experienced a significant bulge and was now more than 100 kilometers longer than the original line Jurborg—Tauroggen—Polangen. However, on May 7, the Supreme Army Command¹) demanded "in case Italy should intervene in the war on the side of our opponents," significant forces from the Commander-in-Chief East. The three newly to be established infantry divisions²) would then suffice at the last moment. In view of the seriousness of the situation, all considerations of secondary importance would naturally have no significance in such a case; the Commander-in-Chief East would then have to be assigned a defensive task. Should this change due to the victory in Galicia, the withdrawal of forces would be unnecessary. Field Marshal von Hindenburg replied that, in addition to the new divisions, he would also be able to free up two infantry divisions, including the 1st Reserve Division of the I Reserve Corps; parts could already be dispatched now.

¹) Volume VII, p. 420. — ²) p. 103 and 114.

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If these assignments had to be carried out, there was hardly any prospect of holding the conquered territory north of the Njemen; however, they thought to hold it. General von Lauenstein wanted to lead the defense at the Dubissa and take connection to Libau to the northwest, utilizing the Windau course, which offered secure support from the sea. Whether Schaulen, which was important as a large place and held rich supplies, but lay forward of the Dubissa-Windau line, could be held was questionable.

When Libau was taken on May 8, the Supreme Army Command initially refrained from transporting the 1st Reserve Division and the Russians advanced from the Njemen, the Commander-in-Chief East wired to Pleß: "We must now know what significance Libau has for the navy. For the time being, we are setting up Libau for defense and want to hold it." The intention to bring an infantry brigade there by sea had to be abandoned, as Admiral Hopman could not guarantee the safety of the crossing. On May 9, the Supreme Army Command replied that the navy had no interest in holding Libau permanently and could not provide troops and combat resources for this purpose. Any reinforcement work could "therefore only serve deception purposes." Consequently, the Commander-in-Chief East decided to hold Libau at least as long as circumstances permitted. The Supreme Army Command agreed, but the general situation currently forced "to avoid incidents as much as possible, which could be interpreted by our opponents as a serious setback with a semblance of right. Any intended evacuation of the city must be announced by us in a preventive manner beforehand." Troops and material should only be stationed in Libau as far as secure withdrawal was guaranteed. Serious fighting for the city should not be engaged in, because it would then "be difficult to portray the Lauenstein operation as a deception raid, which is probably intended according to the current situation."

Under the leadership of Lieutenant General von Pappritz, who was appointed governor of Libau in the meantime, the expansion of the place into a base for the German left army wing began. The Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Sea forces continued to attach importance to the possession of the port, but also pointed out that the support from the sea could no longer be guaranteed in the future due to the withdrawal of part of his ships to the west.

1) Volume VII, p. 420. — 2) Naval War, Baltic Sea, Volume II, p. 88 ff.

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Defensive Battles at Schaulen.

On May 10, the Russians approached the Dubissa and attacked at

Schaulen. In this situation, the Supreme Army Command

now demanded the provision of the two divisions offered by the

Commander-in-Chief East. However, it seemed necessary to him

to at least finish the battle just begun at Schaulen

beforehand; then one would vacate the field as a victor, not as a retreating force.

The Supreme Army Command agreed.

The Lauenstein Army Group had been prepared for defense on the morning of

May 10 as follows: In almost 50 kilometers width,

the 36th Reserve Division along with the Siebke Detachment formed the southern flank.

The Dubissa gave this very thinly occupied section a certain

hold, even if the water could be waded through at numerous points.

The Richthofen Cavalry Corps was retreating to the flood

areas to close the gap to the "Morgen Corps," which was to provide defense on

the main road over Schaulen. To the right, adjacent to marshes and lakes,

its 78th Reserve Division held the heights surrounding the city,

while the 6th Reserve Division was still advancing to the left flank

of the corps. In the area of Murawjewo, 60 kilometers

northeast of Schaulen, the 6th Cavalry Division had retreated behind the

Windau, east of Libau stood the 3rd Cavalry Brigade

(two more cavalry brigades) were advancing from the area of Memel

towards Telsche; followed by the 1st Reserve Division.

At Schaulen, the Russian attack penetrated deep

into the northern flank of the 78th Reserve Division during the day. General von Morgen

was forced to abandon the city to the enemy with serious losses.

On May 11, the German 6th Reserve Division intervened and captured 1400

prisoners. Despite this success, even after the arrival of the

1st Reserve and 6th Cavalry Division, it was not possible to

break the Russian resistance and advance again on Schaulen. The enemy was estimated

at 3½ infantry divisions and one cavalry division, another

division was reportedly arriving at Janischki. Thus,

General von Morgen decided to withdraw the left flank for defense to the

Windau and allowed the 1st Reserve Division to evade to Kurschany.

1) 18th and 38th R. Br. — 2) The Russians captured several hundred prisoners and   
seized five guns.

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d) Extension of the Battles to the Southern Bank of the Njemen, May 13 to 24.

It consisted north of the Insterburg-Kowno railway of the 39th Cavalry Brigade and some Landsturm

companies, which secured a front more than 50 kilometers wide. Initially,

there had been further calm here. But since May 13, the enemy seemed to be

strengthening in the forest area west of the fortress and pulling out

forces from the northern bank of the Njemen. On May 14, they advanced

to Schaki and thus deep into the southern flank of the German position

at the Dubissa. Generaloberst von Eichhorn expected a strong attack

and took extensive defensive measures.

At this time, the Russian front in southern Poland was already in

retreat²). The Commander-in-Chief East expected, if the movement

also extended to the area north of the Pilica, as preparation

for this, strong Russian relief attacks on both sides of the Njemen. Thus,

the view of Generaloberst von Eichhorn was shared, and the 29th Landwehr

Brigade from the 9th Army and other available smaller units were sent to

the northern wing of the 10th Army. Between the Kowno railway and

the Njemen, the border position was occupied as a fallback and equipped with artillery

from East Prussian fortresses; the only reserve of the Dubissa

section was moved against the Njemen to Jurborg. Then, unexpectedly,

the Russians attacked on May 15 at the Army Group

Lauenstein, against the Dubissa, and established themselves north of

Szirgaiola on the west bank of the river. However, the 10th Army saw the

situation on May 16 as much more favorable than two days before and

wanted to go on the offensive themselves as soon as all reinforcements were

in place. Even at the Commander-in-Chief East, there was "a certain

relief"³). However, it was questionable whether the forces would be sufficient

to continue holding the front at Schaulen. First,

the situation on both sides of the Njemen was to be secured with all available forces,

and the 78th Reserve Division stationed at Schaulen was to be brought in.

The Commander-in-Chief East agreed that

General von Morgen should continue to retreat westward if the strong Russian attacks persisted.

May 17 brought clarity to the 10th Army. The attack led by General

Litzmann on the northern wing was successful. The German forces positioned along the Szeszup from Pilwiszki to Schillebnen and at Jurborg, altogether about two motley assembled divisions of infantry, whose core was the "Division Beckmann," and one and a half cavalry divisions, pushed the enemy back without difficulty and captured 1700 prisoners. They anticipated further successes for the following day.

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Battles at the Dubissa and before Kowno.

Further successes were expected for the following day. When the Commander-in-Chief East was asked by the Supreme Army Command on the morning of May 18 about his intentions in the area north of the Njemen, he responded confidently: "The intention remains to hold the line of the Dubissa and Windau, as well as Libau, at least until the rich country supplies are transported and the fortified border position is completed, which will take a longer time." However, on May 18, the overall situation with the Army Group Lauenstein became more difficult again. The enemy entrenched themselves immediately south of Cirgaloa on the western bank of the Dubissa. To intercept the Russians, if possible, the 78th Reserve Division was to advance across the river to the east. Meanwhile, General von Lauenstein had the security line south of Cirgaloa withdraw about ten kilometers westward during the night of May 19, as the left wing of the 10th Army was still behind. At the same time, the situation north of Schawlen intensified. Airmen had identified about one and a half Russian divisions advancing from the northeast against the Kurschany—Libau line. General von Morgen withdrew his troops on May 19 to the Buhje—Windau Canal—Trischt line and northwest; he was to cover the rear of the impending German attack on the Dubissa. In any case, the less mobile parts of the artillery deployed in Libau began to be withdrawn.

On the night of May 20, Major General von Müller led his 78th Reserve Division, reinforced by cavalry, northeast of Rossienie to attack through a ford across the Dubissa. The surprise succeeded; 800 prisoners were captured. Before the advancing new enemy, General von Lauenstein withdrew the division back to the west bank the following night. Meanwhile, the left wing of the 10th Army approached behind the retreating enemy at the mouth of the Dubissa.

Meanwhile, General von Falkenhayn thought on May 20 that it had become known to him that the Commander-in-Chief East, with reinforcement by two army corps, considered it possible "to force the final decision in our struggle against Russia."

1) See Div. of Major General Beckmann (Commander of the 80th R. D.), reserves of the Dubissa section, 1st R. D., 17th and 39th R. Br.

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Such a configuration of circumstances would be of utmost value given the danger posed by Falken, which he need not elaborate further. He therefore asked how the implementation was planned and whether it could be foreseen when significant forces would again be available for other tasks. The Commander-in-Chief East immediately replied that a final decision against Russia could not be guaranteed even with the transfer of two additional army corps. However, it would be possible to conduct "effective tactical strikes" through their deployment (at least of the three newly formed divisions at his front). An attack to destroy the Russian forces fighting north of the Njemen, estimated at seven to eight divisions, or a breakthrough on the Ralnaija—Marjampol line would be possible. He also expected favorable winds to greatly benefit their deployment with the 9th Army, where a gas attack was being prepared. He could not specify an exact time when these forces would again be free for other tasks. If he received no reinforcements, the 9th Army could free up at least one division after conducting the gas attack; another division could be released if the currently occupied Russian territory north of the Njemen west of Libau were evacuated. Given the current strong Russian troop concentration, an entire corps could only be spared there if the surrender of the Memel district were accepted. For direct discussion of all these issues, Lieutenant General Ludendorff would come to Pleß, if desired.

The result of a meeting held on May 23, the day of Italy's declaration of war on Austria-Hungary, in Pleß was that large new operations in the area of the Commander-in-Chief East were not currently considered. The need to maintain the current front line had to be reconciled as much as possible with the necessity of freeing up additional troops for the Supreme Army Command, for which General Ludendorff was quite willing. In accordance with his offer, the three newly formed divisions (101st, 103rd, and 105th Infantry Divisions) were to be withdrawn in the coming days, with five more to follow gradually: the 3rd Infantry Division from the Army Group Gallwitz and the 41st from the 8th Army upon the arrival of 15 to 18 mobile Landsturm battalions that General von Falkenhayn had promised, a newly formed 107th Infantry Division, a division from the 9th Army after the gas attack, and a division after the completion of the border defense position Turborg—Tauroggen—Polangen.

1) p. 117. — 2) p. 133.  
3) The accompanying General Staff officer, Captain von Waldow, wrote about it in his diary on May 24: "It was so nice how General Ludendorff said: 'I gladly give, and I only know that it will be used in the right place for victory. It was he himself who offered the divisions to the Army Command."

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Negotiations with the Supreme Army Command.

After the departure of the last five divisions,

the Commander-in-Chief East emphasized in a report dated May 25,

he would have "no reserves available to balance difficult combat situations."

He then had only about 34 divisions for the approximately

850-kilometer stretched front, which mostly counted only three regiments,

while in April he had 38 divisions for 750 kilometers with four regiments and even increased and stronger

artillery). This weakening could not be compensated by the increased

allocation of machine guns and advances in position,

especially obstacle construction, as with the beginning of the dry season many previously impassable terrain

sections for attacks by the local Russians no longer posed obstacles.

Despite these extensive troop withdrawals, the fight north

of the Njemen was to continue according to the Supreme Army Command.

The enemy had pushed forward west of the lower

Dubissa in recent days and entrenched himself north of Rossienie on the

western riverbank. At the same time, he had attacked the Morgen Corps in

the front and from the north comprehensively. The leader had thought of

retreating, but General von Lauenstein insisted on holding

and counterattacking with his own left wing. The operations

brought 1,400 prisoners on May 22. The danger at this point was

initially averted. Meanwhile, north of Rossienie on the Dubissa,

the division Beckmann, supplied by the 10th Army, intervened. On

May 24, they managed to push the enemy back across the river,

3,200 prisoners and ten machine guns remained in German hands.

General von Lauenstein now wanted to also clear up the situation at the lower course of the

Dubissa.

Meanwhile, a change in command occurred.

With the growth of the Army Group Lauenstein, more and more the need arose to replace the commanding general command with a higher authority.

1) p. 103.

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In the report that the Commander-in-Chief East submitted to the Supreme Army Command, he particularly expressed that General von Lauenstein had led the previous operations to full satisfaction. In four weeks of uninterrupted, strenuous marches and battles, his troops had captured a total of about 20,000 prisoners, 16 guns, and 40 machine guns. About five and a half German infantry and three and a half cavalry divisions had, as far as was known, drawn eight to nine Russian infantry and four and a half cavalry divisions upon themselves.

e) Battles of the 10th and Njemen Army, May 25 to July 2.

On May 25, the Commander-in-Chief East transferred command of the now-called "Njemen Army" troop formation north of the Njemen to General Otto von Below with the staff of Army High Command 8. Initially, this was only intended as a temporary state, which was to be changed again after the conclusion of the battles on this front. The command of the 8th Army was transferred for this time to the commanding general of the XX Army Corps, General of Artillery von Scholtz. General von Below received verbal instructions during the passage through Lötzen to "hold and exploit the area north of the Njemen as long as possible and to inflict as much damage as possible on the enemy"; if the current line became untenable, the army should fall back to the border position, which could only be expanded in about 14 days; the fortress of Kowno should not be abandoned without the express permission of the Commander-in-Chief East. When General von Below took command in Tilsit on the evening of May 26, a serious setback had just occurred on the right wing of the Morgen Corps, as the 6th Reserve Division had lost the strong position at Bujhe and had been pushed back about six kilometers westward; it had lost over 2000 men, the majority of whom were prisoners. General von Morgen wanted to retake what was lost the next day through a counterattack. Parts of the cavalry corps Richthofen, which was connected to the south, were to participate. But also on the southern flank, the Russian pressure had increased to such an extent that General von Lauenstein had already ordered the 36th Reserve Division on May 24 to extend further west if necessary and at the same time to create space for a thrust, which the 78th Reserve Division on the western Dubissa bank from north to south should lead.

1) p. 121.

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Formation of the Njemen Army and Their First Battles.

General von Lauenstein himself now took command of the parts deployed south of the cavalry corps (36th Reserve Division, Siebend Detachment, 78th Reserve Division, and Beckmann Division) and thus also the execution of the impending attack here. More than four Russian infantry divisions seemed to be facing him.

On May 27, the counterattack against Bubie was unsuccessful. General von Morgen wanted to withdraw his heavily exhausted southern flank further, but General von Below refused permission; the current line was to be held. It ran roughly halfway between Bubie and Szawlany from southeast to northwest from the Dubissa to the Windau.

In the Lauenstein group, the attack on May 27 brought some successes, and on May 28, the enemy retreated significantly, losing more than 3000 prisoners; however, his southern flank was still able to hold a 20-kilometer-wide area west of the Dubissa.

The German line now stood at the same level as the left wing of the 10th Army. Otherwise, the days passed with skirmishes here and there along the more than 200-kilometer-long army front.

By May 28, the enemy had already re-established himself south of Kielmy on the western bank of the Dubissa and had taken four guns from the German militia. On the other hand, he evacuated the western bank of the lower Dubissa on May 30. On June 1, he unsuccessfully attempted to advance further at Schawlen, losing 500 prisoners in the process.

Here, General von Below expected further attacks. He intended to deploy reinforcements arriving from the border (2nd Cavalry Division, 72nd Reserve Infantry Brigade of the I Reserve Corps, and some independent units) on the northern flank of the Morgen group so that they could intervene as soon as the enemy continued his offensive. At the same time, he withdrew the Beckmann Division from the front at the Dubissa to counter the expected Russian attack from the south. However, if the enemy delayed until all reinforcements arrived, General von Below intended to go on the offensive himself and lead it in the direction of Schawlen. The fact that the enemy re-established himself at several points on the western bank of the lower Dubissa on June 2 did not change these intentions. Since he remained calm in front of General von Morgen's group, General von Below now intended to launch a comprehensive attack from the south. Lieutenant General von Richthofen was entrusted with the leadership. On June 4, the Beckmann Division advanced over the Dubissa along the Windau at Bulowiany, but initially had only five battalions at hand and was therefore able to resist only slight opposition on the eastern bank, gaining little ground.

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The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

on the east bank, only little ground was gained. By the evening of June 6, however, the Richthofen Group had established a foothold on the eastern Dubissa bank over more than 20 kilometers in width and about 10 kilometers in depth. Meanwhile, on the night of June 5, both wings of the Morgen Group had also launched an attack and were successful. Above all, by the evening of June 6, the commanding heights of Buhie east of the Dubissa were encircled and retaken; 5000 prisoners were brought in.

At the same time, south of the Njemen, the left wing of the 10th Army under General Litzmann (79th Reserve Division, 1st and 4th Cavalry Division) had penetrated the Kownoer Forest. Generaloberst von Eichhorn hoped to force further parts of the Russian front to retreat by swinging this group southward.

General von Below now wanted to expand his successes into a breakthrough through the Russian front, with the Richthofen Group turning south and the Morgen Group carrying out the attack on Schaulen. To this end, the Commander-in-Chief East noted in his war diary: Even if a concentrated deployment of all available forces on the northern wing (left wing of the Morning) had promised greater success from the outset, he did not misjudge the development of the situation. If the Njemen Army, which now reports an apparent weakening of the enemy, wanted to achieve the decision by pushing southeast and northeast, the Commander-in-Chief did not want to intervene; but only against a defeated enemy could the breakthrough with these weak forces have lasting success. General von Below himself was full of confidence and hoped, in further operations, to gain support with the left wing at Mitau from the lowland area of the Aa and thus from the Riga Gulf, in order to then concentrate forces for further operations behind the center of his entire front. The Commander-in-Chief East agreed with these thoughts. The northern wing of the 10th Army had also made further progress and was approaching the outer positions of the fortress in the Kownoer Forest. A new gas attack was imminent with the 9th Army. In Galicia, Przemysl was recaptured and the last stand reached. Thus, the Commander-in-Chief East now viewed the overall situation hopefully. Lieutenant General Ludendorff explained to Colonel Tappen: "After the decisive victories in Galicia and the recent successes of the Njemen Army, it seems to me beyond doubt that by deploying just two more divisions north of the Njemen, we can achieve a success there that will significantly contribute to the destruction of the Russian army.

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Successes near Kowno and in Lithuania.

On June 14, the Commander-in-Chief East of the Njemen Army ordered that the current position be held until the reinforcements, expected in about a week, arrived, then the army should "through a wide encirclement of the enemy's right flank, defeat the forces in front of it while securing against Riga" and further destroy the railways leading eastwards from the Samro—Mitau line up to and including the Wilna—Dünaburg—Riga route. Whether only cavalry divisions reinforced by infantry or the entire army would need to be deployed for this would depend on the war situation; however, "the possibility should be considered and a march of the army north past Kowno should be prepared." On June 16, however, it became doubtful whether the two promised divisions would still be claimed by the Supreme Army Command for other purposes¹).

Meanwhile, the German attacks by the 10th Army continued and increasingly dominated southwards. On June 15, an operation led by Lieutenant General Elstermann von Elster of the 76th Reserve Division at Kalvarja captured 2000 prisoners. In accordance with the assigned task, General Litzmann repeatedly set new attack objectives in mobile warfare. However, the strength of the troops began to wane. The attempt to break through south of Kalvarja to roll up the Russian position to the south resulted on June 18 in only minor territorial gains but heavy losses.

On June 20, the Commander-in-Chief East reported on the overall situation to the Supreme Army Command: The gas attack by the 9th Army, on which the release of another division depended, had to be postponed due to unfavorable winds²). The operations assigned to the Gallwitz Army Group³) to tie down the enemy continued, and the 8th Army⁴) was no longer capable of attacking due to its composition. "The 10th Army has encountered strong enemy positions; however, it will be able to hold the gained territory. The Njemen Army has a strong enemy in front of it." Further Russian troop movements against this army were to be expected but could not be prevented. Under these circumstances, the Commander-in-Chief East again requested the right to deploy the 3rd and 41st Infantry Divisions, whose gradual withdrawal from the previous section began today, and added: "I would thus be able to hold the land north of the Njemen as well, and in the best case, strike here; otherwise, I would likely be forced to give up territorial gains north of the Njemen." Now General von Fal-

¹) p. 244. — ²) p. 123 and 136 ff. — ³) C. 137 f. — ⁴) C. 104.

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The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

Now General von Falkenhayn released the two divisions. At the 10th Army, the German attacks continued to advance further south. On June 15, an operation led by Lieutenant General Elstermann von Elster of the 76th Reserve Division at Kalvarja captured 2000 prisoners. In accordance with the task set, General Litzmann repeatedly set new attack targets in mobile warfare. However, the strength of the troops began to wane. The attempt to break through south of Kalvarja to roll up the Russian positions to the south led on June 18 only to minor territorial gains but to heavy losses.

On June 20, the Commander-in-Chief East reported on the overall situation to the Supreme Army Command: The gas attack of the 9th Army, on which the release of another division depended, had to be postponed due to unfavorable winds²). The operations assigned to the Gallwitz Army Group³) to tie down the enemy continued, the 8th Army⁴) was no longer capable of attacking after its reorganization. "10th Army has encountered strong enemy positions; however, it will be able to hold the gained territory. Njemen Army has strong enemy forces in front of it." Further Russian troop movements against this army were to be expected but could not be prevented. Under these circumstances, the Commander-in-Chief East again requested the right to dispose of the 3rd and 41st Infantry Divisions, whose gradual relief in the previous section began today, and added: "I would thus be able to hold the land north of the Njemen, in the best case to strike here; otherwise, I would probably be forced to give up territorial gains north of the Njemen." Now General von Falkenhayn released the two divisions.

¹) p. 244. — ²) p. 123 and 136 ff. — ³) p. 137 f. — ⁴) p. 104.

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Further Plans Against Kowno and Lithuania.

kenhavn released the two divisions. In the staff of the Commander-in-Chief East,

there was renewed activity and full of hope in preparing the future operations in the Njemen area). Regarding further intentions, it is stated in the war diary under June 20, the enemy is "slowly but inexorably shifting his forces to our left wing." The thrust of the Njemen Army should be directed against the enemy's right wing with the two divisions combined, not before early July. Whether the 1st Guard Reserve Division from the Gallwitz Army Group could also be brought in was being considered. "Assessment of the overall situation: This pressure on the Russian northern flank is all the more promising as the main forces of the enemy are tied up and severely shaken in Galicia."

The Commander-in-Chief East also considered the possibility of taking the fortress of Kowno. For a discussion about this idea, first suggested by General Litzmann, the First General Staff Officer of the 10th Army, Major Keller, was called to Lötzen on June 21. There he was informed that the 3rd Infantry Division, heavy batteries, and siege formations could be made available so that they would be ready in front of the fortress by early July. In view of reports about the small number and combat strength of the garrison, the inferiority of the artillery equipment, and the moral impact of the heavy blows suffered in Galicia, the Commander-in-Chief East considered it possible to take the fortress by coup de main and strong artillery preparation under certain circumstances. However, no noticeable setback should occur; the operation should rather be initiated in such a way that, in the event of the coup de main failing, the troops seemed to be prepared for the initiation of a planned siege. Major Keller, on behalf of Generaloberst von Eichhorn, acknowledged the possibility of a coup de main, but the forces seemed very small in the face of the danger of flanking from both sides. He therefore suggested rolling up the enemy front over Simno to the south or breaking through over Preny against the Wilna railway; for both operations, the deployment of a fresh army corps was necessary. The latter operation promised, incidentally, a more intense and faster effect against the Russian front in Poland than the deployment of additional forces north of the Njemen. However, the Commander-in-Chief East ordered, subject to any changes, to prepare the coup de main against Kowno.

1) Diary entry of the current Colonel von Waldow from June 21, 1915.

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The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

For the 10th and Njemen Armies, the days until July 2 were spent preparing for the deployment of the promised reinforcements. For the 10th Army, a well-executed local attack by the brigade of Colonel Baron Diepen von Monteton on July 1 at Kalwaria captured more than 700 prisoners. In the Njemen Army, the enemy was pushed back slightly on the northern flank of Group Morgen at the middle Windau with the deployment of the newly arrived 8th Cavalry Division from the 9th Army. Here, the enemy seemed to be preparing for further retreat. A general staff officer of the Commander-in-Chief East wrote on June 27: "We still cannot explain a report from yesterday: In the area of Frauenburg, everything is supposed to be burning, and everything is being hastily evacuated from Windau. Either the Russians are retreating there and destroying all goods and supplies, or a revolutionary movement is being diverted to the poor Germans... In Riga, all factories are being relocated to the interior of the Reich."

The navy also prepared for the continuation of operations in Courland, where it could play an important role. On June 23, it was pointed out by the Supreme Army Command that "later action against Riga is within the realm of possibility." With this and in view of the lack of any railway connection from the German border to the Russian cross-line Wilna—Schavllen—Libau, the importance of Libau now came more to the fore. The port was developed to the extent that it could withstand any Russian attack and was thus an important base for the left army wing as well as for the Baltic Sea forces. The Commander-in-Chief East wanted to hold it under all circumstances, as he reported to the Supreme Army Command on June 21, constantly stationing two older battleships there. In the future, Libau was also considered for supplying the left wing of the Njemen Army. The commissioning of the railways leading from here to Schavllen and Mitau could facilitate the deployment of stronger forces in this army and an advancing offensive. However, since the enemy had secured almost all usable material, German locomotives and freight cars were brought to Libau by sea on June 28. A danger remained, however, the route to there, which was occasionally made unsafe by Russian submarines. Otherwise, the Russians also showed themselves to be more active at sea, leading to a naval engagement on July 2 off the east coast of the Swedish island of Gotland at Desterzarn, which, although not decisive, resulted in unpleasant losses for the German side.

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Reflections.

f) Measures of the Russians.

The task of the Russian "Riga-Schaullen Group"²), deployed north of the Njemen and gradually reinforced, was to prevent the Germans from advancing in the coastal area, especially against Riga, which, with 400,000 inhabitants and an industry rich by Russian standards, was politically and economically significant. It simultaneously protected the route to Petersburg. When the German advance began at the end of April, cavalry was added to the Riga-Schaullen Group as reinforcement, then infantry, and finally, as the forces grew, a special army command was established north of the Njemen, similar to the German side.

A proven army leader, General Plehwe, received command on June 5th over the troops now consolidated into the "5th Army," at that time totaling 8½ infantry and 7 cavalry divisions³) and the fortress Dünamünde. The army, which was reinforced by only 3½ divisions in the following weeks, was to "protect as large an area as possible against exploitation by the enemy with relatively weak forces" and, if possible, gradually push them back.

By mid-June, about 5½ German divisions faced more than 13 Russian divisions, and five against eight cavalry divisions. The German leadership succeeded in diverting far superior enemy forces from the main theater of war with minimal own effort and capturing about 40,000 prisoners in total⁴). The battles were conducted by both sides over a wide area and without a pronounced focus. On the Russian side, General Alexeyev, the commander-in-chief of the Northwestern Front, sharply criticized this type of warfare and attributed the lack of success to it. On the German side, the commander-in-chief of the East expressed a similar opinion on June 7th⁵). However, whether anything decisive or even significantly better could be achieved in view of the massively increased Russian superiority with the most concentrated German forces remains uncertain.

¹) Naval Warfare, Baltic Sea, Volume II, p. 173 ff.  
²) G. 113.  
³) III., XIX., XXXVII. Corps, 6th S. D., 1st Cauc. and 3rd Turk. Rifle Brig., independent.  
J. Brig. XIII. — 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 15th R. D., 2nd Rud. Roj. D., 4th independent R. Brig. and Uss. Cavalry Brig.  
⁴) G. 124. — ⁵) G. 126.

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The Front of the Supreme Commander East until July 2.

It repeatedly showed that the striking power of the deployed troops was insufficient for blows that penetrated deeply. Supported by its railways, the enemy could move its troops relatively quickly, supply them conveniently, and reinforce threatened positions in time, while on the German side, every man, every shell, and every ration had to cover about 100 kilometers of land from the German railway to reach the front.

3. Events with the 9th Army, Army Group Gallwitz

and 8th Army in May and June.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketch 12.

After the victory at Gorlice and the German breakthrough into the area north of the Njemen, the 9th Army¹) had been waiting with the utmost attention for the moment when these successes would also affect the Russian front advancing far to the west, west of the Vistula. Vigorous aerial reconnaissance, patrol activities, and monitoring of enemy radio telegraphy, however, only revealed the picture of increased movements behind the positions up to the Vistula and offered no indication that the enemy intended to withdraw or significantly weaken his front. He continued to occupy his combat positions. A strong day's march behind these, aircraft had identified long-established rear installations at Grojec and Blonie, which barred the approach to the Vistula and Warsaw and had a northern connection to the large fortress of Nowogeorgiewsk.

At the beginning of May, the transport of a Russian division²) became known. The necessary contributions for the formation of our own new divisions balanced what the enemy withdrew, at least. The question of whether to launch an attack was denied, as the forces were insufficient for a major offensive, and small local successes would not justify the inevitable casualties. Above all, there was a lack of ammunition, as supplies had been extremely restricted due to the increased demand from other fronts. By May 12, the success in Galicia had expanded so far that the enemy also began to retreat before the Army Detachment Woyrsch³).

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Situation West of the Vistula and Preparations for the Gas Attack.

The following day, their left wing approached south of the Pilica to the forward position of the 9th Army north of the river. The 29th Landwehr Brigade, thus freed, was immediately claimed by the Commander-in-Chief East for the battles at the Njemen1). On May 14, the newly established Pioneer Regiment 36 was made available to the 9th Army as a gas troop. Its sector seemed particularly suitable for gas release, as it faced east, which corresponded to the foreseeable wind direction, and because the distance to the enemy trenches was shorter than in other parts of the Eastern Front. The experiences with the new weapon (recently made before Ypres2)) suggested that with favorable wind, such an effect could be expected that the Army High Command hoped to be able to break through the Russian positions smoothly. At Ypres, only the forces had been lacking to exploit the surprisingly favorable local success. The 9th Army now intended to deploy a total of 2½ army corps for the operation; the only question was where the thrust should be directed and what goal should be given to it. On May 16, the northern wing of the Army Division Woyrsch had reached the same level as the right wing of the 9th Army standing at Domaniowice on the north bank of the Pilica. The simultaneous left swing that this army had carried out behind the retreating enemy had, however, only reached as far as the extension of the 9th Army to southeastern Poland; an encirclement of the enemy in the area west of the Vistula had therefore not yet been achieved. Nevertheless, a general retreat of the Russians from this area came within the realm of possibility. In such a case, the Commander-in-Chief East did not want to let the 9th Army pursue, but rather withdraw troops to use them at the Njemen, where the enemy at this time apparently attacked with strong forces3), presumably to relieve a retreat movement planned in western Poland. Here, however, the enemy still stood for a while. On May 18, the 9th Army reported that it intended to install the gas cylinders in the area east of the Rawka near Sumin, which had been so often and hotly contested, in the section of the XVII Army Corps. In view of the high expectations attached to the effect of the gas, and to maintain the element of surprise, it was decided to forego artillery attack preparations. With favorable winds, the gas was to be released on the morning of May 23, and if all went well, immediately followed by a breakthrough with 2½ army corps on Blonie.

1) p. 120. — 2) p. 35 ff. — 3) p. 120.

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The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

In contrast, the Commander-in-Chief East determined that it was less about "pushing forward to the Blonie position" and more about "achieving the greatest possible tactical success by pushing southward." In the attack, the main thrust was assigned to the XVII Army Corps, with a division from neighboring sectors joining on the right and left. The Army High Command had an infantry division and a cavalry brigade ready as reserves. The Gallwitz Army Group was instructed to engage the enemy with its own operations so that he could not send reserves to the breakthrough point.

By May 22, preparations were complete, but the attack had to be postponed due to east winds.

Only on the afternoon of May 30 did the weather conditions with favorable winds for the coming night become apparent. The order to prepare for the attack was given; about 12,000 gas cylinders were installed. Of the 52 heavy batteries with the army, about 20 were ready to act in the entire twelve-kilometer-wide attack area. Field Marshal Prince Leopold went to the command post west of Bolimow. On May 31, at 2:30 a.m., the gas was released; the cloud moved towards the Russian positions. Half an hour later, however, the XVII Army Corps reported that the gas had apparently passed over the enemy too quickly, and grenade troops had been halted by Russian fire. To advance, the infantry demanded thorough artillery preparation. The Army High Command called off the attack. Expectations had been disappointed. As early as May 28, the Supreme Army Command had stated to the Commander-in-Chief East in another context: "To carry out our operations against Warsaw, the forces now standing at Bzura and Rawka will suffice if the gas means hold up to some extent what can be expected from it based on previous performances." However, it had not had nearly the effect that the troops had hoped for based on the experiences communicated to them. They were only equipped with very inadequate gas protection means and therefore had 56 gas casualties out of a total loss of 374 men. It was considered possible that the Russians had been warned beforehand and had used protective measures. The main reason for the failure of the still little-tested combat means was seen in the fact that strong, gusty winds had already dispersed the gas cloud, which was not dense enough due to too slow a release and had been torn up and driven too quickly over the foremost enemy trenches.

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The Gas Attacks of the 9th Army.

torn and just driven too quickly over the foremost enemy trenches).

The Commander-in-Chief East considered it expedient, in agreement with

the Supreme Army Command, to repeat the gas attack as soon as possible;

by June 7th, filled bottles could be ready again; the goal should be to inflict

as many losses as possible on the enemy. To prevent another failure, he

secured the allocation of ample ammunition to supplement the gas effect

if necessary. The Army High Command 9 pointed out to its divisions that

the entire success should not be expected from the gas and that the path

to victory is most securely paved by the determined initiative of leaders

of all ranks and the fearless bravery of the troops. The use of the gas

bottles was limited to a three-kilometer-wide area at the Sucha, directly

at its confluence with the Bzura. After the 22nd Infantry Division had

been transferred to the front in Galicia, General von Pannewitz was to

lead the attack only with the XVII Army Corps and 1/5 Reserve Division

from the Beseler Group. However, significant sapper work was still

necessary to create favorable conditions for the release, so the execution

was delayed by a few days.

On June 12th, at 3 a.m., after prolonged artillery fire, General von

Pannewitz gave the order to release the gas, but withdrew it five minutes

later due to a change in wind direction. Meanwhile, about 4500 of the

installed gas bottles, a good third, had already been emptied. Despite

these inconsistencies, the operation was successful. By noon, infantry

of the XVII Army Corps and the 5th Reserve Division had broken into

the enemy position in the Sucha-Bzura angle over a width of six kilometers

and advanced up to three kilometers. 1660 prisoners, eight guns, and nine

machine guns were captured. With a total own loss of 1100 men, about

350 gas casualties were counted again. However, the moral impact on the

Russians seemed to have been great; they fled when they saw the gas cloud approaching“).

1) According to a statement by a later captured prisoner, the Russians   
are said to have had 1200 dead and 3100 men with other gas losses; other   
statements mentioned even higher numbers.  
2) See p. 123.

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The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

Upon receiving the report on the outcome, the Commander-in-Chief East inquired on the evening of June 12 about further intentions and offered the choice: either a determined continuation of the attack or the provision of strong forces for transport, considering deployment north of the Njemen. After the 9th Army had expressed its support for continuing the attack, the Commander-in-Chief East limited their contributions to the 8th Cavalry Division and ordered the attack to be "vigorously continued." However, this should only be carried out in the future with truly favorable winds.

Field Marshal Leopold Prince of Bavaria intended to extend the previous breach point southward to Humina. The fact that the enemy had reportedly brought about two new divisions into the attacked section was welcomed from the standpoint of the overall situation on the Eastern Front. It also did not influence the decision of the 9th Army. They wanted to continue the attack using the gas, from whose effect they had now gained such a favorable impression that they expected an even greater success than on June 12. However, on June 17 and again on June 19, the already prepared attack had to be abandoned due to a change in the wind. Waiting for the wind with filled gas cylinders in the trench became a severe test for officers and men.

After Lemberg was taken on June 22, the Commander-in-Chief East considered the possibility of further Russian retreats also in West Poland; the 9th Army was initially to keep them at bay with increased artillery fire. While the Russians then retreated on June 24 before the right wing of the Army Group Woyrsch and the southern adjoining Austro-Hungarian 1st Army, they still stood before the main front of Colonel General von Woyrsch. Thus, they still held a line west of the Vistula, which in its overall course ran from Ilza via Opatow to Sochaczew, forming a slightly westward-curved arc that could hardly be effectively enveloped.

1) The VI Siberian Corps, previously stationed there, was soon withdrawn. According to the war diary of the Commander-in-Chief East on July 3, it seemed to have suffered so much from the gas attack that it was initially no longer considered for tactical use. In fact, it was transferred to the combat front at Lublin and was already deployed there again from July 5.  
2) p. 130. — 3) p. 234. — 4) p. 254.

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Weakening of the 9th Army. — Army Group Gallwitz and 8th Army.

At the beginning of June, Przemysl was retaken, the attack on both sides of the Njemen made progress, and the new gas attack of the 9th Army was imminent. The Commander-in-Chief East had also ordered offensive operations for Army Group Gallwitz and the 8th Army to "hold the enemy and cause him damage." They brought Army Group Gallwitz by the end of June, alongside some territorial gains, a total of 1500 prisoners, but also considerable own losses. The gains for the 8th Army were even smaller. It was also not possible to prevent the transport of enemy forces. Overall, the Russians were able to withdraw five divisions of infantry from the East Prussian southern front in June, and even 15 divisions since the beginning of May, and transfer them to other fronts.

1) In total, apart from the newly formed units, the following had been transferred since mid-April: 6th R. D. to Army Group Lauenstein, 29th Ldw. Br. to 10th Army, 22nd I. D. to Supreme Army Command, 8th R. D. to Njemen Army. In the front on June 30 were still: 35th, 36th I. D., 49th and 50th R. D. (p. 132). — 2) As emphasized by General Ludendorff in a letter from December 1931 to the Reichsarchiv. Other reports are missing.  
4) pp. 104 and 106. — Transfers were made: from Army Group Gallwitz, end of May 9th Ldw. Br. to 10th Army, 2nd R. D. to Njemen Army, end of June 3rd G. D. to 10th Army; from the 8th Army end of April parts of the 4th R. D. to Army Group Lauenstein and b. u. Front; in May about one reinforced Br., end of June 41st S. D. to Njemen Army.

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The Front of the Commander-in-Chief East until July 2.

In June, when Przemysl was retaken, the attack on both sides of the Njemen made progress and the new gas attack of the 9th Army was imminent, the Commander-in-Chief East also ordered the Army Group Gallwitz and the 8th Army to undertake offensive operations to "hold the enemy and cause him damage." By the end of June, they brought the Army Group Gallwitz, in addition to some territorial gains, a total of 1500 prisoners, but also suffered significant own losses. The gain for the 8th Army was even smaller. It was also not possible to prevent the transport of enemy forces. Overall, the Russians were able to withdraw five divisions of infantry from the East Prussian southern front in June, and since the beginning of May, even 15 divisions, and redeploy them to other fronts.

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B. The Summer Campaign of the Allies in Galicia.

1. The Forcing of the San Crossing at Jaroslaw from May 14 to 20.

According to the agreement made by the Chief of the General Staff of the allied armies on May 12 in Pleß, the pursuit operation in Galicia was initially to be continued up to the San-Wisznia line and against the upper Dniester. It was expected that strong resistance from the enemy would still have to be overcome. Once these sections were firmly in hand, further actions on the Galician battlefield were to be made dependent on the developments on the eastern flank. This was of particular importance in view of Romania's uncertain stance. If it was possible, through the advance of the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army and the German South Army south of the Dniester, to bring the Russian offensive directed against the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army in Eastern Galicia and Bukovina to a standstill, then the aim was to limit to holding the San-Wisznia-Dniester section. In this case, General von Falkenhayn intended to withdraw the 11th Army for other uses and leave it to the Austro-Hungarian military leadership to decide whether and to what extent they still wanted to pursue with their own troops (including the German 47th Reserve Division and the Beskid Corps). However, if the pressure exerted by the armies advancing from the Carpathian front proved insufficient to bring about a decisive change in the situation in Eastern Galicia and Bukovina, the continuation of the operation beyond the San and Dniester was envisaged, with the right wing of the 11th Army to take the direction towards Lemberg. General von Falkenhayn saw in such a development a welcome opportunity to deliver another blow to the Russians, should they falter, that would paralyze their offensive power for a long time. The Austro-Hungarian Chief of the General Staff considered, as he wrote to General von Falkenhayn on May 14, even "the vigorous joint continuation of the war against Russia necessary, with the minimum goal of regaining the territory of the monarchy and the territory of Russian Poland on the left bank of the Vistula to be ceded to us as compensation for the territorial concessions to Italy."

1) Volume VII, p. 426.

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However, the idea of continuing the operation in this way was subject to the reservation dictated by the political situation that Italy's entry into the war and the unforeseeable effects of this event on the attitudes of Romania and Bulgaria could necessitate completely different decisions.

In any case, the next operational goal in Galicia, which was to be pursued regardless of the political dangers lying in the future, was the attainment and securing of the San—Wisznia—Dniester section.

The main thrust was again to come from the 11th Army¹) and be directed against the "San downwards Przemysl"²).

From intercepted radio messages, it was known that in this section the Russian 3rd Army of General Radko Dmitrijew had reestablished its front³). The XII Corps was stationed in and north of the fortress of Przemysl. Further San bridgeheads were occupied, at Radymno by the XXI, at Jaroslaw by the XXIV, and at Sieniawa by the III Caucasian Corps. The San front to the north and in the San—Vistula angle southeast of Sandomierz were the X and IX Corps had retreated. The XV Corps was on the march there. Southward adjoining the 3rd stood the Russian 8th Army of General Brussilow in the line Przemysl—Dobromil and continued the Carpathian valleys running northeast. North of the Vistula, the Russian 4th Army of General Ewret had bent its southern flank further back into the area of Sandomierz.

The deployment of the armies set against this new enemy front had been completed as planned by May 13⁴). Generaloberst von Mackensen issued the attack order for the two armies under his command at 6 p.m.: "The 11th Army advances and crosses the San on both sides of Jaroslaw. The 4th Army follows on the left across the river and secures the left flank of the 11th Army."

¹) The 11th Army consisted of: Guard Corps (1st and 2nd G. S. D.), X. A. K. (19th, 20th J. S. D.), XXXXIst R. R. (81st, 82nd gr. D.), 11th Bavarian J. D., 56th S. D., 119th S. D., Austro-Hungarian VI Corps (Austro-Hungarian 12th, Hungarian 39th S. D.).  
²) Volume VII, p. 426.  
³) Volume VII, p. 425.  
⁴) Volume VII, pp. 426, 427.  
⁵) The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army consisted of: IX Corps (Austro-Hungarian 10th, Austrian 106th J. D.), XIV Corps (Austro-Hungarian 3rd and 8th S. D.), Kirchbach Corps (German 47th R. D., Austro-Hungarian combined Div. Stöger-Steiner), Austrian 21st S. D., Hungarian 37th and 41st S. D., H. J. Br. Szende, Hungarian 11th S. D., Austro-Hungarian 42nd R. D.

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Deployment against the San.

One had to expect stubborn resistance according to the available reports1). Therefore, Generaloberst von Mackensen wanted to conduct the attack systematically. From May 14 to 16, reconnaissance, deployment, and artillery firing were to take place, and the assault was to be carried out on May 17. This was the earliest time that could be chosen considering the difficulties of supply2). The main focus of the 11th Army's attack was on both sides of Jaroslaw, where the Austro-Hungarian VI and the Guard Corps were deployed in a narrow space, with the 56th Infantry Division Army Reserve behind them. To be able to bring in the strongest possible forces, including the XXXXI Reserve Corps, for the decisive attack against the San line, the cover against Przemysl was assigned to the newly formed Kneussl Corps (11th Bavarian and 119th Infantry Division). The exemplary X Army Corps advancing with the Guard was also responsible for protecting against the Russian bridgehead from Sieniawa in addition to participating in the attack towards the Lubaczowka mouth. The departure of strong enemy columns to the east, observed by aircraft on the afternoon of May 13, made it doubtful, contrary to previous assumptions, whether the Russians would still offer sustained resistance at the San. Therefore, the Army High Command also pointed out that "under no circumstances should the opportunity be missed to follow the retreating enemy immediately and thus perhaps take the section without great sacrifices." The previous hesitation, which was the measure of the operation, should also be maintained in this case. The neighboring Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army3) set its left wing to attack the west and south front of Przemysl. Its right wing, the German Beskid Corps of the Cavalry General von der Marwitz, was to advance over Dobromil to Mosciska to cut the rear connections of the fortress. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army4) was to continue the advance over the line Chyrow—Sambor—Horodyszcze. On May 14, the movements of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd and the 11th Army reached the immediate area of influence of the Przemysl fortress. Thus, they could have a significant impact on the further course of events.

1) Volume VII, p. 426. 2) Volume VII, p. 428. 3) Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army consisted of: VII Corps (Austro-Hungarian 17th, Hungarian 20th Infantry Division), X Corps (Austro-Hungarian 24th, Austrian 45th Infantry Division), XVII Corps (Austro-Hungarian 2nd and 11th, Austrian 26th Infantry Division), Hungarian 1st Landsturm Division, Austro-Hungarian 1st and 4th Cavalry Division, German Beskid Corps (Austrian 3rd Cavalry Division). 4) Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army consisted of: IX Corps (Austro-Hungarian 10th, Hungarian 13th and 33rd Infantry Division), XVIII Corps (Austro-Hungarian 41st, Austrian 42nd and 44th Infantry Division), IV Corps (Austro-Hungarian 27th, Austrian 31st and Hungarian 51st Infantry Division), XIX Corps (Austro-Hungarian 29th and 34th Infantry Division).

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However, the High Command of the 3rd Army hoped to take the southwestern front of the fortress by surprise, and the High Command of the 11th Army was also reinforced by new aerial reports in the early morning of May 14, believing that the enemy would not only abandon the San line but also Przemysl.

To cover the southern flank of the attacking 11th Army against the fortress, the 119th Infantry Division of Major General von Behr was advanced immediately north of the San to west of Korzynski. In front of them were still detachments of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army. The 11th Bavarian Infantry Division under Major General Ritter von Kneußl gained the eastern exits of the forest and mountain terrain northwest of Przemysl. The XXXII Reserve Corps reached the line Kaszyce-Chlopice-Morawinsko in its advance on Radymno. The enemy held forward fortification groups over the fortress area and apparently prepared positions in the hills west of Rada and forward Ostrow. The two corps assigned to the main attack on Jaroslaw advanced in sections. The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps had early determined that the enemy strongly occupied the high ground south of Jaroslaw and the castle southwest of the city. Field Marshal Lieutenant von Arz wanted to lead his divisions under the cover of darkness to this enemy to attack him everywhere before morning. The corps encountered strong resistance. Only the right wing succeeded in advancing beyond Morawinsko in connection with the XXXII Reserve Corps. Meanwhile, fierce battles broke out along the entire attack front, which did not lead to a decision by evening. The Guard Corps, under the increasing impression of only a weak occupation of Jaroslaw, gradually approached the enemy. When around noon the leader of the 2nd Guard Infantry Division, Lieutenant General von Winkler, reported that Jaroslaw seemed to be evacuated, the commanding general, General of Infantry Baron von Plattenberg, ordered that both divisions, if the opponent offered no stronger resistance, should take possession of the San line. However, the attack of the 2nd Guard Infantry Division against Jaroslaw also unexpectedly encountered strong enemy forces. The advance also suffered from the flanking fire effect from the castle of Jaroslaw, which the Allies could not wrest from the enemy despite the deployment of reinforcements from the 2nd Guard Infantry Division; the forward movement came to a halt west of the city. The 1st Guard Infantry Division under the command of Colonel Eitel Friedrich Prince of Prussia was Russian posturing over a dead arm of the San north of Jaroslaw and could only push through against the northern front of the city with its right wing by evening.

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The Attack on Jaroslaw.

The commanding general of the X Army Corps, General of the

Infantry von Emmich, under the impression that the enemy was

continuing the retreat, ordered the pursuit at 11:30 a.m. by the only

available 19th Infantry Division — the 20th was marching towards Lancut —

to reach the bridgehead at Nieleptowice with advance troops. However,

since enemy resistance at Wola Buchowska threatened the advance on the

left flank, Lieutenant General Hofmann decided to initially deploy the main

force of his division against this. No serious engagement occurred in the

evening.

In view of the developments that the battles on May 14 had taken

in the center and on the left wing of the 11th Army, the planned

attack procedure envisaged by the High Command was no longer considered.

On the other hand, the impression had also strengthened that the eastern

bank of the San could no longer be won by a surprise success. Rather,

further fighting on this side of the San was to be expected.

In front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, the enemy had retreated

behind the lower Wislok and the San above Krzeszow. The right wing,

where the operational focus lay, reached the San below the Wislok

confluence without a fight. The reserve cavalry (1/2 and 11th Cavalry

Division) was also moved there. The left army wing swung to secure the

flank against an enemy position identified in the forest area of the San-

Vistula angle south of Sandomierz.

The Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army had not yet reached the positions

of the fortress area with its left wing. On its right wing, the Beskiden

Corps reached Dobromil in pursuit. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army

gained the Carpathian exits on both sides of Stary Sambor.

On May 15, the 119th Infantry Division advanced security

against the northwest front of Przemysl. This freed the

11th Bavarian Infantry Division for the immediate

flank protection of the now also advancing against the San

XXXXI Reserve Corps; it advanced against the Rada-Bach.

Reconnaissance revealed that the Rada position adjoining the fortress

and also the positions grouped further north around Ostrow were heavily

occupied. However, the XXXXI Reserve Corps managed to be deployed

in the morning hours for an attack with the target Radymno-Tuczepy.

However, the right wing and the center of the corps succeeded in reaching the enemy's main position by evening.

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Corps, to approach the enemy's main position by evening. The left wing had to remain bent back against positions at Morawisko, as the southern wing of the neighboring s.-w. VI. Corps was entrenched here. For this, it was crucial to first bring down the commanding heights around 264, the key point of the bridgehead of Jaroslaw. This was only achieved at 6 p.m. Although fierce counterattacks by the enemy prevented full exploitation of this success, it had the effect to the north that by late evening, the castle of Jaroslaw succumbed to the assault of the inner wings of the VI. and Guard Corps, thereby eliminating the threat to the flank and rear of the 2nd Guard Infantry Division. The Guard Corps could only advance to attack in the afternoon after extensive artillery preparation against the enemy reinforced from the east bank. While the main forces of the 2nd Guard Infantry Division, due to the constant threat from the south, engaged in a holding battle on their right wing against the western front of Jaroslaw, the 1st Guard Infantry Division was to be deployed from the north for a decisive envelopment of Jaroslaw. This thrust of the right wing of the 1st Guard Infantry Division, joined by the left wing of the 2nd Guard Infantry Division, initially made good progress but then stalled in Jaroslaw. Here, when the castle of Jaroslaw fell in the evening, the attack front had already solidified. Only the left wing of the 1st Guard Infantry Division had evaded the enemy over the San and reached the wide and deep main arm of the river west of Goryle. The immediate follow-up over this, which the General Command still hoped for, proved ineffective due to the strong occupation of the east bank overlooking the lowland without sufficient artillery preparation.

Since the Guard Corps had not succeeded in overcoming the San section the day before, and since the 19th Infantry Division faced considerable enemy forces with its front to the north, the commanding general of the X. Army Corps, General of Infantry von Emmich, now expected strong resistance at the San. Parts of the 20th Infantry Division had therefore been set in motion early to the east. When at 11 a.m. the directive of the Army High Command arrived to continue the attack in conjunction with the Guard Corps, the leader of the 20th Infantry Division, Lieutenant General Ritter and Edler von Detinger, received orders to take possession of the western arc of Niedebrowice. In the course of the afternoon, he drove the enemy detachments, which were still on the west bank, back over the San. The bulk of the division reached the beginning of Ijeszna.

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Below Jaroslaw, the San is reached.

The 19th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Hofmann refrained from a planned early morning assault against the strong Russian positions in the lowlands between Wisłok and San on the orders of the commanding general. General von Emmich believed that the enemy would abandon their positions opposite the 19th Infantry Division under the impact of the advance of the 20th Infantry Division and the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army against the San. Therefore, it was only to secure the attack of the 20th Infantry Division against a threat from the bridgehead of Sieniawa.

The leader of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, refrained from forcing the San crossing by his right army wing on the same day, as the Army High Command 11 had responded to an inquiry: "Forcing a uniform advance on the entire front is not intended today ... If a corps succeeds in crossing, this forcing will be followed by other corps." The San front of the 4th Army extended north to the area west of Iwanow. The enemy positions, covered by forests and crisscrossed by numerous streams, in the San-Vistula angle proved to be a well-developed resistance zone. The involvement of Russian reinforcements over Sandomierz on the eastern Vistula bank and the insertion of forces already withdrawn to Sandomierz against the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army west of the Vistula suggested the enemy's intention to hold the San-Vistula angle and the connection to their positions on the far side of the Vistula. Thus, it seemed they also wanted to maintain the possibility of an offensive from the bridgehead of Sandomierz against the flank of the armies fighting at the San. The 4th Army, on the other hand, initially wanted to focus on establishing a "reinforced line of resistance" and wait for the reinforcements currently in transport for their own attack.

The Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army moved its left wing closer to the southwest front of Przemysl. The Beskiden Corps, which followed the retreating main Russian forces south of the fortress, encountered strong positions on both sides of Husztow behind the Slowtina and Buchta. At this fortified section, which protected the road and railway leading south from Przemysl, strong enemy resistance was to be expected. The Beskiden Corps therefore decided to conduct the attack uniformly the next day.

1) Volume VII, p. 421; — cf. 21. I. D. from 3rd Army, Kdo. VIII, Hungarian 37, and 41. I. D. from 2nd Army.

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The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army maintained connection with the Besikent Corps and reached

with its right wing over the Dniester beyond Sambor.

Aerial reconnaissance confirmed the impression gained through the hard battles of the 11th Army:

Strong parts of the enemy were still standing west

of the San. Nevertheless, the Army High Command hoped to force the river crossing on May 16.

The difficulties of supply from

the railway points Krosno and Przemyśl, however, necessitated limited

objectives, especially since it was to be expected that the Russians would bring up reinforcements.

Generaloberst von Mackensen therefore initially aimed only at creating a bridgehead in the line Michalowka

(east of Radymno)—Ryszkowa Wola—Lubaczowka-Bach—Sieniawa,

to gain freedom for further action on the eastern bank of the San.

Under the pressure of the successes achieved west and south of

Jaroslau on the evening of May 15, the enemy vacated the left bank here during the night.

The 2nd Guard Infantry Division, advancing in the early morning of May 16, was already in possession of the

entire city of Jaroslau by 7:30 a.m. General Freiherr von Plettenberg had instructed the division

to initially only push strong patrols onto the eastern bank.

The division commander, Lieutenant General von Winkler, however, gained the view through personal observation that

quick and vigorous action was necessary, as the enemy's defense on the eastern bank

had apparently not yet taken firm form. He therefore ordered at 9 a.m.

to force the crossing. At 2 p.m., the crossing began under the protection of artillery and machine gun fire

with the result that by evening a significant part of the division had established a firm foothold on the

eastern San bank. Strong counterattacks were repelled. The 1st Guard Infantry Division, which had advanced further north to the San,

had to postpone the river crossing to May 17 due to the particularly difficult,

widely visible terrain, which made an artillery advance during the day inadvisable.

With enemy reinforcements against this section of the Guard Corps

on the march, the corps faced heavy tasks.

The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps of Field Marshal Lieutenant von Arz had also

followed the enemy, who had retreated south of Jaroslau after nightly counterattacks.

At 10 a.m., the right wing reached Tuczapy under heavy artillery fire from the eastern bank,

and at 2 p.m., the San front of the corps reached the western riverbank. After nightfall,

the left, 12th Infantry Division, was led across the San in the area of the Guard Corps and then advanced towards Sobicin, which was strongly occupied by the enemy.

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Guard and X Army Corps Force the San Crossing.

It was still questionable whether the significant partial success achieved by the center

of the 11th Army on the battlefield around Jaroslau could be expanded to

achieve the goal sought by the leadership. The decision on this depended very much on the development

of events on the two army flanks. The XXXXI Reserve

Corps of General von Francois had, as soon as the advance

of the northern neighbor eliminated the threat to its left flank,

initiated a rightward swing to attack.

Faced with this impending encirclement, the enemy retreated over Tuczepy on the

road to Radymno. Only east of Tuczepy did the left wing

of the 82nd Reserve Division encounter the northern part of the enemy's main position.

After hard fighting in the afternoon, the entire attack line of the XXXXI Reserve Corps came to a halt.

The intention of the commanding general, General of Infantry von Francois, to continue the encircling

thrust from the north could only be fulfilled after replenishing the ammunition.

To protect the right flank held at Zamoscie,

the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division

was pushed up to the Raba. The 119th Infantry Division

swung forward to Batycze. At 6 p.m., the Kneussl Corps received the

notification that an attack against the occupied line north of Przemysl

was not in line with the army high command's intentions. It would mean deploying forces

in a direction incompatible with the army's tasks south

of the San. Therefore, no more forces were to be used against the enemy at the Rada

than required for the protection of the right flank

of the XXXXI Reserve Corps. The 119th Infantry Division was to

be held back to be available as an army reserve at any time. The

army high command hoped that Przemysl would soon succumb to the attack of the right neighboring

army and wanted to maintain the striking power of the 11th Army for

the breakthrough over the San downstream from Przemysl with the goal of Rawa

Ruska undiminished.

North of the battlefield of Jaroslau, the 20th Infantry

Division faced the task of forcing the river crossing as soon as possible.

In the open lowland terrain, the preparation for this was

very difficult. Only at night was the crossing possible, despite considerable losses.

West of Wiazownica, a bridgehead was established. It was the intention of General von Emmich, after

further advance of the 20th Infantry Division on the eastern

bank, to also bring the 19th Infantry Division into attack on this side of the still opposing enemy.

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Upon receiving the report of the enemy forces' march against the crossing point of the 20th Infantry Division, he ordered the 19th Infantry Division to attack on May 17 to divert the enemy's influx of forces there.

At the San front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, the river crossing did not succeed. North of the Vistula, a surprising setback occurred. The Austro-Hungarian 1st Army and the Army Detachment Woyrsch, in their forward movement since May 11, under multiple local night skirmishes against the northeastward withdrawing Russians, reached the general line: Koprzywnica—Staszow—Mircze—north of Wisłoka—Gapiwn on May 16. However, on the morning of May 16, the Russians launched a counterattack against the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army and the southern flank of the Army Detachment Woyrsch, particularly targeting the inner flanks and the weakly secured gap between the two armies. The ensuing battles forced the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army to withdraw its northern flank by up to ten kilometers. This also prompted the 4th Army to hold back its left flank. Behind it, the three approaching reinforcement divisions had reached the beginnings of Debica, Radomysl, and the area east of Tarnow. General von Conrad now redirected one of these divisions (41st Infantry Division) via Szczucin to support the 1st Army. The left flank of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army reached just west of Pratkowice. On both sides of the Wisłoka, the attack lines failed to advance closer to the fort line. Further east, however, the attack against the Slotwina—Butcha section did not break through. The line of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army ran from here to Kaisersdorf on the Dniester (20 kilometers northeast of Sambor).

On May 17, the operation of the 11th Army continued as planned. The Kneussl Corps remained in its position according to the guiding idea. The XXXXI Reserve Corps was also forced to delay its attack due to a shortage of ammunition.

1) Austro-Hungarian 1st Army consisted of: II Corps (Austro-Hungarian 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions, 1st Brigade of the Polish Legion), I Corps (Austrian 46th Infantry Division), Austro-Hungarian ½ 2nd Reserve Division. Army Detachment Woyrsch consisted of: Landwehr Corps (3rd and 4th Landwehr Divisions), Landwehr Division Bredow, Austro-Hungarian Group Kövess (Command XII, Austro-Hungarian 16th and 35th Infantry Divisions), and 7th Group Division.  
2) Volume VII, p. 434. The army corps formed from the Army Detachment Woyrsch and the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army has so far been referred to as "Army Woyrsch" (Volume VI, p. 100, footnote 1). With the withdrawal of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, the designation "Army Woyrsch" becomes obsolete again.  
3) Position course for sketch 15.  
4) p. 145.

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Expansion of the Captured San Bridgeheads.

to push forward. At the same time, its right wing advanced upstream on both banks of the San to create further crossing opportunities. East of Jaroslaw, the 2nd Guard Infantry Division repelled new counterattacks. The Guard Corps initially intended not to advance further east of the San, as the frontal crossing of the 1st Guard Infantry Division had not yet succeeded. Only at 6 p.m. did parts of this division cross the river at Jaroslaw to open the way northward for the battlefields. Parts of the left wing also used the bridge of the neighboring 20th Infantry Division for crossing in the evening. This division had already vigorously expanded the bridgehead taken during the night beyond Wiazownica in the morning hours, achieving a decisive success for the continuation of the operation. By 4 p.m., parts of the 56th Infantry Division, following in the second line, were able to cross the river here. Under the pressure of a brilliantly executed attack by the 19th Infantry Division, the enemy evacuated the San-Wislok corner with a loss of 7000 prisoners. The division then prepared the San crossing at Lezachow. No changes occurred at the front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army. However, as the crisis intensified beyond the Vistula with the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army, the 4th Army was forced to prepare reserves at the Vistula and bring the reinforcement divisions approaching closer to the river. If forced to make further concessions, it could also find itself in a difficult situation, as an extension of enemy attacks into the area between the Vistula and San had to be expected. The Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army found itself compelled to make the attack on Przemysl dependent on further ammunition supplies. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army was also held up by strong enemy positions. The commander of the Besikder Corps, General von der Marwitz, therefore intended to shift the focus of the attack to his right wing to break through together with the left wing of the 2nd Army. The High Command of the 11th Army summarized in a report to the Supreme Army Command that it seemed determined to hold Przemysl and its already adjoining positions. In contrast, the expansion of the previously captured two bridgeheads and the crossing of the entire army would only be possible after thorough preparation. The situation would likely change significantly if the breakthrough of the 2nd and the right wing of the 3rd Army succeeds.

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According to this assessment, Generaloberst von Mackensen saw

his next task in consolidating as strong forces as possible to expand the

bridgeheads on the eastern bank despite expected resistance. The 119th

Infantry Division was withdrawn as an army reserve and moved to the

Zarzecze—Jaroslau road. To secure against Przemysl, parts of the Austro-

Hungarian 3rd Army remained immediately north of the San. The XXXXI

Reserve Corps, to which the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division was assigned,

was to initially suspend the attack on Radymno.

The Austro-Hungarian VI, the Guard, and X Army Corps (with the

attached 56th Infantry Division) were to expand their attack successes on

the eastern San bank. When it became apparent that the enemy had already

retreated during the night, the army command believed him to be in full

retreat to the northeast and ordered at 3 a.m. that the attack corps should

follow until reaching the approximate line Wietlin—Oleschowa—Cetula—

Lubaczowka-Bach. The 19th Infantry Division was to connect with the

4th Army to take the heights of Leszaczow and eastward. However, very

soon reconnaissance revealed that the enemy had retreated under the cover

of rearguards to a newly prepared defensive front in the line Wysocko—

Bobrowka—Oleschowa, and that he also occupied the near edges of the

forest zone south of the Lubaczowka.

The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps was set to attack on both sides of

the Szklo. In this rightward swing, the left wing advanced east of Sobienin

at 3 p.m. Then the attack came to a halt. The Guard and X Army Corps

wanted to launch a joint attack after the river crossing at 1 p.m. The 2nd

Guard Infantry Division connected with the allies by evening at Malkowisko

and the road west of Oleschowa. The 1st Guard Infantry Division had to

overcome open difficult attack terrain up to the large forest zone west of

Cetula. Its right wing stormed Hutti and Buczyna in the evening. Its left

wing broke into the forest zone in the afternoon, then swung right into the

enemy's rear at Cetula. However, the attempt failed due to stubborn

resistance. On the right wing of the X Army Corps, the regiments of the 56th Infantry Division¹) under Major General Schach von Wittenau threw themselves into combat from a difficult advance against the Russian forest positions and wrested them from the enemy by 3 p.m.

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Strong Counterattack of the Russians against the 11th Army.

On the left, the 20th Infantry Division, with its left wing on both sides of the Lubaczowka, joined the advance and reached the forest on both sides of Terebnie at 3 p.m., which the enemy voluntarily evacuated. Both divisions pushed through the forest up to the Lubaczowka bend. The right wing of the 56th Infantry Division still sought to relieve the Guard Corps by advancing on Cetula in the evening, but did not penetrate the village. North of the Lubaczowka, parts of the 20th Infantry Division cleared the river bend up to the area west of Nieliniki. The 19th Infantry Division advanced to cover beyond the bridgehead over Pesachow. The overall result of the day was therefore a significant expansion of the bridgeheads.

Thanks to the successes of the X Army Corps, the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army crossed the San. It was to advance downstream to open the crossing at Ulezibyn and take possession of Sieniawa. The Army High Command expected that the enemy, to prevent the deployment of further forces of the 4th Army on the eastern bank, would advance against the breach point of the army reserve at the San. Therefore, the army reserve was moved there. To preempt the expected attack of the Russians from the bridgehead of Sandomierz on the eastern bank of the Vistula, the High Command decided to deploy its two available reinforcement divisions (Hungarian 37th and Austrian 21st Infantry Division) to the left army wing for an early attack downstream.

The Austro-Hungarian 3rd and 2nd Armies made no progress, particularly due to insufficient ammunition supply.

May 19th already brought strong counterattacks of the enemy against the entire front of the 11th Army in the morning hours. Generaloberst von Mackensen concluded from this that the Russian resistance was growing further; he wanted to move the 119th Infantry Division to Jaroslaw and temporarily leave the Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division there to be able to deploy them quickly as needed. But when at 11 a.m. General von François reported the beginning of significant enemy artillery deployment against his front and the gathering of strong forces in front of his right wing, the 119th Infantry Division was moved south, to Boratyn, and General von François was made available for emergencies.

¹) The infantry of the 56th Infantry Division was equipped with captured Russian rifles.

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Prisoners reported that the Russian assault was planned for the evening of May 19 or May 20.

The k.u.k. VI Corps attacked with the intention of advancing its center on Wietlin, but gained ground only slowly against freshly deployed Russian forces. Also west of the San, the enemy launched a strong relief attack along the road from Radymno at the junction of the XXXXII Reserve and k.u.k. VI Corps, which, however, collapsed around 7 p.m.

Opposite the Guard Corps, the enemy also seemed to have reinforced, particularly in artillery. From Oleszyce, additional forces were apparently brought in by rail. The Guard Corps therefore refrained from continuing the attack, also considering its own ammunition situation. The divisions prepared for defense, as did the adjacent Lubaczowka front of the X Army Corps.

Only north of the Lubaczowka was there still the intention to publicly carry out the task of the 19th Infantry Division south of Sieniawa. However, by noon, the army command had considered halting this division as well, to use it on the right army wing, which appeared more threatened at the moment. However, since it was also important to secure sufficient depth for the bridgehead, the army command refrained from the shift. The right wing of the k.u.k. 4th Army, the 10th Infantry Division, which had crossed to the southern bank of the San behind the 19th Infantry Division during the night, occupied Sieniawa, which had been evacuated by the enemy. The joint attack conducted by this division and the 19th Infantry Division in the afternoon succeeded in expanding the bridgehead around Sieniawa.

The stubbornly resisting enemy was still close by, especially on the commanding Slawa Heights east of Sieniawa. Its fall was a prerequisite for the permanent holding of the bridgehead. The attack on the Slawa Heights and the southern heights was planned by both divisions for the hour of May 20. Further north on the San front, the enemy had shown lively offensive activity throughout the day. Parts of the Russians, who had crossed north of Lezajsk during the night, could be pushed back over the San. Strong attacks occurred in the Ulanow—Nisko area (about 35 kilometers northwest of Lezajsk). But everywhere, the deployment of all reserves was tested, without success in repelling the enemy advancing over the San here. Preparations were now made for an imminent attack also east of the Vistula, especially since the situation of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army was still considered critical.

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Expansion of the Successes at Siennawa.

In the Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army, the attack of the Beskid Corps made some progress. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army was also able to advance its immediately adjacent battlefront.

By May 20, the enemy behaved more cautiously than expected. In all its positions, there was intense digging. Its artillery seemed to be further reinforced. Across the entire front of the 11th Army, only isolated skirmishes occurred without changing the situation. Only the struggle for the bridgehead of Siennawa was brought to a successful conclusion. Early in the morning, the parts of the 20th and the 19th Infantry Division deployed north of Lubaczowka had seized the heights between Mielnitza and the Slawa Heights overnight. Then the left wing of the 19th Infantry Division swung north to support the allies advancing against the Slawa Heights. After extensive artillery preparation, this stronghold also fell in the morning. After such setbacks, the enemy, aided by torrential downpours, quickly disappeared into the large forests east of Siennawa; only cavalry followed him. The positions gained were expanded for defense. On the rest of the San front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, the situation could be improved again. Against its northern front between San and Vistula, the enemy advanced, partly in individual thrusts, closer.

In the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army, a relaxation occurred. In fourteen days of heavy fighting, this army and the Landwehr Division, reinforced by parts of the Landwehr Corps under Lieutenant General Count von Bredow, managed to halt the Russian attack on May 19 along the line Koprymnica—Bielułta—Strykow. The threat of an enemy breakthrough in the gap between Bielułta and Chybiec was eliminated by deploying parts of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army and the Landwehr Division Bredow as well as the Austro-Hungarian 7th Cavalry Division; the Austro-Hungarian 9th Cavalry Division stood ready as an army reserve behind the army front. The southern wing of the Landwehr Corps also repelled the Russian attack along the line Strykow—Pomorzany. The advance of the left wing of the Landwehr Corps and the Kövesz Group came to a halt along the line Pomorzany—Mniszek—Gapinin.

On the front of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army, nothing changed except for a local gain by the Beskid Corps. The enemy seemed to be strengthening in front of the inner wings of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd and 2nd Armies.

The course of the last few days had shown that the advance of the 11th Army east of the San and its simultaneous pressure on the western riverbank towards the southwest strongly threatened the Russian defensive front at the San, which was based on the fortress of Przemysl.

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The 11th Army east of the San and its simultaneous pressure on the western riverbank towards the southwest posed a strong threat to the Russian defensive front at the San, which was based on the fortress of Przemysl. This explained the army command's furious enemy counterattacks from the south and east on both banks of the river. In order to continue operations in the decisive direction to the southeast, Generaloberst von Mackensen had to be careful to free up additional forces. The Chief of Staff of the 11th Army, Colonel von Seeckt, had therefore already promised the Emmich Corps a significant extension of its combat front to the right by noon on May 19, in order to release the Guard Corps for the army's disposal.

2. The Events on the Right Wing of the Army until May 19.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketch 17.

The German South Army¹) under the leadership of General of Infantry von Linsingen launched an attack along the entire line from the Carpathians on May 12 in the direction of Dolina—Stryj—Drohobycz²). The enemy, parts of the Russian 8th Army³), retreated without serious fighting before their left wing, as did the neighboring Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army on the left. The center and right wing of the South Army still encountered strong resistance from the Russian 11th Army⁴). While the Szurmay Group and the Hungarian 38th Infantry Division of the Bothmer Corps reached the Wolszce—Unit line, the 3rd Guard Infantry Division under Major General von Friedeburg stormed strong enemy positions west of Zawadka, suffering heavy losses, and pursued the fleeing enemy. Fierce battles took place at the 1st Infantry Division of Lieutenant General von Conta over Hill 927 southeast of Kozinowa, which was only taken at 10 p.m. The Hofmann and Gerok Corps refrained from an impractical frontal assault on the Russian trenches, which were still strongly occupied, and an encirclement planned in the Swica Valley towards Leopoldsdorf was not carried out.

¹) South Army consisted of: Gerok Corps (Genkdo. XXIV. R.K.: 48. R.D., 6. Ldw. I.D., 19. S.D.), incl. Hofmann Corps (incl. 55. S.D., incl. 131. S.Br., incl. 12. Pfdt. Erzrt. Bothmer Corps (incl. 3. G.D., 1. S.D., 3. I.S.D., Hung. 38. I.D.), incl. Szurmay Group (incl. 7. T.S.P., Hung. 40. S.P.).  
²) Volume VII, C. 430. — ³) C. 189. — ⁴) C. 189.

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The Advance of the Southern Army.

In pursuit, the advance troops of the Gerof Corps reached Leopoldsdorf and Solotwina. The Hofmann Corps, with the Austro-Hungarian 55th Infantry Division, reached the confluence of Dpor and Orava in the evening, after breaking the resistance of weak rearguards on the mountains on both sides of the Tuchla—Stole railway. The Bothmer Corps' 1st Infantry Division gained the Orava section south of Korostow. The 3rd Guard Infantry Division reached south of Rybnik, the Hungarian 38th Infantry Division reached the heights north of Jasionka masiowa, the Szurmay Group advanced to Turza and Topolnica, and the right wing of the 2nd Army reached the heights north of Strzyki.

Based on an order received around noon from the Austro-Hungarian army command, which instructed the Southern Army to advance its left wing as far as possible in the general direction of Drohobycz during the continuation of the pursuit, General von Linsingen directed the Szurmay Group to Drohobycz, the Bothmer Corps to Stryj, the Austro-Hungarian 131st Infantry Brigade of the Hofmann Corps, which reached the area east of Tuchla, to Bolechow on Lipowice, and the Gerof Corps in the Mizunka and Swica valleys over Dolina to Turza wielka. The main parts of the Hofmann Corps (Austro-Hungarian 55th Infantry Division, Austrian 12th Landsturm Territorial Brigade, and an Austro-Hungarian combined Infantry Brigade Bolzano, transported from the 2nd Army and in the process of unloading in Lawoczne) were held back as army reserve.

The pursuit on May 14 brought the Southern Army a great leap forward, although the enemy attempted to create significant difficulties for the advance by destroying numerous bridges in the mountain valleys. The artillery had to be brought up to the advancing infantry partly via time-consuming detours. After an early start, the Gerof Corps reached the Swica section southwest of Dolina, the Austro-Hungarian 131st Infantry Brigade Braza, the Bothmer Corps the line Raszkow—Orlow—Boryslaw, and the Austro-Hungarian 55th Division the area of Podbuz. The army reserve closed in south of Stole. The right wing of the 2nd Army was positioned around Stary Sambor in the evening.

The previous successes of the German Southern Army began to have an impact on the neighboring Austro-Hungarian 7th Army of General Cavalry Baron von Pflanzer-Baltin.

1) The Austro-Hungarian 7th Army consisted of: Korda Corps (XI Command, Hungarian 42nd Infantry Division, Hungarian 5th Infantry Division), Austro-Hungarian combined Brigade Papp, 2nd Brigade of the Polish Legion), Marschall Group (Austro-Hungarian 30th Infantry Division, German 5th Infantry Division, Austro-Hungarian 30th Infantry Division), Krautwald Corps.

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This was withdrawn on May 13 and 14 before superior enemy forces (Russian 9th Army¹)) into the fortified Pruth line with its lateral bridgeheads at Dubowt, Kolomea, Lanczyn, and Delatyn, as well as to the heights between Delatyn and Pasieczna. Its left wing, the Ljubicz group, gathered at Juta and secured in the Lomnica Valley near and northeast of Smoloda. Under the influence of the advance of the Southern Army, the enemy retreated here on the 14th to Perehinsko, following the eastern adjoining Rhemem group only as far as south of Nadworna. However, in the early afternoon hours of May 14, it advanced with two and a half infantry and one cavalry division for a concentric attack on the bridgehead of Kolomea. Although this thrust failed due to the stubborn resistance of the Krautwald group, since timely and sufficient support of the bridgehead garrison did not seem assured due to the slow transport of the advancing III Corps²) from the 3rd Army, General von Pflanzer-Baltin saw the best relief in the immediate resumption of the offensive of his left wing. In agreement with the Southern Army, he launched the Czibulka, Rhemem, and Ljubicz groups on May 15 for an attack in a northeasterly direction. The offensive was then to be continued with the main forces over Ottynia to Tlumacz, with the left wing group against the heights west of Stanislau and on to Kalusz.

This was also entirely in line with new instructions from the Austro-Hungarian army command, which had been received by the high commands of the 7th and Southern Armies in the early afternoon of May 14. According to this, the 7th Army was to hold its eastern wing on the Pruth and concentrate its main forces on the western wing to join the general advance in a northeasterly direction. The Southern Army received a double task. With its right wing, to be assembled at Dolina–Bolechow, it was to advance in a general direction towards Kalusz to make the enemy front between the Bystrzyca and the Czeszwa untenable and to defeat it in cooperation with the 7th Army. Its left wing, advancing over Stryj–Drohobycz, was assigned the security against the Dniester line Jacyczow–Mikolajow–Kolodruby. The left neighboring Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army was to continue its offensive on Czajkowice–Mosciśka (exclusively).

(III Corps: east 22nd, Austro-Hungarian 28th Infantry Division, Austro-Hungarian 8th Cavalry Division), Czibulka Corps (Austro-Hungarian 15th and 36th Infantry Divisions), Rhemem Corps (XIII Corps: Austro-Hungarian 5th Infantry Division without 9th Infantry Brigade, Austro-Hungarian 6th Infantry Division), Ljubicz Group (Austro-Hungarian 9th and 16th Infantry Brigades, parts of Austro-Hungarian 6th and 15th Infantry Divisions).  
¹) p. 189.  
²) Volume VII, p. 431.

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The Southern Army Comes to a Halt Before New Enemy Positions.

Immediate cooperation between it and the Southern Army seemed no longer to be considered.

The course of events in the following days did not meet the expectations of the army leadership. It turned out that the enemy was still determined to offer strong resistance south of the Dniester.

The relief attack of the left wing of the 7th Army - Rhemen and Litzbicz groups - quickly came to a halt on the morning of May 15 against a strong opponent in the Lanczyn-Pnivon line, east of Jablonica, near Majdan and south of Perehinsko. The right wing of the Southern Army, the Gerok Corps, also encountered fierce resistance on the forest heights south and southwest of Dolina and had to wait for the arrival of artillery before considering continuing the attack. The territorial gain was greater in the center and on the left wing. The Austro-Hungarian 131st Infantry Brigade occupied Bolechow after a brief street fight and advanced to the Stryca. From the Bothmer Corps, the 1st Infantry Division reached the area east and northeast of Siemiginow; the 3rd Guard Infantry Division drove out weak enemy forces in Uliczno, but by late evening stood east of it on both sides of the railway towards Stryj before strong positions. The Hungarian 38th and 40th Infantry Divisions also found the heights east of Drohobycz occupied; the Austro-Hungarian 7th Infantry Division reached Lisznia. The army reserve advanced to Stynawa nizna. The far right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army reached Zublatyn and thus was already significantly ahead of the Southern Army.

General von Lintingen still believed he had only weak rearguards in front of him, whose resistance would be easy to break. Consequently, he also set ambitious goals for the corps for the 16th. The Gerok Corps was directed towards Nowica-Kalusz, the Austro-Hungarian 131st Infantry Brigade towards Zawadka, the Bothmer Corps against the Sulatycze-Nowosielc line, the Szurmay group towards Medenice, and the army reserve towards Bolechow.

During the course of this day, however, it became apparent that stronger Russian forces were standing in front of the entire front of the Southern Army in an apparently continuous, long-prepared line, which extended in connection with the positions in front of the left wing of the 7th Army from Perehinsko over Spas-Moryszyn-Gaje wyzne to Hruszow. The enemy had also made a front in fortified positions from west of Czajkowice to Husiatow in front of the 2nd Army.

The attack of the Southern Army on this new line of resistance of the Russian 11th Army was unable to break through anywhere on the 16th. Only individual positions were taken. Thus, the Austro-Hungarian 19th Infantry Division of the Gerok Corps drove the Russians out of Spas; their attempt to envelop the assumed left flank of the Russians to the east came to a halt before enemy trenches southwest of Janowka.

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Attempting to envelop the assumed left flank by swinging east, they came to a halt before enemy trenches southwest of Janowka. The 48th Reserve Division under Lieutenant General von Hahn focused its attack on the left flank. Field Marshal Lieutenant Hofmann positioned the Bolzano Brigade to the left of the 131st Infantry Brigade and brought the 55th Infantry Division and the 12th Landsturm Territorial Brigade to Bolechow. The main forces of the 1st Infantry Division advanced eastward to attack but halted before the Russian positions at the ironworks of Morszyn. The 3rd Guards Infantry Division stormed enemy trenches on both sides of the railway to Stryj, but by evening faced a second line extending southeast from Holobutow. On the heights southeast and east of Drohobycz, the 38th and 40th Infantry Divisions advanced to close proximity to the enemy. To the left, the 7th Infantry Division was deployed against enemy positions north of the Dniestrnica.

In the following days, the Southern Army struggled in vain to defeat the enemy. Only the 1st Infantry Division achieved a significant local success. After heavy, costly battles, they stormed Lipowice and the Russian positions on the railway embankment northwest of it on the afternoon of the 18th. However, when they attempted to advance northeast together with the left flank of the now fully deployed Hofmann Corps the next day, new enemy resistance soon halted them. The left flank of the division even had to fend off stronger Russian counterattacks on both sides of the railway to Stryj.

The neighboring armies made no progress. The right flank of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army came to a halt at the Strywiaz. A sharp Russian counterattack pushed the attacking flank of the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army back to the Lanczyn—Dyl [997]—Glinik line on May 16th and 17th. Simultaneously, the enemy, using relentless manpower, assaulted the bridgehead of Kolomea, whose now reinforced garrison held firm. However, the Russians succeeded on May 19th in breaking into the trenches on the southern Pruth bank at Kumaniczy, from which they were soon expelled. Then a longer pause in fighting occurred on the right flank of the 7th Army. General Freiherr von Pflanzer-Baltin refrained from resuming the offensive, considering the strength of the opposing enemy.

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Advance of the 11th Army to the Southeast.

3. The Battle North of Przemysl from May 21 to 27.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketches 14 and 15.

General von Falkenhayn had recognized from the previous course of operations on the Galician front that considerable efforts were still needed to achieve the next operational goal agreed upon by the allied army commands on May 12, the San-Wisznia-Dnjestr line. On May 18, he informed the 11th Army High Command that the 11th Army1) could only be considered for another use once the enemy had been driven from its current position. The sooner this happened, the more welcome it would be in view of the general situation. The standstill in the attack, which had occurred with the armies of the Carpathian Front fighting south of Przemysl after initial successes since May 17, diminished the hope of quickly reaching the Dnjestr-Wisznia line and thus a rapid change in the situation in Bukovina.

General von Falkenhayn saw the most effective means to get the stalled overall operation moving again in an advance of the 11th Army to the southeast. On the afternoon of May 18, still unaware of the day's battle developments, he initially inquired with the 11th Army High Command, "why not advance the VI and Guard Corps further south or southeast to relieve the XXXXI Reserve Corps and the 11th Bavarian Division at Radymno and Przemysl and, in the further course, also the left wing of the 3rd Army southeast of Przemysl." This inquiry had crossed with a report from the 1st Army High Command, which expressed the general impression that the enemy was retreating before the center and left wing, but was trying to hold the San from Radymno upwards as well as Przemysl. Before further major offensives, the reorganization of supplies and the establishment of a new base on the San were necessary, which would take several days due to the difficult road conditions and the distance from rail support2). The army intended to first attack Radymno and thereby enclose Przemysl in the north. The infantry attack against Przemysl, however, was not intended without special orders.

From the response that the 11th Army High Command then gave to the inquiry itself, General von Falkenhayn saw that the advance to the southeast he had suggested was already considered by Generaloberst von Mackensen, "as soon as the army corps have gained sufficient space and freedom of movement to the east."

1) p. 139. — 2) Frystak and Krosno. p. 146.

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Currently, however, all corps are still engaged with their front to the east. Additionally, the ammunition situation needs to be improved. The Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army then emphasized in a detailed letter on May 19 the decisive importance of a breakthrough by the 11th Army on both sides of the Wisznia to the southeast. "According to the developments of recent days," it stated, "it is doubtful whether the 2nd, 3rd, South, and 7th Armies will soon reach their goal unless they are relieved by another breakthrough by the 11th Army... I would like to emphasize once again the importance of the issue given the rapid escalation of the military-political situation. The enemy's movements reported yesterday by rail and foot march suggest that he has significantly weakened in front of the actual front of the army. On the other hand, he seems to be strengthening Przemysl and his positions there for political reasons. As far as can be judged from here, it should then be possible to leave a screen against the east and north and to attempt a breakthrough thrust on both sides of the Wisznia with the assembled main forces."

In his response to this suggestion, the Chief of Staff of the 11th Army, Colonel von Seeckt, pointed out that the 11th and 4th Armies had been attacked on their entire front on May 19, most strongly over Radymno and south of it. Once the situation is clarified and sufficient ammunition is procured, the proposed breakthrough over the line Zablotsce—Radymno—Lazy would be initiated.

The Army High Command 11 intended to prepare the XXXXI Reserve Corps, Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, Guard Corps, and the 119th Infantry Division in the approximate line Kaiszce—Malkowicze by May 22 to begin the attack in the direction of Buczow—Galicia on the 23rd. The 11th Bavarian Infantry Division was to cover against Przemysl, and the X Army Corps was to take over the previous front of the Guard Corps. The Lubaczowka was envisaged as the boundary against the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army. This army was assigned another position over its already greatly extended front. This could only be done by deploying its last reserves on the right wing of the army. The two reinforcement divisions on the march were therefore redirected to the right. Since a local setback had occurred at Sieniawa on the right wing of the 4th Army, this was not extended to the Lubaczowka, but only to Sady.

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Preparations for the Attack.

This required a pivot of the assault group to the southeast. Accordingly, the attack sectors were assigned. The k.u.k. VI Corps and the Guard Corps were to move to the right. The XXXXII Reserve Corps was instructed to deploy strong forces behind its left wing. The start of the attack could only be scheduled for May 24, as the reliefs at the 4th Army were delayed. This army intended to carry out its assigned cover to the north through its own offensive on Sandomierz. The two neighboring armies to the right, the 3rd and 2nd Armies, were ordered by the k.u.k. Army Command to break through on May 24, continuing the planned attack on the fortress of Przemysl with the inner wings, and to advance through the foothills of the Carpathians "up to the railway and road on both sides of Mosciska."

Along the entire front of the allies from the middle of the Carpathians to the area north of the Vistula, a unified attack was to be initiated. It was hoped that by the pincer attack on both sides of Przemysl, the fortress could be quickly brought down, and then a clear path could be created to gain the Wisznia—Dniester section.

The Russians remained calm on the entire front in the days leading up to the start of the attack. This benefited the planned course of the relief movement and the replenishment of ammunition supplies. According to the army order of the 11th Army issued on May 22, the artillery firing on May 23 was to be followed by the effective firing on May 24 at 6 a.m. The assault was set for 8 a.m. The 119th Infantry Division was to be ready as an army reserve at Dobkowice—Bratyn.

The reconnaissance flights conducted in clear weather, supported by photographic surveys, had supplemented the troops' findings about the enemy. The first Russian position, already known, north of the Rada, in the line Ostrow—Wietlin—Madywka—Cetula, was strongly fortified. Behind it, the defense zone was structured, particularly east of Rada and San towards Radymno, deep in depth. Thus, the bridgehead of Radymno represented a stronghold of special defensive strength. Another position, also connecting to the Rada on the left wing, ran over the narrower bridgehead east of Radymno behind the Wisznia to Lasy and was withdrawn on the northern wing over the heights of Laszki and Tuchla.

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According to previous findings, the opposing Russian 3rd Army consisted of

the XIII Corps (19th, 12th, ½ 81st Infantry and 3rd Don Cossack Division) northeast of Przemysl, the XXI Corps

(33rd, 44th Infantry, 16th Cavalry Division) at Radymno, the V Caucasian

Corps (3rd Caucasian, 43rd Infantry, 3rd Rifle, 7th Cavalry Division

and three foot Cossack brigades) northeast of Jaroslaw and the

III Caucasian Corps (34th, 21st, 52nd Infantry and 13th Siberian Rifle

Division) at Sieniawa. One had to expect stubborn resistance from the Russians

because the enemy's front covered the most important road and

rail junctions to the capital of Galicia: from Przemysl via Grodek,

from Radymno via Jaworów and from Jaroslaw via Rawa Ruska to

Lemberg. Therefore, the main concern of the army high command was to

provide sufficient quantities of ammunition for the attack. Since the supply

railway of the 11th Army was only completed to Strzyzow northeast of

Jaslo on May 19, all troop and column vehicles and

all remaining transport in the country were made available for ammunition transport

with the greatest urgency.

The XXXXI Reserve Corps wanted to focus on the front

section north of the railway that cuts through Ostrow. Here on the main

road to Radymno, a series of entrenchments and height 202,

which dominates the river plain, formed the key point of the enemy

position. The 82nd Reserve Division was to launch a decisive breakthrough

against it and the northern adjoining front from Torczyn to

Tóten. The h. u. VII Corps placed the emphasis of its attack on the

east bank of the San against Wietlin. The Guard Corps initially wanted only the

reinforced 1st Guard Infantry Division to move against the area north of Wiet-

lin, between Sólk and Makowisko, while the 2nd Guard Infantry

Division was positioned on the main road to Makowisko.

It was later to advance over Makowisko to cover the left flank. The

reinforced X Army Corps was tasked with protecting the attack to the north.

General von Cmmich wanted to solve this task offensively by

attacking the 20th and 56th Infantry Divisions through the woods north

of Oleszyce to the heights around Cetula, to hold as many enemy

forces here as possible. The Lubaczowka front was to remain defensive.

The protection of the right flank of the attacking 11th Army was

entrusted to the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division with the Hungarian

11th Cavalry Division under its command. It was to adapt its left wing to the

advance of the XXXXI Reserve Corps. At the same time, it was also

tasked with "encircling the northern front of Przemysl."

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Breakthrough of the XXXXI Reserve Corps.

Initially, the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division believed in a strong occupation of the fort belt. Then the impression grew that no significant Russian forces were in the fortress. Intercepted conversations even suggested its imminent evacuation. Other reports stated that the Russians wanted to hold the fortress for political reasons. Initially, the high command of the 11th Army had no intention of concentrating heavy artillery against the northern front or conducting an attack on the fortress itself without special orders\*). However, when the idea of a forcible capture was considered, General von Kneussl proposed an attack on the northern front. This aspect was already taken into account in the redistribution of heavy artillery. The 11th Bavarian Infantry Division was also instructed to act immediately if the evacuation of the fortress was confirmed. However, the enemy still stood in the position behind the Rada on the line Mackowice—Bathzize—Walawa intended for the encirclement of the northern front of Przemysl. It was hoped that the pressure of the main force of the 11th Army to the southwest would also bring down this position. To strengthen the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division for its new task, its right wing was relieved by cavalry.

The Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army could only plan the start of its assigned systematic attack on the southwestern front of Przemysl for May 28 due to the late arrival of heavy artillery.

Dense early morning fog still lay over the San lowlands when, on May 24 at 6 a.m., the artillery began its effective fire along the entire attack front of the 11th Army. The infantry assault began punctually at 8 a.m. The enemy, prepared for defense, had artillery that was significantly more numerous and better supplied with ammunition than before. Heavy guns from the fortress area also engaged the front attacking west of the San. The XXXXI Reserve Corps stationed there faced a difficult task. But within minutes, a determined leap led the decisive battle of the 82nd Reserve Division into the entrenchments east of Tuczepy and further against the northern part of Ostrow. This impact in the north quickly overcame the front west of Ostrow. By 8 a.m., General von Francois could already report: "Heights west and northwest of Ostrow taken." Shortly thereafter, the 82nd Reserve Division advanced into the northern part and soon after, the 81st Reserve Division into the southern part of the elongated village. Under this bilateral encirclement, the defense in Ostrow completely collapsed. On the northern part of the battlefield, Major General Fabarius set the next line of heights before Radymno as the target for his 82nd Reserve Division and moved his reserves along the main road. The rapid success achieved in a determined direction so shook the Russian infantry that their resistance weakened and they surrendered en masse. The tirelessly advancing infantry of the 82nd Reserve Division reached the heights before Radymno before the Russian batteries in the line of fire there could bring up their limbers for rescue. The teams broke down under infantry and machine gun fire. Reserves advancing along the road to Radymno reached the rear of the bravely resisting batteries. After these great successes, mainly due to the determination of the troops, the leadership of the 82nd Reserve Division gained the impression that with decisive action, Radymno itself would soon fall. General Fabarius therefore ordered the continuation of the attack on the town at 9 a.m. Further south, the 81st Reserve Division encountered new resistance on the heights west of Stolziszow. However, after Major General von Stöcken had his previously held back right wing march to encircle northwest of Zamojce, covered to the south by the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division, the enemy defense collapsed so quickly that Russian batteries were overrun here as well. Now the 81st Reserve Division wanted to advance with the main force into the southern part of Stolziszow, while the right wing had to cover this advance on the heights north of the lower, deeply incised Rada. Both divisions of the XXXXI Reserve Corps were thus set to attack the second enemy line of defense by 10 a.m., only two hours after the start of the assault. Aircraft had observed numerous marching columns retreating behind the San east of Radymno.

\*) p. 147.

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Shortly thereafter, the 82nd Reserve Division advanced into the

northern part and soon after the 81st Reserve Division into the southern part of the

elongated village. Under this bilateral encirclement, the defense in Ostrow completely collapsed. On the northern part of the battlefield,

Generalmajor Fabarius set his 82nd Reserve Division the next

ridge line before Radymno as the target and moved his reserves along the main

road. Due to the rapid success achieved in a determined direction, the Russian infantry was so shaken that their resistance

weakened and they surrendered in masses. The tirelessly advancing

infantry of the 82nd Reserve Division reached the ridges before Radymno,

before the Russian batteries standing there in fire could bring up their

rescue teams. In the infantry and machine gun

fire, the teams collapsed. On the road to Radymno, advancing reserves reached the rear of the bravely resisting

batteries. After these great successes, mainly due to the determination of the

troops, the leadership of the 82nd Reserve Division gained the impression that with determined action, Radymno itself

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Division, the enemy defense quickly collapsed, so that

Russian batteries were also overrun here. Now the 81st Reserve

Division wanted to advance with the mass into the southern part of Stolziszow, while

the right wing on the heights north of the lower, deeply cut

Rada had to cover this advance. Both divisions of the XXXXI Reserve Corps were thus at 10 a.m., only two hours after the start

of the storm, already set for the attack on the second enemy position zone.

Pilots had observed numerous marching columns east of Radymno

retreating behind the San.

The battle at the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps was initially not as successful.

Although its right wing south of the San had joined the rapid victory

course of the 82nd Reserve Division. By 10 a.m., the

route Ostrow—Wysocko was reached. Some guns had also fallen into the hands of the

Hungarians here. The front of the Hungarian 39th Infantry

Division and Field Marshal Lieutenant von Hadfy had to be covered, however,

as their left wing at the San near Adamowka remained completely tied down.

Because the main attack of the VI Corps on the right bank against Bielstin was not met with quick success.

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Radymno is Taken.

Leaning against the San lowlands and the Szklo, the enemy offered stubborn resistance, particularly in entrenchments west of Bielstin. The attack stalled completely here. To get the advance north of the San moving and thereby eliminate the flanking fire that was hindering the attack on Radymno, the artillery of the Hungarian 39th Infantry Division and partly also that of the XXXXI Reserve Corps directed their fire northward. However, this support only affected the combat area immediately east of the San. At Bielstin, the Austro-Hungarian 12th Infantry Division under Field Marshal Lieutenant Kestranek was still held fast for the time being.

The same happened to the left neighboring southern wing of the 1st Guards Infantry Division. Under the effect of enemy flanking fire from Bielstin, it was initially unable to advance. However, a breakthrough further north in the middle between Szklo and Malowisko was successful. Parts swinging north soon also cleared the way for the left wing attacking through Malowisko to break through the breach towards Bobrowka. The units of the 2nd Guards Infantry Division deployed here to support the 1st Guards Infantry Division were reassigned to General von Windler on the left corps wing for unified command.

The X Army Corps had already intended to take the positions around Cetula by surprise attack early in the morning before the start of the general attack, which, according to prisoner reports, had become known to the enemy. However, this did not succeed. Made aware by this attempt, the enemy was prepared for defense against the X Army Corps. A unified attack no longer occurred. The right corps wing, the 20th Infantry Division, separated from the Guards by a swamp area, gained some ground towards Olszowa. But the left wing and the 56th Infantry Division were stuck in heavy fighting around Cetula.

Meanwhile, the attack of the XXXXI Reserve Corps on Radymno had made favorable progress. By noon, the place was in the hands of the 82nd Reserve Division, and the 81st advanced further south into the immediately adjacent village of Stolzów. During these battles, aerial reconnaissance determined that the road from Radymno via Duntowice to Zalestów Wola was covered with several side-by-side marching columns. Clearly, troops of all arms were striving over the San bridges east of Radymno. A wild confusion arose in the masses gathering there. Aerial attacks of the long-range artillery targeted these welcome objectives.

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During the advance of the 82nd Reserve

Division through Radymno, a new severe panic arose among the Russian infantry,

so that further batteries, which sought to escape through the city,

fell into German hands. Both divisions already believed they could pursue

these disintegrating formations. However, the enemy positioned itself again

in prepared positions in front of the 81st Reserve Division on the heights

of the eastern Rada bank. The division organized itself for a new attack,

while the right wing was to advance on the eastern Rada bank towards Zadarowice

for flank security. By pushing the division towards Stoloszow, a noticeable gap

had arisen between it and the northern wing of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division,

which had meanwhile occupied Zablonce. The execution of the attack proved

impossible here, especially as the enemy itself launched a counterattack.

The 82nd Reserve Division was still able to establish itself on the flat

height east of Radymno. However, the attack strength of this division,

which had become quite confused in the local combat, seemed nearly exhausted.

Its left wing had to remain strongly bent back, as the Hungarians to the north

could not follow the rapid attack progress. The bridgehead of Zagrody effectively

flanked any further advance of the division. Fresh reserves initially swung

east against it, but encountered strong enemy resistance there at 3 p.m.

Although the attack of the XXXXI Reserve Corps had come to a halt along the entire line,

General von Francois still hoped to advance to the San line today, possibly even further.

In response to this intention reported to the Army High Command, the approving

reply came at 3 p.m.: "Since the enemy still holds east of Przemysl, a quick

advance against its rear is very promising."

When it soon became apparent that the Russian command had managed

to reestablish their collapsed front between the Rada and the

bridgehead of Zagrody, the Army High Command decided to close the gap

that had arisen between the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division and the XXXXI Reserve Corps.

It was hoped that this would give new impetus to the advance of this corps against the

San. At 4 p.m., the order was given to the 119th Infantry Division to

advance over Zamojce-Zadarowice. The 11th Bavarian Infantry Division ordered its left wing

at Zablonce to join the advance of the army reserve. The 119th Infantry Division reached the line Zablocze—Zamosjce only after nightfall.

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Also Great Successes East of the San.

The gap was closed. A coordinated advance of both divisions against the positions on the heights east of the Rada did not occur. The XXXXI Reserve Corps also postponed the continuation of its attack to the following day. May 24 had been a day of rest for the corps. The infantry, advancing with fresh momentum, effectively supported by the accompanying artillery, broke through two enemy defensive belts and thus wrested the strong bridgehead of Radymno from the enemy. In doing so, 52 guns were captured and 9000 prisoners were taken.

The 39th Infantry Division, positioned on the right flank of the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps in the difficult lowland terrain on both sides of the San, could not keep pace with the rapid advance of the XXXXI Reserve Corps. Flanking fire from Wietlin also hampered their attack here. It was not until 4 p.m. that the northern exit of Radymno was reached. The bridgehead of Zagrody also halted further advance here, as with the neighboring 82nd Reserve Division on the right. The frontal attack of the Hungarians did not break through. On the battlefield of the 12th Infantry Division Wietlin, the hotly contested redoubt west of the place was brought down at 11 a.m. with the support of the 1st Guard Infantry Division. However, Wietlin itself was still stubbornly held by the enemy. Only when the division directed its main thrust through the suburb of the place towards the road Sbychow—Drejna and reached it at 2 p.m., did the resistance in Wietlin finally collapse. In the hope that the attack of the inner flanks of both divisions, which had been advancing slowly through particularly difficult swampy terrain between the San and Wietlin, would now come into faster flow, the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps received the order from the army high command at 3 p.m. to "capture the line east of Grabowice—Dunkowice—Lazy in connection with the XXXXI Reserve Corps and Guard Corps today." However, this proved to be impossible. The army high command now emphasized that it was important to "break through from Wietlin via Zagrody to advance on the right bank of the San as soon as possible and thus facilitate the advance of the XXXXI Reserve Corps." "Above all, the VI Corps must soon be able to bring the road Radymno—Grabowice under fire." However, the Austro-Hungarian 12th Infantry Division did not succeed in the open terrain, exposed to flanking, in making significant progress against the strong enemy position between Zagrody and Lazy. Only directly at the San did the parts of the Hungarian 39th Infantry Division, separated by the river, reach the junction.

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The heavy day of fighting had brought the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps 7000 prisoners and 16 guns.

With the favorable turn that the battle north of Wisłim had taken by noon, relief had also come for the right wing of the Guard Corps. The General Command now placed the focus of further operations on it. In the line Dreśina—Adamowka¹), the 1st Guard Infantry Division encountered new strong resistance at 1 p.m. After breaking this, the division pushed towards the heavily fortified Łazy. The enemy responded with fierce counterattacks. Heavy fighting raged here until evening, without significant ground being gained. On the left wing, the 2nd Guard Infantry Division advanced after capturing the heights north of Małowisko to attack Adamowka—Bobrowka. But here too, the enemy charged at the attacker at 6 p.m. Bobrowka was no longer reached. 5000 prisoners were captured by the Guard Corps during the day.

After the successes of the 2nd Guard Infantry Division at Małowisko, the right wing of the X Army Corps also advanced fiercely in the afternoon. By 7 p.m., the enemy forest positions on both sides of Olchowo had fallen. In tough fighting, parts of the 20th Infantry Division pushed through to the edge of the forest, and by 10 p.m., Chodaniec was taken. The repeatedly fierce battle for Cetula indicated that strong Russian forces still stood here and also on the Łubaczowka front. Thus, despite the small territorial gains, the attack by the Emmich Corps succeeded in holding significant enemy forces here, away from the decision point.

The overall result of the day was that the 11th Army had broken through the newly established enemy front over a width of 20 kilometers and gained 5 kilometers of space. Nevertheless, the enemy managed to position itself, leaning on Przemyśl, in a westward-facing defensive position. Prisoner statements revealed that on May 22, the order was given to hold Przemyśl. On May 23, aircraft observed only limited traffic from the fortress in an easterly direction. If this was to be maintained, the 11th Army had to reckon that the enemy would continue to offer the strongest resistance on the connection front protecting the links from Przemyśl. A report made to the Supreme Army Command at 7 p.m., which also reached the General Commands, expressed the Army Command's further intentions to exploit the success achieved today.

¹) South of Bobrowka, located north of Sztło; not to be confused with Adamowka north of Rabyńmo.

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Reinforcements of the Enemy West of the San.

As the general command received orders, the army high command expressed its

further intentions to "exploit today's success and advance with the greatest possible force into the rear of the enemy east of Przemysl, ... to relocate the enemy's retreat over Mosciska as much as possible." The XXXXI Reserve Corps was to do everything "to enable the 119th Infantry Division to make the promising advance on Medyka."

Since the battles were not yet concluded in the evening, the high command could not foresee what situation would arise the next morning. It was therefore left to the initiative of the sub-commanders to exploit their previous successes within the framework of the given attack objectives on May 25. Initially, this did not succeed on the right wing of the army. The 11th Bavarian Infantry Division hoped, through its advance in connection with the 119th Infantry Division, to roll up the Rada position from the north and then swing into the desired encirclement position opposite the northern front of Przemysl. The 119th Infantry Division had reached the heights east of Zablcce during the night and wanted to advance with its right wing southward along the Rada. However, this attack did not progress by midday, while the Bavarians managed to take Drohojow by surprise. At the XXXXI Reserve Corps, the 81st Reserve Division made its further advance from Zamosc—Stolzow to the east dependent on the advance of the 119th Infantry Division on its right flank. Since the 82nd Reserve Division also had to repel strong attacks during the night, General von Francois considered a systematic preparation of the attack against the reinforced enemy necessary. Above all, the division's advance to the east seemed only possible if the bridgehead of Zagrody on the left flank had fallen.

Here, the nightly and repeated morning assault by the Hungarians had not yet achieved success. A relief through the center of the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, which did not advance in the open terrain north of the San, was not to be expected. Therefore, Field Marshal Lieutenant Arz placed emphasis on the left corps wing to take Laczyn in conjunction with the southern wing of the guard. This succeeded at 10 a.m. However, the local battle also attracted parts advancing further south. In the gap created north of the San, the corps reserve was now redirected to the rear of the bridgehead of Zagrody.

The Guard Corps intended a leftward swing in the attack. While the left wing was to hold the line reached in the morning at Bobrowka, the right was to swing forward over Lazy.

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Bobrowka was to be held, and the right was to swing forward over Lazy. After this place was taken, the connection to the VI Corps was reached here without strong enemy resistance. The center of the Guard Corps had to overcome significant terrain difficulties in the swampy lowlands, particularly for the artillery in its development for the attack.

In front of the X Army Corps, the enemy had vacated the hotly contested Cetula during the night. By 3 a.m., the height mass projecting into the Lubaczowka lowlands east of the place had been occupied by the 56th Infantry Division. General von Emmich now intended to also prepare the 20th Infantry Division at and north of Chodanie for the advance against the upper Lubaczowka. This connection initially caused some concern at the Army High Command that the previously taken bridgehead might be threatened from the east. However, this concern was soon dispelled, as Ryszkowa Wola and Zapalow were already found free of enemies in the early morning hours. Flyers confirmed at 9 a.m. that the Russians had withdrawn their forces to the southeast. The forward movement of the 20th Infantry Division was to take place at noon.

At this time, the High Command of the 11th Army assessed the situation such that the previous good progress north of the Wisznia would also help the attack group on both sides of the San, which still encountered strong resistance east of Radymno. If this succeeded in crossing the San, for which there seemed to be justified prospects, the impact on the enemy in front of the 3rd and 2nd Armies had to be made felt and force him to withdraw. This resulted in the necessity to continue the attack of the 11th Army in the chosen direction with all forces.

However, the hopes of the Army High Command were initially not fully realized. The right wing of the army did not make significant progress. In the course of the afternoon, the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division succeeded, under heavy fighting, in advancing its left wing at and north of Andrykow. The 119th Infantry Division advanced on the heights east of the Rada but soon became stuck again in front of Zadabrowie. Consequently, the 81st Reserve Division, suffering under heavy artillery flank fire on the right wing of the XXXXI Reserve Corps, could not gain significant ground. However, the 82nd Reserve Division resumed the attack against the Swiete-Grabowiec line from the left wing when the bridgehead of Zagrody fell at 4:45 p.m.

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Progress East of the San on May 25.

General von François intended to move the 81st Reserve Division later behind the 82nd to take them out of the fortress's firing range. The Army High Command agreed and directed the corps towards Stubno east of the San and the occupation of Soinica to secure the right flank. The 82nd Reserve Division managed to advance to Swiete despite the onset of darkness. However, they encountered such strong resistance that the plan to take Swiete and Soinica during the night could not be carried out. The left wing maintained connection with the Hungarians at the San near Grabowice.

As the execution of the tasks of the XXXXI Reserve Corps proved more difficult than expected, the Army High Command was eager to regain a reserve force to assert its intentions if necessary. Therefore, the 119th Infantry Division was ordered to remain at Zablace for the time being.

The battle in the center of the 11th Army brought more territorial gains. The attack by the corps reserve of the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, which struck the bridgehead of Zagrody from the rear at 4 p.m., brought it down. Subsequently, the 39th Infantry Division advanced on the east bank of the San up to Grabowice. The 12th Infantry Division also pushed forward after a victorious conclusion of the battles around Lazy, pursuing the retreating enemy over the Wisznia between Duniowice and Lazy during the afternoon.

The right wing of the Guard Corps was still engaged in combat north of Lazy in the afternoon. The center had already launched an attack against the heights west and north of Laszki at 1 p.m. Despite fierce, offensively conducted defense and after lively local skirmishes, the enemy had to abandon Laszki by 4 p.m. In the evening, the center reached both sides of the Szylo up to Chartany—Zamecznik. The right wing also managed to advance eastward beyond Lazy without encountering strong resistance. On the left corps wing, shortly after 2 p.m., forces deployed from Bobrowka launched an attack on Zagrody. Despite heavy flanking fire from the north, the position of the place was secured by 6 p.m.

The X Army Corps carried out the intended pivot of its center into the line Zapalow—Lubaczowka during the afternoon without enemy counteraction. Parts of the 20th Infantry Division also participated in the Guard's battle around Zagrody.

1) On the Bobrowka—Oleszyce railway, not to be confused with Zagrody on the battlefield of the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps.

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In the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, decisive battles north of Przemysl had not yet occurred since the beginning of the battle. Its command area had meanwhile extended beyond the Vistula, with the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army subordinated to it as "Group Kirchbach"¹). On the northern riverbank, the enemy had vacated its positions in front of the left wing of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army and the Landwehr Division Bredow on May 22, but had already set up new resistance a few kilometers further east. After a feint operation on May 24 at the San front, the planned advance on Samborice took place on both sides of the Vistula the next day. However, some enemy positions were overcome. The high command of the 11th Army requested the 4th Army at 7 p.m. to relieve the parts of the German 19th Infantry Division deployed in the bridgehead of Sieniawa, so that they could also be drawn into the breakthrough of the 11th Army. The relief was promised for the night of May 27.

The progress of the neighboring Austro-Hungarian 3rd and 2nd Armies to the southward road from Przemysl had been minimal so far. The demand of General von Conrad that the attack of both armies should reach the Mosciska—Przemysl road on May 25 could not be met by the troops. A breakthrough into the enemy did not occur. Serious threat to the rear connection from Przemysl from the south did not exist so far. This was largely due to the fact that strong artillery had to be deployed for the attack of the 3rd Army against the western front of Przemysl, so that only weak artillery was available for the thrust of the inner wings of both armies. Additionally, there was a shortage of ammunition due to the difficult supply conditions in the mountains. It was intended to consolidate the Besikent Corps around the left wing of the 2nd Army on May 26 under the command of General von Marwitz to achieve success. In the evening, aircraft observed the departure of enemy columns from Przemysl to the east and from Balice in front of the right wing of the 3rd Army to the northeast. Whether these movements were to be seen as the beginning of a withdrawal of the enemy to the east or to reinforce its front heavily threatened by the 11th Army was uncertain. In any case, the task for all armies remained to continue their attacks in the chosen directions with all their strength.

¹) On May 22, the command of the VIII Corps was taken over by the cavalry general Baron von Kirchbach. The previous commander of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army, Cavalry General Dankl, was assigned to the Italian front. See p. 26.

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Corps Francois is deployed against the rear of the fortress.

Since the 119th Infantry Division was held back by the Army High Command, the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division, relying solely on itself, was unable to advance beyond the Rada. At the XXXXI Reserve Corps, the 82nd Reserve Division continued in a tough, indecisive village fight around Swiete. In front of the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, the enemy had retreated to a position east of Grabowice—Nienowice—Piaśki. At 10 a.m., they were attacked here. The enemy had retreated from the Guard Corps. Only around noon did the 1st Guard Infantry Division encounter resistance from Zaleska Wola. The 2nd Guard Infantry Division broke through at noon in the march through Mielizka Stary and Korzenica. The enemy stood here in line Luchla—Mielizka Nowy—Butkowina. General Freiherr von Plettenberg intended to advance the 1st Guard Infantry Division on Chalupki Chotyniecice under the cover of the left flank by the 2nd Guard Infantry Division.

In this situation, Generaloberst von Mackensen gave the following order to General von Francois at 1 p.m.: "Since the XXXXI Reserve Corps can no longer advance in the front, it must now attempt, under the protection of the 119th Infantry Division, which is now assigned for this purpose, to bring the 81st Reserve Division and the 82nd Reserve Division across the San. ... The overall situation urgently requires that the San be crossed today in line Barcyz—Nienowice."

General von Francois then ordered the 82nd Reserve Division at 3 p.m. to push through to the southern edge of Swiete. This goal was reached by 5 p.m. From the 81st Reserve Division, the immediately available parts were to reach the eastern bank of the San over Michalowka during the night after being relieved by the 119th Infantry Division, to later advance on the shortest route over Stubno—Bucow towards the road Przemysl—Moscilka and make the 82nd Division available. During the night, the 81st Reserve Division moved between the parts of the 82nd Reserve Division located on the eastern bank of the San and the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps.

This corps had taken Nienowice from the enemy with the 39th Infantry Division by 7 p.m. and pursued them to Gaje. The 12th Infantry Division, following weak enemies, had reached Chotyniec. Thus, a wedge had been driven far to the southeast. Positioned on the left, the 1st Guard Infantry Division pushed forward through Jaleska Wola under combat with enemy rearguards.

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Separated by the broad Słozówienung, the 2nd Guard Infantry Division reached the heights west of Tuchla. The lower course of the Lubaczowka was designated as the army boundary for the X Army Corps, after the 19th Infantry Division was detached from the front and assembled at Jarosław. No more battles took place here on this day.

The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army had made the attack on Sandomierz on the Vistula dependent on the advance of the German 47th Reserve Division deployed further east. However, this division soon came up against strong forest positions. Without significant additional artillery deployment, success was not to be expected here. No successes were achieved on May 26 at the junction of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd and 2nd Armies either.

The allied army commands had planned the later expansion of the San-Wisznia line in their agreements on the continuation of operations on May 12.1) After important parts of this section had now fallen into the hands of the attacking army, General von Conrad ordered on May 26 the expansion of the San line and the captured bridgeheads, adding that this "naturally must not hinder the continuation of the offensive in any way." The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army was to fortify the bridgehead of Sieniawa and the line reached so far in the San-Vistula angle. The 11th Army then ordered the X and Guard Corps to expand their positions by advancing the right wing to Młyn north of the main road to Krakowiec. The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps was to advance north of the Wisznia over Kalników-Galazie. For the attack group of General von Francois, it was ordered: "XXXXI Reserve Corps with 119th Infantry Division retains the task of advancing south of the Wisznia, which now forms the border with the VI Corps, towards the Medyka-Mościska road. Right border free." The cover of the right flank on the western San bank remained with the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division with the Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division. This gave General von Francois more leeway to push the attack part from the previously gained large bridgehead of the 11th Army against the connections from Przemyśl. The VI and Guard Corps were to follow to protect the left flank positioned to the southeast.

1) p. 139.

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The Francois Assault Group is Weakened.

However, at 11:45 a.m., he called upon the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division to relieve the troops of the 119th Infantry and the 82nd Reserve Division located on the western bank of the San. General von Kneussl, on the other hand, was of the opinion that due to the resulting extension of his division over twelve kilometers, overcoming the enemy's elevated position east of the Rada was no longer possible for him. He considered the involvement of the units subordinated to General von Francois in this task on the western San bank still necessary and made representations to General von Francois in this sense. However, he was convinced that the resistance on the western side opposite the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division would also collapse through the full-force assault on the eastern bank. The Army High Command initially agreed to the measures of General von Francois but decided, after receiving the statement from General von Kneussl, in favor of the latter and ordered at 3:15 p.m.: "XXXXI. Reserve Corps is to first secure possession of Sosnica with its right wing, advance with the left wing over Stubienko to Stubno. After gaining Sosnica, the right wing is to take the direction towards Bucow. The 119th Infantry Division is to follow up on Sosnica. Connection of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division via Zadobrowce to Drohojow." Under these circumstances, the decisive advance on the eastern bank could only become effective in full force once the Francois group had completed its task on the western bank. The influence of the Przemysl fortress on the course of operations became apparent.

The attack battle of the XXXXI. Reserve Corps initiated in the meantime on both San banks remained unaffected by this exchange of opinions. The 119th Infantry Division only wrested the heights immediately south of Zamoscie from the enemy in the evening and maintained connection there with the 82nd Reserve Division. The repeated attacks of this division against the enemy, effectively supported by the fortress artillery, had not been successful. Only when parts of the division intervened from the other San bank in the afternoon, did they finally succeed in penetrating the northern part of Sosnica. The 81st Reserve Division, now deployed on the flat eastern bank between San and Wisznia, pressed forward with the focus on its left wing towards the southeast. It encountered strong resistance along the Barcza-Stubienko line. Under the pressure of the superior force, the enemy was forced at 4:00 p.m. to Stubienko and in the evening also to give up Stubno.

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The division now wanted to advance to Pozdacz to gain influence on the railway and road Przemysl—Medyka—Mosciska, but its striking power was no longer sufficient in the increasingly widening attack area. Its right wing remained at the San in front of Barcza, while its left could still wrest Nako from the enemy in the evening.

East of the Wisznia, the Austro-Hungarian VI and the Guard Corps accompanied the advance of the XXXXI Reserve Corps with squadrons from the right wing. In the afternoon hours, the Allies took Kalników and the heights south of the place after a hard fight. Further north, the line Ostran Kalników—west of Milny—height west of Tuchla was captured, where the planned defensive front was to be expanded.

A serious threat loomed on the left wing of the army. Already during the night and throughout the day, strong enemy advances over the Lubaczowka had to be repelled on the entire front of the 20th and the now over eleven kilometers extended 56th Infantry Division. Particularly in front of the left wing of the 56th Infantry Division at the Lubaczowka bend east of Czernowka Wola, strong enemy forces seemed to be massing. The approach of considerable troops unloaded at Lubaczow was reported by aircraft at noon. The army command therefore prepared a regiment from the 19th Infantry Division, which had been withdrawn as a reserve, at Pionka for the right wing of the X Army Corps and made another regiment of the 56th Infantry Division available.

While the left wing of the 11th Army stood firm despite enemy attacks, the Russians achieved a great success north of the Lubaczowka against the bridgehead of Sieniawa. After the failure of Czech troops had lost the Slawa height at night, the entire defense of the Allies completely collapsed. Numerous Austro-Hungarian batteries fell into enemy hands. Reserves were unable to restore the situation. The Russian X Army Corps, itself under the heaviest attack, was unable to provide assistance. Thus, the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army had to retreat behind the Lubaczowka and the San after several unsuccessful attempts to rebuild the defense east of the San. At 8:45 p.m., Generaloberst von Mackensen approved this order but also simultaneously ordered the cessation of offensive movements against Somborina to free up forces for the threatened right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army. Also on the left Vistula bank, the attack of the Kirchbach group and the right wing of the Army Detachment Woyrsch in the line Klimontow–Jezow–Stojhow finally came to a halt.

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Successful Russian Counterattack at Sieniawa.

Due to these events at the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, a serious crisis arose for the left wing of the 11th Army. If the army wanted to continue its offensive task, its left flank could not be pressed. Therefore, at 9 p.m., the army command ordered the 119th Infantry Division to be held at its immediate disposal. This meant a further significant loss of striking power for General von François's mission.

The fronts of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd and 2nd Armies had almost come to a standstill.

4. The Battle for Przemysl from May 28 to June 3.

Map 6, Sketch 14.

On May 28, a relaxation occurred at the front of the 11th Army. Under the impression of the bold advance of the 81st Reserve Division on the southern bank of the San, the enemy was retreating before the entire front of General von François. The rest of the army's front held its positions against enemy partial attacks except for a local loss at Kalniów. This allowed the army command to release forces to counter an extension of Russian successes at Sieniawa to the western bank of the San and against the left flank of the 11th Army. Parts of the 19th Infantry Division were sent to Wola Buchowska. The 119th Infantry Division was moved to Jaroslaw, except for the divisional staff and a reinforced infantry regiment, which were subordinated to the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division, where two battalions of the Guard Corps had also been shifted. The Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division, without its rifle unit, which remained with the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division, was also set in motion to Jaroslaw. Thus, sufficient reserves were ready at the junction of both armies by evening.

Meanwhile, the enemy had retreated before the right wing of the 11th Army to the line Malowice–Walawa. General von Kneussl followed the enemy accordingly. The XXXXI Reserve Corps also followed the enemy on both banks of the San, where the focus was increasingly shifted to the eastern bank. Here, the advance troops reached the line Chalupki–Nako. However, at 9 p.m., the army command ordered the 82nd Reserve Division to halt south of Sieniawa and not to go beyond the line Walawa–Podziacia on the eastern bank. This measure appeared necessary to be able to fall back on the XXXXI Reserve Corps to support the left wing of the army if needed.

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However, General von François urged a rapid continuation of the assigned thrust against the connections of Przemysl, despite the significant weakening of his forces revealed by the events at Sieniawa. He saw the enemy's isolated attacks as a sign of their waning strength, indicating an imminent evacuation of the fortress. Prisoners had also stated that strong forces would leave the fortress on May 28. Therefore, the 82nd Reserve Division was to aim for Malawa—Torki on May 29, and the 81st Reserve Division for Pöbbazicz—Starzawa.

The High Command of the 11th Army also gained the impression that the enemy no longer intended to seriously defend Przemysl. To prevent an orderly withdrawal of their forces and resources from the fortress, it was necessary to force them into a hasty evacuation. However, given the current course of attacks, a quick success by the Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army against the fortress was unlikely. Therefore, only the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division was considered to hasten the fall of the fortress. Generaloberst von Mackensen ordered this division to carry out the "shortened attack on Przemysl."

The fortress of Przemysl, located at the deep exit of the San from the mountains, was surrounded by a ring of modern forts and intermediate works. In the south, west, and north, these were extended far into the surrounding hilly terrain, while on the eastern front they lay in the widening river plain. Although the hurried demolitions carried out before the fortress was handed over to the Russians in March of the year had diminished the defensive capability of the works in some respects, they did not affect the secure accommodation in underground spaces and the remaining armored types and observation posts. Meanwhile, the Russians had worked on restoring the works and expanding the intermediate lines, significantly strengthening the obstacles. The inner fortification of the fortress was outdated and offered no resistance to modern artillery.

The commander of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division, General von Kneussl, chose the area of Forts X and XI as the target for the attack. In two sections, two infantry regiments each were deployed under the command of Generals von Schön and von Behr. To the right secured only cavalry, while on the left, the rifle detachment of the Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division joined.

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The Abbreviated Attack on Przemysl is Ordered.

It was intended to advance the infantry to the fort line on May 29. The artillery under the command of Major General Zieten was to open fire on May 30, the infantry to reach the assault position the following night and storm on the 31st. The Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army promised a simultaneous attack against the southwest front.

The movements carried out on May 29 and in the subsequent rainy night and the artillery's positioning proceeded without interference from the enemy. However, the troops gained the impression that the enemy was still willing to offer sustained resistance in its solid, partly fortified front line.

The XXXXI Reserve Corps was able to advance its right wing on both sides of the San to the southern edge of Walawa and to the same height as Dallo on May 29 without being disturbed. At 4 in the afternoon, the 82nd Reserve Division brought mortars and 10 cm cannons into position right behind its infantry, opening fire on the railway near Medyka. At least a disruption of the connections from Przemysl was now achieved. The enemy seemed to be concentrating strong forces on the Turczan Heights opposite the left corps wing. Therefore, parts of the 82nd Reserve Division were moved behind the 81st to Stubno, which also provided support to the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps stationed at Kalników; it was brought forward again. Otherwise, the adjoining front of the VI, Garbe, and X Army Corps had only weak advances to repel. On the left army wing, however, the enemy launched strong but unsuccessful attacks against the now extended front of the X Army Corps (56th Infantry Division) to the San, to exploit its success from Sieniawa. The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army regrouped its right wing on the west bank of the San.

Given the overall operational situation, it was absolutely necessary to increase the previously unsuccessful pressure of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd and 2nd Armies against the road east of Przemysl, in order to at least pin down the enemy forces located on this front. Already strong parts of the Russian 8th Army had appeared opposite the 11th Army east of the San. Consequently, Generaloberst von Mackensen believed in view of the developments at Sieniawa that he could not afford to use additional forces beyond the XXXXI Reserve Corps for the decisive thrust to the south, which could have simultaneously accelerated the fall of Przemyśl.

1) Two Austro-Hungarian mountain guns, one Austro-Hungarian mountain howitzer, nine field guns, three light field howitzers, three light field howitzers, one 15 cm gun, four 21 cm, one 28 cm, one 42 cm howitzer, two 30.5 cm mortar batteries, two, four medium and one light mine thrower units.

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Events at Sieniawa could not be undertaken, except for the

XXXXI Reserve Corps to use additional forces for the decisive thrust to the

south, which could have simultaneously accelerated the fall of Przemyśl.

"If Przemyśl falls," Colonel von Seeckt stated in an assessment of the situation,

"then at least the position before the Wisznia line is resolved. It therefore

appears necessary to continue operations in the initiated manner, thus

withstanding the pressure from the east against the bridgehead at Jaroslau,

and advancing further from the north and south directly towards Przemyśl—Mościska

to capture Przemyśl."

The attack preparations of the 11th Bavarian Infantry

Division against Przemyśl itself proceeded according to plan on May 30.

At 11 a.m., the artillery began its fire in clear weather. The assault was

scheduled for May 31 at 6:30 a.m. General von Francois continued to

strive to push his right wing forward on both sides of the San, to bring

his heavy artillery further south to effectively target the connections of Przemyśl.

If further progress was made towards Podziaca, he intended to also attack

the Turzyna Heights, which dominate the battlefield. However, the army

command was concerned that such an attack might divert the XXXXI Reserve

Corps from its main thrust direction to the south, and recommended suppressing

the Turzyna Heights only with artillery fire from both neighboring corps.

While the 82nd Reserve Division managed to advance somewhat east of the

San during the afternoon, its attack west of the river did not progress well.

Opposite the weak Austrian cavalry riflemen deployed between the 82nd

Reserve and 11th Bavarian Infantry Division, the front section at Malkowice

was heavily occupied by the enemy. As this posed a threat to the left wing

of the fortress attack, the army command instructed General von Francois

at 4:30 p.m. to "advance emphatically on the western bank while holding

the position now reached on the eastern San bank" and to capture Ghetyn,

"so Malkowice." The 82nd Reserve was raised at 8 p.m., and Wyszatyce

was also named as an additional target. However, decisive progress was

not achieved on the western bank of the San on May 30. The Austro-Hungarian

VI, Guard, and X Army Corps were able to further expand their defensive

positions. The two guard battalions withdrawn to Jaroslau were moved to

Dunlowice for the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, which had weakened combat

strength. The new front at the lower Aubaczowa was already exposed to strong, repeated mass attacks during the day, in which seven Russian divisions were involved.

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Breakthrough in the Frontline of Przemysl.

They were completely repelled, mostly in

fierce close combat. The crisis seemed to be overcome here.

Also, with the Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army, artillery fire against Przemysl

began on May 30. The assault was also planned for the following

day. But by 7 p.m., the infantry had already succeeded in

taking Fort VII at Pralkowce by surprise.

In the attack section of the 11th Bavarian Infantry

Division, the infantry that had entered the assault position in the early morning of May 31

did not yet find the effect of the artillery fire

sufficient. Therefore, the assault was postponed to June 1, and the

firing on the intended breakthrough point continued.

The 82nd Reserve Division, which was adjacent on the left, was engaged in heavy combat

west of the San in the morning, to wrest the areas "to Malkowice" from the enemy and advance south from Walawa.

In this situation, at 2 p.m., the army command received an order from the Austro-Hungarian

high command, which, pointing to the worrying developments at Sieniawa and the enemy

troop concentrations there, ordered the following: "The 11th and 4th Armies ensure

particularly strong fortification of their battle lines and prepare all

dispensable forces as reserves for defense. The 3rd and 2nd Armies

continue the attack on Przemysl and against the Przemysl—Rudki line with all

determination." The 11th Army Command inferred from this

the certainly justified wish of the Austro-Hungarian high command to

regain the fortress lost in March despite brave defense with the forces of

their own armies. However, it believed that it should not comply with this request

in the current operational situation, as with a sudden withdrawal of the 11th Army from the execution of the

attack on Przemysl and on the Borstkopf from the north into the rear of the

fortress, there was a danger that the entire attack operation would come to a standstill,

— all the more so as shortly thereafter the news arrived that the

fort VII, taken by the Bavarians the evening before, had been abandoned again.

In full awareness of his responsibility, Generaloberst von Mackensen

refrained from changing his previous orders. This found its

quick and brilliant justification through the behavior of the troops entrusted with

the attack on Przemysl.

The new bombardment of the attack front, lasting until 4 p.m.,

finally had a visible effect. The last successful shot of a 42 cm

mortar had shattered the rest of a dangerous trench section on the west flank

of Fort XI. Recognizing these favorable circumstances, the assault infantry, beginning from the left flank, broke out of their position on their own initiative.

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The attack of the left wing of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division over Dumkowiczi suffered heavily from flanking fire, as the farms "at Malkowice" on the left flank had not yet been taken by the 82nd Reserve Division. The storm was fully successful. The fort line Xa to XI was taken. The surprised Russians had mostly not been able to occupy the breastworks in time. Their isolated counterattacks were repelled and numerous prisoners were made. The attack, immediately carried out over the ring road, reached the heights between Fort X and Dombrowiczki by 5 in the afternoon. The first, most important step towards capturing the fortress was thus accomplished. As support, General von Kneuss was assigned the two guard battalions stationed at Dombrowice. The next day, the artillery was to prepare the expansion of the breach to the east. For this, the advance of the subsequent 82nd Reserve Division was essential. The army command therefore demanded at 5:30 in the afternoon from the XXXXI Reserve Corps the deployment of all available forces to immediately "ensure the cover of the Bavarian division between Malfowice and the San." The artillery of the XXXXI Reserve Corps was to be deployed against the fort line Dombrowiczki—Bolestraszice. All other tasks of the corps, except for the artillery bombardment of the railway at Medyka, were to take a back seat to this. Accordingly, reinforcements of infantry and artillery were also supplied from the east bank to the attack group of the 82nd Reserve Division fighting from the heights "at Malfowice," to be able to continue the attack with full force the next morning. At the front of the 11th Army east of the San, the expected strong attacks of the enemy did not materialize.

To ensure more unified combat leadership at the joint attack front of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd and 2nd Armies than before, the Beskiden Corps was subordinated to the 2nd Army. The attack was planned here for June 2.

Enemy reports revealed that the shift of Russian forces to the northeast had also led to a new division of their front. The Russian 8th Army now extended to the Lubaczowka near Nowa Grobla. In Przemysl, three infantry divisions and three landwehr brigades were assumed, as well as 18 infantry and three cavalry divisions from the 11th Army and eleven infantry and three cavalry divisions in front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army.

General von Kneuss made every effort to expand the breach front in the fort belt, which was of utmost importance for further advance to the south, on both sides, especially to the east, as this could simultaneously increase the pressure against the fortress's connections.

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The Breach is Expanded.

The infantry division over Dumkowiczi suffered heavily from flanking fire, as the farms "at Malkowice" on the left flank had not yet been taken by the 82nd Reserve Division.

During the night, the enemy launched new attacks against the large bridgehead of the 11th Army east of the San, with particular force against the Lubaczowka front. They were repelled. The unassailed right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army was able to consolidate through the supply of further reinforcements. Based on this situation, which was clear by 9 a.m., Generaloberst von Mackensen moved the reserves located on the left army wing over Jaroslau on both banks of the San to the south, to be able to use them if necessary to support the fortress attack or the advance east of the San.

At the front of General von Kneussl, the left wing was able to advance through Dumkowiczi under further heavy fighting. By 5 p.m., the general reported that the enemy was only slowly retreating. Meanwhile, the 82nd Reserve Division, supported by artillery from General von Kneussl, had already captured the farms "at Malkowice" by noon and pursued the enemy up to the height of Dumkowiczi and south of Wisznaty. The favorable development of the situation prompted General von François to inquire with the army high command whether the 82nd Reserve Division should now participate in the attack on the fortress. The decision was made at 2:30 p.m. that only "the effect with heavy artillery against the northern front of the fortress" and "the securing of the flank of the fortress attack" were the tasks of the division. To make this bombardment effective, more artillery was brought from the east bank of the San. The good progress of the 82nd Reserve Division also had to bring significant relief to the left wing of the fortress attack. By 8 p.m., a work south of Dumkowiczi was stormed and the foreland up to Fort XII was taken.

In front of the entire front east of the San, especially in front of the Guard and 10th Army Corps (including the 56th Infantry Division), the enemy had further strengthened.

Since the previous artillery preparation for the fortress attack of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army had not been sufficient, the high command of the 11th Army suggested at 7 p.m. to expand the advantages gained so far on the northern front of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division by supplying infantry from the 3rd Army, in case a quick success with this army was not to be expected.

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The Summer Campaign of the Allies in Galicia.

After repelling night counterattacks, the planned bombardment of Fort X began early in the morning. By noon, the right wing of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division stormed into this fort, almost completely destroyed by artillery fire, yet stubbornly defended to the last. Its fall laid the foundation for the continuation of the attack southward. To ensure the security of the left flank, General von Kneußl requested at 2:30 PM that the Army High Command, contrary to previous orders, also advance the right wing of the XXXXI Reserve Corps further against the fortress. General von Francois had already independently ordered this. Thus secured on the left flank, the entire attack front of General von Kneußl could advance beyond this village after repelling enemy counterattacks from Zurawka between 4 and 5 PM for an hour. This, however, extended the attack to a worrying width of twelve kilometers without reserves being available. As further hard fighting was expected, the Army High Command forced the deployment of additional forces from the XXXXI Reserve Corps. Repeated requests at 7:15 PM to bring infantry from the Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army to support General von Kneußl's attack. "If infantry is not moved into the breach of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division from there tonight, this division will not be able to exploit the success further but will struggle to hold what has been achieved." General von Conrad, however, considered the storm of the 3rd Army against the southwestern front of the fortress, planned for early June 5th, whose success was not doubted, to be the most effective support for the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division. Moreover, signs had increased during the day that the enemy was preparing to evacuate the fortress systematically. Early in the morning, aircraft had detected columns marching east on the Przemysl—Mosciśka road. They had been fired upon by the 10 cm cannons of the XXXXI Reserve Corps. According to the aircraft, the Russian artillery had weakened, parts of it were also in retreat. The enemy gun position on the east bank of the San was cleared. Consequently, General von Francois was eager to advance further southeast and later also indicate the Turzyna height. In response to his inquiry, the Army High Command stated at 12:30 PM: "Advancing on Medyka is desired as soon as possible." Consequently, General von Francois ordered at 1:30 PM to immediately advance the San towards Lorki—Podziacis so far that field artillery could also operate against the road from Medyka. The left corps wing felt against the Turzyna height.

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Advance of the XXXXI Reserve Corps against the Road to Medyka.

At 7 p.m., however, the army command issued the order to attack the heights only if it would facilitate the advance on Medyka. Under no circumstances should the right wing of the army be further stretched, "whose task remains primarily the capture and closure of Przemyśl." It was possible that forces of the XXXXI Reserve Corps would be required for this. Accordingly, General von Francois ordered the next day that the 82nd Reserve Division advance west of the San against the fortress and "seize forts decisively where the opportunity arises," while on the east bank the advance against Medyka-Bucow was to be carried out under cover against the Turzyna Heights.

The rest of the 11th Army's front east of the San had gained further strength through expansion. Strong enemy troop concentrations in front of it made it likely that the Russians would soon launch a relief offensive, particularly against the flank of the 11th Army at the Lubaczowka.

However, a worrying turn threatened the situation anew with the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army. Already on June 1, enemy attacks had begun in the area between the San and the Vistula, which had been repelled except for a local setback at Rudnik. On June 2, the enemy succeeded in forcing a breakthrough southwest of Rudnik. Here, the allies had retreated to their second position, so that the German 47th Reserve Division also found itself compelled to withdraw its right wing, which was positioned in the woods east of the Leg Stream. In the evening, the front seemed to waver at Lezajsk as well. The Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division was sent there. Generaloberst von Mackensen pointed out to the command of the 4th Army the serious consequences that further yielding would have for the attack on Przemyśl and for the operation planned after the fall of the fortress. No progress had been made on the inner flanks of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd and 2nd Armies either.

The further attack on Przemyśl, however, went much more favorably than the command had assumed. By the afternoon, the works adjoining the breach on the right and left had also fallen. General von Kneussl immediately ordered the continuation of the attack against the enemy positions south of Zurawica. The victorious advancing troops soon gained the impression that the Russian defense was weakening, and reached the desired next line of heights without encountering sustained resistance.

1) p. 202.

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The evening aerial reconnaissance reported the continuation of the enemy's departure from the fortress and numerous fires, especially at the Przemysl train station. The evacuation of the fortress seemed to be in full swing. Therefore, General von Kneussl ordered at 8 p.m. to advance further to the core fortifications and, if possible, to penetrate the city itself, as Major General von Behr had already intended. The artillery opened fire on the core fortifications1). The fall of the fortress was now only a matter of a few hours.

Indeed, the cavalry of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division found the works IX a and IX abandoned by the enemy at midnight on June 3. The other adjacent works north of the San were also occupied by cavalry of the Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army by 3 a.m. At this time, General von Kneussl assumed, based on reports from his right wing section, that the enemy would no longer hold the inner fort line. Therefore, he renewed the order at 4 a.m. for the right section of Major General von Schöch to advance into the city center. The left attack section under Major General von Behr, from whom no reports had yet been received, was to immediately advance eastward past the fortress over the San to capture the enemy withdrawing from the fortress if possible. At 5:30 a.m., however, the report from Major General von Behr arrived directly at the army command that Przemysl had been occupied by his troops at 3 a.m. A guard battalion made available to General von Behr had advanced through the inner fortifications during the night and found the city abandoned by the enemy. General von Kneussl received this report only at 6 a.m., simultaneously with an aerial report that the last Russian infantry had been observed marching east from Przekpana, east of Przemysl, and from Torit towards Medyka. Further east, long infantry and vehicle columns were moving south of the main road to the east. General von Kneussl now set all his troops on the shortest route over Przemysl in pursuit. Also, the parts of the XXXXI Reserve Corps located on the west bank of the San had joined the advance of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division. At 4:45 a.m., the 82nd Reserve Division had reached the area between Zurawica and the San, occupied the forts abandoned by the enemy, and swung further towards the San east of Przemysl.

1) Total ammunition consumption of the heavy artillery during the attack on Przemysl in the section of General von Kneussl: 7067 shots.

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Przemysl Falls.

The Austro-Hungarian 4th Cavalry Division of the 3rd Army entered the city shortly before 7 in the morning.

As the inner wings of the 11th and Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army threatened to converge in and around Przemysl, it was necessary to make arrangements for the continuation of operations. At 8 in the morning, the army command ordered the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division to advance to the eastern belt of the fortress and the XXXXI Reserve Corps to reach the San south of Bolestraszyce and the line Fort I—Tuzna Heights. The Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army began a rightward swing of its left wing through Przemysl. By noon, the Austro-Hungarian X Corps moved into the city south of the San. In the evening, the lines of the allies stood on and on both sides of the heights of Siedliska. The line Medyka—Bucow was agreed as the boundary between the two armies. Up to this line, the XXXXI Reserve Corps swung forward at Medyka. Fort I and Popdaczka were free from the enemy. The left wing of the corps prepared for an attack against the still occupied Tuzna Heights in the afternoon. At 3 in the afternoon, it was stormed after a hard fight. The enemy still held at Wisznia and in Starzawa. The expected major counteroffensive against the front of the 11th Army further north did not materialize.

The situation with the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army was still tense. The enemy that had broken in at Lezajsk could not be completely thrown back over the San. An attack seemed to be preparing against the new front southwest of Rudnik. The German 47th Reserve Division of Lieutenant General von Besser was already heavily, but unsuccessfully, attacked on both sides of the Leg. The reserves of the 4th Army were exhausted on the extended front. Following a suggestion from Generaloberst von Mackensen, the Austro-Hungarian army command decided to immediately assign the left wing corps of the 3rd Army, the X Corps, to the 4th Army.

Considerations.

The operations of the allies in West Galicia from mid-May to early June had proceeded differently than originally planned by the command. The 11th Army, covered on the left flank by the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, was to be the main carrier of the offensive, forcing the crossing of the San in the area of Jaroslau, thus outside the tactical range of the Przemysl fortress, to prepare for the initially uncertain continuation of the operations beyond the river, with its right wing being able to take the direction towards Lemberg.

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The capture of the fortress, whether by coup de main or by planned attack, was the task of the neighboring Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army. Moreover, this army was also to initially place its focus on cooperating with the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army in the area south of Przemysl.

The objective for the 11th Army was indeed that Generaloberst von Mackensen should concentrate as many forces as possible in the center for the advance over the San at Jaroslaw and also entrust his weakly held right wing only with defensive flank protection against the fortress. The first impetus for a change in this task came on May 18 from the suggestion of General von Falkenhayn to break through from the bridgehead taken at Jaroslaw to the southeast on both sides of the Wisznia. Certainly, there was no thought of an attack by the right wing of the 11th Army against the northern front of the fortress, but rather of cutting their rear connections and operational relief of the allied armies on the right, whose offensive had almost come to a standstill. However, as much as Generaloberst von Mackensen was also eager to place the focus of the thrust in a southeasterly direction towards Mosciska during the implementation of this suggestion, it could not be avoided that his right wing now came into close contact with the fortress. Initially, it was still believed that it would be possible to limit themselves to closing off its northern front. However, the strong resistance encountered by the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division assigned to this task made Generaloberst von Mackensen find the involvement of the XXXXI Reserve Corps, reinforced by the 119th Infantry Division, more desirable. From the slight progress of the right neighboring army both against Przemysl itself and in advancing against the area east of it, it then emerged, albeit certainly not inevitably, but understandably, the decision to quickly bring down the fortress by attacking its northern front. To be sure of success, the army commander also believed that he could not do without at least indirect support from the XXXXI Reserve Corps. As a result, a considerable part of the original strength of the thrust against the rear connections was lost. To compensate for this and sharpen the delivery of other objectives, consideration of the precarious situation into which the left neighboring army had simultaneously fallen forbade it. To relieve the northern flank of the 11th Army, even considerable parts had to be assigned to the Francois assault group.

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Thus it happened that the final result fell short of the initial intention emphasized by the Army High Command and soon pursued by General von François, to encircle the fortress by advancing southeast and thereby capture the garrison along with the rich war material¹). However, this was offset by the decisive fact for the continuation of operations that the obstacle, which had previously hindered the direct cooperation of the 11th Army and its right neighboring army, was finally removed. The shortening of the front freed up forces for other uses. Besides this operational advantage, the fall of Przemysl also represented a new, highly significant moral success for the allied armies.

5. The Russian Southwestern Front from Mid-May to Early June.²)

Maps 5 and 6, Sketches 13 and 14.

By mid-May, the Russian Southwestern Front under General Ivanov, divided into five armies, was ready for new battles between the Pilica and the Romanian border³):

4th Army (General Ewetz: XIV., XVI., Grenadier-, XXV., XXXI. Corps): 10 infantry divisions, 5 Landwehr brigades, 2½ cavalry divisions;

3rd Army (General Radko Dimitrijew, from May 20 General Lösche: IX., X., III. Caucasian, XXIV., XXI., XII. Corps): 20½ infantry divisions, 5 Landwehr brigades, 5¾ cavalry divisions;

8th Army (General Brussilow: VIII., XVII., XXVIII., VII. Corps): 10¾ infantry divisions, 1 Landwehr brigade, 1¼ cavalry divisions;

11th Army (General Schtscherbatschëw: XXII., XVIII. Corps): 6¾ infantry divisions, 1 Landwehr brigade;

9th Army (General Letschitzki: XI., XXX., XXVIII. Corps, 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Corps, XXXII. Corps): 9 infantry divisions, 6 Landwehr brigades, 8 cavalry divisions.

¹) During the battles around Przemysl, the attacking troops of General von Kneussl captured a total of 8300 prisoners. They also seized the guns stored in the forts, mostly destroyed, as well as a large stock of unusable captured guns.  
²) Volume VII., p. 435/436.  
³) Map 18, Volume VII, shows the front line and army boundaries. The composition of the individual armies contains some changes compared to Map 18.

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Already on May 14, the 3rd Army and the right wing of the 8th were attacked. On the night of May 16, the XXIV Corps of the 3rd Army had to abandon the bridgehead of Jaroslaw and retreat behind the San in the Lubaczowka-Mündung-Wielin section. General Iwanow ordered on May 16 a stubborn defense of the entire front; at the heavily threatened San line, it was to be combined with a counteroffensive. For this purpose, the transfer of the two left wing corps (XXI and XII) of the 3rd Army to the 8th was ordered, the 3rd being reinforced by the newly arrived 8th Division of the XV Corps from the Northwest Front. The 8th Army was to advance with parts from Przemysl into the flank of the enemy facing the XXI and XII Corps on the San. The leadership at the focal point of the battle on the Southwest Front thus passed to General Brussilow.

However, already on May 16 and 17, a new setback occurred at the 3rd Army; the German 11th Army threw back the XXIV and XIII Caucasian Corps and crossed the San itself at Jaroslaw and below. General Iwanow was therefore forced to support the 3rd Army with a concentrated thrust (3rd Caucasian Rifle Division in army reserve at Lemberg standing V Caucasian Division from Northwest Front and a Cavalry Division), which was initially assembled in the area south of Lubaczow. He ordered the enemy to be thrown back over the San.

Although the 8th Army supported this counterattack by advancing especially against Jaroslaw, it failed on May 19; the XXIV Corps was even pushed in at the Lubaczowka. Into the gap that thus arose between this and the III Caucasian Corps, General Radko Dmitrijew had to quickly insert the 77th Infantry Division and a large part of his cavalry (7th, 11th, 16th Cavalry Division, 3rd Don and 3rd Caucasian Cossack Division). To further support his left wing, the V Caucasian Corps (3rd Caucasian Rifle Division and two Kuban Foot Cossack Brigades) was also deployed here on May 20.

Meanwhile, the position of the 8th Army south of Przemysl in front of the 3rd Army had also been partially pushed in. General Iwanow now saw the situation as so serious that he decided to evacuate the fortress on the night of May 21. However, as the pressure of the Allies more and more also solidified the situation of the 3rd Army, the evacuation was initially postponed. As reinforcements, the 20th Infantry Division from the Caucasus and the 3rd Guard Infantry Division and the II Caucasian Corps from the Northwest Front were assigned to the Southwest Front.

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The Counterattack of the Russian 3rd Army.

The command over these forces was initially retained by the army leadership;

the 20th Infantry Division was combined with the 3rd Guards Infantry Division

into the XXIII Corps. On May 24, however, the allies resumed their

attacks on the San Front and during the course of the battles, the XXIX Corps

(composed of one division each from the XIV and

XXIV Corps) was thrown back behind Lubaczowka and the V Caucasian

to the line Bobrowka—Lazy; the right wing of the

8th Army (XXI Corps) had to retreat. To its left, the

XII Corps barely held east of the San.

As a result, the Russian army leadership was compelled

to make the II Caucasian Corps available to the Southwest Front.

With the transfer of the V Caucasian Corps to the 8th Army, its

right wing now extended to Lubaczowka. Meanwhile, the

continued attacks of the allies and the precarious situation on the

left wing of the 3rd Army prompted General Brussilow to order the withdrawal

of his right wing to the line south of Lubaczowka—Mosziska and

thus also the abandonment of Przemysl for the night of May 27.

On the orders of the army leadership, however, this measure was

rescinded, as the new commander of the 3rd Army, General Lösch,

achieved a significant local success north of Lubaczowka through a counterattack

against the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army. Nevertheless, it could not be prevented

that the German 11th Army north of Przemysl expanded its breakthrough in the

decisive direction to the east: the right wing of the

8th Army had to retreat to the line Zagrody—Mlyny—Kalników.

Still, the Russian leadership did not give up the attempt to

restore the situation and seize the initiative. General

Iwanow decided, in agreement with the army leadership, to

launch a counteroffensive across the entire front on the night of June 1.

For this, the 8th Army was reinforced by the army reserve

(II Caucasian, XXIII Corps), the right wing of the 3rd by the

XIV Corps (a division from the 4th Army) and the 4th Cavalry Corps.

The 4th Army was transferred to the command area of the Northwest Front,

so that General Iwanow could devote his entire strength to the planned offensive.

However, this only came to fruition with the 3rd Army on both sides of the San;

the execution also allowed the right wing of the

4th Army to achieve some partial successes. In the combat area of the 8th Army,

the fortress Przemysl had to be abandoned after stubborn resistance

in the night of June 3, and the front was withdrawn to the line Starzawa—Siedliska.

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By order of the army command, three divisions of the 3rd Army (63rd Infantry Division, 12th and 13th Siberian Rifle Division) that were no longer combat-effective were sent to Riga.

6. The Advance of the Southern Army against the Upper Dniester from May 20 to June 3. Maps 5 and 6, Sketches 17 and 18.

While the attack group of Generaloberst von Mackensen successfully completed the task assigned to it within the framework of the overall operational action by establishing a firm front on the east bank of the San and capturing the fortress of Przemysl, the German Southern Army also managed to fight its way close to its next assigned operational objective, the upper course of the Dniester.

General of Infantry von Linsingen, after the unsatisfactory outcome of the attacks begun in mid-May1) against the positions of the Russian 11th Army south of the upper Dniester, was eager to get the offensive back on track as soon as possible. Since he had come to the conclusion from the heavy fighting of the last few days that a decisive success could not be expected from simultaneous, uncoordinated attacks at several points along the front, he decided to form a new attack force and deploy it at an appropriate point for a breakthrough. For this purpose, on May 20, the reinforced 95th Reserve Infantry Brigade of the Gerok Corps and the Austrian 12th Landsturm Territorial Brigade of the Hofmann Corps were to be ready in Bolechow, and the Hungarian 38th Infantry Division at Uliczno, whose section the Szurmay Group was to take over.

However, since the 38th Infantry Division, in conjunction with the 40th, succeeded in wresting the heights east of Drohobycza from the enemy early on the morning of May 20, it was initially left with the Szurmay Group to exploit this success, and only when the follow-up attack of both divisions came to a halt in front of a new Russian position the following day was it withdrawn and positioned northwest of Uliczno.

Based on extensive reconnaissance, General von Linsingen intended to lead the decisive blow to break through the enemy front at Stryj. On May 23, he commissioned the Bothmer Corps, to which the army reserves were made available.

1) p. 154 ff.

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Unsuccessful Attack of the Southern Army.

It was to attack comprehensively with strong wings on both sides and, after capturing Stryj, roll up the fronts to the north and south. Corps Gerok was to take Dolina; the parts of the Austro-Hungarian 19th Infantry Division stationed east of the Czeczwa were withdrawn behind the river to the area of Spas, as their right flank was threatened by Russian troop concentrations near and south of Krasna due to the strong detachment of the 7th Army. Corps Hofmann was to advance eastward and on the left bank of the Swica in the direction of Sokolow, while Group Szurmay, with a strong right wing, was to storm the enemy positions east of Zytomyr and roll up the enemy to the north. The attack was to begin at dawn on May 26, with the 24th and 25th used for the strongest artillery preparation. General von Falkenhayn attached particular importance to its rapid execution up to a full decision, in view of Italy's entry into the war.

However, the Southern Army again encountered such stubborn resistance everywhere that significant successes were achieved nowhere. The division Puttkamer (reinforced 95th Reserve Infantry Brigade and Austrian 12th Landsturm Territorial Brigade) deployed on the right wing of Corps Bothmer east of the Lipowice—Stryj railway was unable to take the particularly strong Russian position here on May 26 despite unfavorable conditions and suffered heavy losses. The 38th Infantry Division (German composite Brigade Kumme and Hungarian 75th Infantry Brigade) attacking in the direction of Stupnica penetrated the forests west of Holobutow but soon came to a halt before new, heavily barricaded trenches on the Holobutow—Gaje wyzne line. The continuation of the attack on May 27 also yielded no better results. In a counterattack, the enemy even managed to retake a position southeast of Turza mala captured the previous day from Corps Gerok. The attempt to break through the enemy front at Stryj with a comprehensive attack by both wings of Corps Bothmer had to be considered a failure for the time being. Its repetition offered little prospect of success on the right wing in the difficult mountain forest between the Sükel and the Stryj. On the other hand, more favorable conditions seemed to prevail for the left wing. Therefore, it was to attack again after reinforcement by a brigade of the 1st Infantry Division and heavy and heaviest artillery. In the meantime, the infantry had to work closer to the enemy with saps. On the evening of May 29, the Pächern Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division was ready behind the 3rd Guard Infantry Division. In the early morning of the 31st, it was to break through the enemy front at Zawadow and Holobutow and take Stryj.

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Then an event occurred that threatened to completely question the attack.

Already on May 28, Corps Hofsmann had to withdraw its center to the left bank of the Swica due to strong Russian counterattacks. Attacked again on the entire front during the night of the 30th and broken through south of Bolechow at 4 a.m., the corps abandoned its positions and retreated to the ridge on both sides of Bolechow. Field Marshal Lieutenant Hofsmann believed that he could not even hold this line securely with his severely shaken troops and requested reinforcement by five to six battalions during the day.

General von Linsingen faced the question of whether to withdraw these forces from Corps Bothmer and thus abandon the decision sought at Stryj or to carry out the intended attack regardless of the situation at Corps Hofsmann. He decided on the latter on the suggestion of General Count von Bothmer, considering that it was by no means certain whether the enemy would continue to attack at all, and if he did, whether he would succeed. He ordered Corps Hofsmann not only to hold its positions but to regain the lost ground through attack. Corps Gerok, which had to bend its left wing back to the northern exit of Kniaszowice due to the events at Corps Hofsmann, was instructed not to join the retrograde movements of its neighbor, but rather to bring the enemy to a standstill through counterattack and to support the ordered advance of Corps Hofsmann with all its might. General von Linsingen reported to the Austro-Hungarian High Command that the enemy, according to a just-received communication from the 7th Army, was making movements westward, and that the Southern Army could only continue its offensive successfully if the 7th Army bound the opposing Russian 9th Army through attack. General von Conrad then ordered the 7th Army to attack with its left wing "to absolutely prevent any withdrawal of enemy forces." Late in the evening, General von Pflanzer-Baltin informed the Southern Army that his left wing would advance over the Pasieczna—Slinik line on May 31.

The bold decision of General von Linsingen was met with complete success. After 1¾ hours of artillery preparation escalating to the strongest drumfire, the reinforced 3rd Guard Infantry Division broke into their trenches at 5:45 a.m. on May 31 and in the first assault took all enemy positions from Dulibj to southwest of Stupnica. Over 5000 prisoners and eight guns fell into their hands. Hot on the heels of the fleeing enemy, the right assault group pushed through Stryj to the eastern and northern edges of the city, where hastily brought-up Russian reserves initially offered resistance.

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The Breakthrough of the Southern Army at Stryj.

The far right wing of the division took Bratkowce. The left attack group drove the enemy back over the railway to Zaplatyn and over the Niezachowka stream, but could no longer achieve the day's goal, the line Dobrany—Brigidan. On the right wing of the 38th Infantry Division, the Kumme Brigade, which had followed the retreating enemy to Stupnica, was hit south of this village by a Russian mass assault, which could only be repelled after prolonged, particularly bitter fighting. On the left wing of the division and in front of the Szurmay group, the enemy held their position with great tenacity. Only a stronghold southeast of Gaje could be wrested from them by the 40th Infantry Division by evening. No change occurred on the right army wing. The continuation of the enemy offensive feared by the Hofmann Corps did not occur. The left wing of the 7th Army advanced with 24 battalions of the Schönburg group¹ into the area on both sides of Manajow and south and west of Majdan, where they encountered stubborn resistance and suffered heavy losses. In the afternoon, a fierce Russian counterattack from Majdan forced the entire group to retreat to their starting positions.

An order received from Teschen at 2 p.m. outlined once again the task assigned to the right army wing. According to it, the Southern Army was to "secure further advances against the Dniestr at Kolodrub and Nikolajow and continue the attack in an easterly direction." The 7th Army was to join from the left wing, which was directed towards Stanislau.

Meanwhile, the left wing of the 7th Army, which had been pushed back to its starting positions, had to fend off heavy Russian attacks, especially east of the Dyl and southwest of Majdan. Also, in the gap between the Lomnica and Iezcwa valleys on the right wing of the Southern Army, the enemy advanced with stronger forces. Against the enemies opposite the Gerok and Hofmann Corps and also the 1st Infantry Division, a breakthrough at Stryj on June 1 was not yet noticeable. The Russians still held their positions strongly here. However, the left army wing was able to make further, in part very considerable, progress. The 3rd Guard Infantry Division threw the enemy back on the right bank of the Stryj to the heights at Strzalkow, left of the river from the railway embankment north of Stryj to the northeast, and fortified Dobrzany in the evening.

¹) Field Marshal Ljubicic was meanwhile replaced by the commander of the Austro-Hungarian 6th Army, Field Marshal Lieutenant Prince Schönburg.

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The enemy had already withdrawn from the 38th Infantry Division during the night. Advancing over Brigidau—Kamfso, the division reached Königsau at 2 p.m. At the same time, the 40th Infantry Division, still engaged in heavy fighting, reached the line Lasowly—Slonisko. The enemy held its position firmly against the 7th Infantry Division. As the further advance of the 38th Infantry Division seemed to offer the possibility of completely cutting off parts of the northern flank of the Russian 11th Army, this division and the left flank of the 7th were deployed on Horucko at noon. Shortly thereafter, the 2nd Army reported that the right flank of the 14th Infantry Division (five battalions and 1½ batteries) stationed at Woloszca, as well as the Austro-Hungarian 1st Cavalry Division under Major General Freiherr von Leonhardi, had been ordered to advance on Medenice to block the retreat of the enemy facing the 7th Infantry Division. General von Linsingen, like these forces temporarily subordinated to him by the Austro-Hungarian army command, also directed them towards Horucko in the army order at 11 p.m. The 38th and 40th Infantry Divisions, which were attacking new enemy positions in the Hofeszberg—Opary line in the evening, were to continue their advance northward. The army high command hoped that the right flank of the Russian 11th Army would be destroyed by the next morning. Then the 38th Infantry Division was to be advanced southeastward for an attack over the Stryj, followed by the Szurmay group echeloned to the left against the Dniestr.

However, the encirclement of the Russians did not succeed. The 38th and 40th Infantry Divisions had already pushed the enemy back north in the early morning hours of June 2, but the 7th Infantry Division allowed them to withdraw unhindered just in time, and the Leonhardi group only arrived west of Lady at 2 a.m., much too late to cut off the enemy south of the Dniestr. The Szurmay group was ordered to quickly clear the southern bank of the Dniestr of the enemy, secure it with a brigade of the 7th Infantry Division and the infantry of the Leonhardi group from Nadiatycze to the Bystrzyca estuary, and take possession of Mikolajow and the crossing of Kolodruby. The rest of the 7th and the 40th Infantry Divisions were to assemble at Medenice—Hofeszberg. The 1st Cavalry Division was deployed over Medenice—Krynica to Derzow to get into the enemy's rear.

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The Center of the Southern Army Turns Southeast.

However, this directive was not executed. The Russians had once again made a stand just south of the Dniester. Field Marshal Lieutenant Szurmay deployed the majority of his forces, including the entire Leondardi group, for an attack, but was only able to wrest Horucko from the enemy on this day. General von Linsingen was not in agreement with this use of the 1st Cavalry Division; he ordered its advance on Derzow once more. The division could only be withdrawn from the front after nightfall; consequently, it only reached the area around Krynica, where the 71st Infantry Brigade of the 7th Infantry Division, tasked with securing the Dniester on both sides of the Stryj—Lemberg railway, had meanwhile arrived.

The command of the 2nd Army objected to the wide deployment of the 1st Cavalry Division to Derzow. They wanted the southern edge of the marshland (Wielkie Bloto) from Serziskow to Bialin secured by the 1st Cavalry Division, as they had no more forces available for this. However, the Austro-Hungarian military command decided to keep the division with the Southern Army and assigned the 2nd Army to secure the southern edge of the Wielkie Bloto up to the area of Woloszcza. The 38th Infantry Division had set off southeast in the morning, assuming that the 40th Infantry Division had reached Horucko. They reached Woynia via Kawko. The left wing of the 3rd Guards Infantry Division captured Lisatycze and Wawozcza in the afternoon of June 2 and entered Lesjaford at night. Their right wing and the left of the 1st Infantry Division (Hungarian 76th Infantry Brigade) made only slight progress on the eastern bank of the Stryj. The enemy still stood in full strength before the Hofmann and Gerof corps.

On June 3, the situation to the right of the Stryj remained unchanged. Although flyers observed more extensive backward movements behind the enemy front than before, the enemy stubbornly and successfully resisted the attacks of the left wing of the 1st Infantry Division, reinforced overnight by the 95th Reserve Infantry Brigade, and the right of the Guards. The left wing infantry of the 3rd Guards Infantry Division and the Hungarian 38th Infantry Division drove the Russians further northeast and then crossed the Stryj at Kawyczat and Chodowicze, where the parts of the enemy still holding south of the river were now to be rolled up from the north. The Hungarians thus moved into the gap between the previously separated fighting parts of the 3rd Guards Infantry Division. They prepared for an evening attack on the heavily fortified Gelsenhofer Heights; the left wing of the Guards fought its way to Ruda and secured its left flank.

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through the occupation of Wolica and Cuculowce. This made it possible

to move strong forces to the right bank of the Stryj, where, according to the

Austro-Hungarian command, the focus of the operation lay. The 1st Cavalry

Division advanced on the Niezwadowka section against the enemy and moved

south around BilczeviI down to Derzow. The Szurmay group, on whose right

flank the 71st Infantry Brigade developed against Rudniki, had to unsuccessfully

attempt to take the Russian positions south of the Dniester. The infantry of the

Leonhardi group was even thrown back by a counterattack to the eastern edge

of Jady.

Although it had not yet been possible to drive the enemy from the

southern bank of the Dniester and to secure the crossings at Mikolajow

and Kolodruby, the Southern Army Command believed it could look forward

to the continuation of the offensive on the right bank of the Stryj in an

easterly direction with justified hopes.

7. Operational Considerations and Decisions.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketch 14.

The capture of Przemysl and the associated territorial gain posed the

question to the allied military commands of how the operations should

be continued.

For some time, before this result came within reach, General von

Falkenhayn, in view of the sluggish progress of events on the Galician

battlefield in the second half of May, had been considering the

mobilization of reinforcements. The decision of where to obtain these

forces was not easy. The three divisions newly formed in the area of

the Commander-in-Chief East — 101st, 103rd, 105th Infantry Division —

had just been sent (from May 24) at the urging of General von Conrad

to southern Hungary, to be used from there as needed against Italy or

Serbia. The Austro-Hungarian Chief of Staff opposed General von

Falkenhayn's wish to now bring these divisions to the battlefield north

of the Carpathians, arguing that he did not rule out an attack by the

Serbs on Syrmia or Bosnia.

There was therefore no choice but to further weaken the front of the

Commander-in-Chief East. Already on May 23, General von Falkenhayn had explained to General Ludendorff, who had been summoned to Pleß for an oral discussion, that major operations in the area of the Commander-in-Chief East were not currently feasible.

¹) See pages 18, 103, and 122/123.

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Considerations on the Deployment of Reinforcements on the Eastern Front.

The desire to maintain the current front line had to be reconciled with the necessity of withdrawing additional troops for the disposal of the Supreme Army Command. In response to the proposals made by General Ludendorff, on May 25, Field Marshal von Hindenburg communicated that the general war situation absolutely required the provision of army reserves on a large scale. For this purpose, five divisions were to be gradually freed from his command area. Thus, these forces were not immediately available for the Galician theater of war. The Supreme Army Command initially reserved the right to dispose of a division of the 9th Army to be stationed on June 3 — the Commander-in-Chief East designated the 22nd Infantry Division for this purpose — and the newly to be formed 107th Infantry Division, whose formation in Thorn was to be completed in early June.

Withdrawing forces from the Western Front seemed risky given the still tense situation there. Nevertheless, on June 1, General von Falkenhayn decided to take the risk of deploying the XXII Reserve Corps (without the 85th Reserve Infantry Brigade) provided by Army High Command 4 and the temporarily withdrawn 8th Bavarian Reserve Division from the front to the east. Ultimately, it was possible to make a total of fourteen and a half infantry divisions available as reinforcements for the continuation of the offensive operation on the theater of war north of the Carpathians.

Initially, opinions differed on the point of deployment. General von Falkenhayn expected less significant impact from an immediate reinforcement of the troops fighting in Galicia than from their indirect support through the deployment of fresh forces on the front north of the Vistula in the command area of Colonel General von Woyrsch. After oral consultation with his Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel von Heyde, he expressed himself on this matter on May 28 in a letter to the Commander-in-Chief East as follows:

"... The situation in Galicia is not very promising. Given the low offensive power of our allies and the enemy's daily increasing superiority, we are facing the danger of a complete standstill there sooner or later, which is now a concern for us after Italy's intervention, which is even more concerning than it has been so far.

1) p. 122. — 2) Details p. 122/123. — 3) p. 73/74. — 4) p. 79. — 5) p. 264/265.

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Nevertheless, it seems to me that the immediate reinforcement of our troops there is not advisable. Only by using an extraordinary amount of blood and ammunition would success be conceivable. However, we have every reason to be economical with both. It is more feasible to consider an operation against the parts of the enemy front weakened by the withdrawal of units, to bring indirect relief. Since the Narew front plays no role in this connection, any offensive there can easily be brought to a standstill by weaker forces at the swamp section, as General Ludendorff also mentioned in his discussion with me, only the Vistula front north of the Pilica is in question. In my opinion, there is no doubt that an engagement of three to four fresh divisions would break through the enemy Russian line there, cause it to waver completely, and probably reach the right Vistula bank downstream of the San estuary simultaneously with the enemy. This would also make the San line untenable for the Russians. The deployment of the four divisions could occur relatively quickly and surprisingly..."

The Commander-in-Chief East agreed with these statements on the same day in a factual sense, but declared himself unable to provide new forces beyond the assignments already imposed on him."

From the written statement of the Army High Command 9 received on May 29, it emerged that while it considered a breakthrough over Ostrowiec against the bridgeheads of Dembno and Jozefow to the Vistula possible with a reinforcement of three infantry and one cavalry division, it viewed the continuation of the thrust beyond the river to effectively relieve the Galician front, considering the expected flank threat from Ivangorod, as doubtful. Lieutenant Colonel Heye also represented this standpoint the following day in a discussion in Pleß. Contrary to the view of General von Falkenhayn, the Chief of the Operations Department, Colonel Tappen, considered the deployment of reinforcements with the previously victorious 11th Army absolutely necessary from the command area of the Generalobersten von Woyrsch. He emphasized that the Russians in Galicia, although they had significantly increased in number, were already greatly demoralized under the paralyzing impression of their previous defeats and could be decisively struck here most easily. In the deployment of reinforcements at any other location, he also saw an "irreparable loss of time".

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A thrust over Jaroslaw will bring about the intended effect more quickly. It has to deal with a fortified river barrier, but only with the enemy facing the 4th and 11th Armies. This enemy is indeed numerically superior to the former. However, the troops of the 11th Army compensate for this with their efficiency and can also be reinforced like the 4th Army by troops that will be freed upon the imminent fall of Przemysl and by divisions still available in the interior. A thrust over Jaroslaw in the general direction of Rawa Ruska is promising if the 4th Army protects the left flank of the 11th and the right Austrian neighboring army allows the enemy standing along the Grodek lake chain to break out of its position. Both will be achievable with the existing and the newly anticipated forces, provided that the leader of the 11th Army is allowed to exert direct influence on both neighboring armies."

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River barrier, but only to reckon with the enemy opposite the 4th and 11th Armies. This is indeed superior in number to the former. However, the troops of the 11th Army compensate for this through proficiency and can also be reinforced like the 4th Army by troops that will be freed upon the imminent fall of Przemysl and by divisions made available domestically. A thrust over Jaroslau in the general direction of Rawa Ruska is promising if the 4th Army protects the left flank of the 11th and the right Austrian neighboring army allows the enemy standing along the Grodek seam to break out of its position. Both will be achievable with the existing and the newly anticipated forces, provided that the leader of the 11th Army is allowed to exert direct influence on both neighboring armies."

When Colonel Tappen returned with this position of Generaloberst von Mackensen on the evening of May 31 in Plesz, it was already known there that the first forts of the Przemysl fortress had been stormed and that the Southern Army had taken Stryj. General von Falkenhayn saw in this promising signs of a favorable development of events in Galicia. He decided on June 2, following the suggestion of Colonel Tappen and the position of Generaloberst von Mackensen, to deploy the reinforcements with the 11th Army. The Commander-in-Chief East received orders to transport the 22nd Infantry Division (from June 2 from Lodz, the 107th Infantry Division (from June 5 from Thorn). The deployment of reinforcements from the Western Front also began on June 2. The Austro-Hungarian Army Command was informed that starting June 4, four and a half infantry divisions along with heavy artillery would arrive via the railways over Debica and Jaslo to Rzeszow. "These divisions," it was said, "are to serve to carry out operations against the enemy located east of the San until a decision sufficient for our purposes is achieved." The communication to the Army High Command 11 was drafted in almost the same wording.

To the Southern Army, whose left wing repelled the enemy against the Dniester on June 2, the following telegram was sent: "The brilliant course of the operations of the Southern Army yesterday and today will hopefully have significant consequences. They could be further enhanced if it proves possible to soon bring a column to the northern Dniester bank and advance downstream there."

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The Operational Plan of the High Command of the 11th Army.

On June 3 at 8:30 in the morning, immediately after the capture of Przemyśl, the Army High Command 11 presented its intentions for the continuation of operations to the allied army commands. It initially proposed the dissolution of the k.u.k. 3rd Army concentrated in the area of Przemyśl. The X and XVII Corps were to be transferred to the k.u.k. 4th Army, the German Beskiden Corps to the k.u.k. 2nd Army, and the incoming reinforcements were to be assigned to the 11th Army. Generaloberst von Mackensen requested the joint command over all three armies. The initial intention was to have parts of the 11th Army advance north from the bridgehead to facilitate the crossing of the San by the right wing of the 4th Army at Sieniawa. After the arrival of reinforcements, the continuation of the 11th Army's offensive was planned in deep formation from the line Starzawa—Molodynja via Starzyska—Rawa Ruska north past the Grodek section, to make it envelopable. The 2nd Army was to cover the right flank of the 11th Army by advancing from the line Chłopczyce—Mosćiska against the line Komarno—Janow, while the same task was intended for the left flank of the 4th Army. This was to advance with two corps on Rudka (20 kilometers north of Lubaczow)—Narol Miasto, with two corps covering the Tanew section, and the rest covering the San-Vistula triangle.

The allied general staff chiefs agreed in a discussion on the afternoon of June 3 in Plesz with these intentions of the Army High Command 11 and also agreed that the Southern Army should continue the attack with its main forces in a southeasterly direction against the right flank of the enemy facing the beleaguered k.u.k. 7th Army. On June 4, the new instructions were issued. They essentially stated: "Generaloberst von Mackensen with the 11th Army and the still incoming troops continues the thrust south of the Tanew to decisively strike the enemy facing him. The 2nd Army joins this advance on the right and subsequently takes over the protection of the right flank, the 4th Army the protection of the advance on the northern flank... To ensure the success of this operation, the 4th and 2nd Armies will be subject to the orders of Generaloberst von Mackensen for the duration of the operation. The Southern Army advances south of the Dniester against the right wing of the enemy forces facing the 7th Army, to finally defeat the enemy south of the Dniester in conjunction with this. It also takes over the security on the Dniester."

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8. The Battles on the Right Wing from June 4 to 13.

The instructions from the Austro-Hungarian High Command on June 4 for the German Southern Army fully aligned with the intentions of its leader, General von Linsingen. He had already reported to the High Command in Teschen on June 3 that his army would launch an attack the next day along its entire front—with the left wing from the line Strzałow—Chodowice—Potrowce—advancing southeast to roll up the enemy before the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army. He had requested the subordination of the left wing of this army under his command. In his negative response, General von Conrad stated that the 7th Army was currently under heavy attack by the enemy and needed all its strength, but after repelling the enemy's advance, it would forcefully join the Southern Army's offensive.

After a fourteen-day battle pause, the Russian 9th Army had resumed its attack on June 2 against the center of the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army. While it had only temporarily reached the southern bank of the Pruth east of Kolomea and near Lanczyn, it had managed to establish a firm foothold south of Sadzawka. Through continued advances, it sought to gain ground here on June 3 towards Mühlbächen. The commander of the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army, General of Cavalry Freiherr von Pflanzer-Baltin, mobilized all available army reserves to the Czbulla group, which was striving to repel the enemy incursion in fierce defensive combat. As the situation intensified significantly in the afternoon, an offensive by the left wing had to be temporarily abandoned.

Thus, the Southern Army was initially on its own. The withdrawal of forces from the front opposite the Gerok and Hofmann corps to the north, observed by aircraft on June 3, also gave hope here for a quick weakening of enemy resistance. General von Linsingen therefore made it the duty of both corps in the army order issued late in the evening to "turn any beginning retreat of the enemy into a rout through swift and vigorous pursuit." The Bothmer corps was to continue its comprehensive attack against the enemy's right wing south of the Dniester, the Austro-Hungarian 1st Cavalry Division was to advance over Snjatyn to Kuty, the Surmay group was to secure the Dniester from Nadiatkow to Kolodrub, and awaken with the Hungarian 40th Infantry Division Derzow.

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The Advance of the Southern Army to the East.

Indeed, the enemy abandoned his positions south of Stryj early on the morning of June 4 and retreated eastward. The corps of Gerok and Hofmann, along with the 1st Infantry Division, followed in a broad front without initially encountering serious resistance. However, the enemy sought to prevent further advances by the Hungarian 38th Infantry Division, which had taken the Gelsendorf Heights at dawn, and the 3rd Guards Infantry Division, which pressed from Ruda towards Nowejsolno against his retreat routes, at all costs. Against the left flank of the Guards, he launched a deeply echeloned mass attack from Zablotowce, which was repelled but succeeded in allowing the Russian forces retreating north of the Swica to escape into the bridgehead of Zurawno. For further pursuit, General von Linsingen assigned Kalusz to the Gerok Corps and Wierzchnia to the Hofmann Corps as daily objectives. The Bothmer Corps was to quickly seize the Dniester crossing at Zurawno, and the 1st Cavalry Division, which had reached Lowczyce by morning on its march to its original target Rechow, was now to cross the Dniester at Holeszow. The 40th Infantry Division, detached from the Szurmay Group's battle line, was to reach Hnizdyczow today, while the rest of the Szurmay Group was to take over the Dniester security between Hnizdyczow and Tersiatow.

However, these daily objectives were not achieved anywhere. Oppressive heat and heavy dust development on poor roads made the marches extremely exhausting. The Gerok Corps encountered stronger enemy forces east of Holyn in the evening, and the Hofmann Corps at Radowna and Zawada. From the Bothmer Corps, the 1st Infantry Division reached the Swica near and upwards of Lachowice. The Hungarian 38th and the 3rd Guards Infantry Division drove the Russians before them into Zurawno but could no longer seize the bridgehead; the left wing of the Guards took Zablotowce, and their right attack group, which had previously been engaged against the heights south of Stryj¹), was moved to Ruda. The 1st Cavalry Division bivouacked in Zablotowce and Hnizdyczow; their reconnaissance units deployed towards Hnizdyczow encountered enemies south of the Dniester everywhere. Against the parts of the Szurmay Group remaining west of Stryj, the enemy continued his demonstrative advances, Horucko fell back into his hands; in the afternoon, he advanced on both sides of the road towards Stryj. Field Marshal Lieutenant Szurmay feared a stronger attack and deployed parts of those marching towards Hnizdyczow of the 40th Infantry Division to be ready for defense.

¹) p. 197.

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But here too

it was only a deception. It had delayed the 40th Infantry Division

so long that it only reached the area of Lejzavoro at midnight.

General von Linsingen had already at 5 a.m. directed the 7th Army

to join the advance of the Southern Army from the left flank. Although the enemy had continued his heavy attacks south

of Sadzawka throughout the night and had broken through here at 4 a.m., and although General von Pflanzer-Baltin

now saw himself forced to also rely on the reserves of the groups Marschall, Krautwald, and Rhemen to restore the situation,

he continued to push the groups Rhemen and Schönburg to attack in a northeasterly direction, upon the news that the right flank of the Southern Army intended to reach Kalusz today. While a relief attack led by the inner

flank of the groups Czbullka and Rhemen on the northern Pruth

bank in the direction of Lanczyn failed due to strong Russian resistance and the group Rhemen otherwise gained only

little ground, the group Schönburg advanced to the line

Maniava—south of Perehimsko. Here, however, they encountered such stubborn resistance the following day that they were unable to make further progress. A Russian counterattack west of Majdan even pushed the attacker back a bit. Meanwhile, the situation of the

group Czbullka had further deteriorated. The enemy continued to bring new

forces into the battle and was able to expand his breakthrough despite desperate resistance

from the defender. During the course of June 5, he gained a foothold in

Moldiatyn. General von Pflanzer-Baltin had already made all available forces of the other groups

available to Field Marshal Lieutenant Czbullka, besides the army reserve. He did not consider further

weakening of the army's eastern flank advisable. From

the now stalled offensive of his left army flank, a

quick relief was not to be expected. It could only be brought about by

the favorable progress of the Southern Army's operations.

In this situation, General von Pflanzer-Baltin therefore saw in the early

afternoon hours the need to request, if possible, to intervene with parts of the southern flank

directly in the direction of and beyond Bohorodczany.

General von Linsingen had set the line Majdan (northwest of Stanislau)—Bukaczowce

as the day's goal for his army on June 5. He expected a decisive success

from an advance into the rear of the enemy opposing the

Pflanzer Army and therefore ordered the Gerok Corps on the morning of June 5 to "move through no considerations for the lagging flank of the 7th Army to prevent the fastest advance towards Stanislau."

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The Center of the Southern Army Crosses the Dniester.

This directive was explicitly maintained even after the arrival of General von Pflanzer-Baltin's request for immediate assistance. However, the Gerok Corps could no longer break the enemy resistance east and north of Holyn on June 5. The Hofmann Corps also initially made no progress. It was not until the afternoon that it was able to overcome the Russian positions on the heights on both sides of Zawadka and gain ground to the east in immediate pursuit. As a result, the enemy withdrew further south on both sides of the Lomnica during the night. However, on the western banks of Nowica, Kalusz, Kopanka, and Tomaszowce, the Gerok and Hofmann Corps encountered new stubborn resistance the next day, the suppression of which extended in part into the early morning hours of June 7. South of the Swica and the Dniester, the 1st Infantry Division followed the retreating enemy on June 5 and 6 to Dolzka and Slope. The 38th Infantry and 3rd Guard Infantry Divisions entered the stubbornly defended Zurawno on the evening of the 5th and advanced in extremely bitter, costly street fighting to the Dniester. Parts of both divisions followed the fleeing enemy at dawn on June 6 across two makeshift bridges that had not been destroyed in time to the opposite bank, where heavy fire from the hills forced them to dig in. In the afternoon, the enemy counteraction subsided, and the enemy seemed to be withdrawing. The allies climbed the steep heights and established themselves on both sides of Bakowzin. The left wing of the Guard fought for the crossing at Holeszow at noon. In the afternoon, the 1st Cavalry Division completed the river crossing at Zurawno.

On June 7, the offensive by the Gerok, Hofmann, and Bothmer Corps was to continue southeast towards Stanislau, Jezupol, and Halicz. The protection of the left flank of the Bothmer Corps was to be taken over by the 40th Infantry Division, which had been brought up to Humra in the last two days and was now to advance via Zurawno to the Nowosielce railway station. Reconnaissance to the north up to the Rohatyn—Chodorow railway was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division.

While the right wing of the army south of the Dniester advanced during the day with lighter fighting to Majdan, Kudlatowka, and down the Swica section to Wojnilow, the subsequent right march of the 38th Infantry and 3rd Guard Infantry Divisions to the southwest was delayed, as there was still heavy resistance on both sides of Nowosztyn that had to be broken.

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Consequently, the Hungarians only reached

Bukaczowce and Czernion. The Guard threw their tenacious opponent back

by evening in difficult forest battles over the railway at Szehdyrow and

back over Czernion. They were then to be relieved by the 40th Infantry Division

and march on Czabrow today. Since this

division, however, counted only 2000 rifles — it had left four battalions to

secure against Szybaczow in the line Zurawlow—Sniydzow —

and was also very exhausted from the strenuous marches of the last few days,

immediate involvement of the Guard seemed questionable in view of the undoubtedly still

combat-ready enemy. It was therefore postponed to the next morning. West of the Stryj,

the Szurmay group began clearing the southern

Dniester bank on June 6; they worked their way up to the evening of the 7th to the

enemy's main position Dementa—Ugartsberg. Their right wing

drove the enemy out of Turady and Iwanowce. However, the parts of the 40th Infantry Division

remaining south of Szybaczow, caught in the flank by stronger

enemy forces from Molotow, retreated to the

line Ruda—Sniydzow. According to captured prisoners,

these forces belonged to the Russian VI Corps, which was supposed to have been unloaded in Mikolajow on June 4, coming from the front west of Warsaw.

General von Linsingen considered the reports of the appearance of stronger

enemy forces south of Szybaczow to be exaggerated. He did not believe in

a serious Russian advance against his left flank and considered its

security by the weak Szurmay group to be sufficient. His

gaze was directed southeast, where the intended destruction

of the enemy standing before the 7th Army promised a great success.

If the intended strike succeeded, the army

had to remain in unstoppable advance; for already since

noon on June 6, the Russian 9th Army sought to escape the impending

danger by retreating to the Dniester. General von Pflanzer-Baltin

immediately took up the pursuit and with the

Szibulka, Rhemen, and Schönburg groups reached the line Altmaczyn—Hanylowka—Horocholna by the evening of June 7.

The Korda and Marschall groups had already been able to gain the northern Pruth bank at Nepolokoutz and

Zablotow.

During the course of June 8, General von Linsingen had to

convince himself that the operational intention he had in mind was no longer to be realized.

1) In fact, at the beginning of June, the Russian 11th Army had the VI Corps   
and the 3rd G.I.D. arrived from the Northwest Front.

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The Russian Counterattack on the Dniester.

Before the entire 7th Army as well as before the right

flank of the Southern Army, the enemy retreated hastily and without a fight

to the Dniester. The divisions of General von Pflanzer-Baltin followed up to

the line Uście—Gwozdziec—Ottynia. The Gerok Corps reached Stanislaus

and Jammica in the evening. Only on the heights west of Jezupol and

southwest and west of Halicz did the enemy resist in reinforced positions

against the troops of Field Marshal Lieutenant Hofmann and General von

Conta. However, against the divisions of the Bothmer Corps and the Szurmay

Group standing on the northern Dniester bank, the Russians brought strong

forces with numerous artillery to attack.

Fortunately, the ordered replacement of the 3rd Guard Infantry

Division by the Hungarian 40th Infantry Division had not yet been fully

carried out on the morning of June 8; at Hrehorow and Czeremchow,

four Prussian battalions were still in the front line. As the opposing enemy

was constantly reinforcing, it seemed inadvisable to withdraw them now.

Two more battalions had to be sent to Holeszow as flank protection on

the news of the withdrawal of the security forces south of Zydaczow. Under

these circumstances, an intervention of the 3rd Guard Infantry Division

towards Szybrowo was temporarily out of the question. It soon had to be

completely abandoned; for against morning, the Russians launched an attack

on the entire front after strong artillery preparation. While they remained

under German defensive fire at Hrehorow and Czeremchow, they managed

to break through the weak Hungarian battalions securing up to Bortniki

in the first assault and advanced over Molodynce on both sides of the railway

to the southeast and south towards Holeszow. As simultaneously on the

opposite flank the 38th Infantry Division was pushed back into the line

Kozara—Wizniow, the German center also had to be withdrawn to Nowoszyn

in the afternoon. The gap between it and the 38th Infantry Division was

closed by the 1st Cavalry Division. For the next day, General Count von

Bothmer expected a continuation of the enemy offensive.

In the angle between the Dniester and Stryj, however, the situation

could be restored during the course of June 8. The enemy, whose strength

had been overestimated by me, returned to his bridge fortifications; the

previous security line Zuwadow—Sniatynczow was reoccupied. West of

the Stryj, the Szurmay Group had stormed the Russian trenches on both

sides of the Lemberg railway and the village of Horochow during the night,

but in the afternoon a strong counterattack threw them back to and beyond

their starting positions.

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General von Linsingen did not consider the situation on his northern flank to be threatening for the time being. He no longer trusted the enemy's offensive power, rather believing that today's attacks were only meant to cover the withdrawal of their main forces to Rohatyn. This view was reinforced by an aerial report, according to which strong columns had been observed marching from Bursztyn and Chodorow to Rohatyn in the afternoon. The army command did not attach any particular importance to the repeatedly reported appearance of the Russian VI Corps, previously suspected to be at the front west of Wyschawa, in front of the Szurmay group. It refrained from continuing the offensive in a southeasterly direction, as there was no longer any prospect of intercepting the Russians retreating before the 7th Army east of the Dnjestr. Instead, it intended to swing its right army wing to the northeast and north, to advance it after crossing the Dnjestr between Uszie Zielone and Halicz against the inner flanks of the Russian 9th and 11th Armies. This expressed a new operational idea in the use of the Southern Army within the framework of the overall operation, which aimed at concentrated cooperation with the armies of Colonel General von Mackensen in the northeastern part of Galicia. For this purpose, the Gerok Corps was deployed on Jeziorko, the Hofmann Corps on Slobódka, and the 1st Infantry Division on Bursztyn. The main forces of the Bothmer Corps were to push back the opposing enemy, while the Szurmay group, too weak for its own attack, was to defend itself.

However, this new operational intention was not implemented. As General Count von Bothmer had expected, the enemy continued its advances against the northern flank of the Southern Army with far superior forces on June 9. Before dawn, it managed to break through the weak left wing of the Szurmay group — which numbered only 2400 rifles — at Medenice and Sitnyia and to throw it back in disarray to the south and southwest. General von Linsingen, who immediately went to the battlefield to prevent a catastrophe through personal intervention, gained the impression that if the enemy attack continued, which was also doubtful, Sitnyia and thus the only railway line available to the Southern Army would be extremely threatened. He therefore requested the temporary assignment of a division to Drohobycz from the Austro-Hungarian army command and the 2nd Army. General of Cavalry von Böhm-Ermolli followed with the reinforced Austro-Hungarian 4th Cavalry Division under Major General Berndt to Dobronlaw, where it was to arrive in the afternoon.

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The Southern Army Abandons the Advance to the Southeast.

General von Linsingen, however, did not consider the measures taken by the troops of Field Marshal Lieutenant Szurmay sufficient to reliably secure his left flank. This seemed assured to him only if the enemy was thrown back over the Dniester, which could only be achieved by deploying stronger forces. Reserves were not available. The divisions of Bothmer's corps deployed on the northern bank of the Dniester were also engaged in fierce defensive battles since early morning and urgently needed support themselves. Under these circumstances, there was no choice but to refrain from continuing the offensive of the right wing of the army in a northerly and northeasterly direction and to focus on defending what had been achieved, in order to free up his main forces for a counterattack to the northwest. On the morning of June 9, General von Linsingen ordered the Gerok corps, which was engaged in an attack on the heights northeast of Stanislau, to withdraw immediately to Wozniolow and be ready to continue the march there the next morning. Remaining weak security forces were to be relieved by June 10 by the 5th Cavalry Division, previously used with the 7th Army's Marschall group, which, along with the German officers of the group command, had already been made available to General von Linsingen at his request by the Austro-Hungarian army command on June 8 and was advancing from Zablotow via Ottynia towards Stanislau. The Hofmann corps, attacking between Stryjzau and Lomnica, was to dig in where it stood and relieve the 1st Infantry Division on the left wing; this was to march to Zurawno. General Count von Bothmer was also given command of the troops fighting between the Dniester and Stryj, and Field Marshal Lieutenant Szurmay was ordered not to retreat any further and to use the Bern group offensively. General von Linsingen reported his orders to the allied army commands with the addition: "Intention: Flanking march and final destruction of the enemy attacking from the north, then offensive north of the Dniester." In a second radio message, he pointed out the extremely precarious condition of the 7th and also the 40th Infantry Division, which were no longer capable of sustained defense, let alone being used offensively, and the need for the deployment of a German infantry division.

General von Conrad, still unaware of these intentions and orders, had expressed in a directive to the 11th, 2nd, Southern, and 7th Armies on the early afternoon of June 9 that the Russian advance against and over the Dniester would neither affect the army's attack group Mackensen nor the advance of the eastern wing of the Southern Army and

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The Mackensen group still affected the actions of the eastern wing of the Southern Army and

those of the 7th Army over the Dniester near and downstream of Halicz,

where the enemy apparently retreated behind the river everywhere. However, it was

necessary to limit the Russian advance over the Dniester and

prevent any impact on the right flank of the 2nd and the left of the Southern Army.

For this purpose, the 4th Cavalry Division was initially set in motion towards Dobro-

volany. Furthermore, the 2nd Army was to quickly

provide a division on its right wing as an army reserve.

However, after General von Conrad received reports in the afternoon

from the Southern Army about the cessation of the offensive of its right wing

and the intended flank attack in a northwesterly direction,

he felt compelled to issue new instructions to the 7th Army.

On June 9, it had made further progress in the previous advance direction to the northeast

and stood in the evening with the Korda Corps

south of Kosmacz, with the former Marschall group, whose leadership

had been taken over by Field Marshal Lieutenant Kaiser, at Jasionow Polny, with

the Krautwald Corps southwest of Horodenka and with the groups

Ezbüllka, Rhemann, and Schönburg attacking enemy rear guard

positions on the heights between Obertyn and Ottynia. Now the

7th Army received orders to swing north with its main forces

and continue its offensive over the Dniester at Buczacz—Maryampol;

the right wing (the Korda and Kaiser groups) was to move between

Pruth and Dniester and from Jalezczyki to west of Liczkowce.

While the higher command was striving to

locally limit the setback on the left wing of the Southern Army through vigorous intervention

and restore the situation by regrouping the forces,

the Böhmer Corps faced an equally severe crisis.

By the afternoon, it had been possible there to repel the

Russian masses repeatedly storming against the trenches of the Allies on the northern

Dniester bank, regardless of losses. Also

on this side of the river, the advance aimed at Zurawno, therefore particularly

threatening, of strong enemy forces could be intercepted by deploying the last German

reserves at the northern edge of Mlyniska.

However, by 6 p.m., the 1st Cavalry Division deployed at Wiszniow was broken through

and completely dissolved back to the Dniester. At the same time, the 38th Infantry

Division on the right also gave way and retreated to the southern bank at Kozara and Starawicz.

Against the thus exposed flank of the 3rd Guard Infantry Division and against

the bridge at Zurawno, superior enemy forces advanced irresistibly.

Any forces that could have been thrown against them were no longer available.

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The Bothmer Corps Retreats Across the Dniester.

Thus, the Guard and the remnants of the

40th Infantry Division (around 700 rifles) had to be withdrawn to the positions from the evening

of June 6th, just north of the river. Since the

1st Infantry Division, which had been on the march since noon, could not

arrive before the next morning — only one battalion

arrived late in the evening, completely exhausted, in Zurawno — and since it seemed questionable

whether it would be possible to hold off the Russian advance on the right

bank of the Dniester for long, the heavily pressured Guard could not

be withdrawn by Bothmer from the northern bank during the night and to the

3rd Guard Infantry Division without interference from the enemy to behind

the Swica in the area of Tarnawka. To the right of it, the

1st Infantry Division was to deploy, with both divisions resuming the attack to the northwest the next

day. The

38th Infantry Division was assigned the security on the Dniester from Swidowa

to the Swica estuary. General von Linsingen approved these

measures.

The right wing of the Szurmay Group had only managed to fend off the

enemy's superior forces with difficulty until the afternoon. It

retreated in the evening to the line Stare selo—Zarita and reestablished the

connection to the left wing, which had been able to hold north of Königsau.

The 3rd Cavalry Division, arriving only in the evening at Dobrowlany, was ordered

to clear the area between Tysmienica

and Bystrzyca of the enemy and then to advance against the rear

of the Russians positioned in the line Hofeszberg—Opary.

During the night, the enemy remained quiet. On June 10th,

they occupied the left bank of the Dniester vacated by the Bothmer Corps and

cautiously moved into Zurawno. In the Dniester—Stryj corner, they advanced

during the day beyond the line Zurawno—Potkowce. The

Szurmay Group faced them at close range in the morning, in front of

the 4th Cavalry Division, they held the line Lipowice—Hruszow.

This hesitant behavior in initiating the new operation

of the Southern Army was maintained. The German 5th Cavalry Division arriving in the afternoon and north of Stanislau

and the Hofmann Corps were subordinated by General von Linsingen to General of Cavalry Freiherr v.

March with the order to immediately go on the offensive in case of the enemy's retreating movements. The parts of the Gerok Corps that remained

were left with the 5th Cavalry Division

until the next morning, as the enemy, after a broken-off telephone conversation with one infantry and cavalry division, seemed to be planning an attack on Stanislau.

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An afternoon bombardment of the city and the northern

villages could be seen as preparation for this.

The Gerok Corps arrived only at noon, heavily fatigued, in and south

of Wisniolow. It was to leave a brigade of the 19th Infantry Division

as an army reserve, march the half of the 48th Reserve Division¹) to

the Bothmer Corps to Tarnawka and secure with the rest of the

19th Infantry Division and the 38th Infantry Division, now only numbering 1100 rifles,

on the Dniester from Kurylow to the Swica estuary.

The Bothmer Corps had reached the road Zurawno-Noweislio with advance troops

on June 10 and was to proceed the next morning

over this line in a northwesterly direction, but in case of enemy attack,

immediately flank the enemy for the Szurmay Group.

Field Marshal Lieutenant Szurmay was to attack on both flanks,

holding his positions in the center. The purpose of the operation,

as General von Linsingen emphasized in the army order issued at 5:30 p.m.,

was a final settlement with the enemy before

the Szurmay Group and the capture of the Dniester crossings.

The deployment of strong reserves behind the right flank of the Bothmer Corps was

deemed necessary for this.

Due to the severe exhaustion of the troops, the ordered

movements were slow to start. Only on the morning of June 11 did

the right flank of the 1st Infantry Division penetrate into the smoking

ruins of Zurawno. At the same time, the

other parts of the Bothmer Corps crossed the road leading from there to Noweislio

and advanced northward under constant skirmishes with weaker enemy

detachments. While the 1st Infantry Division swung into a strong bridgehead

drawn in a semicircle around Mynsifta by evening,

the Guard worked its way to the heavily fortified railway line running east from Jydaczow

and approached the fortress-like village of

Rogozno; the half of the 48th Reserve Division followed as corps reserve.

The 1st Cavalry Division, which had spent the night at Noweislio, crossed

the Stryj at Potokrowce and attacked the enemy in the morning,

the right flank of the Szurmay Group retook Czulowce in the evening.

On the left flank of this group, the 4th Cavalry Division

had already pushed the Russians back somewhat during the course of June 10, then but had to limit itself to holding the line Wroblowice—Hruszow in view of the enemy's strength.

¹) The reinforced 95th R. J. Br. was still assigned to the 1st S. D. (p. 197);   
the command of the 48th R. D. was taken over by Lieutenant General von Oppeln-   
Bronikowski on June 8.

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The Flanking Attack of the Bothmer Corps on Zydaczow.

To simultaneously organize the disordered units and replenish the combat strength, which had fallen to about 20,000 German and 25,000 Austro-Hungarian rifles and carbines, by incorporating the incoming reinforcements. On June 12, the Bothmer Corps continued the attack. The 1st Infantry Division cleared the bridgehead of Mlyniska and advanced under cover along the Dnjestr together with the right wing of the 3rd Guard Infantry Division against the stubbornly defended Rogozno, which only fell into German hands the following day after bitter, costly fighting and with the involvement of parts of the corps reserve. The left wing of the Guard worked its way up to close proximity to Zydaczow over the course of the two days and repelled an enemy counterattack. The 40th Infantry Division, again subordinated to the Szurmay Group, relieved the 1st Cavalry Division, which had advanced on the western bank of the Stryj, and took Iwanowce. Szurmay's center gained the northern edge of Derzow and the Blizekif forest, his left wing wrested Blizce, Hofeszberg, and Dparv from the enemy. The Kornhaber Group, on the other hand, did not achieve the decisive impact intended for it. It encountered the strongest resistance at and north of Litwinia, which it was unable to break.

Meanwhile, there had also been fierce fighting on the right wing of the army. On the morning of June 11, the enemy, as expected, had advanced over the Bystrzyca Nadwornianska to attack Stanislau, but had been bloodily repulsed. In return, the 5th Cavalry Division withdrew over the Worona section the following day and followed the Russians retreating on Jezupol and across the Dnjestr to the area of Jamnionka on the 13th. In the following days, General von Linsingen intended, as he reported to the combined army commands on the afternoon of June 13, to continue clearing the right bank of the Dnjestr of the enemy and to establish crossing points.

1) p. 220.

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Then he wanted to cross the Dniester in a northerly direction. General von Conrad agreed with these intentions the next day. "It will," he added, "initially be the task of the Southern Army, even after reaching the Dniester, to reliably bind the enemy forces in front of it and to prevent any withdrawal against the thrust of the 2nd, 11th, and 4th Armies as well as against the 7th Army."

The main forces of the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army had, according to the new instructions from the army command, turned north from their previous northeastern advance direction on June 10. While the Schönburg Group reached the Dniester at Maryampol by the evening of the 13th, in connection with the right wing of the Southern Army, and the Rhemen and Czibulka Groups pushed the Russian XXX Corps back into the bridgehead of Nizniow, the Kraußwald Corps came to a halt before strong enemy positions south of Czernelica and found itself compelled on June 13 to assist the Kaiser Group, which had established a foothold on the northern Dniester bank at Zezawa and Zaleszczyki on the 10th and 11th, but had since been exposed to heavy Russian counterattacks. The Korda Corps, entrusted with the protection of the right flank of the army, had moved east between the Pruth and Dniester and stood on the heights beyond the Russian border in firm resistance. Its two cavalry divisions, combined into a corps on the northern flank, advanced another 20 kilometers eastward over Rzawiency.

9. Mackensen's Offensive on Lemberg in June.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketch 16.

a) Deployment and Preparations.

While the Southern Army struggled with varying success for control of the Dniester line in the first half of June, the three armies under Generaloberst von Mackensen made preparations to continue their ordered offensive on Lemberg. Observations from the aerial reconnaissance conducted after the fall of Przemysl indicated on the evening of June 3 that the enemy was withdrawing his defeated troops in the direction of Lemberg, while simultaneously bringing in new strong forces by rail and on foot marches approximately in the line Mosciska—Krakowiec—Lubaczow.

1) p. 212.

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Advance to the Offensive of Army Group Mackensen on Lemberg.

Here, behind the front still held by the enemy at the time, a second developed position was recognized. Another strong barrier position was formed by the Genzelette of the Bereska (Grobel position) and as a continuation to the north, the ridge over Niemirow to Narol Miasto protecting Lemberg. Behind this spatially deeply structured defense zone, the railway Chodorow—Lemberg—Rawa Ruska formed a favorable cross-connection, while six railway lines from it served as feeder lines to these new battle fronts. The railway situation on the side of the allies was heavily contested. In the area of the three attacking armies of Generaloberst von Mackensen, only the railway over Sariow, on which transports to Przemysl became possible in the next few days, and over Rzeszow, which was completed from June 3 to Jaroslau, led. On this latter railway, the transport of reinforcements for the 11th Army and the supply of army needs had to be carried out. The condition of the roads and paths, which were deeply rutted due to their heavy use and covered with tough mud due to frequent thunderstorms, added to the difficulty. It was therefore necessary to first create a solid base for the new offensive of the allied armies. Only then, and after the troop movements from the Austro-Hungarian 3rd to the 4th Army had been carried out, could operations begin. The next few days were therefore used for the assembly of the newly joining forces behind the front of the 11th Army and the organization of the three armies in their future battle fronts.

In addition, it was necessary to align the still unfinished combat operations east of Przemysl with the new operational idea. For this purpose, the previous left wing of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army was to advance to Mosciska, with the Beskiden Corps advancing to Hobbynia on the left, and the Austro-Hungarian XVII Corps advancing to Czerniawa. The deployment of this latter corps to the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army was only to take place after its section had been taken over by the Beskiden Corps. The XXXXII Reserve Corps had a swing to the Wisznia in line Czerina—Starzawa. In the movements required for this, the Beskiden Corps already encountered a strongly developed enemy position on June 4, which then ran from the Sieczna bend over the heights on this side of the Wisznia to Starzawa. The stubborn defensive battle of the Russians showed that it could not just be about rearguard positions. On June 5, the Austro-Hungarian XVII Corps and the XXXXII Reserve Corps joined forces in front of this front. In doing so, progress was made in the battle for Starzawa. There lay the rear guard attack, to roll up the enemy position from the north.

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On June 6, Starzawa and the position south of it succumbed to the assault of the XXXXI Reserve Corps. Czerniawa was reached in the follow-up. This also advanced the left wing of the Austro-Hungarian XVII Corps, which climbed the Buczki Heights southwest of Czerniawa. However, the right wing of the corps stalled in front of Jozefowka. Multiple strong counterattacks by the Russians failed. On June 7, the replacement of the XVII Corps by the Besziden Corps and the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division was ordered. The initial intention to maintain the pressure from the north through the XXXXI Reserve Corps was abandoned by Generaloberst von Mackensen, as he now assessed the combat strength of the opposing Russians as low. The 11th Bavarian Infantry Division, supported only by the artillery of the XXXXI Reserve Corps, was to attack in the direction of Hodynia-Czerniawa. The main thrust was directed against Jozefowka. However, it did not break through on June 8. The Besziden Corps also achieved only some local successes. On June 9, repeated bloody assaults against Jozefowka failed to bring down this stronghold, which also supported the adjacent fronts on both sides. Therefore, Generaloberst von Mackensen decided to halt the attack on the line reached so far and to resume it only with the start of the general offensive. The 11th Bavarian Infantry Division was relieved by the Besziden Corps and withdrew from the battlefront as an army reserve. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army also had to cease its partial attacks, as it had to withdraw forces from its front to protect its right flank against the Russian advance over the Dniester. Thus, it was not possible to achieve the desired starting position for the major offensive near Mosciska in the area east of Przemysl.

Also, on the northern flank of the 11th Army, not everything went according to the wishes of the 11th Army High Command. The enemy advances against the northern front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army continued. A strong Russian attack was expected. The situation remained tense here until the arrival of the two reinforcement corps (X and XVII) sent by the 3rd Army. This posed a threat to the Rzeszow-Jaroslaw railway and thus to the entire deployment. Therefore, from the reinforcements rolling towards the 11th Army, the first arriving 22nd Infantry Division was positioned as support behind the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army on June 4.

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The Attack Preparations.

Rather, Generaloberst von Mackensen could already describe the prospects for the new offensive as favorable on June 7. In front of the 11th and 4th Army, parts of the enemy had been withdrawn southeast against the South Army, and further withdrawals from the front line to the east were observed. The enemy apparently organized for defense in depth. On June 10, Generaloberst von Mackensen issued the attack order for the 13th.

Reconnaissance and preparations on the entire front of the 11th Army had already begun on June 6. The general offensive was to be preceded on June 12 by a partial advance of the 56th and 119th Infantry Divisions, consolidated under the command of General von Behr, over the lower Lubaczowka in the direction of Sieniawa, to facilitate the crossing of the San by the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army. The main assault group of the 11th Army, the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, the Guard, and XXII Reserve Corps¹), had the task of breaking through in a northeasterly direction. The X Army Corps was initially to join the attack only with its right wing, covering the left army flank until the Behr Corps could also advance eastward. On the right army wing, the XXXXI Reserve Corps was to overcome the broad Wisznia section, thereby facilitating the advance of both the VI Corps and the left wing of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army. Army reserves included the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division, the 5th Bavarian Reserve Division, and the 88th Reserve Infantry Brigade of the XXII Reserve Corps. The Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division was to follow at the disposal of the Mackensen High Command behind the right wing of the 4th Army.

The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army had already received the directive from Generaloberst von Mackensen on June 6 to "keep their left wing as strong as possible, to envelop and roll up the entire occupied Brodyel front from the north, while the advance of the 11th Army south of the mentioned front would make it impossible for the enemy to hold out longer." Accordingly, General of Cavalry von Böhm-Ermolli emphasized his left army wing. Here, the Austro-Hungarian IV and the Beskiden Corps were to be united under the command of General von der Marwitz on June 13. The other corps were then to join the attack in stages. Opposite the right wing of the 2nd Army, the enemy had already gathered strong forces in the area around Litynia to counter the increasingly bold advances of the South Army.

¹) The 43rd (without 85th R. J. Btr.), 44th R. D. and 107th J. D.

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As flank protection, a special combat group was formed under Field Marshal Lieutenant von Kornhaber with the 2nd Army, which was to throw the enemy by June 12, and then rejoin the 2nd Army with the start of the general offensive on June 13.

The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army of General of Infantry Archduke Josef Ferdinand was to immediately follow the advance of the left wing of the 11th Army on Sieniawa on June 12, crossing the San between Sieniawa and Ulanow with as strong forces as possible towards Rawa Ruska—Narol Miasto and taking over the cover of the left flank at the Tanew section. For the opening of the offensive over the San, the German 22nd Infantry Division had already been subordinated to the army on June 9 to deploy it on the right wing with the Austro-Hungarian XVII Corps. The corps command ordered the division for June 12 to launch a frontal attack over the San on the Lubaczowka-Mouth—Lezachow route. However, the division commander, Lieutenant General Dieffenbach, requested permission to also attack the strong positions identified in the Lubaczowka-San corner from the south, whereupon his division was assigned the area up to east of Manasterz. The division was then to be relieved by the XVII Corps on the night of June 14 and follow the left wing of the 11th Army. Furthermore, Colonel General von Mackensen pointed out to the 4th Army the necessity of a simultaneous frontal attack against the San front. In further advances to the east, he anticipated an offensive thrust by the enemy against the left flank of the 11th Army. "Against this possibility, it is necessary to cover the advance of the 11th Army," Colonel von Seeckt stated in a letter to the High Command of the 4th Army, "for if it has to divert its own forces early, its striking power to the east will falter." The 4th Army was therefore to initially allocate as few forces as possible for the offensive task at the Tanew section, Archduke Josef Ferdinand intended to accompany the advance of the 11th Army to Sieniawa through the XVII and IX Corps and from there to Cieszanow through the XVII Corps. Two more divisions were to follow in the second line.

The High Command of the previous Austro-Hungarian 3rd Army took over the leadership of the Kirchbach Group on the western Vistula bank, from which an independent Austro-Hungarian 1st Army was formed again.

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The Advance at Sieniawa Succeeds.

The advance of the inner flanks of the 11th and Austro-Hungarian 4th Army in the river bend of Sieniawa on June 12 achieved the desired success. The left flank of the 56th Infantry Division swung forward in the early morning attack over the Lubaczowka and held against enemy counterattacks south of the Kotowka Forest during the morning hours. Thus covered on the flank, the simultaneously deep advance over the Lubaczowka by the 119th Infantry Division under Major General von Behr carried its attack northward over several positions. Relief attacks by the Russians from the woods to the east and west were repelled. The 22nd Infantry Division encountered significant resistance in its advance north of Manasterz, which was only broken by a frontal attack and encirclement from the east around noon. The division then drove the enemy back to the heights southeast of Sieniawa. By 5 p.m., Sieniawa was also occupied. These successes made it possible for the previously unsuccessful crossing of the allied troops over the San to succeed. At Sieniawa, they connected with the German combat front. The 22nd Infantry Division had to forgo the immediate execution of the attack against the Slawa Heights, as its artillery deployed on the western bank of the San could not be in place in time. The bridge built by the allies at Lezachow was only completed in the evening. Against the deep right flank of the 119th Infantry Division at the Kotowka Forest, heavy Russian counterattacks were launched in the evening, which could be countered by timely shifting of forces from the left to the right flank. However, the division was so heavily engaged in the night combat that its immediate relief by the Austro-Hungarian 11th Infantry Division, which had arrived behind the front, was not possible.

In the early morning of June 13, the 11th Army launched a frontal breakthrough. The Guard Corps, positioned in the center of the main assault group, achieved a great success. The 2nd Guard Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Winkler managed to wrest Tucholka from the enemy by 9 a.m. Advancing, the division captured Kobylnica Ruska by 2 p.m. and seized the heights adjoining to the north. By 5 p.m., the enemy again prepared for counterattack. Under the impression of these rapid successes, even the initially stubborn resistance by the 1st Guard Infantry Division was weakened.

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This threw the Russians over the Sãlo depression in the morning hours. In the evening, it reached the connection south of Kobylnica Ruska with the neighboring division. The continuation of the Guard Corps' attack into the night against the enemy reported in strong positions on the heights on both sides of Wielkie Oczy seemed inappropriate and was omitted. Even so, the deep breakthrough already had a favorable effect on the course of the battle at the connection fronts.

The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps had broken into the enemy's position at Jagrebla and Jalazie. However, only the 12th Infantry Division managed to push further and thereby initiate an encirclement from the north. It was not until around 3 in the afternoon that the resistance also collapsed in front of the 39th Infantry Division. Both divisions then worked their way through to the eastern edge of the large forest zone, where they encountered new enemy positions at 6 in the evening. The XXXXI Reserve Corps entered into heavy, fluctuating combat after initial successes on both sides of the Wisznia near Oltrow and further north. It was only when the 81st Reserve Division broke through Malnow at 10 in the evening that relief came for the heavily engaged 82nd Reserve Division in the Wisznia depression. The evening storming of the Aufowa Heights north of Malnow created a connection to the allies to the north. To the right, contact with the Besikow Corps of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army on the Wisznia was maintained.

The enemy stronghold Jozefowka succumbed to its attack. Further advances on both sides of the stream depression to the east were, however, prevented by Russian counterattacks. Even an encirclement initiated from the north only brought the heights on this side of the place into the possession of the attacker.

On the northern wing of the main attack group, the advance of the XXII Reserve Corps under the leadership of General of Cavalry von Falkenhayn encountered particular difficulties, as the enemy positions were skillfully flanked by each other. The main target of the attack for the 43rd Reserve and 107th Infantry Division was the village of Mielkis Nowy, which had been expanded on several fronts. It was only when the rapid success of the 82nd Reserve Division also allowed the 107th Infantry Division to advance that the mutual flanking effect of the enemy against the attack on Mielkis Nowy was eliminated, and the village was stormed around noon. As the combat area expanded upon entering the large forests, the 44th Reserve Division was inserted into the center. The right wing of the corps advancing in the mountain forest of Panska Niwa was halted by darkness. The left wing was held up in the evening at the Czerwianka, over which the enemy position extended to the northwest.

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Great Success on the First Day of Attack.

It encountered strong resistance while advancing over the exposed swamp lowlands. By noon, the right wing, supported by the 107th Infantry Division, gained ground. Simultaneously, the enemy was also driven over the Lubaczowka. In the afternoon, the 20th Infantry Division pushed across this river to the stream section on both sides of Olszówka. This created space for the deployment of the 19th Infantry Division, which was brought up in the second line. In a difficult maneuver to the flank, it overcame the wide Lubaczowka lowlands and continued its attack into the night. At 3 a.m., Wulka Szapalowka fell.

At the front of the Behr Corps, the battle north of the Lubaczowka concluded only in the early morning of June 13. The enemy retreated. The relief of the 119th Infantry Division by the allies was completed by 11 a.m. The division attempted to swing south through the Kotowka Forest for flanking action but encountered the enemy in the forest. Thus, it only managed to advance the inner wings of the 56th and 119th Infantry Divisions east of the forest.

Against Sieniawa, the Russians launched several attacks during the night of June 12 to 13, which were apparently only meant to cover their retreat to the east and north. By 7 a.m., the 22nd Infantry Division had occupied the Glawa Heights. In the evening, it was relieved. The line of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army extended the bridgehead to Piskorowice (ten kilometers northwest of Sieniawa).

Thus, the new offensive operation achieved a promising initial success on the first day. The tip of the breakthrough wedge of the Guard advanced far to the east, close to the intermediate position determined by reconnaissance at Krakowiec — Wielkie Oczy — Lutowisce — Lubaczow. Since the enemy was already moving reserves back into the Grodek—Magierow position behind the front, the Army High Command 11 no longer expected sustained defense in the intermediate position ahead. It hoped that the breakthrough's progress would bring it down. Generaloberst von Mackensen ordered: "The Guard Corps will continue its successful and decisive advance to the heights of the Wielkie Oczy sector tomorrow." The center of the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps was directed at Krakowiec, as was the XXXXII Reserve Corps at Sarny. North of the Guard Corps, the XXII Reserve Corps was to push further through the forest zone and secure the encirclement of Bucznik from the north initiated by the Guard. The X Army Corps had to maintain the connection with the Behr Corps, which intended to conduct its concentric attack in the Kotowka Forest and advance its right wing to Oleszyce.

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The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army was directed eastward towards Czerwow and northward towards Krzeszow on the San. The right neighboring army was ordered to "continue the attack or begin it most emphatically." Under the impact of the breakthrough of the 11th Army, the enemy had already retreated before the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army during the night of June 14 to the general line Strwiaz—Bonow. They swung to the right and proceeded to attack this position.

Also from the right wing of the 11th Army, the XXXXI Reserve and Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, the enemy only positioned themselves on June 14 in the positions on both sides of the Kratkowice Gees. In fierce preliminary battles, the XXXXI Reserve Corps advanced to the heights on this side of the Szlko. The intention of the Hungarian 39th Infantry Division to relieve the corps of General von Francois south of the Gees failed, as they themselves encountered the enemy. The Austro-Hungarian 12th Infantry Division also faced a difficult frontal attack north of the Gees. The crossing over the Szlko lowland was opened to them by their left wing advancing with the Guard Corps. They then reached as far as the eastern edge of the large Gees and at night as far as Swidnica.

The Guard Corps unexpectedly encountered particularly strong resistance at Wielkie Oczy. It was not until 4 in the afternoon that the divisions could launch their assault. The 1st Guard Infantry Division under Colonel Eitel Friedrich Prince of Prussia overcame the Berzenitz and extended this success northward. Then the left wing of the division also pushed through Wielkie Oczy. The planned encirclement of the 2nd Guard Infantry Division from the north failed due to the strength of the Bucznik Massif. Only after being relieved by the 1st Guard Infantry Division could their right wing penetrate into Wielkie Oczy at 7 in the evening after a hard fight and then gain connection with the right neighbor. Thus also encircled from the south, the Bucznik fell. Meanwhile, the left wing did not advance significantly further, especially since the situation in the forest zone further north was unclear. Here, the two southern divisions of the XXII Reserve Corps had followed the enemy retreating to the Ladowa Nima Heights. After a difficult advance, the 43rd Reserve Division of Major General von Runckel took possession of the position there at 7° in the evening. The 44th Reserve Division had already moved into the area south of Lutowka by nightfall, with parts of it turning towards Lutowka. There, the 107th Infantry Division also arrived after having driven back enemy rearguards from section to section, having thrown them back, entered the battle at 6° in the evening.

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The Offensive Continues to Push Through.

At 8 p.m., the village and the heights further east were taken by storm.

North of the Lubaczowka, the X Army Corps faced hard battles

on both sides of Dzików. When the right wing of the 20th Infantry

Division broke through at the Lubaczowka and flanked to the left,

the enemy abandoned his position at noon. The attempts of the 19th

Infantry Division to extend their nightly success at Wulka Zapałowska to the east

and north were met with strong resistance from the Russians.

Progress was only made here by noon. In the afternoon,

the entire front of the X Army Corps advanced slowly after the heavy battles.

By evening, the connection to the XXII Reserve Corps at the Lubaczowka

and the northern forest edge south of Lipina was reached.

The 56th Infantry Division under Major General Schach

von Wittenau also broke through the Lubaczowka front and pushed the enemy

further north into the forests. Its left wing advanced northwest

to support the right wing of the 119th Infantry Division.

This reached the southern edge of the Kotowka Forest by evening

at the height near Ropana. The left wing of the division, however, like

the adjacent combat front of the allies, advanced only laboriously in heavy forest battles.

Therefore, the command of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army considered

a relief by advancing north of the Kotowka Forest towards

the Czarne Heights necessary. For this, it received the

German 22nd Infantry Division. This moved east of the

Slawa Heights into the battle line to attack the following day.

Down the San, only little ground was gained.

Already by noon, Generaloberst von Mackensen,

under the impression of the Russian retreat movement in front of the 2nd Army's front

and based on reports of marches from the Krakowice—Lubaczow line to the east and northeast,

had given the order to pursue up to the Grodek position. The further course of the day showed

that the enemy had only retreated to a strong position ten kilometers

back from the 2nd Army, and that he also intended to hold before the 11th Army.

According to prisoner statements, in strength of 19 divisions —

had been positioned. Also, south and north of the Szklo and on both sides of the

Lubaczowka, a breakthrough into the position had been achieved so far.

The attack of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, which began on June 15, brought only

some local successes west of Borowno on the northern flank, the Beskiden Corps,

which fought in conjunction with the XXXI Reserve Corps.

However, they did not lead to the intended encirclement from the north.

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The left wing of the XXXX I. Reserve Corps reached Morance early at the marshy Szczan. However, the crossing over a dam east of the Krakowiec Lake failed. Further south, after fierce fighting, the Russian positions still held west of the Szczan-Albrychtse were breached. Then, in the evening, the right wing was also able to penetrate the enemy's trenches west of Bonow. From the 5th and VI Corps, the 12th Infantry Division drove the enemy back over the Lipowiec section. The bulk of the 39th Infantry Division was also moved north around the Krakowiec Lake. While its left wing was able to maintain contact with the 12th Infantry Division, the decisive advance of its right wing to the southeast was unsuccessful.

The Guard Corps also continued its attack deep into the enemy's defense system on June 15. The 1st Guard Infantry Division encountered strong Russian positions at the Lipowiec Brook. Supported by its neighboring division from the north, it was able to break this resistance by 6 p.m. and connect with the 2nd Guard Infantry Division, which was able to advance 20 kilometers beyond Wielkie Oczy to Luzki. The XXII Reserve Corps also drove the enemy back from section to section in the rugged terrain. Despite the greatest marching difficulties, all three divisions reached the Sanadowka section in the afternoon. They had thus significantly expanded the breakthrough of the Guard to the north.

The X Army Corps advanced its 20th Infantry Division along the Lubaczowka. It first encountered resistance at the Przerwa section, which was overcome by encirclement from the east bank of the Lubaczowka by 7 p.m. The division then reached the Zawadowka with its right wing. The positions east of Lipina had already been stormed by the inner wings of the 20th and 19th Infantry Divisions by 10 a.m. The latter continued to push the enemy further west in open terrain from position to position around Oleszice and into the woods north of it. The bulk of the 19th Infantry Division then also turned east. In the evening, the X Army Corps encircled Lubaczow, protected by stream depressions, in a bow.

The Behr Corps was still far behind. The 56th Infantry Division attacked the enemy still holding south of Molodynce around noon and relieved the 119th Infantry Division encircling Krakowiec. This division itself, supported by troops of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, stormed the strong positions there. In a joint attack by both divisions, they succeeded in the evening in driving the enemy from his positions around Molodzycz.

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The Enemy Retreats to the Grodek-Magierow Position.

At 4 p.m., the High Command of the 11th Army had ordered that the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division, which

had meanwhile been advanced to secure the deep left flank of the Reserve Corps,

be directed towards Oleszyce-Zabiala and combined with the adjoining 56th

Infantry Division into a corps under the command of Bavarian Lieutenant General

Freiherr von Stein. The 8th Bavarian Reserve Division reached Oleszyce with

its largest parts. The 119th Infantry Division was to become the army reserve.

On the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, the 22nd Infantry Division,

advancing north of the Krotowka Forest, broke through the enemy positions at

11 a.m., simultaneously with the Austro-Hungarian 11th Infantry Division fighting

in the forest. Both divisions advanced significantly beyond the Czarna Heights.

The rest of the 4th Army's front east of the San pushed north towards the

enemy-occupied high positions on both sides of Cieplicze.

The Mackensen High Command assessed the overall situation of the 11th Army

as very promising in the afternoon. At 6 p.m., Colonel von Seeckt issued the

following directive to the corps chiefs of staff: "The pursuit law is progressing

well across the entire front of the three armies. The situation has changed in

our favor since yesterday, as the enemy has thrown parts of his main forces

against us again, thus offering us the opportunity to defeat him in the open

field. We will therefore encounter less resistance in the main position he has

prepared and may be able to penetrate it with him. In this sense, the pursuit

in the combat zones must continue relentlessly." To further consolidate the

forces of the 11th Army for the breakthrough thrust on Magierow, its boundary

was shifted to the left towards the forest crest of Rubyn, which was to enable

an encirclement of the Grodek position north around Lake Janow for this army.

Before the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, the enemy retreated to the Grodek

position on the night of June 16. The army followed along the entire line,

with the left wing reaching Szklo. The right wing and the center of the 11th

Army also continued the pursuit relentlessly. Driving enemy rearguards before

them, the four southern corps reached the line Szklo-Niemirow and northward

despite great marching difficulties. A longer assault battle was required to

capture Niemirow. The commanding general of the XXII Reserve Corps, General of

Cavalry von Falkenhayn, intended during his advance to swing parts northward

to engage in the battles of the X Army Corps at Lubaczow to protect his left flank.

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The Army High Command did not allow this, as it considered the pursuit to the east more important.

The X Army Corps was also able to overcome the resistance

it found in the naturally strong and heavily fortified position around

Lubaczow. The 20th Infantry Division was set to attack from the south, the

19th Infantry Division from the west. Positions were stormed and taken shortly after

noon. On the heights

south of the Golotwa, the enemy set up new resistance. The attack

was transferred to the 19th Infantry Division, but due to the advanced time of day, it could not be carried out. The 20th Infantry

Division marched eastward towards Sieniawa. The Hungarian 11th Cavalry

Division was brought forward to close the gap between the XXII Reserve

Corps and X Army Corps. In front of the 8th Bavarian Reserve

Division, the enemy still held positions north of Oleszyce at the

forest edge behind it. The division prepared for a comprehensive attack on both sides. Its left wing crossed the stream

section at Zabiala around noon. In the late afternoon, the

56th Infantry Division appeared on the battlefield northwest of

Zabiala after a difficult march on deep sandy forest paths. Meanwhile, the

Bajon had already taken the enemy positions north of Oleszyce.

Both divisions were now to attack the Kubalszyna Forest comprehensively the next day on the orders of General von Stein.

This necessitated a left turn of the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division.

During the night, it took possession of Dachnow. Through

this bold advance, the enemy in the Kubalszyna Forest was surrounded from three

sides. Thus, even though the left wing of the 11th Army had not

fallen significantly behind the center and the right wing,

there was a justified prospect that after overcoming the Russian

resistance, it would soon join the advance to the east in a staggered formation.

The right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army reached the forest edges

south of Czentow. Here the enemy still held. Further west, the

army advanced over Cieplice. The Army High Command intended

to advance northward only after expecting a Russian attack on the eastern San bank. However, Chief of Staff von Mackensen pointed out

that the advance to the east would proceed until

an enemy attack, and not the fear of one, prompted a halt.

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The Attack on the Grodek-Magierow Position.

Cieszanow was set as the next target, under echelon against Tarnogrod. Upon the news that backward movements had also been initiated on the western bank of the San by the enemy, the 4th Army was informed: “Therefore, the advance ordered this evening appears facilitated to the east and the attack of the parts standing in the San-Vistula angle is promising and necessary.”

Reports from aircraft received on June 16 clearly showed the picture of the general enemy retreat into and behind the Grodek-Magierow position, which continued northwest to the Tanew section. The prisoners generally reported a great shortage of ammunition among the Russians and highlighted the tremendous moral impact of the German artillery. The replacement of the infantry was said to have deteriorated due to short and inadequate training, especially since the training depots lacked rifles. Generaloberst von Mackensen pointed out to the subordinate command authorities that “defeated troops” had occupied the new positions. The corps had to decide independently whether a quick access or a planned attack was appropriate. “That a quick decision is advantageous and necessary will be clear to every position.” The focus of the operation remained in the center of the 11th Army. This was also expressed by the transfer of further heavy artillery from the left army wing to the Austro-Hungarian VI and the Guard Corps.

c) The Breakthrough through the Grodek-Magierow Position and the Capture of Lemberg. June 17 to 22.

On June 17, the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army advanced against the Grodek position. It already succeeded in penetrating the town of Grodek. However, General von Böhm-Ermolli planned the main breakthrough thrust on his left wing between Kamienobrod and Janow.

In the 11th Army, this day was also marked by sharp pursuit behind the retreating enemy. Only in front of strongly fortified height positions of the general line Majdan-Lake-Magierow-Dobromilce height did the advance of the corps come to a halt. On the left army wing, the Stein Corps reached the heights south of Cieszanow, whose advancing attack in the Kubaszinja Forest the enemy had timely evaded. To maintain the connection with the left neighboring corps, these heights were initially to be crossed. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army intended to advance further east through parts of the detachment of the left flank of the X Army Corps. In view of the strength of the height positions, in front of which the 11th Army now stood across the entire front, extensive artillery preparation before the start of the infantry attack proved necessary.

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Generaloberst von Mackensen therefore ordered at 10 p.m.:

"The 18th of June is to be used for reconnaissance, deployment, and artillery calibration. Storm planned for the morning of the 19th."

In front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, the enemy, under the influence of

the success of the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division at Dachnow and a night

advance by the Allies west of Cewkow, abandoned their positions

south of the San. The right wing of the 4th Army occupied Cieszanow.

Behind it, the German 22nd Infantry Division remained as a reserve

for the 11th Army. Additionally, the line Ulanow—Tarnogrod, the

Tanew, and the heights of Krzeszow on the San were reached.

On June 18, the two armies of the attack front moved closer to the enemy's positions under

preliminary skirmishes. The Stein Corps also reached the same level as the other corps of the 11th Army after partly heavy fighting near and

east of Rudka, while the left wing of the 56th Infantry Division, which extended over the Brusienka, was forced to

deeply echelon against strongly fortified flank positions northeast of Cieszanow. The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army

reached the Birowa—Tanew section. Generaloberst von Mackensen did not allow an advance beyond the Birowa

towards Narol Miasto to ensure the security of the 11th Army's flank was not jeopardized by a possible setback. In the San—Vistula angle, the enemy

seemed to retreat to their last bridgehead in the Rozwadów—Sandomierz line.

On June 19, the armies launched the decisive attack.

The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, whose task was "to push the enemy standing before it eastward from Lemberg and thereby

roll up the enemy Dniester front," achieved only local progress against the Dniester and

in the area between it and the Wereszyca as well as in Grodek. However, on its northern flank, the 35th Reserve Division

of the Beskiden Corps, under the command of Generalleutnant von Schmerttau, broke deeply into

the enemy positions at Stawki after deploying the entire heavy artillery of the corps.

The attack of the 11th Army brought decisive successes. The four southern corps

had set out to break through against the road Lemberg—Rawa Ruska with the intention of encircling the enemy forces." The X Army Corps, Stein Corps, and the Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division, under the command of the General of Infantry von Emmich, were unified to cover this attack northward towards Rawa Ruska.

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Breakthrough of the Guard at Magierow.

The XXXXI Reserve Corps attacked due to the swampy lowlands on both sides of the Majdan Lake with the main focus on the northern flank and gained the heights east of the Sopfina Forest. When further progress could not be achieved, General von Francois deployed his reserves in the center at 5<sup>o</sup> in the afternoon. Here, a breakthrough was achieved at 7<sup>o</sup> in the evening, after which the heavy attack further south also succeeded on the eastern shore heights of the Majdan Lake.

For the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, the initial focus in its difficult advance in rugged mountainous terrain was primarily on gaining the Horodysko Massif. This succumbed to the assault of its two divisions at noon, as the encirclement through the Sopfina Forest became effective. In swift forward movement, the Austro-Hungarian 12th Infantry Division now reached the connection to the Guard Corps at Kunin, while the right corps wing, deeply echeloned, reached the area west of Zabelnia, which the enemy stubbornly held.

Of decisive importance for the intended separation of the Russian forces was the advance of the Guard Corps, as here the shortest route to reach the road and railway Zolkiew—Rawa Ruska could be achieved. The attack of the 1st Guard Infantry Division on the right initially did not penetrate the heavily intersected terrain, whereas the 2nd Guard Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Winkler early on took the height dominating the entire attack field of Mazuryn and simultaneously advanced further south. The wedge driven forward from the center of the corps towards Magierow then exerted a flanking pressure on the entire corps section. By noon, the enemy resistance had collapsed everywhere. The commanding general, General Freiherr von Plettenberg, soon decided to continue the breakthrough beyond Magierow. Through strong marching performances and fighting against Russian rearguards, it was possible to advance by evening over the railway and the road at Jadorinow. Deep echeloning protected both flanks, as the neighboring troops could not follow so quickly. Already shortly after noon, the 119th Infantry Division had been made available to the Guard Corps. It no longer became active.

The XXII Reserve Corps had placed its main focus on the right wing to maintain the connection with the Guard Corps. The frontal attack initially remained unsuccessful. Only when at 10<sup>o</sup> in the morning the rapid advance of the 2nd Guard Infantry Division became noticeable did the 43rd Reserve Division succeed in breaking into the enemy position.

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To relieve the heavily struggling center, the command was forced to also deploy the 107th Infantry Division of Major General von Moser on the left flank of the corps for the breakthrough. However, even before they engaged, the southern flank of the enemy east of Wysiecz Castle was torn open, and by early afternoon, they gave way along the entire line. In the pursuit, the right flank was able to connect with the Guard north of Lawrykow, while the left remained positioned south of Rawa Ruska.

General von Emmich had prepared a division composed of parts of the 19th and 20th Infantry Divisions under the leadership of Lieutenant General Hofmann behind the right flank of his defensive front, to potentially expand the success of the XXII Reserve Corps northward. By 4 PM, this division was advancing on both sides of the Niemirow—Rawa Ruska road, while the right flank of the 20th Infantry Division, in line with the advance of the 107th Infantry Division, sought to push eastward. The enemy retreated under the pressure exerted from the south. The X Army Corps was able to advance to the Manasterz—Dobrinice line by evening. The Stein Corps faced strong Russian positions grouped around the Butszna Forest Heights. On the left flank, there was close combat contact at Rudka. The 2nd Army was expanding its new positions. Three divisions were held in reserve on the eastern bank of the San.

As the success of the breakthrough at Magierow became apparent towards evening, Colonel General von Mackensen reported to the Austro-Hungarian army command that he did not intend to cross the Zolkiew—Rawa Ruska road eastward, but would "continue to pursue the enemy, who had mostly withdrawn northward, and shift to the left."

On June 20, the Guard Corps was to close up on the main road accordingly, while the southern adjoining corps of the 11th Army and northward had to continue on both sides of the road from Zolkiew. North of the Guard Corps, the XXII Reserve Corps was to push its right flank to the road, but otherwise remain in the left echelon to maintain connection with the Emmich group, whose left flank was to swing north around Rudka. General von Conrad agreed with the basic idea of these orders but pointed out that in connection with the attack of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army against Lemberg, a swing of parts of the 11th Army against the northern front of Lemberg might initially become necessary.

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The Enemy Retreats to Lemberg.

Already during the night, individual local breaches in the actual Grodek position had been expanded into significant territorial gains. Consequently, the enemy had retreated eastward along the entire line before dawn. The pursuit led the 2nd Army to the Dniester at Mikolajow and to the Szczerzec-Stawczanta section, which the enemy held in connection with Lemberg, as well as directly in front of the city's west front, protected by makeshift works. In the northern wing, the advance of the Beskiden Corps aimed at Kulikow.

Even before the 11th Army, the enemy had retreated on both sides of the breakthrough point of the Guard Corps. The XXXXI Reserve Corps, however, encountered new, very strong positions on the heights around and south of Gliniec by morning. The attack had to be postponed to the following day, as the right corps wing with the heavy artillery was only ready to engage in the evening after an extremely difficult advance through forested mountains. The k.u.k. VI Corps also soon encountered new enemy resistance and had to fend off even more vigorous counterattacks. Only its northernmost wing could achieve great strength in connection with the Guard Corps. This extended its front northward at Dobrostin. An intended advance of the Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division against the Zolkiew-Mosty Wielkie road proved impractical, as the enemy had almost closed its front again before the Guard Corps. The XXII Reserve Corps reached a line forward of Apopozielisko without resistance. Here, only enemy cavalry seemed to be facing them. Marching columns withdrew eastward from Rawa Ruska. The X Army Corps also advanced unopposed toward Rawa Ruska. A composite detachment was sent there. The Stein Corps encountered heavily fortified Russian positions when turning north around the pivot point east of Rudka. Effectively supported by the artillery of the 20th and 56th Infantry Divisions and reinforced by parts of the latter division, the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division succeeded in encircling the enemy from the south. Around 1 p.m., it gave way at the Buskano Heights. Through skillful expansion of the encirclement movement, the heights further north were also taken in a brisk assault in the evening.

The k.u.k. 4th Army approached the section on both sides of Zukow with its right wing.

On June 21, the k.u.k. 2nd Army gained only a little ground to the east. However, it was of decisive importance for the outcome of the battle that the Beskiden Corps of General von der Marwitz, using its entire combat strength, succeeded in breaking into the strong elevated position west of Kulików, which was aligned with the northern front of Lemberg. This ensured the desired impact against the northern front of Lemberg.

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The Summer Campaign of the Allies in Galicia.

This secured the desired impact against the northern front of Lemberg.

In the 11th Army, only the two southern corps were still engaged in combat. The XXXXI Reserve Corps advanced with great difficulty on the rain-soaked, steep forest paths through Swarazawa Nowa and towards Glinsko. This position was stubbornly held by the enemy to cover Zolkiew. Meanwhile, the XXXXI Reserve Corps was reinforced from the army reserve with the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division. The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, to which the 11th Cavalry Division was assigned, also did not break through. Before the Guard Corps, XXII Reserve, and X Army Corps, the enemy had retreated further north under cover of cavalry. At the Stein Corps, there was still contact with the enemy.

In the area of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, only local skirmishes took place. The fate of the Galician capital was sealed the following day. During the night of June 22, the Beskiden Corps had been able to extend its breakthrough on the battlefield north of Lemberg in the direction of Kulików. Supported by this strong pressure on the northern front of Lemberg, the other corps of the left wing of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army managed to penetrate the works of the western-northern front during the morning and advance through this wide breach towards the city itself. The enemy had abandoned Lemberg. The pursuit continued to the line Chyżki—Zapytnow, further north it came to a halt before Russian rearguard positions at Remenow and Zoltance. On its southern flank, the enemy was now forced to retreat to the approximate line Dornfeld—Krotoszyn. An attack through Lemberg into the rear of this position on Bobrka was intercepted by the Russians.

Meanwhile, the right wing of the 11th Army had also gained freedom of movement and followed the enemy who had retreated over Zolkiew during the night. The XXXXI Reserve Corps pushed its lines beyond Zolkiew and through large forests northward to the Zeldec section, fighting against rearguards. The 11th Cavalry Division, dispatched by the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps to Mosty Wielkie, was unable to advance beyond Zolkiew despite support from the following Hungarian 39th Infantry Division. At Zameczek, the Austro-Hungarian 12th Infantry Division covered the left flank and maintained contact with the Guard Corps. Opposite the northern front of the 11th Army, the enemy continued to entrench from Rawa Ruska and beyond the Rata.

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The Capture of Lemberg.

Only at the extreme left army wing were there still local skirmishes.

The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army was instructed to immediately follow the enemy, whose retreat east of the San was considered likely, and, if he should still hold the bridgehead of Sandomierz, to attack on both sides of the San. Also, on the left bank of the Vistula, the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army and the Woyrsch Army Detachment were to immediately pursue if necessary.

10. Considerations.

With the fall of Lemberg, the third operational phase of the Galician offensive was successfully concluded. The extensive development of the strong Grodek-Magierow position and the fortification of Lemberg with all means had not been able to avert the new defeat of the Russian armies deployed to defend the capital of Galicia. The hoped-for separation of the enemy forces seemed to have been achieved. A large part had sought connection to the Russian Northwest Front standing in Poland.

Also, in this third operational phase, the 11th Army was assigned the decisive task of breaking through the enemy front within the overall operation. The attempt to force such a breakthrough against the naturally strong and particularly resilient lake position west of Lemberg would have promised little success. Therefore, rightly, the right wing was not, as previously intended, directed at Lemberg, but the entire 11th Army was given the direction further north towards Solkiew-Rawa Ruska. Similar to the forcing of the San crossing at Jaroslaw, Generaloberst von Mackensen, by concentrating strong forces towards the center, formed an attack wedge of great striking power, which also brilliantly fulfilled its task. The immediate securing of the flanks was achieved by deep echeloning behind both wings. In their rear, operational flank protection fell to the neighboring armies on the right and left.

For the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, gathered in a narrow space, the offensive solution to this task was straightforward through a frontal approach to the Grodek position, with the freedom to envelop and roll up the position to the north. The situation was less favorable for the neighboring Austro-Hungarian 4th Army on the left, which was still widely spread out west of the San. Nevertheless, Generaloberst von Mackensen rightly demanded significant participation from it as well in the advance to the east, so as not to have to divert more troops than absolutely necessary from the 11th Army for flank protection purposes.

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Forces advancing eastward, so that the 11th Army would not have to

divert more troops than absolutely necessary for flank security. This

objective was not fully achieved. It was already problematic that the left

wing of the 11th Army had to carry out the eccentric thrust in the river

bend of Sieniawa one day before the start of the general offensive to open

the crossing over the San for the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army. Of the three

divisions that preceded this, two — the 56th and the 22nd Infantry Division

— cooperated with the left neighboring army throughout the operation,

while the third, the 119th Infantry Division, eventually moved through and

did not engage elsewhere. Also, a division of the army reserve, the 8th

Bavarian Reserve Division, had to be used alongside the X Army Corps

to protect the left flank. This significant loss of striking power did not

have adverse effects on the progress of the operation, as after the vigorous

breakthrough of the army group at Magierow, the offensive was no longer

continued eastward but gradually shifted northward. In this process, the

forces deployed for flank protection on the left quickly engaged in the new

front.

Reviewing the overall operation from Gorlice to

Lemberg, the Allies' offensive in seven weeks advanced more than 300

kilometers through numerous, hastily expanded enemy positions, moving

eastward under constant heavy fighting, culminating in four massive

breakthrough battles. The combat losses of the 11th Army amounted to

about 87,000 men, including 12,000 dead. What the troops and supply

formations accomplished during this time in continuous advance, mostly

in scorching heat on mud-covered roads, deep sand, or the worst mountain

paths, and the hardships endured in the enemy-evacuated, barely

accommodating land, can be worthily placed alongside their combat

activity and leadership. In terms of health, particularly dangerous areas

with extremely poor water conditions had to be traversed. From the San

onwards, cholera and typhus appeared, and the Galician dysentery spread.

Nevertheless, due to prudent and thorough sanitary measures and the

selfless dedication of the medical personnel, the health condition of the

armies was such that the course of military operations remained secure.

The bloody and especially the other losses of the Russians were

much heavier. More than a quarter of a million prisoners of war, 224 guns, and over 600 machine guns were left in the hands of the 11th Army alone.

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New Crisis with the Southern Army.

The loss of the Galician capital, where the Tsar himself had celebrated as the "Liberator of Galicia" just a few weeks earlier with festive pomp, meant a severe moral loss for the Russian people and their ruler, the extent of which was also unforeseeable in political terms.

II. The Battles on the Dniester Front from June 14 to 22.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketches 17 and 18.

The successful course of Generaloberst von Mackensen's offensive on Lemberg had meanwhile also made itself felt in the course of events on the Dniester Front. Initially, however, the Southern Army faced a new serious crisis when its left wing was hit again by a counterattack of strong Russian forces on June 14. Northwest of Bortniki, Russian guards broke over the Dniester and threw the 1st Infantry Division of the Bothmer Corps back to the road leading from Zurawno to Szydlaczow; by deploying the corps reserve and with the help of the right wing of the 3rd Guard Infantry Division, it was possible to retake part of the lost ground by evening. West of Stryj, however, the right wing of the Szurmay group had to be bent back halfway to Tejszarow after further resistance. West of the Lemberg railway, Bildze was lost. The Kornhaber group on the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army was also temporarily forced to abandon its positions. While the enemy limited itself the following day to holding the ground gained against the Bothmer Corps, it continued its attack on the Szurmay group with undiminished force and pushed them back in fierce fighting to the line Tejszarow—Letnia. Stryj was once again seriously threatened. General von Linsingen found it necessary to bring in additional forces to support his left wing. On the afternoon of the 15th, two battalions of the Bothmer Corps were sent to assist the Szurmay group. Furthermore, General von Gerok received orders to relieve the Hungarian 38th Infantry Division during the coming night with the half 19th Infantry Division held back as army reserve in Wozniulow and to march to Rudn.

The two German battalions were to be used for a counterattack at Wolica, where the enemy had attacked again on the morning of June 16 and gained ground. To prevent any further advance of the Russians on both sides of the Lemberg railway in the direction so threatening to the Southern Army towards Stryj in time, General von Linsingen also set two battalions of the Bothmer Corps and three batteries of the 38th Infantry Division in motion to Wolica and placed these forces under the command of Major General Gentner.

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On both sides of the Lemberg railway, in the direction so threatening for the Southern Army towards Stryj, General von Linsingen dispatched two battalions of the Bothmer Corps and three batteries of the 38th Infantry Division to Wolica and placed these forces under Major General Gentner. The abandoned positions could be reoccupied in the evening.

The enemy, under the influence of the offensive by Field Marshal von Mackensen, refrained from continuing his attacks south of the Dniester. Calm prevailed along the entire front of the Southern Army. On June 17, the 38th Infantry Division, under the command of General Count von Bothmer, relieved the 40th in their positions on the west bank of the Stryj. Lieutenant Field Marshal von Kornhaber moved the bulk of the 51st Infantry Division across to the right bank of the Dniester and launched an attack at dawn on the 18th as part of the offensive task assigned to the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army. The left wing of the Southern Army — the Szurmay Group and the 38th Infantry Division — joined in. The enemy retreated to the Dniester under weak resistance and completely abandoned the southern bank the following day. Only the bridgeheads of Zydaczow and Woloczyn remained strongly held. Against the latter, the 38th Infantry Division advanced, gaining ground slowly. The Szurmay Group followed on both sides of the Lemberg railway to the Dniester and positioned the 40th Infantry Division to the right of the 7th, replacing the troops of General Gentner, who withdrew to the Bothmer Corps. On June 20, the 51st Infantry Division completed the river crossing at Kolodruby and rejoined the right wing of their army, which was advancing against the Szczerzec sector. Upon receiving this news, General von Linsingen ordered the Szurmay Group in the afternoon to join the advance of their left neighbor across the Dniester, to assist the Bothmer Corps in capturing Zydaczow and Woloczyn and then also crossing the river. Meanwhile, as he had already communicated in the army command report on June 17, he intended to force a crossing over the Dniester again on both sides of Zurawno between Buczaczowce and Holeszow, as the conditions there seemed more favorable than further upstream. In the following days, the necessary regrouping of the army was carried out. The Szurmay Group left the Southern Army on the evening of June 20 and joined the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army. Opposite the Marschall Group, the enemy continued to hold their strong bridgehead positions around Halicz-Jezupol.

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The Battles of the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army at the Dniester.

The Austro-Hungarian 7th Army also had to endure hard and varied battles during these days to hold the Dniester line. Its left wing was able to wrest the bridgehead of Nizniow from the enemy on June 15. However, General von Pflanzer-Baltin was forced on the same day to withdraw the Korda Corps, advancing eastward between the Pruth and Dniester, to the line Bojan—Horoszowa, as an intercepted Russian order indicated an enemy advance over the Dniester below Zaleszczyki. The river security in the gap between the Korda Corps and the Kaiser Group was assigned to half of the 8th and 10th Cavalry Divisions, while an army reserve was formed by assembling a brigade of the 8th and 5th Cavalry Divisions and parts of the Krautwald Corps. The enemy's attack, however, did not come from the north as expected, but against the front of the Korda Corps, which had roughly occupied its new positions by the night of the 16th. In the following days, it had to fend off repeated mass assaults by the Russian XXXII Corps with the 3rd Cavalry Corps, which was only successful with the use of the army reserve. The four cavalry divisions now united north of the Korda Corps (Hungarian 5th, Austro-Hungarian 6th, 8th, and 10th) were grouped under Field Marshal Lieutenant von Benigni and reinforced by forces hastily brought from the left army wing, as new reports indicated that Russian attacks from the northern Dniester bank were also to be expected. On the night of the 20th, the enemy occupied the Dniester loop west of Uscie Biskupie and advanced the next day from here and from the large forest area east of Rarwienczy for a concentric attack. The defender had to retreat to the heights west of Dnutf; here, on June 22, he repelled all enemy assaults.

On the left army wing, after the capture of the bridgehead of Nizniow, only weaker parts of the Schönburg Group remained on the Dniester stretch from Ostra to Maryampol. General von Pflanzer-Baltin had deployed the main forces of his western wing over the Dniester against the line Potok Zlothy—Ropotice to force the enemy to abandon his positions south of the river at Czernelica through a threat to his rear. General von Rhemen was tasked with the unified command of the operation. Already on the night of June 16, the Czbulla Group had moved into the river loop south of Kolomea to Turb. During the day, parts of the Schönburg Group and the Rhemen Corps also crossed at and south of Ostra.

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The next day, the offensive was to be continued with full force, with parts turning east and west to compel the enemy to evacuate the Czernelecia Bend and the northern bank of Nizniow. Due to heavy counterattacks by the Russians, which began on June 19, General von Rhemen was forced into defense and had to abandon Kosmierzyn again. As further reinforcement of the Benigni group had become urgent, General von Pflanzer ordered on the 20th the cessation of the offensive over the Dniester and shifted the dispensable forces here to the right wing of the army.

The offensive of the German Southern Army, which began on May 12, soon suffered from being assigned a dual task pointing in two different directions. It was to reach the upper Dniester in conjunction with the left-adjacent Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army and thus the western Galician front of the Allies, advancing northward, and also exert operational pressure eastward to halt the Russian 9th Army's offensive directed against its right neighboring army in the area between the Dniester and Pruth.

This dual task, although the Southern Army initially had a considerable superiority in units (9½ infantry divisions) over the opposing Russian 11th Army (6¾ infantry divisions), made it difficult to establish a focal point. After relatively easily achieved, spatially significant initial successes, explained by the enemy's voluntary retreat, the progress of the advancing army on a broad front was minimal from the moment it encountered stubborn resistance. Only when General von Linsingen concentrated the forces of his left wing at the end of May, consciously accepting the risk of a setback on the right, did the thrust on Stryj pave the way for a decisive change in the situation. However, since this success was not expanded with all available force northward to expel the enemy from the southern Dniester bank, and the focus was instead placed on the Stryj line in an eastward, almost southeastward direction on the orders of the army command for cooperation with the right neighboring army, a serious danger arose for the insufficiently secured left wing of the army. It manifested itself after a few days, as the Russians had received reinforcements, in the severe and costly setback north of Stryj and at Zurawno.

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The Result of the Offensive of the Southern Army.

Although this could be balanced again by the vigorous countermeasures of the army leader and the bravery of the troops, it resulted in a complete standstill of the army's offensive on the entire front for a longer period. That the Russians finally gave up the southern Dniester bank happened under the impression of the failures of their neighboring front in the area west of Lemberg. A decisive influence on the course of the offensive of Generaloberst von Mackensen, as General von Linsingen had envisaged on June 8, albeit only temporarily, was denied to the two armies of the allied right wing until the fall of Lemberg. Indirectly, however, they contributed to its success by tying down strong enemy forces on their front.

12. The Allied Army Commands during the Operation on Lemberg.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketch 16.

General von Falkenhayn had, shortly after issuing the decisive instructions of June 4 for the continuation of the offensive in Galicia¹), made a brief visit to the German Western Front²). The impressions received there seemed to have strengthened his view that the extensive denudation of the Western Front of army reserves, which had occurred since mid-April, could only be sustained for a limited time. A withdrawal of forces from the eastern theater of war might therefore become necessary sooner than previously assumed. Shortly after his return to Ples, he reminded General von Conrad in a letter dated June 12 of "the immediate implementation of reinforcement work on the Dniester-Wisznia and San lines with all conceivable means." He cited as a reason for this the fear "that the development might not be far enough advanced if we were forced by the situation to withdraw significant forces from Galicia. Such a situation could arise unexpectedly, although he currently had no indications for it."

General von Conrad initially stated in his response that all orders for the strongest establishment of the San line, insofar as it was already in their possession, and the lower Wisznia line had been made, while the connection to the upper Dniester and the Dniester line itself would still have to be fought for.

¹) p. 203. — ²) p. 77.  
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Moreover, he emphasized, "that the compulsion to transport strong forces from Galicia to another theater of war could certainly occur in the foreseeable future for both Germany and Austria-Hungary. However, he hoped that the current joint thrust by the Allies in Galicia would continue with full force until the decisive defeat of the Russian army."

General von Falkenhayn agreed, as his response on June 13 proved, that the common goal must "for the time being remain the decisive defeat" of the enemy. However, he also pointed out that "the operations in Galicia had been severely hampered by various incidents," and expressed doubt "whether it would be possible to continue them until the decisive defeat of the enemy." "The enemy will try to evade the thrust, and we cannot pursue him indefinitely." During the course of June 13, however, his view approached that of General von Conrad. From the reports of the high commands of the 11th and the Southern Army on the stubborn battles of the day, he gained the impression that the Russians were determined to defend themselves with all their might. This also increased his hope for the success of a decisive blow. On the evening of June 13, he proposed in a letter to General von Conrad to transport the German divisions still in Syrmia, whose continued presence on the Serbian border no longer seemed necessary to him, to the Galician theater of war and to assign them to the Southern Army "so that it would receive the necessary forces to facilitate the advance of Mackensen's army eastward over the Dniester."

General von Conrad was pleased to find agreement with his own view "that the main decision against the Russian army in Galicia should be sought with all force." Assuming "that the enemy would accept this decisive battle at the latest along the general line Bereszyca—Nagyow—Karol," he also considered the bringing up of strong forces from the south over the Dniester particularly important for success. However, he declared that leaving at least one German division in Syrmia to prevent a Serbian incursion was indispensable and was ready for the immediate transport of the general command of the X Reserve Corps and the 101st and 105th Infantry Division to the Southern Army. The orders for this were issued on the afternoon of June 14.

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The orders for this were issued on the afternoon of June 14.

On June 15, the Chief of Staff of the 11th Army, Colonel von Seeckt, presented an assessment of the situation to the German Supreme Army Command, outlining how Generaloberst von Mackensen envisioned the continuation of overall operations on the Galician battlefield following the hoped-for and sought-after breakthrough of enemy positions west and northwest of Lemberg. The thrust of the 11th Army was to continue eastward until the majority of the Russian forces in Galicia were separated from the main body of their army. An encirclement of significant forces on the northern bank of the Dniester through comprehensive maneuvers east and north of Lemberg was considered unlikely by Colonel von Seeckt in the event of an early enemy retreat, but he hoped to be able to divert strong forces with vigorous pressure against the roads leading north from Lemberg in an easterly and northeasterly direction. Thus, he saw the task of the 11th Army on this side as likely completed. The further pushing back of the enemy in Galicia to the northeast and east was to fall to the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army and Southern Army. For the entire left wing of the army, the 2nd, 11th, and 4th Armies, Colonel von Seeckt proposed a swing to the north. "The goal of this operation," it was stated in the letter, "would then be the advance of the 2nd and 11th Armies between the Bug and Vistula against the Brest Litovsk—Warsaw line, while the 4th Army advances on both sides of the Vistula. This would bring about the decision against the Russian western and northwestern front."

Here, for the first time, the great operational idea was expressed, which was later to become reality, albeit under changed circumstances. General von Falkenhayn was still very reserved towards it at this time, as his marginal note to the last sentence of Colonel von Seeckt's letter proves: "A nice idea! But?" The doubt expressed here by the head of overall operations about the possibility of initiating and carrying out a new, far-reaching offensive on the eastern battlefield after the completion of the operations currently underway in Galicia stemmed primarily from concern about maintaining the resistance capability of the German western front, against which new heavy attacks seemed to be imminent at several points." General von Falkenhayn even considered, albeit only temporarily, the idea of diverting the two divisions from East Prussia to Galicia to the Southern Army to the western theater of war.

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A doubt expressed by Seeckt in his assessment of the situation also made him concerned about whether the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army alone would be able to continue covering the left flank of the 11th Army during the ongoing operation. On June 16, he felt compelled to inform the Commander-in-Chief East that he could not count on two divisions just released into his command area by deploying Landsturm formations for his purposes2). The letter stated: "The pressure from the Western Front is now so strong and the necessity to effectively support the left flank of the 11th Army during its decisive advance to the east can become so compelling that the deployment of the divisions at one point or another may become unavoidable."

A similar view on the continuation of operations on the eastern theater of war as Colonel von Seeckt was independently represented by the head of the operations department, Colonel Tappen. On June 18, he suggested to General von Falkenhayn, after the fall of Lemberg, to advance "between Bug and Vistula towards Warsaw against the strong Russian forces there, to end the war with Russia or at least to completely break its resistance3)." He believed that solving this task would not require all the German forces currently deployed in Galicia, and suggested withdrawing two army corps to the western theater of war after the conclusion of the current operation to make necessary replacements with the 6th Army. General von Falkenhayn himself hoped to go significantly further in reducing the German eastern forces. "His Excellency agrees," it says in a private diary of Colonel Tappen, "but still wants to bring three corps to Gaede to clear Alsace. Whether these three goals can be achieved simultaneously still needs to be examined." If the agreement noted here by General von Falkenhayn referred not only to the withdrawal of forces to the west but also to the continuation of operations in the east according to Colonel Tappen's proposal, it is hardly to be assumed that the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army should have thought of a decisive offensive between Bug and Vistula against the main mass of the Russian army.

1) Diary note of then Colonel Groener.  
2) C. 128.  
3) From unpublished war memoirs of the current Lieutenant General a. D. Tappen.

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The Army Commands Agree to the Shift to the North.

For with a reduction of forces by five army corps, he could hardly regard such a far-reaching operation as promising success.

On the evening of June 18, the German Kaiser, accompanied by General von Falkenhayn, went to the 11th Army. On the train journey from Jaroslaw to Radymno, Colonel General von Mackensen reported on the morning of June 19 about the favorable progress of the offensive. Whether the idea of initiating a new operation in the area between the Bug and Vistula was discussed, and what position General von Falkenhayn actually took, could no longer be determined. In any case, the 11th Army Command itself, in view of the favorable course of the battles northwest of Lemberg, was eager to adapt the movements of the armies under its command during the ongoing operation as much as possible to the new operational idea that was envisaged. When it became clear after the major breakthrough success at Magierow on the evening of June 19 that the majority of the enemy opposite the 11th Army had moved north, Colonel General von Mackensen decided not to continue his army's advance eastward beyond the Lemberg—Rawa Ruska road, but to gradually direct the pursuit northward by regrouping the forces.

Late in the evening of June 19, Colonel von Seeckt presented General von Falkenhayn with a hastily sketched plan for the shift northward at the Jaroslaw train station upon his return from Radymno. The German Chief of Staff approved the basic idea and the orders given but reserved final approval.

General von Conrad immediately joined the decision of the 11th Army Command, leaving only the question open as to whether parts of the 11th Army should initially be used for the comprehensive advance against the northern front of Lemberg in coordination with the 2nd Army. The next day, June 20, it became clear that this was not necessary. In line with his operational guiding principle, the 11th Army Command now also prompted a suggestion from the commanding general of the XXII Reserve Corps, whose right wing, in the morning, had reached the railway line Zolkiew—Rawa Ruska in connection with the Guard Corps, to attempt to prevent the enemy from withdrawing by an advance to the east.

1) Diary note of Colonel General von Pletten. — 2) G. 232. — 3) Letter from Colonel General von Seeckt dated June 27, 1931, to the Reichsarchiv. — 4) G. 233.

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After his return from the Galician theater of war, General von Falkenhayn had a meeting with General von Conrad in Plesz on the afternoon of June 20. During this, he took the position that regardless of the battle situation before Lemberg, whose capture was the task of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, the 11th and 4th Armies should advance north between the Bug and Vistula. General von Falkenhayn argued that a separation of the tasks of the armies under Generaloberst von Mackensen seemed premature. He proposed to decide on the continuation of operations on a large scale only after the expected fall of Lemberg. Consequently, the following directive was initially agreed upon for all armies:

"The operations currently in progress, which are so successful, are to be carried out by Generaloberst von Mackensen with the 4th, 11th, and 2nd Armies until the capture of Lemberg. At the same time, the dissolution of the enemy retreating northward by attack, wherever he positions himself, is to be completed. The Szurmay Group is now subordinated to the 2nd Army command"). The Southern Army is to cross the Dniester and advance against the area east of Lemberg. The 7th Army advances over the Dniester and secures the right flank of the army and the unconditional possession of Czernowitz."

The directive was issued on the evening of June 20. It was nothing more than a repetition of the tasks already assigned to the individual armies, with which they were still occupied at the time. The motives of General von Falkenhayn for this formulation of the directive are evident from a simultaneously dispatched telegram intended only for Generaloberst von Mackensen and his chief of staff: "The directive has been formulated because, on the one hand, Your Excellency should initially retain full freedom of action with all the forces under your command, while on the other hand, the Supreme Army Command must reserve the right, considering the prisoners, to issue new directives as soon as it deems necessary, if necessary, by reducing the forces there. After carrying out the operations according to the above directive, it will certainly not be missed to withdraw German divisions from the 11th Army for use in the West. If special circumstances do not require other measures, then the intention is:

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The Instructions for the New Operation.

2nd Army separates from Army Group Mackensen to clear Galicia of the enemy with parts of the current South Army and 7th Army and to cover the right flank of the 11th Army. 11th Army (without the divisions to be detached) and 4th Army under Your Excellency's command advance further downstream."

Following this, General von Falkenhayn was prepared to join General von Conrad's proposal for the continuation of operations after the fall of Lemberg, which aimed to detach the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army from the command area of Generaloberst von Mackensen and involve it in the downstream advance. If his intention to reduce the 11th Army by four divisions is maintained, the difference from the operations proposal made by Colonel von Seeckt on June 15 becomes clear. It seems that General von Falkenhayn, in the anticipated advance of the 11th and 4th Armies between the Bug and Vistula, did not envision the initiation of a new operation with far-reaching goals, but rather a spatially limited pursuit, as also expressed in the directive itself with the words, "to complete the dissolution of the enemy retreating northwards by attacking wherever he positions himself." Consequently, the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army had no reservations about returning to the Commander-in-Chief East, upon his request on June 20, the limited authority over the two divisions to be detached from his command area at the front. He believed he would not need them on the battlefield between the Bug and Vistula.

On June 22, even before the news of the fall of Lemberg had reached him, General von Conrad, in line with his previous understanding, addressed General von Falkenhayn with the following operational proposal:

"2nd Army might take Lemberg today. Of the agreed tasks, one is then fulfilled, the other, pursuit by the 4th Army and 11th Army northwards, still needs to be fulfilled. My proposal: Generaloberst von Mackensen carries out this task with the 4th and 11th Armies. The latter is assigned occupation troops to cover the Dniester line towards Kaminowka Strumilowa. 2nd Army leaves the association of Army Group Mackensen and pursues the enemy towards Busk (inclusive)–Friedjow (inclusive). South Army advances with a strong right wing down the Dniester to Surawno, to enclose Halicz from the north and advance over the lower Gnila Lipa up to and including Rohatyn.

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7th Army retains previous tasks."

General von Falkenhayn agreed with this proposal. However, he did not prescribe an end goal for the Southern Army. The further it advances, the better it is. He also considered the attachment of the Beskiden Corps to the direction of Kaminoka Strumilowa unnecessary, as it should not be mandatory. For the continuation of operations, he requested the most rapid expansion of the railway lines Stryj—Chodorow, Przemysl—Lemberg, and Jaroslaw—Rawa Ruska.

Despite his agreement with the operational proposal of General von Conrad, the German Chief of Staff maintained the intention to transfer four divisions from the area of the 11th Army to the western theater of war. Corresponding orders were issued on June 22. The 8th Bavarian Reserve Division was to begin its transport from the area of Jaroslaw on June 26, followed by the 56th Infantry Division and the XXXXI Reserve Corps around June 28. The measure was justified by the fact that "given the current situation, in conjunction with the losses inflicted on the Russians since the beginning of this operational phase, a reduction of German forces in the southeast is possible without impairing the tasks still to be solved and is necessary in view of the situation on the Western Front." General von Falkenhayn verbally informed General von Conrad of the impending transport during a meeting in Teschen on the afternoon of June 22. For several days, he even considered the intention, already expressed to Colonel Tappen on June 18, to transfer three more corps from the 11th and Southern Army to the west, "to clear Upper Alsace of the enemy."

1) The proposal of General von Conrad also did not prescribe an end goal for the Southern Army, but rather foresaw an advance over the lower Gnila Lipa. Rohatyn was only indicated as the last boundary of the Southern Army's advance area.  
2) On the two railways considered for the previous Mackensen Group, the Przemysl—Mosciska line was completed on June 19. The completion of the Jaroslaw—Lubaczow line could be expected by June 24.  
3) See p. 94.  
4) See p. 609. Colonel Groener writes in his private diary on June 23: "Order for the transport of the four divisions from Galicia etc. will be issued tomorrow as the last boundary of the Southern Army's advance area. During the lecture, General von Falkenhayn told him to bring troops back from the west and clear Upper Alsace of the French."

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Decision of General von Linsingen on the Dniester Crossing.

13. The Battles of the Southern Army End of June.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Army, General von Linsingen, had already reported to the allied army commands on June 17 that he intended, after the arrival of the two divisions made available to him on the 14th, rolling in from Southern Hungary to Stryj, to force the Dniester crossing anew on the night of June 21 to 22 on both sides of Zurawno. The instructions arriving from Teschen on the evening of the 20th assigned the army the further operational task of advancing "towards the area east of Lemberg" after completing the river crossing. Contrary to the wishes of General von Conrad, to cross with the left wing of the Southern Army at Wolcniow, General von Linsingen held firm at and behind the position he had chosen at Zurawno, as he hoped that the Southern Army would be able to break through the defensive position established by the Russians behind the Gnila Lipa and roll it up from the south, as well as threaten Halicz from the north and the enemy in front of the 7th Army on its right flank. However, the forcing of the Dniester crossing was to take place only on the night of June 22 to 23, as only slightly more than half of the reinforcements had been unloaded in Stryj so far. General von Conrad agreed with this and also approved the further operational intention to advance over the lower Gnila Lipa. His new instructions arriving on June 22 were in this sense. The German Chief of Staff particularly emphasized that it was important to "carry the thrust of the Southern Army with the greatest possible acceleration on the northern Dniester bank, even if only at one point, to damage the enemy retreating from south of Lemberg."

Although on June 22, a third of the infantry and half of the artillery of the 101st and 105th Infantry Divisions were still missing, General von Linsingen, in view of the overall situation, especially the capture of Lemberg known in the evening, refrained from another postponement of the attack and left it at the already issued order of the morning of the 22nd, according to which the Dniester crossing was to take place early the next day.

Divisions, whose transport has already been ordered, three corps from the 11th and Southern Army to Alsace. On June 25: "General von Falkenhayn says that it has been his opinion from the beginning to leave the reinforcement of the 11th Army only for the short breakthrough in Galicia, but then to withdraw it back to the west immediately." On June 26: "I agree with General von Schönborn that no further forces should be withdrawn in Galicia."

1) G. 238. — 2) G. 242 f. — 3) G. 246. — 4) G. 247 f.

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His suggestion to have the left wing

of the 7th Army participate by advancing from the area of Maryampol to the northwest

could not be granted, as the forces here

were too weak for an offensive use and the tense situation on the rest of the army front

did not allow their reinforcement. Only deception measures were agreed to by General von Pflanzer.

The group Marschall (5th Cavalry Division and Austro-Hungarian Corps Hofmann)

had to bind the strong enemy forces standing in the bridgehead of Jezupol—Halicz

from the 22nd onward through demonstrative advances. The Corps Gerok (Austro-Hungarian Brigade Bolzano and Austro-Hungarian 19th Infantry Division),

Kövess (General Command of the X Reserve Corps with 101st and 105th Infantry Division)

and Bothmer (3rd Guard Infantry Division and 1st Infantry Division) were to

surprise their infantry between Ostrow and Holeszow in the darkness by crossing the river

and extinguish the enemy's resistance at dawn with overwhelming artillery fire.

The left wing, also under General Count von Bothmer (48th Reserve Division, Hungarian 38th Infantry Division and Austro-Hungarian 1st Cavalry Division)

was assigned to the group Sourmay of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army for the flank protection of the crossing troops,

especially against Szydlaczow.

However, things did not go as planned. It took

days of bitter fighting to reach the next desired goal.

The infantry crossing during the night of the 22nd to the 23rd of June

encountered extremely strong resistance everywhere and

was only able to gain a foothold at a few points on the northern bank.

Even during the day, it was not possible to significantly expand the breach points.

On the other hand, the enemy, apparently under the impression of the

unfavorable battles around Lemberg, evacuated the bridgeheads

of Szydlaczow—Wolczimow and the left Dniester bank during the night

and withdrew to the east. In the immediately resumed pursuit, the

48th Reserve Division advanced to the west of Chodorow, the Hungarian 38th Infantry Division

further north to Ostrow. The Austro-Hungarian 1st Cavalry Division

maintained the connection to the right wing of the 2nd Army, which reached the

line Wyglyanowka—Lopuszna. The group Sourmay, which was spared from the front,

was gathered around Mikolajow the next day

and moved north on the 25th.

1) p. 239.

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The Southern Army Crosses the Dniester.

Even during the night of June 24, the corps of Gerok, Kosch, and Bothmer were unable to bring stronger forces to the north bank, as the enemy sought to prevent the construction of bridges and footbridges through continuous artillery fire. At daybreak, fierce Russian counterattacks began, which the few crossed battalions of the allies could only fend off with great difficulty and at the cost of heavy losses. Under these circumstances, the 3rd Guard Infantry Division refrained from further crossing attempts at Holeszow, where only a few companies had been able to establish themselves on the north bank, and crossed the Dniester with the bulk of the 48th Reserve Division east of Bzaczow, to force the stubborn defenders to retreat from a flank attack over Bortniki. The enemy opposed the advance of the left wing of the army and the neighboring Austro-Hungarian V Corps to the east at the lake and stream section between Bortniki and Bobrka.

Although the fords became unusable due to the rising Dniester and the bridge sites were still under heavy enemy fire, it was finally possible the following night to bring the mass of the infantry of the Kosch Corps and the 1st Infantry Division to the opposite bank. During the course of June 25, the heights west of Butaczow and northeast of Zurawno were wrested from the enemy. Holeszow fell into the hands of the Guard. However, their main force could not take Bortniki. Larger successes were also denied to the northern parts of the Bothmer Corps.

The next day, the Kosch Corps had pushed the enemy behind the Swirz section. The three German divisions of General Count von Bothmer advanced fighting to the line Trehyborw—Chodorow. For the further attack against and over the Gnila Lipa, General von Linsingen made the 48th Reserve Division, which had become dispensable on the northern flank, available again to the Gerok Corps, whose crossed parts were still heavily pressed by the enemy.

On the night of the 27th, the Russians evacuated the bridgehead of Jezupol—Halicz; during the day, they also retreated behind the Swirz section in front of the Bothmer Corps and the right wing of the 2nd Army, which was reached everywhere by the allies and crossed exemplarily by the Kosch Corps from Butaczow without heavy fighting. Opposite Halicz, according to aerial reports and other information, the Dniester bank could only be weakly occupied, but the former garrison of the bridgehead had marched behind the Zlota Lipa. General von Linsingen therefore ordered the Marschall Group, to which he reassigned the Bolzano Brigade, to cross the Dniester immediately with strong forces.

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and to roll up the Gnila Lipa position from the south. Otherwise, the offensive was to be continued in a northeasterly direction, with the left wing on Narajow.

Already in the morning hours of June 28, the army, following the enemy who had withdrawn during the night, reached the Gnila Lipa along the entire front. On its eastern bank, General von Linsingen assumed only weak rearguards, believing the main enemy forces to be in continuous retreat to the east. Therefore, he urged his corps to cross the river during the day and attack the enemy before they could establish themselves in selected positions. However, these proved to be so strong and stubbornly defended that the crossing was unsuccessful at any point. Only in Rohatyn did parts of the 1st Infantry Division penetrate. In the Marschall group, the Dniester crossing was successful only at Halicz, but not further downstream; the 5th Cavalry Division was stuck opposite Maryampol.

The army command intended to focus the attack henceforth on the right wing, which was to be reinforced by the Austro-Hungarian 1st Cavalry Division and the Kosch Corps. The former was to reach the area of Butaczowce by the evening of the 29th, the latter on the road via Bursztyn Halicz. However, since the strong enemy resistance was not yet broken on this day and the eastern bank of the Gnila Lipa could only be captured in places, the planned shift of the Kosch Corps could not be realized for the time being. At the Gerok Corps, the newly arrived 48th Reserve Division engaged in battle to the right of the Austro-Hungarian 19th Infantry Division. It filled the gap that had previously existed with the Bolzano Brigade. On June 30, the Kosch and Bothmer Corps were able to capture the eastern river heights in fierce fighting and hold against powerful enemy counterattacks, but a decisive success was not achieved on this day either.

Thus, the southern army had not yet succeeded in exerting operational influence on the course of events with the neighboring armies of Generaloberst von Mackensen to the left. However, through the persistent continuation of its attack, it had completely paralyzed the enemy's freedom of movement and inflicted heavy losses on them. Nearly 60,000 prisoners, 24 guns, and over 100 machine guns remained in their hands in the months of May and June. Their own bloody losses in June alone amounted to around 25,000 men, and the number of missing was about 11,000.

1) The losses of the southern army in May have not been determined.

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The Battles of the Southern Army at the Gnila Lipa.

The Austro-Hungarian 7th Army had to fend off strong Russian breakthrough attempts at Dobronouz and Dnuth in the last third of June and expected new attacks against the Krautwald group at Zaleszczyki.

14. The Pursuit after the Capture of Lemberg

until the End of June.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketches 16, 24, 25.

Based on the instructions given after the fall of Lemberg¹), the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army was to continue the pursuit of the enemy eastward with its left wing in the direction of Busk, while the 11th and Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, subordinated to General Field Marshal²) von Mackensen, were to advance northward between the Bug and Vistula. This had to lead to an ever-widening gap between the 2nd and 11th Army during the movements. The allied army commands assumed that the previously aimed separation of the enemy forces into an eastern and northern group had succeeded. According to the reports available on June 23, the Russian 3rd Army was positioned in a southward-facing front with its left wing north of Rawa Ruska. There, the Russian 8th Army joined, encircling Lemberg in a large arc to the east. Although strong breakthroughs were observed in the defeated enemy formations, it was already apparent that the operational goal of this separation had not yet been fully achieved. The high commands of the 2nd and 11th Army were rightly concerned about their inner flanks. Their views differed on how these should be covered. The Austro-Hungarian army command decided, at the request of the 11th Army, that the coverage on the Bug down to Kaminotka Strumilowa was initially the task of the 2nd Army. From there, the 11th Army itself had to ensure the protection of its right flank through the Beskiden Corps subordinated to it, after its detachment from the 2nd Army.

In the advance area between the Bug and Vistula, an expanded defensive position between Hrubieszow and Józefow was identified through aerial reconnaissance. A position extended along the north bank of the Rata over Narol Miasto and north of the Tanew swamp area. While the armies of General Field Marshal von Mackensen took the front northward, the necessary regroupings had to be made simultaneously considering the obligations imposed on the 11th Army.

¹) p. 247. — ²) Promoted to this rank on June 22.

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The center and left wing of the 11th Army as well as the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army were not disturbed by the enemy. Rather, the Russians completely abandoned the San-Vistula angle in front of the left wing of the 4th Army on June 23. On the left bank of the Vistula, the allied troops were able to follow the enemy retreating beyond Sandomierz. The Austro-Hungarian 1st Army advanced there to the Russian position in the Zawichost line (on the Vistula)—Darow, the right wing and center of the Bothmer Army Detachment reached the northeastern edge of the large forest area southwest of the Baltow—Sienno—Ilza line. The rest of the front up to the Pilica remained unchanged.

Difficulties in regrouping the forces arose on the right wing of the 11th Army northeast of Lemberg. Here, on the heights around Zoltance, the XXXXI Reserve Corps and the northern wing of the Beskiden Corps were still embroiled in heavy fighting, which significantly delayed the disengagement of the last parts of the XXXXI Reserve Corps and the relief of the Beskiden Corps south of the Zoltance—Kamionka road. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, whose southern wing advanced to the Dawidowka on June 23, decided to expedite the relief of the Beskiden Corps by deploying the Kresja Group) east of Lemberg and, to enable the army to extend northward, also to transfer the Surmay Group) from the right to the left wing of the army. However, these measures could only gradually become effective. On the other hand, the pursuit operation between the Bug and Vistula could not be halted by the binding of the right wing of the 11th Army. Consequently, the center and left wing of the 11th Army advanced over the upper Rata to the recognized Russian position on June 25. The enemy evaded the planned attack for June 26 and withdrew under disjointed rearguard actions. The 11th Army pushed through the woods south of Uhnow with its center and was able to advance its left wing, effectively supported on the flank by the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, to the heights southeast of Narol Miasto. Its right wing initially remained tied down at Zoltance. Only on June 27 could it join the Beskiden Corps, in conjunction with the Kresja Group now deployed on the northern wing of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, in the advance. On this day, the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army captured the ridge west of the Gnila Lipa and reached Zadoworze with its left wing and the area south of Kamionka. Here, the Beskiden Corps joined with security measures against Kamionka.

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The breakthrough through the Russian army front has succeeded.

The 11th Bavarian Infantry Division and the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps advanced as flank protection against Mosty Wielkie and Belz. Only the three army corps of the left wing of the 11th Army — the Guard Corps, XXII Reserve Corps, and X Army Corps — could carry the pursuit further northwards beyond Uhnow-Belzec. The enemy still held the important road junction Narol-Miasto for securing his retreat. His previous movements indicated two directions, an eastern one in front of the right wing of the army and a northern and northeastern one in front of the left wing. The gap in front of the Guard Corps seemed to be filled only by Russian cavalry. The advance of the three western corps of the 11th Army on June 28 to the Huczwa lowlands west of Zerniki and beyond Tomaszow necessitated a further extension of the forces entrusted with flank protection to the right wing. Therefore, the 119th Infantry Division was inserted into the section of the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division. Both divisions were placed under the command of General v. Kneussl. East and west of Sielec, the enemy offered stubborn resistance to secure the withdrawal of his forces retreating to Sokal and behind the Bug. On the northern wing of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, the Kresja group reached the Bug at Kamionka Strumilowa on this day. Otherwise, the army advanced to the Gnila Lipa and into the area west of Sliniany. Behind this section and northward behind the Bug, the enemy apparently stood in a strong position. The reconnaissance results confirmed the impression that the desired separation of the enemy had now been achieved. The Russians withdrew in two groups both east behind the Bug and north to Zamosc. The 3rd Army entered the operational area of the Russian Northwestern Front1). Thus, the offensive, which began on May 2 in West Galicia and continued persistently for nearly two months, found its culmination in the breakthrough through the enemy army front. Field Marshal von Mackensen was eager to exploit this now clearly recognized situation for the continuation of the pursuit and as a possible advantage. He decided to make the Russian position on the Tanew section untenable by advancing his left army wing northwest towards Zamosc and the neighboring Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, thereby regaining full freedom of movement.

1) The XII Corps had mostly turned east towards Sokal. In front of the German 11th Army were the rest of the XII, the XXIII, and II taut. Corps and the 4th Cavalry Corps, in front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army the XXIX, XXIV, X, III taut. Corps.

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The emphasis of the operation between Bug and Vistula was now on both sides of the road

Tomaszów—Zamość, where 4½ divisions of the 11th Army (XXII Reserve

and X Army Corps including the 22nd Infantry Division) were deployed in a narrow

area, with the 107th Infantry Division positioned as army reserve behind them.

Accordingly, the 11th Army also intended to continue its advance

to the northwest on June 29. It was only possible that its right

flank, from which seven infantry divisions and a cavalry

division were already used for securing the Bug or against it,

had to move even more to the northeast in continuing this movement

and had to allocate further forces for the task of flank protection.

This threatened to stall the entire pursuit operation of Field Marshal

von Mackensen. It was therefore high time for decisive

measures to be taken to relieve the 11th Army of the concern for its right

flank.

In the instructions issued by the Austro-Hungarian High Command on the evening of June 22,

the 11th and Austro-Hungarian 4th Armies were tasked with pursuing the enemy retreating northward.

A far-reaching operation was apparently not yet considered. Again, as already in mid-

month, it was the Chief of Staff of Field Marshal

von Mackensen, Major General von Seeckt, who now suggested

expanding the pursuit task into a new decisive

offensive. On June 24, he presented the allied

high commands with a detailed assessment of the situation, in which he initially

described the "actual war aim on the eastern front as the imminent

complete defeat of Russia." He then continued:

"The southern Russian front is defeated. The northwestern half is

undefeated. It can only be defeated if it is forced to abandon

its strong front and is encircled from the south while retreating.

How sensitive this pressure is to the enemy is proven by the fact that only

in the occupied front position of the 4th and the left half of the

11th Army to the north did the enemy begin to abandon its position in the Vistula-

San triangle also against the 1st Army and Bavarian. This invites

even more to carry out the attack on the right Vistula bank east of Iwan-

gorod with strong force. It will throw the entire Russian north-

western front.

1) Promoted to this rank in Lemberg.

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Gen. von Seeckt Proposes Decisive Offensive between Bug and Vistula.

They would still grow if parts of the 1st Army were freed for use on the right bank of the Vistula. The prerequisite for the strength of the thrust is that it can be carried out without diverting forces to cover its right flank. One must consider the likely countermeasures of the enemy, who will hardly be ready to retreat behind the Bug. He will withdraw parts from the front or the right wing and immediately oppose them in a position between the Vistula and Bug, approximately in the Swangord—Wlodawa line. He will also throw available weak forces against the right flank of the advance, exploiting the railway connections via Brest Litowsk and Kowel. This development must be secured against. The Army High Command¹) has already recognized this necessity at the outset by directing the left wing of the 2nd Army to Kaminotka Strumilowa. I believe it is necessary to already consider the redirection of the 2nd Army in this direction. The Besziden Corps is not sufficient for this if the advance of the right wing of the 11th Army extends over Belz to Hrubieszow and Cholm. Otherwise, it must be kept further back and not lose the strength of the front through broadening. It is therefore requested to consider whether the 2nd Army should not join the advance in a northerly direction in echelons from the left wing in the general march direction of Wladimir Wolynsk. If the presumed influence from the east remains, this march direction already results in its continuation in bypassing an enemy position leaning against the Bug at Wlodawa and later covering against Brest Litowsk. For the final evacuation of Galicia and the continuation of operations against the Russian 8th and 9th Armies, the forces of the 7th and the now reinforced Southern Army should suffice, perhaps with the addition of the V Army Corps and Group Szurmay, while the 2nd Army with IV, XIX, and XVIII Army Corps turns north against the Radziechow—Krystynopol line. The border between the two main groups would approximately form the Lemberg—Brody railway."

"While Generaloberst von Conrad²), from June 23 to 26, was on a business trip in the Lemberg area, initially refraining from commenting on this plan, General von Falkenhayn immediately declared his agreement. However, he added that it could not yet be said whether the planned operation would take place, because the situation east of Lemberg was still not clarified and the conditions for deploying all German troops to the right of the Vistula were not yet foreseeable.

¹) See Army Command. ²) Promoted to this rank after the capture of Lemberg.

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In any case, there was no objection to the major operation being prepared in the meantime. General von Seeckt therefore familiarized the chiefs of staff of the corps with the basic idea of his plan in a letter dated June 26. In a simultaneous submission to the Austro-Hungarian army command, the special importance of the railways for the future operation on the inner line was pointed out. The 11th Army would arrange everything achievable in its area for the restoration and commissioning of the railways and requested the same of the 2nd Army for its area. Essentially, it was about the rapid development of the connections Sambor—Lemberg—Rawa Ruska—Jaroslaw—Przemysl—Lemberg and the immediate following of operations behind the army advances. A wagon park near Lemberg was necessary.

On June 27, Generaloberst von Conrad sent his proposals for the continuation of operations to General von Falkenhayn. He assumed that the Russians, who were retreating not only in front of the 11th Army and the right wing of the 4th Army to the north, but also in front of the 2nd and the Southern Army to the northeast, would set up new resistance in the line Gnila Lipa—Busk—Kaminoka Strumilowa. General von Seeckt's proposal to continue the offensive of the 11th and 4th Armies northwards between the Bug and Vistula had been fully adopted by Generaloberst von Conrad. He expected from this, in conjunction with the ongoing attack of the Austro-Hungarian army, initially a further bending back of the left wing of the Russian Vistula front still standing at Zaniowost. As an indispensable prerequisite for a decisive success in the area between the Bug and Vistula, Generaloberst von Conrad also saw the securing of the thrust to the right flank of the 11th Army. Using parts of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army for this, as General von Seeckt had suggested, seemed to him, however, not advisable due to the associated weakening of the front directed eastwards in Galicia. He therefore intended to use the three divisions of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army after completing their current task west of the Vistula with the railway via Lemberg, "to advance forces over Sokal—Radzichow and be ready to intervene northwards or to cooperate with the Eastern Front as needed, while ensuring secure coverage in Eastern Galicia against the east."

1) Behind the 11th Army, the expansion of the railways over Przemyśl to Mosciska and over Jaroslaw to Lubaczow was completed on June 26.

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Gen.-Colonel von Conrad Suggests Cooperation of the Front of the Supreme Command East.

Since this regrouping would only be possible in a few days, he requested that the XXXXXI Reserve Corps, if at all feasible, not be transferred to the western theater of war, but instead be tasked with securing the right flank of the 11th Army. Furthermore, Generaloberst von Conrad, bypassing the authorization of General von Seeckt, adopted a new operational idea by suggesting the cooperation of the front of the Supreme Commander East, "to strike the main Russian force and push the enemy back behind the Vistula." For this purpose, he recommended an attack from the area of the army group Gallwitz, which was to be reinforced by contributions from other front sections, in a general direction towards Siedlce. He envisioned, as he wrote, that operation "which was initiated by us at the beginning of the campaign, but at that time could not break through due to the Russian superiority and the absence of the German thrust on Siedlce." General von Falkenhayn's view initially differed in some points from these proposals of the 8th and General Staff Chiefs. His position is evident from the draft of an operations order, which he sent to Teschen on the morning of June 28 with the addition that it would be advisable to issue this order to the armies immediately if Generaloberst von Conrad approved it. General von Falkenhayn was indeed in agreement with retaining the XXXXXI Reserve Corps within the 11th Army." However, since this had already been withdrawn to Jaroslaw at the time, it was initially not considered as flank protection for the 11th Army. For this purpose, the German Chief of Staff rather considered the immediate advance of the k.u. 2nd Army against the Bug line Busk—Sokal necessary. To its right, the Southern Army was to continue its advance over the line Brzezany—Krasne (south of Busk) eastwards without pause and secure its right flank itself against the section of the lower Lota Lipa. To support it, the deployment of the last German division still in southern Hungary, the 103rd Infantry Division, via Delatyn and Stryj to Stanislau was envisaged. Also, the k.u. 7th Army was to advance with a strong left wing over the line to Buczacz—Podhajce.

1) G. 248.

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These advance to the line Buczacz—Podhajce, otherwise holding their posi-

tions from Bojan (east of Czernowitz) to north of Horodenka. The task of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army and the Woyrsch Army Detachment was initially seen by General von Falkenhayn as pushing the enemy further back and over the Vistula line. Overall, he thus aligned himself with the proposals of General von Seeckt. He refrained from commenting on the planned regrouping of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army and the operational involvement of elements of the Commander-in-Chief East.

The differences of opinion existing thereafter were resolved through verbal discussions between the two chiefs of staff on the afternoon of June 28 in Plesz. General von Falkenhayn complied with all the wishes of Field Marshal Conrad. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army was initially to advance only to the upper Zlota Lipa (including Dunajow) and to Busk—Kamionka Strumilowa (including), with strong reserves on the northern flank to secure the Bug line up to the confluence of the Rata. Thus, it was considered as flank protection for the 11th Army to a lesser extent. Instead, Field Marshal Conrad maintained his intentions to continue leading the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army, that is, after breaking through the Russian position south of Kamien towards Tarlow, to advance over Lemberg and then over Radziechow—Sokal, ready to intervene to the left or right as needed. The advance of the Southern Army over the Gnila Lipa was initially to proceed only to the Zlota Lipa down to Dunajow. Field Marshal Conrad requested to refrain from bringing the 103rd Infantry Division from southern Hungary, as he still considered it indispensable on the Serbian front. The 7th Army was to continue securing the right flank and the temporary possession of Czernowitz. Overall, this meant that the eastward-facing covering front was only a spatially limited project. The Woyrsch Army Detachment remaining on the left bank of the Vistula was to take over the entire front there up to the Pilica, exploiting any withdrawal of Russian forces for an attack and then following the Vistula.

On the evening of June 28, orders were issued to all armies in this sense. In an accompanying letter to General von Seeckt, the head of the Austro-Hungarian Operations Office, Major General Metzger, justified the measures envisaged for the immediate flank protection of the 11th Army: "... The strengthening of the covering front against the three armies of the Russian Southwestern Front is intended to serve the purpose of forming an army remaining at the disposal of the Austro-Hungarian High Command, designated for operations east of the Bug, as the protection of the eastern flank of the 11th Army is only possible offensively in the long term."

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General von Falkenhayn Agrees to the Envelopment Offensive.

The discussion of the general staff chiefs of the allies in Pleß on the afternoon of June 28 further created unanimity in the view that the participation of parts of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief would decisively contribute to achieving a major operational success against the main Russian forces in Poland. In choosing the starting point and direction of an offensive from the German Eastern Front, for which various possibilities were considered, General von Falkenhayn retained free hand, as he initially wanted to hear the opinion of Field Marshal von Hindenburg. In addition to the attack against the lower Narew recommended by Colonel General von Conrad, he also considered an advance along the Pilica beyond the Vistula as well as a simultaneous operation at or after Lwow. In this sense, he sent an inquiry to the Eastern Commander-in-Chief on June 28 and requested his opinion.

15. The Russian Southwestern Front in June.

Maps 5 and 6, Sketches 16 and 17.

The short pause in fighting after the fall of Przemysl had been used by General Iwanow to form new reserves, which were to gather at Lubaczow, Lemberg, and Rohatyn. However, as early as June 12 and 13, new attacks began against the front of the 3rd and 8th Army. Despite heavy losses, which for the XXIV Corps alone on June 12 and 13 amounted to about 70 percent of the combat strength, the armies offered the most stubborn resistance. But when the 3rd Army was pushed back in fierce fighting on June 14 to the line east of Lesajsk—Lubaczow, General Brussilow took action on the night of June 16, moving his 8th Army back into the long-prepared Grodek position in line southwest of Werchata—Magierow—Grodek—south of Lubien.

1) See Army Command. — 2) p. 266. — 3) Connection to p. 192.

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The Summer Campaign of the Allies in Galicia.

In view of the threatening accumulation of enemy forces north and

east of Jaroslau, the Commander-in-Chief of the Southwestern Front had already

on June 15 at the breaking point of the 3rd and 8th Army around Lubaczow

formed a special group from units partly designated as army reserves

under General Olochw (XXIX, II, and V Caucasian,

XXIII Corps, 4th Cavalry Corps). It remained subordinate to the 3rd Army

and was to maintain the connection to the right wing of the 8th Army.

The other corps of the 3rd Army

(XV, IX, XIV, X, III Caucasian, XXIV) as well as the

8th Army were tasked with holding their positions to the utmost.

The 11th Army had to hold the Dniester section from Zatkowice to Sniatka.

Following it was the 9th Army, which from June 5 gradually

retreated with the right wing according to the movements of the 11th Army

to the line Halicz—Sniatyn, covering the river defense

up to Chotin, while its left wing in the area of Czernowitz

was to become offensive again.

Already on June 16, the group Olochw was attacked and

like the left wing of the 3rd Army forced to

withdraw to prepared positions on the northern Tanew bank

on the night of June 17. A few days later, on the night of June 20,

the 8th Army also had to evacuate the Grodek position under the pressure of the German 11th Army and the left

wing of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army and retreat to the positions

of Lemberg. The gap that arose between the two Russian armies

was covered only by cavalry. By order of Grand Duke

Nicholas Nikolaevich, the right wing of the 3rd Army also

retreated without a fight behind the San by June 23 and joined the 4th Army at Zawichost.

Meanwhile, the fate of Lemberg had been decided. Already

on June 20, the Commander-in-Chief had ordered the evacuation of the city and

also the ridge of Galicia. When on the night of June 22

the XXVIII and VIII Corps were thrown from their positions at Koltiew,

General Brussilow began the retreat on the morning of June 22 to the

line north of Rawa Ruska—north of Zolkiew—

Bobrka. On the same day, General Iwanow issued new instructions

for the Southwestern Front: the 3rd Army and Group Olochw were to closely

cover the Austro-Hungarian Southern Front Lubin—Wladimir

Wolynsk, the 8th and 11th Army, retreating eastward, to delay the enemy as much as possible and finally bring him to a halt in the line Bełz—Buzü—Złota Lipa.

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The Russian Southwestern Front.

The 9th Army was to

adapt its right wing to the movements of the 11th Army

and, by offensively exploiting its partial successes achieved in recent days between the Dniester

and Pruth, unfold the retreat operation of the Southwestern

front. The 3rd Army and the Olochw Group crossed over to the Northwest Front on the night

of June 25.

The following days led to further withdrawal of the fronts.

By the end of June, the 8th Army (XII., XXVIII., VIII., XVII.,

VII Corps) reached the line Sokal—

Kamionka—Gliniany under continuous enemy pressure; to the south, the 1st Army (V., XVIII., IX., XI Corps) joined in the line Gliniany—Rohatyn—

Bursztyn, which, after a successful counterattack on June 14 and 15, initially held its front

but then retreated to the line Złota Lipa—

Dniester on June 26. The 9th Army (X., XXX., XXXIII Corps,

2nd and 5th Cavalry Corps, XXXII Corps) had refrained from offensive activity due to considerable reinforcement of the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army and held the

Dniester line Bolszowce—Uście Biskupie and from there the national border

to Bojan.

After withdrawing from the Southwestern Front, the Olochw Group, heavily pressed, had to retreat to the line Grabowice—Krylow by June 29. The gap to the left wing of the 3rd Army, which

retreated to the area of Zamość, was covered only by a reinforced cavalry

division. On June 29, the Guard Corps, returned from the Narew Front to Cholm,

and the XXXI Corps (previously with the 4th Army west

of the Bug) were made available to the Olochw Group.

In agreement with the 4th Army, which had to withdraw its left wing to

Józefów, the 3rd Army (including the Olochw Group) was instructed to hold the line Urzendów—Krasniów—Grabowice—

Krylow—literally against Sokal. At the disposal of the commander-in-chief of the Northwest Front, the II Siberian

Corps from the 1st Army and the 13th Cavalry Division from the 4th Army were withdrawn to the area of

Cholm.

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C. The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

I. The Decisive Meeting on July 2 in Posen.

The more the attack in Galicia grew into a major decisive battle, the more the Commander-in-Chief East felt the need to participate as far as his own forces allowed. However, these were by no means sufficient for larger offensive undertakings unless the Supreme Army Command at least provided the necessary ammunition; they also shrank more and more due to allocations to the Galician front and by withdrawing units for new divisions. The diversionary campaign to Lithuania and Courland and the gas attacks of the 9th Army were the utmost that could be achieved under such circumstances. After carrying out the last, still pending allocations, the Commander-in-Chief East could only count on about 34 divisions along his approximately 850-kilometer-long front, which mostly counted only nine battalions, while about 50 Russian divisions with 16 battalions faced them.

After Italy entered the war, General von Falkenhayn on May 28 requested the stance of the Commander-in-Chief East on the continuation of overall operations against Russia, in the belief that the Russians would soon focus their efforts solely on regaining Libau on one hand, and not losing Warsaw as well as Eastern Galicia with Przemysl and Lemberg on the other. The fronts "between these focal points" would be ruthlessly stripped of forces by the enemy and were already in the process of doing so. Therefore, one had to expect heavy fighting at the mentioned locations. However, the Chief of the General Staff hoped that Libau could be held for a longer time. Against Warsaw, he thought of advancing further with the help of the then impending gas attack. He wanted to bring "relief" to the situation in Galicia by attacking elsewhere indirectly. To this end, he explained that the Narew Front played no role in this connection; any offensive there could easily be brought to an indefinite halt due to weaker forces.

1) G. 18, 117, 121 f. — 2) C. 10. — 3) C. 133 ff. — 4) C. 200.

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The Effort to Support Overall Operations.

He asked for a position on this plan and inquired whether it was possible to free up four divisions from the Narew front for this purpose. The Commander-in-Chief East fully agreed with the operational implementations but had concerns about the release of additional forces beyond what was already agreed upon, as the front would already be so thin that it could only be held with strongly fortified forward lines and rear positions.

On June 1, General von Falkenhayn requested that the 9th Army not be reduced in its strength in the near future, as "in case of urgent need" all dispensable forces would have to be used to employ them "in the south." The war diary of the Eastern Command noted that a total of nine Russian divisions²) had now been transferred from their own front to the Galician front. The focus of the fighting had thus shifted to the southeast. The Commander-in-Chief now saw his task as holding on with as few forces as possible and supporting the decision by deploying troops. Giving up the Schawlen area and Libau was not yet necessary³).

On June 2, General von Falkenhayn reported that the attack south of the Pilica was no longer in question, as the enemy's resistance in Galicia was waning. However, he suggested the following day to support the local fighting by repeating the gas releases at the 9th Army and perhaps also through operations "north of the Vistula," which he considered promising, as the Russians were generally suffering from a lack of ammunition. The Commander-in-Chief East assessed the prospects based on previous experiences as not so favorable and therefore responded on June 4: "The armies under my command attack as much as possible. However, since I have to constantly give up forces due to the overall situation, I currently have no sufficient reserves for an effective attack except with the 9th Army and north of the Njemen." General von Falkenhayn, who did not consider these explanations convincing, refrained from a rebuttal. Soon after, the situation north of the Njemen seemed to develop so favorably that the Commander-in-Chief East still had the possibility in view to achieve a great success there.

¹) Discussion from May 23, 1915 (p. 122). ²) III. lauf. Corps (21st and 52nd Div.); 3rd Guard, 8th, 51st, 62nd, 63rd, 77th, and 13th Russian Div. The Baltic deployment included eleven to twelve divisions as of June 2. In fact, there were ten (after the withdrawal of two returned); they were well informed. — ³) p. 124 ff. — ⁴) p. 135.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

Thus, General von Falkenhayn agreed on June 11 that the two divisions desired for the decisive offensive north of the Njemen, if no unforeseen events occur, would be withdrawn from the units to be pulled out at the 9th Army.

Since then, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief has been primarily concerned with the idea of the operation against the current and future operations north of the Njemen, where he had in mind as a further goal a "Bormark north past Kowno." When he reported to the Supreme Army Command on June 20 that he had to postpone the gas attack of the 9th Army and therefore wanted to deploy two divisions from the 9th Army and the Gallwitz Army Group north of the Njemen instead of the 9th Army, General von Falkenhayn had "no objections given the current situation." The Eastern Commander-in-Chief believed he was in full agreement with him and had to be further encouraged when he learned on June 25 that Field Marshal von Mackensen was now to "attack" the retreating enemy between the Bug and the Vistula to the north, wherever he found him, and that General von Falkenhayn had even spoken to the navy about the possibility of later actions against Riga, where he wanted to enlist the support of the Baltic Fleet. This went beyond the plans previously held by the Eastern Commander-in-Chief, who had considered Mitau as a target for the left wing.

In this situation, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief received a request initiated by the proposal of Colonel General von Conrad from General von Falkenhayn on June 28¹). It stated: The pressure exerted from Eastern Galicia must soon be felt on the left bank of the Vistula. The Woyrsch Army Detachment should advance against the Vistula above the Pilica estuary. "His Majesty assumes that the troops under Your Excellency's command can also participate in the operation in extension of the directive from April 16²)." In addition to the operation he desired against Kowno, "as a special measure, vigorous support for the ruthless exposure of the front currently held by the 9th Army and an advance with the forces in question, whether along the Pilica to beyond the Vistula or against a point on the lower Narew line, could be considered. The enemy would not gain any significant advantage from the weakening of the Bzura and Rawka positions, as long as the forward movement between Bug and Narew remained underway.

¹) G. 126 f. — ²) G. 128. — ³) G. 261. — ⁴) G. 103 and Volume VII, G. 362.

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New Plans of the Supreme Army Command.

On the other hand, this movement would be facilitated in an invisible way by a timely, even weaker thrust near the Pilica or over the now probably soon passable Narew lowlands near or below Nowogeorgiewsk). Incidentally, there may also be other front positions) where troops can be made available for this outstanding purpose". In the west and southeast, however, this is ruled out. On the other hand, the Supreme Army Command might "possibly be able to make some Landsturm regiments and some, admittedly only immobile artillery available for deception purposes at the exposed fronts". This presentation by the Supreme Army Command did not come as a surprise to the Commander-in-Chief East, as he had always kept the support of the overall operation in mind. He agreed with the recommended "ruthless weakening" of the 9th Army. That he had not yet decided to do so himself was due to the fact that a further success of the gas attack and thus an immediate support of the assault group in the south was still expected from a change in the weather. He was apparently still undecided about the direction in which the new offensive operation should be launched. On the same June 28, General von Gallwitz was in Lötzen. His chief of staff, Colonel Krafft v. Dellmensingen, had previously drafted "points of view for the attack on fortified positions" in increasing form. Now General von Gallwitz himself presented the plan of an attack against the area of Przasnysz, with subsequent advance on Ciechanow). However, the Commander-in-Chief East still considered this direction of attack to be operationally ineffective, as it did not hit the depth of the Russian deployment; it also led against one of the strongest points of the enemy front and then into the area of effect of the large fortress Nowogeorgiewsk, so it had to be particularly difficult. On June 29, he replied to General von Falkenhayn: "A most decisive participation of the subordinate troops within the framework of the overall situation was envisaged by me as soon as I received knowledge of the order of the Mackensen army through Your Excellency's telegram. An advance of the 9th Army against the Vistula is not intended by me, as it would have to overcome three prepared positions, the last of which runs from the Vistula north of the Pilica estuary over Piaseczno—Nadarzyn—Blonie.

1) Nowice is actually on the Bobr, not on the Narew. 2) This probably meant the front of the 10th and Njemen Army. 3) von Gallwitz, p. 264.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

The withdrawal of further forces of the 9th Army is therefore ordered from July 2. I have also refrained from reinforcing and launching an offensive of the Gallwitz Army Group. Whether the thrust will take place in the Osowiec area, in the Kowno area, or even further north, I will depend on the surveys already ordered. I will report my final decision as soon as possible. I request information on how many Landsturm regiments I can count on and when they will arrive."

Instead of the attack at Kowno and north of the Njemen, as General Ludendorff later wrote, an attack via Osowiec—Grodno, perhaps even via Lomza, could also be considered, as it had already been planned following the winter battle. Such an offensive could have a decisive effect, leading "on the shortest spatial route into the rear of the Russian army retreating from East Galicia between the Vistula and Bug." Precisely for this reason, however, "serious resistance in the tactically already very strong and presumably also heavily occupied line Osowiec—Grodno" was to be expected, and it was therefore very questionable whether the attack across the broad swampy lowlands of the Bobr could be successful. Before the Eastern Commander-in-Chief made a final decision, he consulted the chiefs of staff of the armies in question for the attack (Gallwitz Army Group, 8th, 10th, and Njemen Army) on June 30 in Lößn to hear about the attack possibilities in their sectors. Colonel Count von Schwerin explained for the 8th Army that the attack at Osowiec was not possible due to the terrain conditions; he recommended the offensive on Lomza and westward. However, this interim solution was not further discussed; rather, Lieutenant General Ludendorff decided in these circumstances for the offensive in the Njemen area and simultaneous execution of the surprise attack planned against Kowno.

1) Memories, p. 114. — 2) Communication from Major General a. D. Count von Schwerin from summer 1931 to the Reich Archive. — 3) According to a communication from General Ludendorff from December 1931 to the Reich Archive, the Bobr area, partly firm sandy, partly swampy and extremely pathless forest area, was known to be unsuitable for the deployment of larger troop masses based on the experiences of the spring battles. The same view was held by General von Gallwitz (p. 278 f.), while General Count Schwerin in a letter from December 1931 to the Reich Archive assessed the conditions favorably and believed that a major offensive against the Nowogrod—Lomza front was also feasible.

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Memorandum of General Ludendorff.

The 10th and Njemen Army were to be reinforced not only by the 41st already in the Njemen area and the 3rd Infantry Division designated there, but also by a Guard Division (newly formed 4th Guard Infantry or 1st Guard Reserve Division) and by the XVII Army Corps.

After the meeting, a telegram from General von Falkenhayn arrived, stating: The operation against Kowno would be carried out as soon as possible, and if successful, would undoubtedly be of great importance for the overall situation. However, to what extent an operation north of Ostrowiec would be conducive to the purpose outlined in his telegram of June 28, he could not yet discern. He anticipated a visit from the Kaiser to the 9th Army in the coming days; during this, the differences of opinion in Poland should be clarified in personal discussions. Meanwhile, the Austro-Hungarian liaison officer with the Commander-in-Chief East, Major von Fleischmann, on behalf of Generaloberst von Conrad, also pressed for the thrust over the lower Narew into the rear of Warsaw towards Siedlce.

On July 1, Lieutenant General Ludendorff set out his views in the following memorandum:

"The Eastern Army has the order from April 16: — "Deception and binding of the enemy north of the Pilica" — primarily fulfilled through the offensive north of the Njemen. The Russian has moved nine infantry and nine cavalry divisions there. The 10th Army has held the enemy in front of it with its advance; however, the offensive operations of the Gallwitz Army Group and the 9th Army have not prevented the enemy from transporting forces away. — The distribution of forces on both sides is evident from the annex1).

The Eastern Army is everywhere facing equal or numerically superior, strongly entrenched forces that must be broken through; only the northern wing has operational freedom. The Eastern Army must also continue to contribute to the decision initiated by the operations in Galicia. It can free up for deployment elsewhere:

3rd Reserve Division from July 3;

XVII Army Corps with 36th Infantry Division from July 3, with

35th Infantry Division from July 8;

1st Guard Reserve Division (its replacement is to be carried out by Landsturm regiments, freeing up not possible before July 10).

1) See p. 270.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

Note: The German infantry divisions consist mostly of three regiments of three battalions, the Russian ones of four regiments of four battalions; the number of squadrons of the German and Russian cavalry divisions is the same.

1. A deployment of three divisions2) within the framework of the Woyrsch Army for a river crossing south of Twangorod leads to an immediate, but probably only frontal support of the assault group. An offensive activity of the Eastern Army thus ceases.

2. A reinforcement of the 9th Army (two divisions3) would not be effective enough to influence the overall situation. The Russians have prepared numerous positions here that would need to be breached.

3. The Army Group Gallwitz, reinforced by the XVII Army Corps, could push the Russians back to the Plonsk-Pultusk line in heavy fighting. This should be followed by the attack on Nowogeorgiewsk. The undertakings are promising if the heaviest artillery can be made available for the attack on Nowogeorgiewsk. The operation is part of the overall treatment but does not support it in the most effective direction.

4. This is essentially located at Osowiec. After thorough examination of the conditions, it is to be noted that an infantry attack over the Bobr south of Osowiec and on Gonionds4) is possible; however, it would have to succeed in a single thrust, otherwise the infantry will find itself in a difficult position in the swampy terrain.

1) Since April (see p. 104), the 22nd I. D. had been handed over; new formations included 4th G. I. D., Div. Bedmann, and Abt. Libau. Among the infantry divisions were six each with the 9th Army, the Njemen Army, and Army Group Gallwitz, five with the 8th Army, and two active or reserve divisions with the Army. — All other units were only considered for participation in decisive offensive operations in a further line due to their composition.  
2) For the use of the fourth division, see p. 272.  
3) Only two divisions, as the XVII A. K. already belonged to the 9th Army.  
4) Place immediately south of Osowiec.

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Memorandum of General Ludendorff

Digging in is not possible due to the high groundwater. Effective artillery support for the infantry attack is out of the question. The security of the operation is not guaranteed. If it fails, it will lead to a severe setback. In the event of success, the troops can at best hold a more or less advanced bridgehead south of Osjowce after the fall of Osjowce. Continuing the offensive towards Bialystok is not possible; the forces are insufficient, as it is certain that the Russians will concentrate forces there. Within the framework of the overall operation, this provides relief for other forces, but it does not lead to an immediate tactical cooperation that would crown a truly decisive operation. Without disregarding the advantages, the undertaking is not recommended, as its success is not guaranteed. The risk is too high compared to the potential success.

5. A reinforcement of the 10th Army and an offensive just south of Kowno and across the Njemen is only indicated if a planned operation against Kowno is successful. Whether this is the case depends on contingencies beyond military influence. An operation cannot be built on this. It must be emphasized that the planned coup against Kowno would be significantly supported by the addition of the heaviest artillery. This could also lead to the capture of Kowno if the other conditions do not occur.

6. The deployment of the freed forces with the Njemen Army, possibly with a simultaneous attack on Kowno, can achieve full tactical success here; a failure, as possible with the operation at Osjowce, is excluded here. To what extent the tactical success will lead the Njemen Army eastward, or towards Wilna, remains to be seen. The fact that the Russians have led very significant forces to the area north of the Njemen as soon as they felt a threat here makes it likely that they will also bring reinforcements against the Njemen Army in the event of a defeat of their 2nd Army. This will relieve another part of the overall front as well as any potential operation at Osjowce. If the capture of Kowno also succeeds, a great strategic success will be achieved in the further course.

The deployment of the forces to be freed here can therefore take place: 1. in the area south of Iwangorod or 2. with the Njemen Army. 1. The deployment south of Iwangorod means an immediate, but only frontal increase in strength of three divisions for the main decision east of the Vistula.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

The fourth division would have to remain at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief East to be prepared for all circumstances, as it is quite possible that the Russians might rally for a strike against the 10th or the Njemen Army through a shift in forces. After the deployment of the three divisions, the Eastern Army would have to remain inactive and could only advance where the Russians voluntarily retreat before it.

2. If the divisions are assigned to the Njemen Army, the 7½ infantry and 5½ cavalry divisions of the Njemen Army will be enabled for the offensive. The actual offensive increase in forces is significantly greater for the allied army than with a deployment of the four divisions at Ivangorod. Even if seemingly far from the main decision, this will be more influenced by the deployment of forces north of the Njemen than by the immediate deployment.

"The reinforcement of the Njemen Army and its offensive with a simultaneous attack on Kowno therefore appears as the most effective action of the Eastern Army within the framework of the overall operation."

With this memorandum, the Commander-in-Chief East returned to the proposals already made on May 20. He thought, as he did then, initially only of immediate support for the offensive of Field Marshal von Mackensen through a tactical success on his own front, but not of a large own operation that could ultimately lead to a campaign decision against Russia in conjunction with that offensive. In his opinion, the forces were not sufficient for such a goal. Since the prospects for tactical success at the point where the strongest operational impact was expected, at Ossowiec, were not very favorable, he advocated for the attack at Kowno and northwards, which should "bring relief at another point of the overall front." Only if the capture of the strong fortress of Kowno succeeded, did he hope "in further consequence for a great strategic success."

1) p. 122.  
2) Similarly, it is said by Ludendorff, Memories, p. 114: "If Kowno, the key to the Russian Njemen fortifications, had fallen, the way to Wilna and into the rear of the main forces of the Russian army was opened. It had to make a tremendous leap backward. If the Njemen and 10th Army could receive even slight reinforcements in time and a column from the north over Wilna could flank, the summer campaign of 1915 would end with a decisive breakthrough of the Russian army."

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View of General von Falkenhayn.

His view was as follows: The situation in the West seemed relaxed after the failure of the French-English attacks, but one had to be prepared for a repetition of similar breakthrough attempts. They could force the shift of the main focus of warfare back to the Western Front. Meanwhile, the strained situation of Turkey increasingly demanded active intervention against Serbia. How long the Austro-Hungarian military command would manage on the Italian front with the forces deployed there was uncertain, although all attacks had been repelled so far. Despite the great successes in Galicia and the currently favorable prospects of the Mackensen army group, it seemed necessary to continue the offensive against Russia with spatially and temporally limited objectives, so that the Supreme Army Command could always be in a position to quickly redeploy strong forces to another front if necessary. The possibility of an early conclusion to the now two-month-long Eastern operation was therefore urgently desirable. The large concentration of arms necessary for this seemed most safely and quickly achievable through the direct cooperation of the Mackensen and Hindenburg army groups in the area between the Bug, Vistula, and Narew.

Based on these considerations, General von Falkenhayn firmly rejected an offensive over Kowno and northward, as the Commander-in-Chief East apparently wanted to propose; he also had doubts whether any effect could be achieved on this path that would benefit the main operation. The experiences made in a similar attempt in the spring (February/March) seemed to argue against it. Even then, the Commander-in-Chief East had harbored very far-reaching hopes, which were not fulfilled. A local tactical victory was not sufficient, "especially not if, as in the present case, it ran the risk of dissipating in an eccentric direction and merely leading to greater expansion."

1) Diary entry of Colonel General von Plesßen from July 2, 1915.  
2) Evidence for the following view of General von Falkenhayn is not contained in the files. It can only be derived from subsequent notes, especially the later correspondence with the Commander-in-Chief East and the work written by the General after the war (p. 97 ff.). However, it is not very likely that what is summarized there was discussed in full and in all details on July 2.  
3) Report of the Commander-in-Chief East to the Kaiser from January 9, 1915, Volume VII, C. 11.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

The Supreme Army Command needed a success

that promised rapid and decisive impact on the struggle between the Bug

and Vistula. However, General von Falkenhayn did not expect such a success

from the operation over Kowno, even if a significantly

greater increase in forces for this front section could be made possible,

than he considered permissible given the overall situation, and if it

were to continue the offensive of the left wing of the army in the direction of and over

Vilna against the enemy's rear connections.

"The Russians had long recognized the dangers of operational encirclement

... and learned to apply countermeasures against it. Their use

facilitated their numerical superiority, their more efficient

railway network, and the ruthlessness with which they could give up ground

and, as experience showed, did so whenever it seemed expedient to them").

Now the Mackensen Army Group had received the order on June 28

to advance against the Russians between the Bug and Vistula"); the

direction of operations of the Supreme Commander East had initially been left

open. In the meantime, however, General von Falkenhayn

(in the sense of Conrad's plan) had decided on the offensive from the area of the

Gallwitz Army Group against and over the lower Narew,

to further the goals of a thrust east past Warsaw"). Earlier

reservations against this operation over the "swamp section" of the Narew

had been abandoned, as the lowland "would soon be passable everywhere").

As a final goal, the German Chief of General Staff envisioned

compressing the enemy masses in Poland through simultaneous pressure from the south and northwest

and, if possible, cutting off their retreat. A decisive victory over these notable

enemy forces should increase and expand the already apparent

disruptions of the Russian army in Galicia to such an extent that

they would be incapable of offensive activity for a long time; such

an effect seemed to him the highest that could be achieved with the available means in

the foreseeable future, only "a fully satisfactory success for the purposes of the Supreme

Army Command."

Accordingly, the Chief of the General

Staff gave a presentation to the Kaiser in the Royal Palace in Posen and

recommended the cooperation of Hindenburg's forces in favor of the operation on the eastern Vistula bank from the area of Przasnysz and not from Kowno.

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The Decisive Meeting in Posen.

The Kaiser shared this view. In view of the overall situation and the particular circumstances of the Russian theater of war, he was also of the opinion that the attack over the Narew offered far better prospects than at Kowno. After the presentation by General von Falkenhayn, the Kaiser received Field Marshal von Hindenburg and Lieutenant General Ludendorff. The Commander-in-Chief East presented the overall situation in the East and his intentions in accordance with General Ludendorff's memorandum in the presence of General von Falkenhayn. It was the first time since winter that he had the opportunity to present his views on the major operations to the supreme warlord. He proposed the offensive of the reinforced Njemen Army with a simultaneous attack against Kowno; in response to the Kaiser’s objections, he conceded that it was “more a matter of feeling whether one should attack at the Narew front or north of the Njemen.”²). He believed he was acting for the benefit of the whole by temporarily abandoning resistance to the intentions of the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army to avoid further unwanted friction, in order to resume his own plan at the appropriate time.

Then the Kaiser elaborated on his intentions, “whereby” — as Colonel General von Plesßen noted at the time — “the decision for the offensive from the area of Przasnysz was made.” In any case, due to the proximity, the impact is more tangible and quicker than it can be from Kowno.”

A written order that would have clearly outlined the task of the Commander-in-Chief East was not given, and thus the interpretations of the outcome of the meeting differ in some details³).

¹) Diary entry of Colonel General von Plesßen, who attended the presentation, from July 2, 1915.  
²) von Falkenhayn, p. 98. These words first appear in a telegram from General von Falkenhayn to the Commander-in-Chief East from October 8, 1915. General Ludendorff confirmed the event with a communication from December 1931 to the Reichsarchiv. However, it is unclear whether the words were spoken by the Kaiser or by Field Marshal von Hindenburg (cf. von Hindenburg, p. 127 f.).  
³) Apart from the diary entry of Colonel General von Plesßen, the following documents from recent times are available to me: General Ludendorff stated in a memorandum from July 1, 1915, his Majesty and the Field Marshal. His Majesty decided in the spirit of the knights.” — In an evening telegram from the Obersten...

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

The 8th Army was to join the attack of the Army Group Gallwitz. Furthermore, as General von Falkenhayn wrote after the war, "the attention of the Commander-in-Chief was drawn to the necessity of temporarily involving all available forces at his front in the Narew operation. Until this was carried out, all operations not directly serving security purposes, even in the north, were to be postponed. On the other hand, it would be advisable to make preparations for a rapid shift of troops from the Narew Group to the north for a later attack.

The Army Command stated: "In confirmation of today's discussion, His Majesty expects that the planned operation against a part of the Narew Front will be conducted. The sooner the attack becomes noticeable to the enemy, the more effective it would be in terms of the whole." — In the war diary of the Commander-in-Chief East, it is only stated that the "deployment of available forces with the Army Group Gallwitz" should take place.

1) General Ludendorff wrote in 1919 (Memoirs, p. 115) that the Kaiser had ordered the continuation of the offensive in Poland, whereby the Army Group Gallwitz was to "break through the enemy in front of it and advance towards the Narew, while the 9th Army and General von Woyrsch were to advance against the Vistula." In contrast, General von Falkenhayn mentioned nothing about this in his somewhat later published book (p. 99), that the 9th Army and the Army Detachment Woyrsch were to advance against the Vistula. He wrote: "The Commander-in-Chief East was instructed to have the Army Group Gallwitz break through the Russian positions on both sides of Przasnysz on the Narew and to advance against the Bug under relief of the Mackensen Army Group. In doing so, the shifting of enemy forces standing on the Vistula and in the south was to be prevented as much as possible, and on the main axis of attack, a numerically well-considered formation is at least doubtful whether 'shifting of enemy masses' was intended when the order was given, rather only the 'relief of the Mackensen Army Group' was meant.  
2) von Falkenhayn, p. 98.

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The Decisive Meeting in Posen.

It would then probably be expedient to direct the thrust over the middle Njemen in a southeasterly direction, instead of setting it in the vast areas north of the river." It is certain that such indications were in line with the decision made by the Kaiser and his General Staff Chief. However, according to the introductory words chosen by General von Falkenhayn, if at all on this occasion"), they were probably more presented as wishes or suggestions of the Supreme Army Command in a somewhat indefinite form. On the other hand, it is also certain that the Commander-in-Chief East did not interpret the indications as a binding order, but believed himself entitled to act differently in the mentioned matters according to his own discretion.

2. Execution of the Attack.

a) Preparations.

Map 6 and Sketches 19, 20, 21.

Since the decision for the Falkenhayn plan had been made, the Commander-in-Chief East faced a task he internally resisted, whose success he did not see as tactically assured, and which, even in the best case, seemed to offer no prospect of decisive operational impact\*). Under the first impression of that decision, he sent a message to the 10th Army on July 2, stating that the Supreme Army Command had ordered to refrain from the intended attack on Kowno. However, he could not bring himself to completely abandon the attack prepared north of the Njemen. He wanted to continue it as far as possible alongside the Narew operation, to divert from it on one hand, and on the other hand, to prepare for the operation over the middle Njemen envisaged by the Supreme Army Command.

1) What documents General von Falkenhayn had for his presentation is not known; the files provide no information.  
2) Major von Fleishmann reported on the night of July 3 about the intended attack near Przasnysz to Teschner: "In any case, there is currently hope, based on the mutual balance of forces in this area, to advance the offensive to Siedlce, as long as the Russians do not retreat at the Narew due to the events at Lublin." Gerner notes in a diary entry from the staff of the 11th Army about artillery deployment in the Narew battle, on July 5, 1915, about a conversation with Colonel Marquard: "Ludendorff did not consider the outbreak possible; Marquard convinced him otherwise."

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The 41st Infantry Division was therefore to remain with the Njemen Army.

Lieutenant General Ludendorff informed Army Group Gallwitz on the afternoon of July 2 that the main attack was to be conducted in their sector, and that the XVII Army Corps would be assigned for this purpose. The other two divisions intended as reinforcements (3rd Infantry and a Guard Division) were already there. Heavy artillery was to be supplied by the 9th Army.

General von Gallwitz had previously had about seven divisions in his 150-kilometer-wide sector between the lower Vistula and Szkwa; however, only seven were available for the task at hand. About 8 1/4 Russian divisions seemed to be facing them. East of the Szkwa, the right wing of the 8th Army extended in a 70-kilometer width to the Bobr below Ostrowiec, which, with a total deployment of four divisions, included some additional powerful divisions. However, about six active Russian divisions, including the Guard Corps, faced this front section.

In the evening, Lieutenant Colonel Hoffmann, who had remained in Lötzen and was informed by telephone about the outcome of the Potsdam meeting, communicated to Army Group Gallwitz what the Supreme Command East was planning. The objective of the breakthrough was Siedlce; in this direction, the advance was to be made "by the shortest route" from the left wing. Such an attack led over the Narew at Ostrolenka. "The bold idea," — as General von Gallwitz wrote after the war — "to advance directly deep into the enemy's rear — Siedlce was 140 kilometers from my front — occupied me intensely." For such a far-reaching undertaking, the reinforcement by the envisaged XVII Army Corps alone seemed insufficient, and the "extremely impassable" terrain between Orzyc, Omulew, Rozoga, and Szkwa with the river barrier lying just behind it, the Narew at Ostrolenka and Nowogrood, was not very suitable.

1) p. 270, Memorandum of General Ludendorff; there, however, perhaps somewhat narrowly, only nine and a half divisions are counted.  
2) 4 G. T. G. and 1. G. R. D.; 2nd, 3rd, 26th, 37th, and 86th I. D. (this, previous Div. Berings of Corps Günter, consisted mainly of replacement units).  
3) Of all, at 3 p.m., S. D.  
4) Hoffmann, I, p. 272. Record of July 2. by Gallwitz, p. 268.  
5) by Gallwitz, p. 268.

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The Choice of Attack Direction.

General von Gallwitz was in agreement with his Chief of Staff, Colonel Marquard, "of the opinion that before such a deep thrust, a reckoning with the opponent facing Prasznysz, the Russian 1st Army and especially its core, the 1st Siberian Corps, must take place and from this a development further west would be preferable for tactical and terrain considerations." This view corresponded to the attack plan against the area of Prasznysz, which General von Gallwitz had already presented to the Commander-in-Chief East on June 28 and which was then included in General Ludendorff's memorandum. He now found the approval of the Commander-in-Chief East, who considered it risky, given the difficulty of the task, to bind an experienced army leader too much in execution. On the morning of July 3, Lieutenant General Ludendorff informed the Gallwitz High Command that "the goal of Siedlce should initially recede, a tactical success must absolutely be in the foreground"1), as it was a prerequisite for any further operational impact. The army group should "advance towards Pultusk," was communicated to the 9th Army on this day, which was to provide as further reinforcement ½ XI Army Corps (38th Infantry Division). Thus, General von Gallwitz had a total of ten attack-capable divisions, which was considered sufficient by the Commander-in-Chief East.

The instructions of the Commander-in-Chief East for the upcoming operations were2): "1.) 11th and Austro-Hungarian 4th Army remain in advance in a northerly direction. Army Detachment Woyrsch covers against Iwangorod and Pilica estuary and will follow in this direction if the enemy retreats. — 2.) 9th Army is initially to occupy Poland left of the Vistula while holding the left wing on the Vistula in case of need, abandoning the connection with Army Detachment Woyrsch. If the 2nd Russian Army retreats, the 9th Army is to follow and effect the closure of Warsaw-Nowogeorgiewsk from the left Vistula bank. — 3.) The main focus of the army lies with the Gallwitz Army Group. After reinforcements arrive, it is to break through and defeat the Russian 1st Army and continue to advance against Nowogeorgiewsk—Szkwa estuary, exerting decisive pressure against this line of the Russian Northwest front.

1) von Gallwitz, p. 264. 2) Date of issue not certain, but presumably before July 5.

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A further march over the Narew with the main forces towards Siedlce and an attack on Nowogeorgiewsk is to be considered. — 4.) 8th Army strengthens between Szkwa and Pisa to join the operations of the Gallwitz Army Group on command. It otherwise holds its positions. — 5.) 10th Army covers in its previous extended position the left flank of the Eastern Army between Rajgrod Lake and the Njemen west of Kowno. The 10th Army cannot count on reinforcements. — 6.) Njemen Army is to attack the Russian 5th Army and thereby also relieve the 10th Army."

On July 4, Lieutenant General Ludendorff arrived at the army headquarters in Soldau to discuss the situation and intentions with General von Gallwitz. There was "unanimity about the procedure to be followed, with General Ludendorff giving preference to the advance against the Narew line Pultusk—Rozan (not Ostrolenka). He secured ammunition in masses"1). The attack day was initially set for July 11.

On July 5, General von Gallwitz issued the fundamental instructions for the attack. They corresponded to the already mentioned Marquardt memorandum on attack procedures, which, among other things, demanded a vigorous approach to the breakthrough. The heavily fortified Przasnysz was initially to be bypassed to make it easier to capture after taking the high ground west and east of the city. This resulted in two separate sections over a total attack width of about 36 kilometers, with Przasnysz in the middle. In these, three corps with a total of seven divisions were to attack in the first wave, with an eighth division following behind the center2). The troops of the neighboring sections, including two active divisions east of the Orzyc, were to tie down and distract the enemy with their own operations and join the attack.

When on July 6 the transport of three Russian corps from northern Poland3) became known, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief also assessed the attack prospects more favorably. "The Russian now has hardly any forces left to oppose a breakthrough frontally and by flanking attack," it says in his war diary. The following day he did express concerns about whether the attack might be too broad.

1) von Gallwitz, p. 269.   
2) More details p. 283.   
3) Guard Corps at Lomza, II Siberian Corps south of Przasnysz, VI Corps in front of the German 9th Army, where also the VI Siberian Corps had been brought in recent days; all for use in southern Poland and Galicia.

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Preparations for the Attack at Przasnysz.

General von Gallwitz

remained firm in his plan; he considered “the number of assault

troops to be sufficient; even though the enemy positions were magnificently

constructed, the occupation was no longer particularly dense after the withdrawal of the II Siberian

Corps.” Nevertheless, he decided to position a Landwehr Brigade behind the right

and an active division behind the left assault wing from neighboring sections“).

An assault operation by the 10th Army and a new gas attack by the

9th Army“) were meanwhile intended to distract the enemy and strengthen

his forces; further operations, especially the offensive of the Njemen Army, were still pending. For the attack on

Kowno, even if its execution was initially not feasible, at least preparations were to be resumed and the

next available unit was to be sent there. Moreover, the attack planned for the right wing of the 8th Army

meant the most direct support for the Gallwitz Army Group.

On July 9, the Commander-in-Chief East reported to the Supreme Army

Command in response to their inquiry: “According to the instructions given to me on the 2nd of the month in

Posen, the group reinforced by XVII Army Corps, 38th Infantry

Division, and all available artillery will attack on both sides of Przasnysz and break through the Russian position.

The right wing of the 8th Army will support the Gallwitz Group's offensive by attacking between Szdna and

Pipja. The attack cannot begin before July 12... I have had to postpone the operation against Kowno

because troops are currently not available.” Following this conclusion, General von Falkenhayn inquired about the

use of the 41st Infantry Division, as the forces intended for the Narew thrust seemed too weak to him. On his behalf,

Major General Lappen“) arrived at the Commander-in-Chief East in Lötzen on July 10. The

assault group set through the Przasnysz area was further reinforced by the 50th Reserve Division of the 9th Army,

so that it now counted 10½ divisions. The 9th Army had thus given up a total of

four instead of the originally planned two divisions.

1) von Gallwitz, p. 270.   
2) Ldw. Br. of Colonel Count von Pfeil and Klein-Ellguth from XVII R. K.   
(previously Corps Suren) and Division Falk formed from troops of Corps Eben.   
3) These operations of all other armies (except Army Group Gallwitz   
and 8th Army) will be described in detail later.   
4) Promoted to this rank on June 26.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

h) Breakthrough through the Russian Positions from July 13 to 15.

At the front of the Army Group Gallwitz, the days since July 2 had quickly passed with preparations for the attack. Its start had finally been postponed to July 13. Since the foremost Russian line was at some points up to 1000 meters away from the German front, the troops had taken time to advance — according to the views and combat conditions of the time — in nightly spade work to the storm distance of about 250 meters. The reinforcement divisions had therefore already had to move into their sections on July 8 and 9 and had since worked their way forward against the enemy. Deceiving the enemy about the attack intentions thus became almost impossible, especially since the camouflage of the inevitably extensive other movements and attack preparations was already extremely difficult due to the short duration of the summer nights.

The enemy seemed to be in perhaps reduced strength, but otherwise unchanged in its previous positions. It lay in widely branched and deeply structured defense installations, which were arranged in groups but connected with continuous obstacles and seemed to be carefully expanded. Two position systems were to be distinguished. The front consisted of three positions, of which the third, running on average three kilometers behind the first, was formed only by a series of support points; in its middle, the town of Przasnysz was fortress-like expanded. In the line Ciechanow—Krasne lay a coherent second position system, which was connected to the first by the barrier position Ciechanow—Przasnysz.

The heights close behind the German positions offered the artillery good observation possibilities. The attack led west of Przasnysz over richly structured and often covered terrain, which east of Grudusk (heights 175 and 179) showed height differences of up to 50 meters; in the attack section of the left wing, the terrain generally showed simpler larger forms, but was more densely covered with forest. On fields and meadows stood excellent grain or high summer grass. Only a single large road, which led the Törcha to the attack direction from Mlawa via Przasnysz and Makow to the crossroad Pultusk—Rozan, crossed the attack area; otherwise, one was dependent on pure natural paths.

In the early morning of July 13, the German attack troops were ready as follows: First Meeting:

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The Deployment for the Attack at Przasnysz.

First Encounter:

| Troops | Width | Artillery |

|--------|-------|-----------|

north of Grudusk:

Gen. of Inf. von Plüskow (Gen. Kdo. XI. A. K.) | 38th Inf. Div. 86th Inf. Div. | 11 km | 33 batteries, including ten light field guns (15 cm), one howitzer (21 cm).

eastward to the road junction north of Mchowo:

Gen. of Inf. von Pannwitz (Gen. Kdo. XVII. A. K.) | 1st G. Res. Div. 36th Inf. Div. | 11 km | 46 batteries, including eight light field guns (15 cm), three howitzers (21 cm).

eastward to the Orzyc:

Genlt. Fhr. von Watter (Gen. Kdo. XIII. württ. A. K.) | 26th (württ.) Inf. Div. 3rd Inf. Div. 4th G. Inf. Div. | 17 km | 44½ batteries, including ten light field guns (15 cm), three howitzers (21 cm).

total | 7 Divisions | 39 km | 123½ batteries, including 28 light field guns (15 cm), six howitzers (21 cm).

Second Encounter:

behind the right wing: | attached Ldw. Brig. Pfeil. 50th Res. Div., arriving from Mlawa station.

behind the center: | 35th Inf. Div. of the XVII. A. K.

behind the left wing: | attached Inf. Div. Fall (parts of the 2nd and 37th Inf. Div.).

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

The total number of about 500 guns¹) with around 400,000 rounds corresponded roughly to the deployment that had brought success at Gorlice, but by equipping the heavy field howitzer batteries with 1,000 rounds against only 600 at Gorlice, it gained even more strength. This artillery, whose deployment was led by Colonel von Berendt as "General of the Foot Artillery," was to fire as inconspicuously as possible, so that on July 13, after daybreak, as soon as observation was secured, the effective firing could begin. In the "instruction" given by General von Gallwitz, the long-time inspector of the German field artillery, to his troops, it was stated: "Well-aimed, lively, and very observed point fire. Large ammunition use in a short time, but no drum fire that excludes observation. The moral effect vanishes if little is hit. Occasional increase of fire to strong fire waves to force the enemy to occupy his trenches in anticipation of the attack. Just before the assault, maximum fire increase, sudden forward shift on agreed signal, then advance. Artillery must provide the infantry with the necessary fire protection until the breakthrough. Immediately behind the last shell, the first man of the assault column must be in the enemy trench."

General von Gallwitz wanted to personally lead the attack of the Plüskow and Pannewitz corps west of Przasnysz; his office was set up in Dzierzgowo behind Brudnutz. The Plüskow corps had the task of decisively attacking the section Grudusk (inclusive) - Pandlowo Roscielne (exclusive) that protruded somewhat from the Russian front; this was a width of about seven kilometers. The Pannewitz corps was to conduct the "main attack against the front Beroza (exclusive) - Height 154 east of Olziewic (inclusive)"; this was a width of 4.5 kilometers. At 8 a.m., the infantry of both corps was to begin the assault and, if possible, reach the height positions on both sides of Czernice Borowe on the same day. On the eastern flank, Lieutenant General Freiherr von Bülow was independently active and also had command over Division Fall. He was to attack the ten-kilometer-wide line Dłusnice - Stegna to break through the enemy front between Murawko and Orzyc; the line Bartniki - Dembiny was named as another target for him.

¹) The official Russian account by Korolkow erroneously arrives at a much higher number, apparently calculating the batteries as six guns. In fact, with very few exceptions (26th Inf. Div.), only four guns are found. (See "Meyer's War Lexicon," 33: "Gorlice.") — There is little to be found in the old records; it only originates from the memorandum of Colonel Max Hoffmann, which also could no longer be found.

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The Orders for the Attack at Przasnysz.

In the other parts of the attack front, the enemy was initially to be held down and pinned. The neighboring sections, especially the corps Surén adjoining to the west, were to deceive the enemy with smaller operations and increased fire activity and should be ready to advance later in connection with the assault group. Overall, it was estimated that in front of the seven attacking German divisions in the first line (each with nine battalions) there were about three Russian divisions (each with 16 battalions), and it was assumed that west of Przasnysz were parts of the I. Turkestan Corps, south of Przasnysz the I. Siberian Corps, known throughout as combat-capable troops. For the continuation of the attack after the first breakthrough, General von Gallwitz had ordered the corps Plüskow and Pannewitz: "In exploiting the successes achieved to continue the breakthrough, I do not want to restrict the commanding generals, but ask them to remain steadfastly straight within the strictly maintained combat zones. Careful consideration will be needed as to whether the attack on the second or third enemy position requires systematic preparation, which seems permissible for a staggered advance. The more the enemy has suffered with the removal of the front line, the less his resistance will be in the next positions." Furthermore, General von Gallwitz intended to regulate the approach according to the results of the attack from case to case; only after the removal of the positions of Sczernice Borowe and Bartniki—Dembiny should the attack from the northwest and northeast simultaneously be directed against Przasnysz, which remains particularly important as a road junction. In addition, he also considered the possibility that the enemy, after breaking through his front lines, would retreat in such disarray that his rear sections could be overrun with rapid action. Even against Przasnysz, a coup de main can promise success, if the Russians no longer manage to muster sufficient forces to occupy the works." In poor weather and rain, on July 13 at 4 a.m., the effective firing began on the entire attack front; impaired observation seemed to affect the result. General von Gallwitz allowed the two corps of the right wing to delay the storm start by up to an hour. In the corps Plüskow, to whose support the heavy batteries of the 50th Reserve Division had also been brought forward, the artillery effect seemed sufficient.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

Artillery effect sufficient. The infantry advanced as planned at 8 a.m. and made good progress. The 38th Infantry Division under Major General Schultheiß initially took the area in front of the enemy's main position at Grunduß and captured about 600 prisoners. Meanwhile, Lieutenant General von Bernuth with the 86th Infantry Division took the prominent elevation northwest of Pawlowo Koscielne. General von Plüskow believed he faced only weak enemy forces, but they fought well. He expected the enemy to hold the "main position" on the 20 to 30 meter high, partially wooded heights north of the Grunduß—Czernice Borowe road. The attack on this line was to be conducted in coordination with the Gallwitz High Command, systematically under new artillery preparation. By noon, the Plüskow Corps had already reached the northern edge of those heights.

At the Pannwitz Corps, the start of the attack was postponed to 9 a.m. due to initially insufficient artillery effect. Then the 1st Guard Reserve Division under Major General Albrecht and the right wing of the 36th Infantry Division of General von Heinricius also broke through the forward Russian lines north of the Wengierka in the first assault and advanced against the gently rising forest stages of Czernice. The left wing east of Czernice remained — as ordered — waiting. At 12°, General von Pannwitz designated the line south edge of the forest north of Czernice—Olszewice as the next target.

The Watter Corps, which had set out at 8:42, also had good initial successes. On the right, the 26th (Württemberg) Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Wilhelm Duke of Urach took the fortifications of Olszewice. More stubborn resistance was encountered in the center by Lieutenant General von Staabs with the 3rd Infantry Division at the village of Szla and in the forest east of it, while further east the 4th Guard Infantry Division under Major General Count von Schweinitz and Krain Baron von Ledebur stormed the heights south of Jednorozec. As they advanced further, the enemy resistance in the numerous forests across the entire width of the corps front diminished.

To the Commander-in-Chief East, who had arrived with his close staff in Willenberg, General von Gallwitz could report at 1 p.m.: "The second enemy position from the heavily fortified ridge at Wyrzynek to the forest northeast of Czernice Borowe and to the point 150 north of Chojnowo is in our possession. Almost a thousand prisoners, some guns, and machine guns were captured."

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The First Day of the Attack at Przasnysz.

taken. The enemy apparently completely surprised. The third enemy main position is also to be attacked." This was located about two kilometers south of the Grudusk—Czernice road, to which it approached at Chojnowo. The report further stated that the Watter Corps was in possession of Szla, but fighting was still ongoing in the forest east of the place; on the left wing of the corps, the Falk Division was moving into the front.

At 3:30 in the afternoon, the attack on the right wing was reorganized. The Plüskow Corps received the high ground immediately south of the Grudusk—Czernice line as the day's objective; the following Pfeil Brigade was made available to cover the flank during further advances. The Pannwitz Corps, which later had the task of turning southeast against Przasnysz and thus significantly extending its front, was assigned the 35th Infantry Division, thereby reuniting the XVII Army Corps.

As the afternoon progressed, the advance slowed. The movement of the artillery required time, and the strength of the infantry advancing from line to line began to wane. General von Plüskow had temporarily halted his 38th Infantry Division south of Grudusk to wait until the 86th Infantry Division reached the Grudusk—Czernice road. At 1:30 in the afternoon, he reported from the 38th Infantry Division that the enemy held Lysaftowo; the others, according to patrol reports, were "in full retreat" against the third position lying south of the main road. When the road was reached by the 86th Infantry Division in the afternoon, the commanding general ordered a new attack. After initially good progress, the enemy artillery fire intensified; the enemy seemed to have settled again. From Lysaftowo, he attacked the flank of the 38th Infantry Division. The German infantry laboriously advanced further and, in the evening, after deploying the Pfeil Brigade, took the strong positions of Piszczoli Gorne. However, the German artillery effect suffered from continuous rain and poor observation. Thus, the attack against the Russian third position came to a halt from Lysaftowo and at the southern edge of Czernice. Effective artillery fire and assault were postponed to the morning of July 14.

Meanwhile, the Commander-in-Chief East suggested that with the help of the still fresh 35th Infantry Division, the only weakly fortified Przasnysz should be taken by surprise, encircling from the south. At 5:30 in the afternoon, General von Pannwitz, who had already deployed this division between the 1st Guard Reserve and 36th Infantry Division, ordered the pivot towards the Laguny—Przasnysz—Mchowo road.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

At this time, however, the 1st Guard Reserve Division had not yet reached the road Czernice—Chojnowo. It was only at 7 o'clock that it could begin the attack against the strong positions between Dzielin and Chojnowo, and only at 7:30 was the 35th Infantry Division under Major General von Hahn on its left in the front line. It was already getting dark when the 1st Guard Reserve Division took Chojnowo at 9 o'clock in the evening; the strong position northeast of the place could only be wrested from the enemy in a devastating attack by the 35th Infantry Division at 10 o'clock. Thus, despite all the dedication of the troops, they could not advance beyond the line Chojnowo—German starting position at Mchowo and were still about five kilometers away from Przasnysz.

The Watter General Command had the impression at 3 o'clock in the afternoon that the enemy was retreating everywhere and only offering resistance with rearguards at some points. However, progress was slow due to rain and forest fighting. The enemy seemed to be receiving reinforcements. The line Bartniki—Dembinin, set as a further target by General von Gallwitz, was still on average three kilometers ahead of the foremost front when the fighting also ceased here after 10 o'clock in the evening. On the left wing, the division of Lieutenant General von Fall had moved into the front line; the wide meadow depression of the Orzyc offered protection to its eastern flank.

The overall result of the first day of attack did not quite meet the high expectations of the morning and midday hours, although the breakthrough into the enemy positions west of Przasnysz had reached a depth of up to six kilometers, east of the place up to 4½ kilometers. The two front positions of the Russians were breached at two points over a width of 15 kilometers each, and at many points the third position was reached; at Czernice, all Russian battery positions were taken. Nevertheless, only 5400 prisoners, five guns, and about 20 machine guns could be reported as booty; for the enemy had only weakly occupied his positions, had withdrawn his small number of artillery, and found time to bring them to safety in time; he apparently intended to hold the third position.

The operations of July 13 were also successful in the neighboring sectors.

In the corps Surén, which adjoined the corps Plüskow to the west, the 85th Landwehr Division under Lieutenant General Clissow Rocq von Breugel stormed the Russian first position and west of the railway to Ciechanow over a width of about six kilometers.

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The Continuation of the Attack at Przasnysz.

As further advance at this point seemed possible only with the deployment of new forces, Lieutenant General Curien intended to attack on his eastern flank the next day to directly support the main attack.

In the 8th Army, the 75th Reserve Division under Lieutenant General von Seydewitz stormed the heights south of Lipnitz on July 13 at the eastern bank of the Orzwa and captured 1800 prisoners; further east, the 10th Landwehr Division led by Lieutenant General Clausius broke into the Russian lines at Krusza and also captured 600 prisoners. Attacks at both locations were to be continued the next day.

Behind the Russian front, German aerial reconnaissance had so far detected only insignificant movements of reserves; no larger closed formations were identified on a day's march backward. The surprise of the enemy seemed successful, and prisoners confirmed this view.

For July 14, General von Gallwitz ordered the continuation of the attack; above all, it was important to get Przasnysz into hand. The Plüskow Corps and the XVII Army Corps were to take the strong Russian third position south of the Grundwulf—Czernice road and near Chojnowo and east, the XVII Army Corps was then to turn further against Przasnysz, the 50th Reserve Division was to follow behind the right flank on Grundwulf. The Watter Corps was to reach the Bartniki—Dronzczewo road, ready to assist against Przasnysz later if needed. The order further stated: "If the enemy retreats at night, all corps will relentlessly follow in their combat zones." These ran against the second line of Russian defenses, namely for the Plüskow Corps on Opinogora and east, for the XVII Army Corps on Zielona and east to Bogate, for the Watter Corps east of the Wengierka.

The battle continued through the night in some places. The divisions of the Plüskow Corps had already largely achieved their first target for July 14. At dawn, the attack continued along the entire breakthrough line. Soon, however, it became clear that only rearguards were facing them. Aircraft, which had been on the move since 3 a.m. and penetrated deep into the rear area, found the roads, especially the main road Przasnysz—Makow—Pultusk, covered by southward-moving vehicle columns; magazines went up in flames. The enemy was in full retreat; even Przasnysz was evacuated.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

Initially in combat development, but soon in marching columns, the German corps followed him in a broad front. General von Gallwitz had already sent them the directive at 9 in the morning: "The pursuit idea must remain the guiding principle in the next operations. Enemy rearguard positions must be attacked and overrun without delay." The blocking position along the Ciechanow–Przasnysz road was taken without delay. At noon, General von Gallwitz reported to the Commander-in-Chief East the further intention: "Advance the army against the last occupied section Ciechanow–Bogate–Krasnosielc, which is to be attacked." Meanwhile, the enemy had also begun retreating in front of the entire western wing of the army group. The corps Dickhuth and Surén followed. East of the Orzyc and in front of the 8th Army, the Russians still held.

In dull and rainy weather and consequently on groundless paths, the three corps of the German breakthrough front approached the Russian second line of defense in the early afternoon hours. Some advanced positions were taken. General von Gallwitz, who personally led the two corps advancing west of the Wengierka, considered postponing the execution of the attack to the next morning, but then let the corps begin when they wanted to take the Russian positions in the evening before the enemy could bring up reinforcements. However, the attempts had to be abandoned because the artillery did not achieve sufficient effect under unfavorable observation conditions. At nightfall, the attackers were positioned everywhere close to the enemy positions, ready to attack. Behind the corps Plüskow, the 50th Reserve Division had moved up, and at the XVII Army Corps, the 36th Infantry Division had been withdrawn as a reserve.

The attack of the corps Watter also came to a halt after insignificant individual successes against the strong Russian resistance. The enemy stubbornly held his fortified positions from Bogate to Drozdowo on the western bank of the Orzyc. The corps had gradually swung to the southeast and extended its left wing with landwehr, as the enemy on the right bank of the Orzyc in front of the corps Eben and in front of the 8th Army was still always in the old positions.

On the western wing of the army group, the corps Surén had been able to follow the retreating enemy. In doing so, the 85th Landwehr Division had approached the positions of Ciechanow. The fighting continued here until darkness. Further west, at the corps Dickhuth, they had reached the line running over Plonsk to Wyszogrod on the Vistula, the Russian second line of defense up to eight kilometers, but also stood partly further away from it.

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The Second and Third Day of the Breakthrough.

Overall, the attack of the Army Group Gallwitz had advanced 10 to 15 kilometers in two days. The loot had increased to 7100 prisoners, and the own losses were moderate at 2700 men. It turned out that the battle had so far been mainly against the 11th and 2nd Siberian Divisions. However, it was also expected that the full force of the 1st Siberian Division, held in reserve, as well as reinforcements, would arrive by train and foot march according to air reports. A possibly heavy new attack was imminent; however, there was no doubt about its outcome after the previous successes.

The infantry of the German attack corps moved closer to the enemy positions on July 15th under cover of darkness; at dawn, the artillery began firing. It turned out that they faced quite strong, well-protected installations with obstacles. The attack task seemed not much inferior to that which had been solved by the thoroughly prepared fresh troops on July 13th; however, the forces were not sufficient to carry it out across the entire front width. General von Gallwitz pointed out to the two western corps 11 and 19 that the enemy was bringing in reinforcements, and that it was therefore necessary to attempt a breakthrough through the enemy position at one point today if possible. Since this seemed to be the least strongly fortified area according to the results of the aerial reconnaissance in the area of Zielona, he wanted to strike here.

General von Plüskow prepared the breach on his left wing in the area west of Zielona, General von Pannwitz on his right wing east of the mentioned place. While the artillery concentrated its fire on these positions, the flyers reported further unloading of Russian reinforcements at Nasielsk and northwards, marching on Pultusk and Ciechanow. Under these circumstances, General von Gallwitz instructed the corps that now, as the last enemy position was in front of them, it was no longer about deep penetration, but about quickly swinging in to roll up the Russian lines. Between 2 and 3 in the afternoon, the 1st Guard Reserve Division under Major General Albrecht succeeded in breaking through in the area of the height southeast of Zielona; it was quickly expanded eastward with the help of parts of the 36th Infantry Division. This division itself was inserted between the 1st Guard Reserve and the 35th Infantry Division to push through in the direction of Wenzewo on the way to Pultusk.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

A little later than the XVII Army Corps, the 86th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Bernitz also succeeded west of Zielona after a hard fight; it was soon expanded to the west. Parts of the 50th Reserve Division had already been involved here; now this entire division was inserted to break through to Kolaczkowo. Meanwhile, at 5 p.m., the 38th Infantry Division under Major General Schultheiß also broke into the stubbornly defended Russian position at Dipinogura further west; the enemy retreated from here to Ciechanow.

At 6 p.m., General von Gallwitz ordered the two western corps: "If the rolling up of the enemy position has led to the enemy clearing the entire line," the Plüskow Corps should proceed south to Gontz—Ciechanow, the XVII Army Corps turning southwest to Karniewo—Makow, the 50th Reserve Division filling the gap between them towards Stary Golynin. He could report to the Commander-in-Chief East at 6:30: "The fortress-like last enemy position Ciechanow—Krasnosielec has been broken through after a heavy fight at Zielona over about seven kilometers, five major strongpoints taken." However, he also had to draw attention to emerging difficulties in the supply of ammunition.

On the outer flanks of the two corps, north of Ciechanow and at Bogate, the enemy still offered stubborn resistance, against which, in the far south of General von Gallwitz — the Plüskow Corps turning right, the XVII Army Corps turning left, while in the direction south alone the 50th Reserve Division under General of Cavalry Baron von der Goltz continued; here the entire Russian 30th Division of the IV Corps, which had arrived by rail, was identified as a new opponent. The unloading at the Warsaw railway continued, and new enemies marched on the road Rozan—Makow. General von Gallwitz therefore repeatedly urged vigorous pursuit and rolling up of the parts of the Russian front still holding at Bogate. He wanted to "quickly seize the immediately ripening fruits of victory" and hoped, above all, through the cooperation of the Plüskow and Surén Corps, to perhaps still catch the Russians at Ciechanow.

Despite the fatigue of the troops, movements and battles continued partly deep into the night, but without reaching the set goals. The Plüskow Corps reached the Ciechanow—Pultusk road only at the Pomorze road junction with a detachment assigned to support the Warsaw railway, but remained with the 38th and 86th Infantry Divisions on average still about three kilometers away from it; the 50th Reserve Division, which had first had to regroup with difficulty, had advanced almost even less, up to Kolaczowo.

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The Breakthrough through the Last Enemy Position.

At the XVIII Army Corps, the 1st Guard Reserve Division only advanced with forward detachments beyond the position taken in the afternoon; the pursuit of the 36th Infantry Division, which was swinging around Krasne, came to a halt at night before Wenzewo, with the enemy still holding at Bogate. This was partly due to the German attack on the east bank of the Wengierka being about two kilometers behind.

The four divisions of Lieutenant General von Watter faced an opponent who held firm in strong positions everywhere. The general planned attack ordered for July 15th led only to local successes. From the right wing and the center of the corps, the Russians still held the forest areas east of Bogate and the west bank of the Orzyc, at Krasnosielec in a very strong bridgehead position. The German left wing reached the river southeast of Dronzborno. Further north, Landwehr troops continued to secure with the front facing northeast, as the enemy still stood before Corps Eben and to the east. However, on this day, the 8th Army gave way in the protruding arc of Krusiza to the attack of the 10th Landwehr Division, allowing progress towards Nowogrod.

The western wing of the Gallwitz Army Group had also gained ground behind the retreating enemy. The left wing of Corps Dickhuth and Corps Surén had followed up to the Russian second line of defense, which stretched from Wyszgorod over Plonsk to Ciechanowo. Here, the left wing of Corps Surén, the 85th Landwehr Division, had been fixed since the evening of the previous day; they were too weak to carry out the attack against the elevated positions of Ciechanowo. Success was expected from the further advance of Corps Plüskow.

c) Continuation of the Attack up to the Narew.

Sketches 19, 20, 21, 22.

The Commander-in-Chief East, who had returned to Lötzen on the afternoon of July 15th, was very satisfied with the successes of the Gallwitz Army Group. As General Ludendorff expressed to General von Gallwitz over the telephone in the evening, it was not believed that the attack would penetrate the Russian defensive network so quickly.

1) from Gallwitz, p. 283. (Cf. p. 277, note 2.)

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

The question arose as to which direction the operation should continue.

Within the overall situation in Poland, the purely frontal retreat of the Russians to Wyszgord—Plonsk—Makow was not yet decisive. To the left of the lower Vistula, their front had long been pushed back by the German 9th Army up to the height of Wyszgord; it only became untenable when the Narew line itself fell. Nevertheless, since the beginning of the month, there were signs that the Russians also wanted to retreat to the left of the Vistula, initially to the Grojec—Blonie position, which offered a completely secure connection to the Narew line in the strong corner pillar of Nowogorgiewsk. Reconnaissance, intercepted radio messages, and prisoner statements consistently gave the impression that the systematic evacuation of the area west of the Vistula was being initiated. Extensive destruction measures seemed to be underway; villages were going up in flames; the population, it was said, would be deported. Two Russian corps (VI Siberian and IV) had been withdrawn; the positions in front of the southern flank of the 9th Army were to be significantly weaker than before. Thus, it had to be expected at any time that the enemy would also evade the 9th Army. Whether he would then try to hold the Grojec—Blonie position in connection with the large and strong fortress of Nowogorgiewsk, or whether he would retreat further under the pressure of the offensive of Army Group Mackensen, which was to be continued between the Bug and Vistula after a temporary standstill, it was always important that the thrust of Army Group Gallwitz hit as deeply as possible into his rear, so that it would hold eastward in the further attack.

In contrast, General von Gallwitz intended to advance with his main forces in the direction of Pultusk—Rozan; the Eben Corps was to cover against Ostrolenka, which, as he hoped, would be attacked by the 8th Army. In a teleconference on this issue, General Ludendorff, after the enemy positions had now been penetrated in their entire depth, wanted to direct the decisive attack more against Ostrolenka and for that to give up terrain on the Vistula. General von Gallwitz considered such an extension of the attack too broad; given the current situation, Rozan was the easiest point to take. An advance to Ostrolenka would bring us forward to a more secure position and against the undefeated troops of the IV Siberian and V Corps.

1) The Bug Army already attacked on this day (July 15); see p. 387.

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The Question of Further Attack Direction.

When he finally posed "the specific question" of whether he should attack Ostrolenka, "the Field Marshal, who was with Ludendorff, immediately gave him freedom of action; the latter also agreed"1). It was decisive that even now the primary goal was the tactical success, the conquest of the Narew line. However, General Ludendorff also wanted to give the High Command Gallwitz, in whom he had confidence, as much freedom as possible in its decisions2). So it remained with its intentions.

After the movements were completed on the evening of July 15, General von Gallwitz assumed that the Russians would try to establish themselves in the line Nowogeorgiewsk—advanced positions from Pultusk—area of Bogate—Orzyc and attempt to hold this line, which was significantly shortened compared to earlier. He ordered the continuation of the attack in a southern and southeastern direction. The left wing of the XVII Army Corps was to "only engage" the enemy in the strong positions of Bogate, to allow the swinging of the German right wing to take effect. On July 16, the enemy held close to the extended front of the corps and in front of the right wing of the Surén corps his prepared second line of defense; the striking power of these German troops was in no way sufficient to drive him out here by force. However, he had evacuated the town of Ciechanow, threatened by encirclement, at night. The 86th Infantry Division of the Plüskow Corps was able to report artillery as booty from its night advance. Further east, the enemy was retreating under rearguard actions. The corps, however, initially pushed southwest as ordered, against the retreat routes of the enemy withdrawing from Ciechanow, managing to shoot down an attacking Russian cavalry brigade, and only resumed the decisive thrust towards Pultusk in the afternoon. Meanwhile, the enemy resistance had been able to strengthen again in connection with the still-held positions north of Golymin on one side and from Bogate on the other. By evening, the left wing of the corps reached east of Somyn again, subsequently meeting the Plüskow Corps, whose center, remaining on the Pultusk road, had reached Stary Golymin, while its two wings were somewhat hanging back.

The day was much more difficult for the XVII Army Corps and the Korps Watter.

1) from Gallwitz, p. 283.  
2) Communication from General Ludendorff from December 1931 to the Reichsarchiv.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

The latter was able to initially continue the maneuver initiated the day before towards the southeast against only weak resistance from the Russians. The situation temporarily appeared so favorable that General von Pannwitz wanted to redirect his corps eastward to attack the enemy of Corps Watter from the rear. However, in the afternoon, they encountered very persistent new resistance on both sides of Krasne; it seemed that the enemy had received new reinforcements. It was only late in the evening that parts of the 36th and 35th Infantry Divisions managed to penetrate the northern part of the stubbornly defended location. South of Bogate, successes were also achieved despite fierce Russian counterattacks that lasted into the night; parts of the 35th Infantry Division crossed to the eastern Wengierka bank. Corps Watter also encountered strong resistance, as it attempted to force the Orzyc crossing at several points simultaneously. The 26th Infantry Division could only reach the river with its left wing south of Podos. The 3rd Infantry Division took the crossing at this location after a heavy, costly battle, but had to relinquish it again against newly appearing Turkestan battalions; it was only in the evening that it remained definitively in German hands. The 4th Guards Infantry Division and the right wing of Division Falk could only reach the river on both sides of Krasnosielc and had to fend off heavy counterattacks here in the afternoon, with the heavily fortified location of Krasnosielc forming the mainstay of the Russian resistance.

Between the upper Orzyc and Pissa, however, the enemy abandoned its defense front, which had been held for months, on the night of July 16 and retreated over a width of almost 60 kilometers. The left wing of Division Falk had crossed the Orzyc southeast of Dronzjewo by noon in a broad front and was ready on the eastern bank northeast of Krasnosielc by the evening of that day to strike the Russians still holding at this location in the flank and rear the next morning. Corps Eben and the right wing of the 8th Army had also set out from their positions to pursue and had followed the enemy halfway to Ciechanow.

Much was gained, and yet the hoped-for larger territorial gain after breaking through the last prepared position of the enemy was temporarily achieved in the least operationally effective direction, against the northern front west of Pultusk. In the direction of Rozan, progress over the Orzyc had not been made, and to now exploit the situation between Orzyc and Pissa, the striking power of the German divisions following here in only a thin line was in no way sufficient. In the actual attack front, difficulties became apparent.

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The First Stagnation in the Offensive.

Although in the four days since July 13, only two of their divisions had moved slightly more than 30 kilometers, or 1½ days' marches, from their original positions, it was already noticeable that the artillery ammunition needed in very large quantities to overcome each new resistance was no longer coming forward in sufficient quantities due to difficult road conditions. It was also always the same ten divisions that were now attacking for the fourth day without interruption, while their front had meanwhile extended from 40 to 50 kilometers. Fresh troops, which could give the attack new impetus and enable the formation of a focal point at an operationally decisive location, were lacking and were not yet in sight. It is to be assumed that if they had been present, the supply difficulties would have increased even more.

To reinforce, the Commander-in-Chief East could only fall back on the 9th Army, which since July 10 still counted two general commands with six divisions, including the 5th and 49th Reserve Divisions, otherwise replacement troops and Landwehr, and some Landsturm. If the enemy of this army was still at least significantly superior in infantry, there was currently no danger at their front. The longer and stronger the Russians remained at the Rawka and Bzura, the greater the result of the operation on Pullusoff had to be. However, the Commander-in-Chief East had not yet intended to move all essential parts of the 9th Army to the breakthrough front Narew, but had assigned them the task of following the retreating Russians to turn against the Grojec—Blonie position and Nowogeorgiewsk and later against Warsaw. As the progress of the Gallwitz Army Group also made the retreat of the enemy more likely for the 9th Army, he decided on July 16, if the enemy retreated here, to move forces of this army to the right bank of the Vistula. At noon, he ordered the newly formed 83rd Infantry Division from Landwehr and Landsturm units of the previous Posen Corps to be assembled in the direction of Wyszogrod for crossing the river and to prepare the division forming the southern flank for transport. Later, he decided to also prepare rail transport for the 83rd Infantry Division to move them to Willenberg behind the eastern flank of the Gallwitz Army Group. The four divisions remaining with the 9th Army¹) and storm were to continue to be ready for pursuit and attack against Nowogeorgiewsk and Warsaw.

¹) 5th and 49th R. D., 84th S. D. (newly formed from parts of the Posen Corps) Div. Westernhagen. The latter two divisions consisted mainly of Landwehr.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

When the Supreme Army Command inquired the following morning, "whether more troops should be moved to Gallwitz," these orders could be referred to. Immediately thereafter, all ordered movements were begun, as the enemy had already begun the expected retreat before the 9th Army during the night.

In front of the Army Group Gallwitz, the enemy had used the darkness to once again evade the German pressure on broad sections of the front. Resistance was only offered north of Pultusk and northwest of Rozan. These fortified bridgeheads of the Narew line seemed to be held; reinforcements were brought against them. At 8° in the morning, General von Gallwitz regulated the further advance of his corps. He intended to close off the northern front of Nowogeorgiewsk—Bzura with the right wing, to advance with the center against the Narew section Pultusk—Rozan. For this, the Plüskow Corps, to which the 1st Guard Reserve Division was also to be transferred, was set against Pultusk, the XVII Army Corps against the Narew between Pultusk and Rozan, the Watter Corps against Rozan; the Falk Division was to withdraw to the Eben Corps during further advances, which would then again have two active divisions and twelve Landsturm battalions. It was to close off Ostrolenka with its left wing. This command regulation for the left army wing somewhat took into account the view of the Supreme Commander East, who wished for the main focus to be shifted further east, but weakened the striking power in the breakthrough direction Pultusk—Rozan. The army headquarters was moved forward to Leisnau southeast of Przasnysz.

During the day, the Litzthum and Surén Corps reached Wyszogrod—Nowe Miasto to the north, the Plüskow Corps with the center to just before the strongly fortified enemy positions of the northwest front of Pultusk. The temporarily held hope of perhaps achieving the goal here in a coup had to be abandoned after the reconnaissance results now available. On the left wing of the corps, the 50th Reserve Division encountered fierce resistance at the crossroads of Karniewo. In a line running from here northeast to the mouth of the Wengierka in the Orzyc and further over the 70-meter-high fortified heights southeast of Podos (Height 171) to Jednoroje, the enemy had settled again. In the attack against him, the two active divisions of the XVII Army Corps pushed through on both sides of the road to Makow.

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Pushing Back the Enemy Against the Narew.

The 36th Infantry Division reached this location in the evening, while to its right, the 1st Guard Reserve Division at the northern edge of the forest east of Karniewo, despite support from the 50th Reserve Division, did not break through, and to the left, the 35th Infantry Division turned over the Orzyc against the flank of the enemy standing before the Watter Corps; it was able to inflict heavy losses on the retreating parts and captured 1200 prisoners alone. The Watter Corps itself was held up at the Orzyc bridges destroyed by the enemy and could therefore only work its way to the new Russian positions southeast of Podosz by evening. In agreement with the Army High Command, the decision for the next day was expected from the 35th Infantry Division, which was to attack the flank and rear of the enemy. The enemy seemed to have received further reinforcements, which he threw into battle as they arrived. At the Eben Corps, only the Fall Division advanced well. Otherwise, this corps and the right wing of the 8th Army could make only slight progress in the forest and swamp terrain east of Ostrolenka with many obstructed sandy paths. General von Scholz wanted to resume the attack the following day also east of the Pissa.

On the morning of July 18, the enemy had vacated his positions in front of the left wing of the Plüskow Corps, the XVII Army Corps, and the Watter Corps; contact with him was mostly lost. It gradually became apparent that the Russians had retreated in one move to the fortified area of Pultusk and Rozan and between these two places against the Narew. The army order from the morning of July 17 had already taken this possibility into account. Thus, the German troops now followed up to the northwest and north front of the positions of Pultusk and Rozan. Between these places, they initially remained about six kilometers from the Narew. On the left wing, the strength of the Eben Corps was not enough to push the enemy further back against Ostrolenka. Also, on the entire remaining front of the army group and with the 8th Army, there was a standstill, with only insignificant progress being made.

Meanwhile, the booty had risen to around 24,000 prisoners, but the number of only 110 officers and a total of only 14 guns was strikingly low. On the other hand, their own bloody losses had increased to about 20,000 men due to the partially very stubborn battles that followed the first breakthrough.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

On July 18, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief received the following telegram from General von Falkenhayn: "His Majesty has taken particular pleasure in the reports of the great successes achieved in recent days under Your Excellency's leadership by the armies of Gallwitz, Scholtz, and Below. At the same time, His Majesty expressed confidence that the thrust against the Narew would not come to a halt at this section, but rather that every effort would be made to advance it as quickly as possible against the lower Bug." For the newly resumed offensive of the Mackensen Army Group, it was of utmost importance that no standstill occurred. Everything now depended on the success of quickly crossing the Narew in the direction intended by General von Gallwitz, Pultusk—Rozan, where, according to the General's view, Rozan was the "easiest point to tackle" and also represented the more operationally effective direction. Any delay would benefit the enemy, who, as indicated by the targeting of his radio stations, was now constantly bringing in new forces. His XXI Corps from Galicia was identified as a new enemy at Rozan, the III Siberian Corps was supposed to be advancing from the Njemen Front, and it could easily free up additional forces from the area west of the Vistula, where, besides the German 9th Army, the Woyrsch Army Detachment had been moving against Iwangorod since July 17. Meanwhile, the difficulties of the operation had grown to the point where a temporary standstill had to occur before the Narew line could be overcome. Bringing up ammunition and heavy artillery required a lot of time with increasing distance from the railway. By this day, July 18, the main railway line from Mława to Warsaw had been converted to German gauge up to Ciechanow and restored; field railways from Mława to Przasnysz and from Willenberg to Ostrolenka were under construction.

In General Ludendorff's memorandum of July 1, it was stated: The Gallwitz Army Group "could push the Russians back to the Pronsk—Pultusk line in heavy fighting." This goal was achieved in six days of struggle, and on the flanks even significantly exceeded. The "Pincer of Przasnysz" had torn open the Russian first line of defense over a width of 40 kilometers, and the Hammer of Biebitz had also struck the decisive hole in the Ciechanow—Krasnosielc line. The Russian front was breached to a depth of 30 kilometers and the enemy was thereby forced to abandon his heavily fortified positions, built over months of work, from the lower Vistula to the Piliza, and also to withdraw the previously stubbornly defended front west of the Vistula.

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Before the Fortified Narew Line.

The enemy was thus forced to abandon his installations, which had been heavily fortified over months of work, from the lower Vistula to the Piliza, and also to withdraw the previously stubbornly defended front west of the Vistula1). Whether the same result would have been achieved if the attack had been launched from the beginning with the operational goal of Siedlce, focusing on the left wing towards Ostrolenka, cannot be determined retrospectively. The battle against the I. Siberian Corps, considered the core of Russian resistance, would certainly have been easier, as it would not have been met frontally in its particularly strong defensive positions at Przasnysz, but its flank would have been gained, forcing it to fight in open field with a shortened front. However, according to the responsible authorities, the terrain conditions ruled out such an operation.

d) Enemy Measures.

Sessions 19, 20, 21.

The attack by General von Gallwitz had hit the right wing of the Russian 1st Army (General Litwinow), which had to defend the approximately 60-kilometer-wide area between Orzyc and Vistula with six divisions2).

When the German attack broke out, the enemy was by no means as surprised as was assumed on the German side. He had already learned of the arrival of German reinforcements at Chorzele on July 6 through prisoner statements. In the following days, his ground and air reconnaissance noted, among other things, an increase in artillery, wagon trains, and the construction of supply railways; he concluded from these signs that a German attack was imminent. Almost every night brought individual prisoners. In the process, the German XVII Army Corps, previously stationed at the Narew, was identified as a new opponent. On the night of July 11, it was finally determined that the Germans were approaching closer, and the width of the German attack was correctly assessed by the high command of the Russian 1st Army. It expected the attack to begin on July 12. On this day, the impact of the German artillery was so strong that July 12 was highlighted in the records of some units as a "day of battle." However, their own defensive preparations came too late.

1) See page 299 for loot and losses.  
2) The book by Korolíow, "Przasnysz," primarily served as a basis for the depiction of events on the Russian side.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

The Russian positions on July 13, as before, were occupied on the 40-kilometer-wide attack front by only two divisions: the 2nd Siberian of the I Siberian Corps to the east, and the 11th Siberian of the I Turkestan Corps to the west of Przasnysz, which together counted 32 battalions and about 100 guns. As a reserve, the 1st Siberian Division of the I Siberian Corps had been moved forward to Mlava on the night of July 12 and thus stood a strong day's march behind the front; behind the 11th Siberian Division, a Turkestan brigade had been provided as a reserve. Further forces were sought to be freed in more westerly sections.

On July 13, the 2nd Siberian Division east of Przasnysz vigorously defended against the attack of four German divisions. In the area of Przasnysz itself, ½ 1st Siberian Division was inserted, west of the city the defense of the 11th Siberian Division was already withdrawn early into the intermediate position of Czernice before the attack of initially five German divisions. The resistance began to collapse here as well, despite the deployment of the Turkestan brigade, already in the afternoon; parts flooded back in dissolution. Meanwhile, the commander of the I Siberian Corps ordered the retreat into the second line of defense running over Krasnosielc—Podos to Bogate, and around midnight General Litwinow ordered the retreat of the entire army. They were to maintain the mentioned line extended over Ciechanow to Wyszogrod on the Vistula. The infantry of the 11th Siberian Division had shrunk from 14,500 to about 5,000 rifles, and the 2nd Siberian Division had probably lost a third of its strength. According to Russian perception, the advantage of the situation was not sufficiently exploited by the Germans on this day. Only because the Germans had repeatedly halted in the attack, it was possible to organize the Russian troops, severely shaken by overwhelming artillery fire, for new resistance. In this context, the procedure of the Plüskow Corps, which continued the attack uninterruptedly on the night of July 14, is presented by the Russians as particularly effective and therefore exemplary.

By the evening of July 14, the I Siberian Corps (2nd Siberian Division on the right, 1st on the left) was ready for new defense from northeast of Krasnosielc, where it had a connection to the correspondingly retracted western wing of the 12th Army, to the west of Bogate. Here, the 30th Infantry Division of the IV Corps, brought in by rail, was already arriving, and the 14th Cavalry Division was positioned behind the front. To the west, the severely weakened I Turkestan Corps joined, whose rear held the positions around Ciechanow.

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Measures of the Russians.

Thus, on July 15, a total of about five Russian divisions¹), two of which were severely shaken, were in prepared positions against eleven attacking German divisions. But the ammunition was scarce; the reinforcements that had been brought in initially arrived without columns. The Russian right wing was somewhat more densely occupied than the left. The German breakthrough at Zielona succeeded against this, mainly thanks to systematic preparation by the German artillery, which was more than three times superior in number. As a result, the Russian account reports that the 11th Siberian Division, which was particularly hard hit here again, had ceased to exist as a combat unit.

While the front of the Russian 12th Army, adjoining east of the Orzyc, was systematically withdrawn on the night of July 16, the commander-in-chief of the 1st Army hoped to restore the situation at Zielona by incorporating the ½ 40th Infantry Division (IV Corps) that had meanwhile arrived. He ordered the general attack of the I Siberian and I Turkestan Corps, but had to weaken this order again soon due to the reports coming in from the front. The troops of the I Turkestan Corps could no longer hold; the shortage of ammunition for guns and rifles increased. The army leader was therefore forced to order a retreat at noon, to relocate the resistance further backward, supported by advancing new reinforcements. The battles of July 17 then led to the decision to abandon the entire right bank of the Narew and to hold only the bridgehead positions in front of Rozan, Pultusk, and Nowogeorgiewsk. The ammunition situation had become more desperate from day to day.

All in all, the Russians managed to offer considerable resistance to the far superior enemy in tough fighting. On July 13, including the reserves, about 100 German battalions and around 600 guns were ready for the attack, opposed by only about 50 Russian battalions with 150 guns; gradually, however, the German superiority had significantly decreased due to the arrival of enemy reinforcements.

According to the Russian view, the German advance was significantly slowed down by the lack of sufficient reserves and the therefore necessary repeated turning against still standing parts of the enemy. For the first few days, particularly for the withdrawal of the Plüskow Corps on July 15 to the west against Ciechanow²), this may be accurate; however, for later periods, the already mentioned concern arises that ammunition and supply replenishment would have stalled even more than it already had¹).

¹) I. Siberian Corps, ¾ I. Turkestan Corps, 30th Division of the IV Corps, 14th R. D. ²) See p. 291 ff.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

e) The Attack over the Narew.

Sessions 19, 20, 21, 22.

With the approach to the fortified Narew line, the Gallwitz Army Group faced a new task. It was necessary, in view of the defensive opponent, to force the crossing of a river whose defense could rely not only on some permanent works but also on field fortifications that had been expanded over months of work.

The Narew itself was, without the smaller river loops, about 100 kilometers long between the Bug estuary above Nowogeorgiewsk and the bridgehead of Ostrolenka, a strong natural obstacle. In the summer of 1915, it was about 80 to 150 meters wide, with sandbanks in places and some bush-covered islands, and had a low water level after a dry spring. Pronounced fords were rare and variable in their location. On foot, one could wade through the river in many places; however, bridges were necessary for artillery and vehicles. The lowland accompanying the watercourse in varying widths was almost everywhere dry and passable as the German troops approached.

For the Gallwitz Army Group, it was necessary to overcome the extensive installations of Pultusk and the smaller ones of Rozan with the large fortress of Nowogeorgiewsk on the right flank, but if possible, to simultaneously carry out the crossing of the river outside these two places. Pultusk, with its two old forts near the local bridge, was expanded into a spacious weapons site by about ten kilometers of advanced, deeply structured defense installations; at Rozan, which also had some old forts, the distance of the new installations from the bridge site was only about three kilometers. At both places, the heights of the western right bank approached the north-south flowing river closely, while on the east side they were several kilometers away. The east-west running river chalk between both places showed less pronounced height differences and was widely accompanied on both banks by a broad, often wooded lowland. A similar picture was also offered by the area above Rozan, at Ostrolenka, and towards Lomza.

¹) Further on the question of force deployment p. 371 f.

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Intentions and Preparations.

On the evening of July 18, General von Gallwitz issued an "instruction for the attack against the Narew front." General von Plüskow was to attack the "northern part of the bridgehead" of Pultusk with four divisions, including 56 batteries (18 of them heavy and 10 heaviest artillery), with the 86th and the "available parts" of the 38th Infantry Division to the west, with the 50th and the 1st Guard Reserve Division east of the road from Ciechanow, here "mainly the part leaning against the Narew." The attack of the XVII Army Corps was to "initially aim at creating efficient crossings and securing them" between Pultusk and Rozan. It was said to be conducted "in such a way that the bridgehead can be carried out under the protection of previously prepared strong artillery at two places simultaneously and surprisingly, while at several other places simultaneous crossing points appear through demonstrations (Gostkowo and Lachy), but reconnaissance must first provide confirmation. A division was to be assigned to each crossing point. The Eben Corps with three divisions, including 39 batteries, eleven of them heavy and one heaviest artillery, was designated against Rozan and was to lead the main attack against the western front. The attack against the two fortresses was to be initiated by the corps and carried out according to the progress made; General von Gallwitz wanted to determine the timing for the attack of the XVII Army Corps himself. The neighboring corps, the XVII Reserve Corps and the Eben Corps, were to engage the enemy in front of their front and thereby cover the flanks of the attack.

On July 19, the situation on the right wing of the army group remained unchanged. The center moved closer to the positions to be approached and to the Narew without significant fighting. At the High Command, the idea of breaking through the river between Pultusk and Rozan and thereby bringing down Pultusk came more and more to the fore.

General von Plüskow intended to lead the main attack against Pultusk from the northwest. General von Gallwitz, however, placed special emphasis in the sense of his instruction that also an attack on the northern front at Chmielewo on the Narew should be carried out, to cross the river at the loop that bends far to the north there and to seize Pultusk from the rear; he wanted the focus of the attack to be shifted more to the east.

1) Three or twelve kilometers east of the Orzye mouth.  
\* World War. VIII. Volume. 20

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

The enemy seemed weak here. The Eben Corps, however, did not have sufficient striking power to exploit this opportunity; its request for reinforcement with heavy artillery was rejected in view of the tasks still to be solved before Pultusk and Rozan.

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Approaching the Bridgeheads and the River.

The right wing of the 8th Army also reached the Narew at certain points. In front of its center, the enemy still held a larger bridgehead northwest of Nowogrod, further east in its previous positions.

In anticipation of the 83rd Infantry Division rolling towards Willenberg, General von Gallwitz intended to soon pull the active troops of Corps Eben to the right to force the Narew crossing between Rozan and Ostrolenka. The Commander-in-Chief East promised further reinforcements with the Menges Division, which General von Gallwitz requested behind his right wing to Mlawa, as well as the airship Z 12, which was to attack the enemy unloading stations. He also ordered the 8th Army to pull a division with strong artillery to its right wing after reaching the Narew bank, to act against Ostrolenka or to cross the river at the Rozoga mouth. He also demanded a closer approach of the right wing of the Gallwitz Army Group to the Narew and the positions of Nasielsk, where the enemy seemed to be evacuating his XXVII Corps.

General von Gallwitz now had a total of 17½ divisions; on the other hand, the battles had resulted in a loss of about 20,000 men, for which only 3,000 replacements had arrived so far. For the supply of the troops during further advance, he applied for the extension of the field railway from Prasznitz to Rozan and the construction of a full railway to Ostrolenka to connect to the Russian railway network.

On the morning of July 20, parts of the artillery of Corps Watter opened fire against the positions of Rozan. These lay as if dead; no artillery shot was fired from the Russian side, raising doubts as to whether everything had been evacuated. The 26th (Württemberg) Infantry Division reported that it intended to storm the enemy height position 132 advanced on the southwest front; about 600 prisoners were the result. This success seemed a good start and raised hopes for further progress. In a telephone conversation that General Ludendorff had with the Supreme Army Command that morning, the assurance was expressed that the attack would "smoothly come over Narew and Bug," but reinforcements were not necessary here.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

General von Gallwitz had already suggested to the XVII Army Corps to let parts cross the Narew at Lachy as soon as possible. However, General von Pannwitz had ordered his right 36th Infantry Division to move east from the area just east of the Orzyc estuary behind the 35th Division, to cross the river bend at Ostrolęka, which juts out the furthest against the enemy, on the left flank of the corps. Here, however, the enemy still stood on the right bank, which he only vacated before the 36th Infantry Division arrived, with parts also advancing in an easterly direction south of Rozan, with weaker parts also from the south west of Lachy, crossing the river and pressing the right flank of the Batter Corps, but especially the XVII Army Corps. Further Russian forces simultaneously advanced west of the Orzyc estuary and from the northern front of Pułtusk against the left flank of the Plüskow Corps.

This led to a series of partially stubborn battles. General von Plüskow moved the bulk of the 38th Infantry Division as a reserve from his right flank behind the left; he also believed he could not do without the cooperation of the 42 cm guns against Pułtusk now. At the XVII Army Corps, the situation was temporarily serious; in the afternoon, General von Pannwitz had already deployed his last reserves and requested reinforcements. It was only in the evening that the situation appeared restored everywhere; however, the large river bend south of Rozan remained in enemy hands, with about one Russian infantry division and one cavalry division involved in the fighting here, with somewhat stronger forces at Pułtusk. The own losses were considerable; the Plüskow Corps had captured about 1000 prisoners with the 1st Guard and the 50th Reserve Division together, but also lost about 600 men each. Additionally, the 86th Infantry Division of the Plüskow Corps had to be withdrawn from the front due to three cholera deaths, and losses due to dysentery occurred.

All in all, the previously high expectations were somewhat dampened by the day's events; it had become apparent that overcoming the Narew line would pose greater difficulties than expected. The enemy had increasingly shifted the focus of his defense to the Pułtusk—Rozan area. South and east of Pułtusk, the I Turkestan Corps seemed to be positioned, in Pułtusk itself the IV Corps, northeast of it at the Narew the 14th Cavalry Division and further back the I Siberian Corps, at Rozan the newly arrived XXI Corps, at Ostrolenka the IV Siberian Corps, while the XXVII Corps seemed to be advancing towards Bischöf. These were at least ten, partly very fresh enemy divisions that had to be driven out of strong positions. Therefore, further heavy fighting was to be expected.

¹) Handwritten note by Gen. von Falkenhayn from July 22.

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Russian Counterattacks.

Thus, there were at least ten, partly very fresh enemy divisions, which had to be thrown out of strong positions. Further heavy fighting was therefore to be expected.

After the vicissitudes of the day, the three German attack corps initially focused on Albeney for July 21. General von Gallwitz said to himself, "that engaging the Narew front by the weak XVII Army Corps, before we firmly held the flanks, would offer no prospect," so it would make no sense to leave parts of the corps in a vulnerable position in the Narew bend"). He had it evacuated from Gostkowo to south of Rozan during the night.

But even on the flanks of the army group, greater successes were initially not to be expected. Although the commanding general of the XVII Reserve Corps, Lieutenant General Surén, had left the garrison of Nowogeorgiewsk so small after the withdrawal of the Russian XXVII Corps that he wanted to attempt a coup de main with his Landwehr divisions, at least against the positions of the northern front. General von Gallwitz had initially agreed with this"). In view of the strength of the fortress, however, he doubted the success of such an undertaking; he considered it more correct, given the overall situation, to move the 83rd Landwehr Division of the corps to the east behind the right flank of the Plüskow corps. This also nullified the plan of Lieutenant General Surén. At the same time, the Commander-in-Chief East made the General Command of the III Reserve Corps, previously belonging to the 9th Army, available for unified leadership of the attack on the large Russian fortress. On the left flank, General von Eben wanted to carry out a feint operation on the Narew south of Ostrolenka on July 21, to then force the crossing at this place on the 22nd. But this plan also became obsolete, as General von Gallwitz ordered the main forces of the corps to be deployed north of Rozan. Thus, the last combat-ready parts of the army group were drawn to the actual breakthrough front, which thereby — without the forces still expected by rail (83rd Infantry Division and Division Menges) — reached a strength of twelve divisions.

1) von Gallwitz, p. 294. — 2) Communication from Lt. Gen. a. D. Kabisch (then Chief of Staff of the XVII R. K.) from summer 1931 to the Reichsarchiv. Further details about the attack on Nowogeorgiewsk f. C. 375 ff.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

When General von Gallwitz, on the morning of July 22, made a direct inquiry to General von Falkenhayn about the situation and intentions, he reported, concluding: "In any case, we face the outcome of the operations with great confidence." On the evening of that day, the troops were ready in the following new formation:

Under General von Beseler, the Dichhuth Corps and the 14th Landwehr Division of the previous Suren Corps were positioned in front of the northern front of Nowogeorgiewsk from the positions of Naiselsk, against which feigned operations were to be carried out on July 23 to divert the enemy's attention.

Group Plüskow with the now united XVII Reserve Corps (86th Infantry Division and Landwehr Brigade Pfeil, behind it the 85th Landwehr Division), 50th and 1st Guard Reserve Division (these two combined under the command of the commander of the 50th Reserve Division, General Freiherr von der Goltz) for the attack on Pultusk.

XVII Army Corps (36th and 35th Infantry Division), extended on the right wing by the 38th Infantry Division, which had arrived south of Szelkow, for the Narew crossing at Zambki and east of Gostkowo (near Romny).

Corps Watter with the 26th and 3rd Infantry and 4th Guard Infantry Division in front of Rozan. Here, the result of the partial attack carried out in the afternoon against the northwest front had fallen short of expectations.

Corps Eben with the 2nd and 37th Infantry Division and the 83rd Infantry Division, predominantly composed of Landsturm, advancing from Willenberg for the Narew crossing between Rozan and Ostrolenka. However, reconnaissance results made it unlikely that this could take place the following morning.

As an army reserve, the Menges Division was advancing from Mlawa to Ciechanow, thus positioned behind the less operationally effective right wing of the attack section.

Against Pultusk, General von Plüskow had indicated the XVII Reserve Corps for the attack west of the Pelta, and the Goltz Group east of the Pelta up to the Narew at Chmielewo. The artillery had been pushed forward as far as possible, but the rearmost batteries were still four to five kilometers from the enemy's foremost line. The effective firing, beginning on the morning of July 23 from more than 200 guns (about 80 of them heavy mortars with 42 cm), was sharply concentrated against the intended breach point, one of which lay between the road from Stary Golynin and the Pelta.

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Preparation for the Attack on Pultusk and Rozan.

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kilometers from the enemy's front line. The effective firing

beginning on the morning of July 23 from more than 200 guns (about 80 heavy

howitzers with 42 cm) was sharply concentrated against the intended breach point,

one of which lay between the road from Stary Golynin and the Pelta, while the main attack was to take place along the road from Makow and to the east.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

After breaking through the advanced positions, the attack was to be continued without interruption, in order to capture the inner defensive line and the bridges on the same day.

Russian artillery barely responded. At 8 a.m., the 1st Guard Reserve Division under Major General Albrecht was the first to break into the northern front on the road from Makow, soon followed by the 50th Reserve Division under General von der Goltz to its right, and at 9 a.m. the 86th Infantry Division of the XVII Reserve Corps under Lieutenant General von Bernitz, in whose area the 42 cm battery had been active. However, it took hours before the entire northern front was taken. It was not until after 11 a.m. that progress was made on the road from Stary Golynin, and only after 12 p.m. was the large earthwork of Chmielewo on the heights above the Narew in the hands of the 1st Guard Reserve Division. General von Gallwitz ordered this division to halt so that it could immediately cross the river and, if possible, reach the road to Wyszkow behind Pultusk by evening. Furthermore, the success achieved was to be exploited to the utmost to quickly capture the city and the crossings. All other considerations had to be set aside.

However, it was not easy to achieve the set goal, as only two flat-fire batteries, a 10 cm and a 13 cm battery, from the previous artillery setup, equipped with very few rounds, could act against the inner defensive line and the bridges, which were on average six kilometers behind the front position. Thus, a completely new artillery deployment was necessary. The attack by the 85th Landwehr, 86th Infantry, and 50th Reserve Division also did not gain ground with the hoped-for speed. Parts of the 50th Reserve Division suffered significant losses, while others, when rolling up the Russian position, captured many prisoners but also lost time. Observations of the extensive forest areas hindered the rapid pursuit behind the enemy, whose retreat, according to observations by the aviators, was stalled at the bridges of Pultusk. However, it could not be effectively targeted by the German artillery. The aviators themselves, given the equipment at the time, were not able to conduct their bombing seriously. The attack movement came to a halt in the evening before the inner defensive line, which, in conjunction with the two permanent works, directly covered the city of Pultusk and the crossing points and seemed strongly fortified. The forces that were currently available to resume the attack were lacking, as the division Menges (Landwehr and replacement troops) assigned to the XVII Reserve Corps in the meantime was 25 kilometers on the march, partially immediately following a 40-hour train journey, so exhausted that their intervention could no longer be expected that day.

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Execution of the Attack on Pultusk and Rozan.

Thus, General von Plüskow reported to General von Gallwitz at 8 p.m.: "In view of the great exertions and the approaching darkness, the assault must be postponed tonight. At dawn, the position should be breached." Meanwhile, the 1st Guard Reserve Division had brought infantry to the southern bank of the Narew at Chmielewo and Grojno. But it was not until 3 a.m. that a bridge was to be completed, allowing the division to advance into the rear of Pultusk. This threat — General von Plüskow believed — the enemy would likely evade by timely evacuation of the western bank.

In the area of the XVII Army Corps, the Narew crossing of the 38th Infantry Division, which had driven the enemy from the northern bank only in the preceding afternoon, was unsuccessful at Zambski. However, further east, the 36th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Heineccius, whose infantry partially waded through the river, had already reached the southern bank early on the morning of July 23 and advanced from there. By noon, the right wing of the 35th Infantry Division also managed to secure the southern bank, while infantry of the 38th Infantry Division crossed in the area of the 36th and then created space westward. The construction of bridges, however, progressed slowly due to Russian counteraction. The 36th Infantry Division suffered such heavy equipment losses that they had to rely on the bridge train of the 35th, delaying their construction again; the 38th Infantry Division could only begin construction at Zambski towards evening.

Nevertheless, by the end of July 23, they had established a firm foothold on the 16-kilometer river stretch from Chmielewo to Binduza on the southern bank of the Narew and could begin four bridges, including the construction of the 1st Guard Reserve Division. The apparently not very strong enemy still stood close opposite, holding in an arc from Ostrolęka to the right bank.

At Rozan, General von Watter had intended on July 23 to fully occupy the positions of the northwest front. But even this partial goal was not fully achieved. As the enemy positions did not seem ready for storming everywhere, some heavily fortified installations north of the Pultusk road were taken; with very few own losses, 1100 prisoners were captured. The approximately 1½ kilometers back, likewise heavily fortified Russian second position was to be taken only on the following or the next day.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

"I agreed in the hope," wrote General von Gallwitz later, "that in the meantime the successes of the neighboring corps would become effective and that greater bloodshed could be avoided at Rozan." He calculated on the one hand with the night evacuation of Pultusk and further advance of the XVII Army Corps, on the other hand with the still pending Narew crossing of the Corps Eben, which was to be forced in the early morning of July 24 between Rozan and Ostrolenka.

The 8th Army's operations scheduled for July 23 against the Narew had yielded no results.

On the night of July 24, the expectations of General von Gallwitz were fulfilled. The Russians evacuated Pultusk and Rozan. Parts of the 86th Infantry and 50th Reserve Division had already moved into Pultusk during the night. By 5 a.m., the report was in the hands of the high command, and by 6 a.m., the news followed that the advance troops of the 3rd Infantry Division had also entered Rozan. In both places, the bridges were destroyed, except for a military bridge and a footbridge just north of Rozan, which were under such heavy enemy fire that they could not be used for the time being. The Russians had set Rozan itself on fire during their retreat, similar to other places before; only about a third of the houses could still be saved. Pultusk, on the other hand, showed only minor damage.

General von Gallwitz himself later judged the success: "The famous Narew Line was taken after quite careful preparation, but finally after a short fight. What had not been considered about this problem in military literature and strategic tasks! It was something worth experiencing. However, eleven days had passed since the attack at Przasnysz, too much for the map distance. But what had the Russian piled up in works in this area to defend it, he mostly did!" About 37,000 prisoners and 49 machine guns, but only 14 guns were the total booty since the 13th, of which 8,500 prisoners, 49 machine guns, but not a single gun from the time since July 18. In the fortified bridgeheads of Pultusk and Rozan, over earthworks, only 3,600 prisoners had been made. The enemy had his excellent defensive installations on the right bank of the Narew mainly with infantry alone so long to hold, until they were shattered by the mass deployment of German artillery.

1) von Gallwitz, p. 300.

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Crossing the River and Outcome of the Battles.

Despite all efforts of the brave German troops, who alone suffered about 3000 casualties on July 23, the Russians succeeded in withdrawing the forces stationed in the bridgeheads back across the river in a short summer night without significant loss of prisoners and without any loss of equipment.

3. The Continuation of the Attack against the Bug.

a) Influence of the Supreme Army Command¹).

General von Falkenhayn saw in the favorable course that the operations had taken since mid-July not only with the Army Group Gallwitz but also with the Army Detachment Woyrsch²) and the Army Group Mackensen³), promising signs for the maturation of the great success hoped for between the Vistula, Narew, and Bug. "General von Falkenhayn brings good news. Everything is progressing in the East. In the West, the enemy is calm... Falkenhayn says it seems the campaign will now be decided in the East!" — so wrote Generaloberst von Plessen in his diary on July 19. In such hope, the German Chief of General Staff had decided to bring in two more divisions from the West⁴). So far, all contributions from other theaters of war had flowed to the Mackensen Army Group. Since further relocation due to long transport routes and difficult supply conditions did not seem advantageous, General von Falkenhayn inclined to assign the two divisions to the 9th Army so that they could advance between Ivangorod and Warsaw over the Vistula into the rear of the enemy still holding at the Narew. However, he then agreed to the proposal of Generaloberst von Conrad, who advocated deployment with the Gallwitz Army Group. General von Falkenhayn therefore informed the Commander-in-Chief East on July 20: "After the course of recent events, it is highly foreseeable that in the decisions, the fight against the Russians will fall in the area south of the Narew. In it, therefore, the deployment of even the last battalion, not absolutely necessary elsewhere, is justified and required. His Majesty has consequently ordered the deployment of the 54th and 58th Infantry Divisions as well as the Mortar Battalion No. 1 from the Western theater of war. The transport begins on July 20th."

¹) Maps 6 and 7. — ²) p. 394. — ³) p. 390 ff. — ⁴) p. 100.

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Information on the intended use and the desired unloading stations was requested.

When this telegram reached the Commander-in-Chief East, it was 2:30 in the afternoon2). The enemy had evacuated the fort on the west bank of the Narew near Ostrolenka the previous evening, and the Gallwitz Army Group reported its first success against Rozan as well, but the severity of the subsequent Russian counterattacks over the Narew between Pultusk and Ostrolenka was not yet recognized. The staff was still full of hope to quickly overcome the Narew line. To the left of the Vistula, the 9th Army was advancing against the Grojec-Blonie position3), the right wing of the Woyrsch Army Detachment4) was approaching the fortress of Iwangorod from the south. On the front from Lomza over Ostrowiec and Rowno to Schaulen, the situation was essentially unchanged; in the far north, the left wing of the Njemen Army had come close to Mitau5).

The Commander-in-Chief East, contrary to the Supreme Army Command, was still of the opinion that the thrust over the lower Narew would remain operationally ineffective, and that the sooner, the better all available forces should be deployed at the Njemen, the retreat of the Russians on the left bank of the middle Vistula might have reinforced this view. Therefore, he had already assigned the surplus third brigade of the Menges Division to the 10th Army the day before, to push further forward against the Njemen and Kowno, according to a diary entry by Major General Groener from that time, he was thinking of a "breakthrough at Olita". Only a success in the Njemen area now seemed to promise operational impact. The decision on the use and unloading stations for the divisions rolling in from the west was to be reserved by the Commander-in-Chief East until the beginnings reached the Vistula the morning after next; by then he expected to have a clearer view of the further outcome of the attack on the Narew. Here he pushed sharply forward, also meeting the wishes of the Supreme Army Command. In this, General Ludendorff, in a telephone conversation with Major General Tappen, requested to postpone the decision on the deployment of the two western divisions until the morning of July 22nd, and expressed the conviction that the Gallwitz and Scholtz armies would smoothly cross the Narew and the Bug and exert the effect demanded by the Supreme Army Command on the battles at Lublin.

1) p. 100. — 2) G. 307 f. — 3) G. 335 f. — 4) G. 396. — 5) G. 460.  
6) These and the following statements are based on a note made by General von Falkenhayn two days later (on July 22nd).

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Dispute with the Supreme Army Command.

to come over the Narew and the Bug and exert the effect on the battles at Lublin demanded by the Supreme Army Command¹). Therefore, there might now be an opportunity to deploy the new divisions against the Russian Njemen Front.

However, the events of July 20 had significantly reduced the prospect of quickly crossing the Narew²). It seemed that the enemy was withdrawing forces from the 9th Army and thereby strengthening his Narew Front. Thus, the Commander-in-Chief East now considered a sharp attack by the army possible and necessary. He gave her the order in the evening to break through the enemy positions on the left bank of the Vistula to cross the river above Warsaw³). He aligned himself with the thoughts of General von Falkenhayn⁴). He thought of cooperating with the left wing of the Woyrsch Army Detachment and possibly also made representations to the Supreme Army Command in this sense⁵). In addition, he now made the first arrangements for the encirclement of Nowogeorgiewsk.

On the morning of July 21, the decision of General von Falkenhayn arrived. Even if the not entirely satisfactory course of July 20 at the Narew Front had already raised slight doubts in him as to whether the high hopes he had attached to the overall operation in recent days would be fulfilled, he now had to reflect that the offensive of the Mackensen Army Group was also threatening to come to a standstill due to unexpectedly stubborn resistance. If that happened, the success of the entire operation was in question. Therefore, the most urgent requirement seemed to him to keep the attack on the Narew Front in motion. He informed General Ludendorff: "Since the situation between the Bug and the Vistula urgently demands relief from the north, I can to my

¹) In the draft of Gen. von Falkenhayn from July 20 to a letter to Gen. Ludendorff, which has not been amended, it says: "At least Tappen told me, you had — in deviation from your and the Field Marshal's view in Poland — thought that the forces of the Gallwitz and Scholtz armies would be completely sufficient to safely advance over the Narew and the Bug so far that their impact on the events at Lublin would be certain."  
²) P. 308 f. — ³) P. 336. — ⁴) P. 315.  
⁵) General Ludendorff mentioned in a conversation with the Austro-Hungarian Army Command on July 21, which he reported to the AOK and from the O. H. L. requested proposal of the Woyrsch Army Detachment over the Vistula (P. 397 f.) to have been suggested to Gen. Ludendorff (Records of the War Archives Vienna).

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

Regret alteration of the general operational plan in the sense of the

local suggestion, not to consider deploying divisions coming from the west

against the Njemen Front."

Meanwhile, the enemy had evacuated the Grojec position in front of the 9th Army

during the night. At the Njemen Army, the entire southern flank was now advancing,

3400 prisoners were reported, Schallen was recaptured. At 12:45 p.m., another message

from General von Falkenhayn to General Ludendorff in Lötzen arrived, stating: "Even

for the case you mentioned in yesterday's teleconference with Tappen, that Group Gallwitz

was advancing well, in my opinion, unfortunately, no deviation from the Supreme

Orders should occur now."

Then Field Marshal von Hindenburg himself addressed the Supreme Army Command

at 12:45 p.m.: "We also intend to break through the Narew Line under all circumstances.

However, since it was possible to achieve this goal without deploying the new units and

their use further east would then become more effective, General Ludendorff has informed

me of his intention to postpone the final determination of the deployment point until the

beginnings of the divisions cross the Vistula." In response, General von Falkenhayn

explained his view in detail: Due to the situation in the Balkans, time was pressing.

However, it is not to be assumed that the Mackensen Army Group, after the achievements

and efforts it has already made, will "advance quickly on its own," nor will the cooperation

of the Woyrsch Army Detachment and the 9th Army suffice. "So it remains only to do

everything possible to make the Narew Strike Group as strong as possible, so that it quickly

forces the decision, and therefore the allocation of the two fresh western divisions to it has

been made. — This does not prevent, as soon as clear signs of the enemy's collapse and

yielding between the Vistula and Bug become apparent, strong forces from the Narew

Strike Group being thrown onto the Njemen to pursue the success sought by Your Excellency."

The prerequisite is only "accelerated advance from railway lines at the East Prussian border

over the Narew." They also formed, according to the view of the Supreme Commander East^1),

the precondition for the unhindered progress of the Gallwitz Army Group.

The Supreme Commander East now decided to assign the 54th of the two advancing

infantry divisions to the left flank of the Gallwitz Army Group, and the 58th to the 8th Army, to now also advance on the previously only thinly occupied front section east of Ostrolenka.

1) Communication from Gen. Ludendorff from December 1931 to the Reich Archive.

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Disputes with the Supreme Army Command.

As things stood, he shared the view of General von Falkenhayn. "It must," it says in his war diary, "be necessary not to carry out the Narew operation once begun. However, it is doubted here that the Narew operation can lead to a decision. The decision lies with Kowno, taking this fortress and advancing towards Wilna." It was feared, as was repeatedly discussed and emphasized in the staff, "that the Russian, with his great skill in retreat, would pull his head out of the noose at Narew by sacrificing rearguards"¹).

On July 22, Field Marshal von Hindenburg presented his intentions to the Supreme Army Command: "According to His Majesty's orders, I am placing the greatest emphasis on operations against the Narew. Since Narew has not yet been crossed, the new infantry divisions will be unloaded at Puppen and Kolno to reinforce the Narew strike group. After crossing the Narew, the right wing Gallwitz will take the fortifications at Zegrze with the weakest possible forces, attack Nowogrojeweńsk from the north and northeast, and attack it. The 9th Army is to break through the Russian position forward of Warsaw, then cross the Vistula above with parts and attack Warsaw. Close cooperation between the 9th Army and the right wing Gallwitz is essential in the battle for Warsaw and Nowogrojeweńsk and will be kept in mind by me, as well as freeing parts of the 9th Army for the offensive to the east. The 10th Army²) continues to advance with its weak forces. The Njemen Army³) carries out its tactical success. I still reserve the decision as to how far it will be advanced towards Wilna. — I dutifully point out that I still expect a decisive success and a quick and decisive relief from Mackensen from a reinforcement of the 10th Army and the capture of Kowno."

July 23 brought the already described⁴) advances of the Army Group Gallwitz against Pultusk and Rozan and the Narew crossing between both places. In addition, Field Marshal von Hindenburg was able to report a complete victory of the Njemen Army to the Kaiser in the evening⁵). The booty made there since July 14 amounts to about 27,000 prisoners and 23 guns.

¹) Communication from Colonel von Baldow from summer 1931 to the Reichsarchiv. In July, Major von Fleischmann also reported to the Supreme Army Command on July 20, 1915 (Files of the War Archives Vienna).  
²) p. 473. — ³) p. 461 f. — ⁴) p. 313 f. — ⁵) p. 462 f.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

According to the report of General von Below, "the main body of the Russian 5th Army fighting at Schaulen has been dispersed." However, there was a lack of forces to further exploit this success, as the entire concern of the Commander-in-Chief East was now primarily focused on continuing the Narew operation. After crossing the river, it was to take a more easterly direction. Depending on the need, one could then force the Bug crossing in the area of Wyszkow with the right wing and thus get directly behind the Russians still holding at Warsaw, or — staying on the right bank of the Bug — head towards Brest Litowsk and thus strike at the depth of the Russian connections. A corresponding order was already given at noon to the Gallwitz Army Group and the 8th Army after the first reports of successes achieved at Pultusk¹).

The decision of the Supreme Army Command received the following day, July 24, coincided — as far as the continuation of the Narew operation was concerned — with what the Commander-in-Chief East had already ordered. It stated: "After taking note of Your Excellency's intentions, His Majesty has ordered: The rapid continuation of the operations of the Narew strike group in a generally southeasterly direction is necessary. The more it succeeds in emphasizing the left wing, the better it will be. The unloadings at Kolno and Puppen already indicate this. The measures against the fortresses of Warsaw, Nowogeorgiewsk, and Zegrze are to be adapted to the guiding idea, therefore, for the time being, as few forces as possible should be used against them. The capture of the fortresses is currently of no value compared to the importance of the thrust to the southeast. — Your Excellency's intention to deploy parts of the 9th Army after breaking through the position at Blonie—Nadarzyn across the Vistula aligns with the plans of the Supreme Army Command. Unfortunately, a reinforcement of the 10th Army is currently not feasible, which also answers the final sentence of the telegram. It will be of great importance for the overall operations if the Niemen Army soon advances with at least stronger cavalry against the Russian rear connections into the area of Wilna."

Thus, the agreement with the Supreme Army Command was restored in the measures to be taken immediately. However, the relationship had been strained by the sharpness of the preceding discussions, experiencing an undesirable escalation; the deeper-seated differences were not resolved.

¹) p. 321.

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The Continuation of the Attack against the Bug.

h) The Battles of the Army Group Gallwitz and the 8th Army from July 24 to 26.

Maps 6 and 7, Sketches 21 and 22.

The order of the Eastern High Command, which reached General von Gallwitz on the afternoon of July 23, stated: "After forcing the Narew, the right wing of the Gallwitz Army is to take Dembe, Zegrze, and Benjamino and attack Nowogeorgiewsk." The mass of the army is to continue the march along the line Wyszkow—Ostrow and the road Ostrow—Lomza to the Ruz-Bach. — The right wing of the 8th Army is to advance along the Ruz-Bach." According to a later report from General von Gallwitz to the Supreme Army Command, the way was to be opened for him by the march of the Gallwitz Army Group. Since the battle for the Narew crossings was still in full swing when this order arrived, General von Gallwitz initially gave the new directive only to the Plüskow Corps, to take the direction towards Wyszkow after capturing Pultusk. He ordered the XVII Army Corps to establish a firm foothold on the heights south of Zambki on the right wing and to force the Narew crossing with the 35th Infantry Division in the advancing arc from Ostrolt.

When it became clear on the morning of July 24 that the enemy had already evacuated the bridgeheads of Pultusk and Rozan, the army order followed, regulating the march against the Bug. The Beseler Group (Dichthut Corps and 14th Landwehr Division, to which the Pfeil Brigade withdrew, and twelve heavy and heaviest batteries used on the Narew front until then) was to take Nasielsk and concentrate against the north and northeast front of Nowogeorgiewsk. In the area of Pultusk—Rozan, by the morning of the day, only the bridge at Chmielewo (1st Guard Reserve Division) and those at Zambki and Rondo (38th and 36th Infantry Divisions) were usable, and only in the afternoon was a fourth bridge at Pultusk completed; Russian fire, which still lay on the crossing points, had repeatedly delayed construction. The movement was to be continued in the following formation: The XVII Reserve Corps (85th Landwehr and 86th Infantry Division, now with the 1st Guard Reserve Division instead of the Menge Division) had to advance on both sides of the Narew to the south and southeast, with the left wing on the road to Wyszkow, and to take cover against Warsaw.

1) Connection to G. 315. — 2) G. 309 and 375 ff.  
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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East Against the Russian Narew Front.

July 24. The Plüskow Corps (now 50th Reserve Division, Menges Division and 38th Infantry Division), the XVII Army Corps (36th and 35th Infantry Division) and the Watter Corps (as before 26th and 3rd Infantry and 4th Guards Infantry Division) received the direction towards Wyszkow (exclusive)—Ostrow. The Eben Corps (as before 83rd, 2nd and 37th Infantry Division with only limited heavy artillery) was assigned the section of the Ostrow road west of the Rug Creek (exclusive)—Lomza as its objective.

Meanwhile, heavy rainfall had set in. During the course of the day, the area of Nasielsk and eastward was reached on the right of the Narew without significant fighting. On the left of the river, the advance initially depended on the speed with which troops could be led across the bridges, but soon new Russian resistance became apparent here. The 86th Infantry Division, which could only cross late at Pultusk, encountered enemy forces in strong positions twelve kilometers south of the crossing point at the Prut section in the evening. To the left, after continuous skirmishes in the forests east of Pultusk, the 1st Guards Reserve Division and the 38th Infantry Division reached approximately the same level as that division, while the 50th Reserve Division and the Menges Division, which could only cross later, were still behind. North of the extensive Pulkow marsh, which was essentially dry at the time, the XVII Army Corps with the 36th Infantry Division advanced on the left bank of the Narew up to the level of the Ostrzlkol loop. The 35th Infantry Division succeeded in building bridges at two points in the river bend itself, but then became stuck in narrow bridgeheads facing increasing enemy resistance. The Watter Corps faced similar difficulties, managing to bring only weak infantry forces across the river in the face of strong Russian defenses at Rozan. The Eben Corps also failed to make progress. While its 83rd Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Stumpff had brought two battalions across the Narew, and further north at Kamionka the 2nd Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Falk had brought four battalions across. These weak forces, which had waded across the river, could only maintain their position against repeated Russian attacks with heavy losses and extreme difficulty; flanking fire from well-concealed positions prevented both their reinforcement and their supply with ammunition and provisions.

The advance of the left army wing was now particularly close to the Supreme Commander's heart. If success remained denied to this, while the right wing gained ground, it would result in a pivot that would increasingly lead to purely frontal pursuit behind the gradually eastward-yielding enemy; operational impact could then hardly be hoped for.

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Between Narew and Bug. New Stay.

In the afternoon, General von Gallwitz inquired extensively by telephone with General von Eben about the prospects of the river crossing north of Rozan and considered attempting it now more at Ostrolenka, as General von Eben had originally intended1); but here too the enemy had meanwhile strengthened, and a new attempt at this point required such extensive regrouping of troops and ammunition that it could only be undertaken for July 27. However, this seemed too late. Thus, General von Gallwitz agreed to the proposal of General von Eben, who — although unable to guarantee the outcome — in agreement with Lieutenant General von Falk commanding at Kaminotka, hoped that there, even if in tough fighting, they would gradually reach the goal. "We must absolutely get through," it says in the record made at the Gallwitz High Command about this conversation, "it is of utmost importance for the operation."

In the mistaken assumption that General von Eben would now cross at Ostrolenka, the 8th Army was ready to join this advance with its own right wing.

By the morning of July 25, seven Narew bridges were completed by the Gallwitz Army Group in the Pultusk—Rozan area, with another begun kilometers south of Pultusk and at Rozan. However, the enemy had meanwhile had time to settle again and further strengthen. On the front from Nowogeorgiewsk to Lomza, including both places, up to 17 Russian divisions2) now seemed to be standing, most densely just in front of the part of the German front where the Narew had already been crossed. At the same time, new delays in supply, especially in the delivery of ammunition, became noticeable; the routes from rail and field railway points had become longer, the few existing roads were completely rutted and often impassable due to heavy traffic and new rain showers. Thus, there was a shortage of ammunition at the fighting front, which hindered the rapid continuation of the operation all the more, as the demands of the infantry for strong artillery preparation grew.

1) See p. 309.  
2) According to a situation map, the 63rd I.D., I. Turk. Corps, IV Corps, 2nd I.D., XXVII Corps, I. Sib. Corps, XXI Corps, IV. Sib. Corps, V Corps were listed, as well as some individual brigades and three cavalry divisions. — In fact, the enemy even counted 20 infantry and three and a half cavalry divisions.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

attack became all the more obstructive as the demands of the infantry for strong artillery preparation grew. Complaints about ammunition shortages began; it had to be conserved. The Eben Corps had already reported on July 24 that to cross at Ostrolenka, it first had to fetch the ammunition prepared at Raminonta from there.

General von Gallwitz had transferred the leadership of the attack between the Narew south of Pultusk and the Pultwy-Bruch to General von Plüskow. The day here was spent advancing against the new Russian positions and other attack preparations. North of the Pultwy-Bruch, the XVII Army Corps advanced towards the railway running along the eastern edge of the lowland Wyszkow-Ostrolenka, where the enemy had apparently made a strong front again. At the Watter Corps, the bridges from Rozan were still under Russian fire. The infantry was firmly in the foreland of the Narew lowland, but the entire artillery was still on the west bank in the evening. "For the divisions of the corps, it was initially about setting up the captured positions," it says in the corps' war diary on this day. The Eben Corps also failed to achieve any further success. The situation of the troops heroically established east of the river, but also reinforced by battalions, became increasingly difficult, as despite all efforts, it was not possible to silence the Russian artillery fire with machine gun fire; it came from forest positions that could not be scouted and therefore could not be fought down with limited ammunition. Thus, the losses at this one point rose to almost 1000 men. An additional difficulty was that the water depths of the fords changed so much due to the impact of heavy Russian shells and rain that almost every connection to the east bank was eventually interrupted.

In the 8th Army, the 75th Reserve Division succeeded in bringing a company across the river east of the Szkwa estuary; further progress was also prevented here by strong enemy counteraction.

The hope that after overcoming the Narew near and east of Pultusk, it would proceed quickly and thus facilitate the crossing further upstream did not seem to be fulfilled. In a telephone conversation that General von Gallwitz had with the Supreme Command D (1), General Ludendorff wished for more emphasis behind the XVII Army Corps to gain space to the east between Bug and Narew.

1) According to von Gallwitz, p. 307.

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Between Narew and Bug. Russian Counterattack.

In contrast, General von Gallwitz himself considered the advance and pivoting of the corps, reinforced to four divisions, southward towards the Bug to be desirable. Therefore, he aimed to bring his left wing over the Narew as well. Since progress at Kaminofa was stalled, he suggested to General von Eben once more to attempt the crossing at Ostrolenka in the area of the 37th Infantry Division, and provided him with the advancing 54th Infantry Division. With this reinforcement, General von Eben believed he could solve the task; he set the 54th Infantry Division on Ostrolenka for July 26.

At the 8th Army, General von Scholz hoped to force the crossing in the area of the 75th Reserve Division by sharply concentrating the troops at the break of the next day. Meanwhile, the 58th Infantry Division had also arrived behind it. Thus, the striking force of a total of four attack-ready divisions was now ready on the border of the two armies in the Ostrolenka–Szkwa estuary area.

In the Gallwitz Army Group, the attack was to be continued on July 26 along the entire front. On the right wing, the Plüskow Corps was to lead the main thrust by breaking through the Russian position at Pniewo on the road to Byskow. However, before this could happen, a general Russian counterattack began at about 8° in the morning, spanning 60 kilometers in width. Its left wing hit the 85th Landwehr Division west of the lower Narew, its right the 4th Guard Infantry Division north of Rozan. In sometimes bitter engagements, it was possible to repel the enemy everywhere, capturing about 3000 prisoners and gaining local advantages at certain points in the pursuit. Overall, however, the Russian thrust, seemingly conducted with considerable manpower and ammunition, had significantly taxed the German troops. The 50th Reserve and the 1st Guard Reserve Division together had lost another 1500 men; generally, the forces of the troops were very exhausted, the artillery was short of ammunition. General von Plüskow reported that a new attack was not possible before sufficient ammunition supplies arrived. At the Watter Corps, the Russian advance had only hit the southern wing and was easily repelled. Subsequently, it was possible to advance further in the woods east of Rozan. On the left wing, the 83rd Infantry Division of the Eben Corps participated, which had meanwhile been moved across the river by the 4th Guard Infantry Division.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

The bridgehead on the eastern bank of the Narew near Rozan was thus expanded in a three-day battle to a depth of about three kilometers, although also towards the north. This — it was hoped — would benefit the 2nd Infantry Division at Kaminotka, which was still struggling under the most difficult conditions for the crossing. Despite serious losses, Lieutenant General von Falk did not want to give in here, but continued to reinforce the parts that had crossed, although these did not gain significant ground forward.

New delays occurred at Ostrolenka. General von Gallwitz, who placed particular importance on rapid progress at this point and therefore urged, had to yield to the objections of General von Eben, who wanted to carry out the crossing only after thorough preparation based on the experiences from Kaminotka. Major General Freiherr von Watter, the commander of the advancing 54th Infantry Division, reported that despite all efforts to accelerate, he could only cross on the 28th. This was partly due to the unfamiliar road conditions of the east, which posed great difficulties for his vehicles coming from the west, further exacerbated by rain showers.

Also, at the 8th Army, hardly any progress was made on July 26. Two battalions of the 75th Reserve Division reached the left Narew bank; however, their situation threatened to become difficult as the enemy also hindered the bridgehead here with artillery fire and searchlight illumination.

In a report demanded directly by the Supreme Army Command in the morning about the situation, General von Gallwitz reported on his current mission and described his forces against the previously opposing enemy as sufficient. For the effective continuation of the attack, however, the troops needed a rest and, above all, ammunition. However, further delays had to occur in the forward movement. General von Gallwitz considered the idea of now initially directing all force to the left wing, with which he then wanted to swing south. However, he wanted to postpone the attack of the right wing, which he considered less urgent.

c) The Standstill in the Attack from July 27 to August 6.

For the right wing and the center of the Gallwitz Army Group, July 27 was essentially a day of standstill after the heavy fighting of the 26th. In some sections, the troops observed how the enemy expanded and wired their positions; they themselves were initially set on defense.

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Between Narew and Bug. Battles without Progress.

General von Plüskow considered withdrawing parts that had suffered particularly heavily only possible "when a rearward position had been established." On the left flank at Rozan, where the enemy had vacated the forest area east of the river at night, the bridgehead was extended to Goworowo, reaching a depth of eleven kilometers; at the same time, the 83rd Infantry Division could advance northward to the crossing point of Kamionka to within about five kilometers; in total, more than 2000 prisoners were brought in. The relief hoped for the situation of the 2nd Infantry Division did not initially materialize. The 54th Infantry Division, assigned to the crossing at Ostrolenka, was still missing the promised pontoons and part of the ammunition, so the river crossing on July 28th early in the morning seemed not yet possible according to the troop leaders. General von Eben, however, now stuck to the once set attack time.

In the 8th Army, it was the 75th Reserve Division of Lieutenant General von Seydewitz that succeeded in completing a bridge at the Schwanmündung during the night and bringing its entire infantry to the southern bank of the Narew despite enemy fire during the day; the 58th Infantry Division had arrived behind it. As a further task of this wing of the 8th Army, Lieutenant General Ludendorff now designated the advance eastward against the rear of Lomza; he promised two mortar batteries of the Eben Corps for this, as soon as the corps had completed the crossing. Since the heavy batteries freed at Pultusk and Rozan had joined the Beseler group, the left wing of the Gallwitz Army Group and the right of the 8th Army had to make do with their previous artillery, which was quite limited for the task to be solved; the Eben Corps had only six heavy howitzer batteries in total with three infantry divisions.

On the morning of July 28th, the Gallwitz Army Group reported directly to the Supreme Army Command, apparently at their request: On the right flank, the attack on Dembe-Serock would be possible in about three days; until then, the Russians would exhaust themselves in unsuccessful attacks. The Prut position, which had proven to be strongly fortified, was also to be attacked; however, it would take two to three days before the ammunition arrived. At the Pulwy break and northward, the XVII Army Corps would fight in a broad front defensively. It was important to first assist the Eben Corps over the Narew. If the crossing at Ostrolenka succeeded today or tomorrow, the offensive could begin on this flank with new divisions in two to three days and be continued.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

When this report was immediately communicated to the Supreme Army Command by the Eastern Command, the difference in views on the further objectives became clear1). While Colonel Marquard pointed out that "the encirclement around Warsaw must be closed and tightened, the left wing should therefore not be extended further against the 8th Army, rather it should be reinforced if possible," Lieutenant Colonel Hoffmann reveals the view of the Commander-in-Chief East, who did not expect much from the thrust south against and over the Bug, but wished to gain space southwards; the Gallwitz Army Group should cooperate as much as possible with the 8th Army to open the Narew crossing in the direction of Sniadowo; until Lomza had fallen, it could not cross the Bug anyway.

Reports of Russian attacks also came from the right wing of the Army Group on this day. In a discussion with the Plüskow Corps, Colonel Marquard hoped that the Russians would bleed out in the ongoing attacks. For the time being, the German attack was halted everywhere. The resumption at the Plüskow Corps was now scheduled for August 3; until then, ammunition was to be procured. This meant that the right wing of the army was not only — as assumed in the morning report to the Supreme Army Command — completely delayed for three days, but for almost a week. The advance against the Bug directly into the rear of Warsaw, to close the encirclement there, was postponed accordingly. But even on the rest of the front, things did not go as desired on July 28.

At the Watter Corps, only a local success at Goworowo was recorded; the temporarily assigned 83rd Infantry Division, reserve, landwehr, and landsturm troops with only about six batteries, were too weak to make further progress after the successes of the previous day. At the Eben Corps, the stubbornly holding 2nd Infantry Division managed to bring five batteries across the river at night — parts of the 37th Infantry Division followed —, but the situation could not be decisively improved even with this.

At Ostrolenka, where the securing exit of the 54th Infantry Division only partially succeeded early in the morning against the prepared defense of the enemy, the army command, in view of the experiences made at Ramionka, considered whether to abandon the operation after all, to bring the division over a bridge that had meanwhile been started south of Kamionka to the left bank of the Narew.

1) p. 325.

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Between Narew and Bug. Battles without Progress.

In contrast, the division commander, Major General von Watter, still considered the execution of the once initiated operation to be promising and "in the interest of the troops and the cause" necessary. He wanted to cross at several points in the coming night, thus in a broader front, which General von Eben also agreed to. However, General von Gallwitz intervened with the order to prepare the division to march south, where a secure crossing was prepared and fresh fighting strength was urgently needed against the stubborn resistance of the enemy.

In the 8th Army, the 75th Reserve Division could not significantly expand its position south of the Narew with rising water; their troops were, as the war diary states, "at the end of their strength after the enormous exertions." To continue the operation, the commander, Lieutenant General von Seydewitz, was also subordinated to the 58th Infantry Division and deployed on the right wing.

On July 29, the surprising news came in the morning that the Woyrsch Army Detachment had taken the right bank of the Vistula between Iwangorod and Warsaw with several spearheads1). However, there was complete standstill on the own front; the enemy seemed to be reinforcing here; from Błystok, flyers reported unloading of troops who seemed to be marching further on Ostrow. If the enemy retreated from the Vistula, it was possible that he was trying to make room to the north. General von Gallwitz therefore ordered his entire right wing up to and including the XVII Army Corps to strengthen and barricade the positions and to pull out reserves. On the left army wing, only the Eben Corps, to which the 83rd Infantry Division withdrew, was to attack on July 30, unless a "significant change in the situation occurred" by then. The goal was to encircle the IV Siberian Corps standing at Ostrolenka from the south. The Watter Corps had to cover the right flank of this attack. As General von Gallwitz explained to General Ludendorff, his further intention was as before: "Hold on the right, initially no attack against the fortresses. On the left with ten divisions, covered by the 8th Army to the east, advance on Ostrow—Malkin," thus a large right swing against the Bug. From the Plüskow Corps, the 1st Guard Reserve Division was to march back to Szelkow as an army reserve, from where it could be drawn over Rozan to reinforce the left army wing.

1) p. 405. — 2) von Gallwitz, p. 310.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

The attack of the Eben Corps began on July 30 only at noon and, despite the deployment of the 54th Infantry Division on the right wing, again fell far short of the hopes of the Gallwitz High Command. Due to the stubborn resistance of the Russians, instead of encircling them, they were pushed back frontally by a few kilometers in a northeasterly direction. The general difficulties associated with rapid advances, and the determination with which the leadership nevertheless adhered to achieving a major objective through attack, are shown by an instruction given by General von Gallwitz on this day to the commanding generals and division commanders. It stated: "The great successes achieved in the battle for strongly fortified positions through the use of heavy and heaviest artillery should not lead to waiting for the involvement of such combat means in cases where the battle can be conducted without them." The 21 cm mortars are intended for strongly fortified strongpoints, against wide wire entanglements, and under certain circumstances also against localities with strong masonry. However, the supply of ammunition is difficult and feasible at the expense of field unit ammunition and provisions with the longer communication lines. As much as it is necessary to "spare the infantry losses as much as possible," the troops should not be too pampered. Hastily constructed strongpoints, for which the enemy now had only a few days to prepare, must be overcome with the cooperation of field artillery and heavy field howitzers. The longer the attack on such points is delayed, the more time the enemy has to reinforce them."

Ammunition shortages were also evident in the 8th Army. The commander of the 58th Infantry Division, accustomed to western combat conditions, Lieutenant General von Gersdorff, reported that in his opinion "with the completely inadequate means, a continuation of the attack was out of the question." The crossing of the Narew was only planned for the night of August 2.

For a week, the operation had essentially been at a standstill. General von Gallwitz assigned the 1st Guard Reserve Division to his left wing. When he also brought in the 50th Reserve Division from the Plüskow group on July 31, it felt only capable of holding the position, but no longer of attacking. On the same day, a Russian counterattack temporarily broke through the 83rd Infantry Division and inflicted heavy losses on it.

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Between Narew and Bug. Increasing Ammunition Demands.

At the same time, it became apparent that the situation of the parts that had crossed the Narew at Kamionka was still significantly less favorable than General von Gallwitz had assumed based on previous reports. General von Eben had indeed ordered the continuation of the attack on the entire front east of the Narew, but had to report in the evening that his ammunition columns at the distribution point Krempa, where the Watter Corps also received supplies, would have to wait for days to be filled; the demands of his corps were barely met to a third there, which posed the most serious danger for the continuation of the attack. Nevertheless, progress was made in the 2nd Infantry Division during the afternoon, especially the Russian position dominating the crossing at Point 92 was finally taken. At Ostrolenka, rearward movements of the enemy were detected on the southern bank of the Narew. On the other hand, the Narew bridge of the 75th Reserve Division was destroyed again by Russian fire at the 8th Army. At 11 p.m., General von Eben ordered the continuation of the attack on the entire front for the following day, to open the river crossing for the 8th Army.

Even August 1st brought no decisive progress. Complaints about ammunition shortages persisted, while the Russian artillery showed more activity than before. According to Major General Tappen of the Supreme Army Command, who spoke at the German headquarters in Krasne that day, there was enough ammunition available for the East; however, due to long and poor transport connections from the unloading stations, it did not reach the front in the required amount. Not only the Chief of Staff of the Eben Corps, Major General von Boyna, but also that of the Watter Corps, Lieutenant Colonel Reinhardt, made emphatic complaints about this situation in telephone conversations with the High Command. The cholera threat had also not yet been overcome1). There were 97 cases; as a specialist in combating it, General Physician Dr. Hünermann joined the army group.

Meanwhile, it became known that the attack of the Mackensen Army Group was now progressing and that one of the works of Iwangorod had already fallen. Foreign newspapers spoke of the impending evacuation of Warsaw. It seemed that the Russians wanted to stubbornly defend the access to the large double-track railway Warsaw—Bialystok, which must have been important for them for the return of equipment and supplies.

1) p. 308 and from Gallwitz, p. 314.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

On August 2, pilots reported that the evacuation of Warsaw seemed to be well advanced; numerous larger bivouacs had been observed south of the Bug towards Nowo Minsk. Increasingly, it had to be considered possible that the enemy was now also yielding in front of the Army Group Gallwitz. However, on this day, only the Eben Corps made some progress; on August 3, it found the Russian positions at the Narew near Ostrolenka vacated and advanced. By evening, the railway from Goworowo to south of Ostrolenka had been reached; more than 2000 prisoners were captured. "The railway for the general attack in a southeasterly direction was clear," wrote General von Gallwitz later; it was supposed to begin on August 4. Instead, the Commander-in-Chief East now ordered the continuation of the attack with the left wing on Sniadowo, thus sharply to the east. This required a turn from the previously southeast-directed front and the final abandonment of the thrust south over the Bug into the rear of Warsaw. Somewhat deviating from the decision of the Commander-in-Chief East, General von Gallwitz temporarily held on to the idea of advancing his left wing more to the south to cooperate with the Mackensen Army Group.

On August 4, the attack was also resumed at the Watter Corps, which had meanwhile been reinforced by the 1st Guard Reserve Division, and the enemy was thrown out of its positions east of Goworowo, at and north of the road to Ostrolenka, in fierce fighting. At the same time, the Eben Corps advanced up to 15 kilometers east of Ostrolenka. Following this, the "Seydlitz Corps" (58th Infantry and 75th Reserve Division) of the 8th Army advanced south of the Narew to the east. Near the town of Nowogrod, the 10th Landwehr Division crossed the river. 5000 prisoners were the spoils of the day for the Gallwitz Army Group, 4000 of them at the Watter Corps. However, the territorial gain for this corps, especially on its right wing, remained small. In the evening, it was also learned that the enemy of the 9th Army had meanwhile withdrawn behind the fortifications of Warsaw and that it had completely vacated the left Vistula bank at Iwangorod. "One particularly felt the decision," noted General von Gallwitz on this day. However, he still expected new resistance from the enemy in a position that had meanwhile been prepared, which extended fairly straight from the northeastern end of the Pultny Marsh to the area west of Lomza.

1) von Gallwitz, p. 314. — 2) Ibid., p. 316.

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Between Narew and Bug. Progress, but no Decision.

August 5th showed that the enemy was initially not even inclined to retreat to these lines. The day brought no progress. From the right wing of the army group, the 38th Infantry Division was now also assigned to the left wing, and the general command of the XI Army Corps was to follow there. However, the enemy, as it was learned, had already given up Warsaw; the 9th Army had followed to the Vistula. "The Russians are desperately resisting and have entrenched themselves again," wrote the first general staff officer of the army group, Major Staps, on this day. "But I hope that we will get through and, in cooperation with Mackensen, strangle them."

On August 6th, the left wing of the Beseler group reached the fort Dembe on the Narew, which was not defended by the enemy. Otherwise, the day brought some progress in tough fighting in the direction of the southwest, especially at Wonsowo and Czerwín, which, although not significant operationally, together with the battles of the last three days, resulted in a larger number of prisoners, 14,000 men along with 69 machine guns, and also a capture of six guns. An attempt by the 8th Army on this day to advance against Doswiec by releasing gas, however, did not achieve the hoped-for success. On the other hand, various points on the front reported backward movements by the enemy; numerous village fires indicated imminent, possibly larger retreat intentions of the Russians.

4. The Events at the 9th Army and the Capture of Warsaw2).

Maps 5, 6, and 7, Sketch 12.

When Field Marshal von Hindenburg gave the fundamental order for the initiation of the Narew operation on July 3rd, the 9th Army had received the order to cover Poland to the left of the Vistula. However, if the Russians retreated here, it was to follow them to enclose Warsaw and Nowogeorgiewsk on the left bank of the Vistula.

After the release of the XVII and ½ XI Army Corps for the Narew attack, Field Marshal Leopold Prince of Bavaria, with Major General Grünert as Chief of Staff, at his approximately 100-kilometer-long front still had over 6½ infantry divisions, including the fully capable assault troops of the 5th, 49th, and 50th Reserve Divisions, as well as a cavalry division.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

The strength ratio to the opposing Russian 2nd Army was estimated by the High Command at 83 German against 148 Russian battalions, but they felt significantly superior in artillery of all calibers and ammunition. As the results of aerial reconnaissance repeatedly indicated that the enemy would soon retreat to the Grojec-Blonie position, the idea of pursuit took precedence over the task of covering, and both the High Command and the Eastern Commander-in-Chief wished to inflict further damage on the enemy before he withdrew, if possible, by repeating the gas attack, to unfold the offensive of the Mackensen Army Group as well as the impending attack against the Narew.

On July 6, Field Marshal Prince Leopold ordered gas to be released as soon as the weather conditions allowed. The aim was to "harm the enemy before it is too late, even if full tactical exploitation of the effect must be forgone." Gas cylinders were installed in the area of the XXV Reserve Corps between Sumin and the southwestern corner of the northern adjoining Bzura bend with the Beseler Group. The timing of the release was left to the commanding generals.

Already in the evening of the day, the weather conditions in the southern section seemed so favorable that General von Scheffer ordered the release at 9:45. Between Sumin and Borzymow, the success seemed good. Further north, the release was omitted due to insufficient wind strength, but the gas cloud then crept back, which had formed further south, and moved along the positions northwards beyond the Sucha. It came completely unexpectedly for the German troops stationed here and was not recognized in the darkness. Serious losses occurred; a total loss of over 29 men from Russian fire was matched by one of about 90 men from their own gas, of which — including all who died from the effects in the following days — 138 were dead. The effect also seems to have been significant on the enemy. Assault troops were able to bring back 112 prisoners, 11 machine guns, 1700 rifles, and other equipment as booty from their positions.

1) Deployment on July 3 (from the right flank): Division of Genlt. von Menges (Replacement and Landwehr troops from the former Breslau Corps), Group of Gen. von Frommel: 1st G. D., 84th G. J. D., Landwehr and Landsturm troops of the former Posen Corps, (5th R. D.), XXV R. K. (Group of Gen. von Beseler: 4th L. III. O. K. (5th R. D.), 83rd J. D. (Landwehr and Landsturm troops of the former Posen Corps), and 48th Westfernabgen (Landwehr and Landsturm troops).

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Simultaneous Battles of the 9th Army.

From the course of this third gas operation, the lesson was learned that blowing off at night would only be considered again when one's own troops were equipped with sufficient protective means.

In the following days, signs of the enemy's impending retreat increased. From the right wing of the army, the Russian IV Corps had been withdrawn from the front, and the enemy weakened in front of the southern adjoining Army Detachment Woyrsch. Daily, the pilots reported heavy rail traffic in the hinterland. Prisoners stated that the area in front of the Blonie position was being devastated, villages there were being burned down. The majority of the population was being transported away, and everything that could be of any use was being removed, especially metals, even church bells and door handles.

When the attack at Prasznysz began on July 13, the tension increased, but the 9th Army itself was further weakened. It had already given up the 50th Reserve Division; Landsturm troops and re-harnessed artillery had taken their place and were consolidated into a division under Major General Gerée. As the attack of the Gallwitz Army Group made good progress and on the right wing, which had remained calm opposite the 9th Army, began to move on the Vistula bank, the Commander-in-Chief East announced on July 16 that the 9th Army was to prepare for the siege of Warsaw and Noydogorjeńst; moreover, further forces were to be released in the event of a Russian retreat. The 83rd Infantry Division and the Menges Division were designated for this purpose.

Already the following morning, it became apparent that the Russian retreat had become a fact. Almost without a fight, the 9th Army was able to follow up to the Grojec—Blonie position on July 17 and the two following days, where the enemy had settled again. A little over 1300 prisoners were the total booty. However, the strength was not sufficient to overcome the long-prepared extensive enemy position after the two divisions demanded by the Commander-in-Chief East had been given up; above all, there was a lack of the ammunition required for such a task.

On July 20, when the Russian counterattack directed against the Gallwitz Army Group suggested that the enemy was deploying stronger forces from the front of the 9th Army, while the Army Detachment Woyrsch with its right wing was already approaching Iwangorod from the south, the 9th Command believed that the enemy would not seriously defend the Grojec position but would soon retreat to the Vistula and the bridgehead of Gora Kalwarja.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

The Commander-in-Chief East gave the order to break through the enemy positions between Grojec and Blonie in the direction of Tarczyn, "to gain the right bank of the Vistula above Warsaw and to attack Warsaw." He particularly provided ammunition. On the left, the army was to secure against Nowogeorgiewsk, for its later siege General von Beseler transferred to the General Command of the III Reserve Corps to the Gallwitz Army Group, while Lieutenant General von Diringshofen took command of the troops of the left army wing.

Already on the morning of July 21, the expectation of the High Command 9 was confirmed. The enemy had evacuated the Grojec position at night, but still held at Blonie. The corps Scheffer (49th Reserve Division and Landsturm Division Gercke) previously assigned to break through to Tarczyn was given the direction to the northeast towards Piaseczno. On July 22, the 9th Cavalry Division, as the right wing of the army, following the enemy, reached the Vistula from the Pilica estuary and turned north against Gora Kalwarja. The new Russian position extended in a semicircle of about ten kilometers around this place and then moved to the Warsaw front, which ran from Piaseczno via Nadarzyn and Blonie to the Vistula west of Nowogeorgiewsk.

On this day, the Supreme Army Command had communicated that, according to reliable reports, the evacuation of Warsaw was to be expected soon, so as not to expose it to bombardment. To the left of the Vistula, the extensive fortifications of the city, as aerial reconnaissance showed, had already been blown up by the enemy. The Supreme Army Command placed great importance on accelerating the attack on the fortress front. The 9th Army planned for July 25 for this. Field Marshal Prince Leopold set the breakthrough against the Piaseczno-Nadarzyn section, with the aim of reaching Warsaw early here. The next days were spent preparing for the attack, especially with positioning the partly unspanned batteries and their ammunition; air raids were launched against the Warsaw station and the Vistula bridges. As then on July 24, the news of the capture of the Narew fortresses Pultusk and Rozan came, it seemed to the Supreme Army Command and the Commander-in-Chief East that it was high time to also advance against the Russians from the west with special emphasis. The attack was to be accelerated as much as possible.

¹) G. 308 ff. um 317. — ²) S. 396. — ³) See G. 341, note. — ⁴) S. 309.

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Attack of the 9th Army against the Positions of Warsaw.

The attack was to be accelerated if possible.

Under the leadership of the General of the Foot Artillery,

Colonel Hüther, the effectiveness shooting began on July 25 at 11 a.m.

from around 150 guns, including about 80 heavy and one heaviest howitzer,

in the eight-kilometer-wide attack section west of Piasczeno.

16 battalions of infantry were available; they were to attack at 3 p.m.

The core was formed by the infantry of the 49th Reserve Division, which had

so little time to prepare for its task that it could only work its way up to

600 to 800 meters to the enemy positions by the start of the effectiveness shooting

and finally attempted the assault from 400 meters away. They mostly

encountered Russian positions in the field and found the enemy

wire obstacles still intact. The artillery, consisting to a significant extent of

militia with older guns, had not had the desired effect due to rain and

poor visibility. Strong Russian fire

met the attackers. At 7 p.m., General von Scheffer

reported to the Army High Command that, despite the use of all available

ammunition, it had not been possible to make the Russian position ready for assault. He

called off the attack. The attempt had cost 750 men in losses.

The Commander-in-Chief, who had personally attended the attack of the 49th Reserve Division,

ordered another careful artillery preparation to

repeat the attack afterward. New ammunition had to be awaited for this.

Meanwhile, the resistance strength of the Russian positions began to be

assessed higher. According to artillery reports, they seemed

to be more strongly built overall than was the case at Gorlice;

the amounts of ammunition assigned for combat there were

greater. In the evening, the Commander-in-Chief East reported to

the Supreme Army Command: Yesterday's battle and reconnaissance

had shown that the Russian positions were extraordinarily strong.

Heavy field howitzers did not penetrate the covers; whether these were concrete

had not yet been determined. In agreement with the High Command,

the Commander-in-Chief East considered a breakthrough possible after

systematic destruction of the position by the heaviest howitzer fire with

sufficient ammunition use. Otherwise, now also on the right bank of the Vistula east of Gora Kalwarja, strong, new Russian positions have been identified.

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

On July 27, Colonel General von Woyrsch informed the Commander-in-Chief East that his left wing, the German Landwehr Corps, was to force the Vistula crossing between Iwangorod and Gora Kalwarja, at the mouth of the Radomka, on the night of July 29. To this end, he requested the support of the 9th Army through feigned operations below the mouth of the Pilica. However, the enemy pushed back the German 9th Cavalry Division, which was standing in a width of 22 kilometers, somewhat on these days. The widely extended deployment of the army was not considered entirely without concern, as it had concentrated all its strength in a narrow space against the planned breakthrough point and was no longer so mobile due to its entire composition with built-in, partly unmanned guns and numerous siege and bridge equipment that it could evade at any time. At the same time, it became apparent that the amount of ammunition necessary for the destruction of the Russian position and for subsequent new attack preparations would probably not be available at all. Rather, the Supreme Army Command had pointed out that, according to the evening report of the previous day, there seemed to be little prospect of early successes against the Blonie position; in this case, reinforcement of the Narew assault group or the Woyrsch army detachment by parts of the 9th Army was in question, "all the more so as, according to all reports, the Russians will hardly hold Warsaw if it is threatened from the east."

The Commander-in-Chief East replied: The Russians had about six divisions in the Blonie position and were conducting the defense very actively. Therefore, a further weakening of the 9th Army, even if the attack were stopped, was impossible. In view of the current high water level of the Vistula and the Russian fortifications along the eastern bank, the attempt to cross at the mouth of the Radomka seemed to him to have little prospect of success. "Within the framework of the current operations, it would therefore be more promising to either reinforce the 9th Army with the Landwehr Corps to initially push the Russians into Warsaw, where they would have strong forces free to get — or to deploy the Landwehr Corps on the right wing of the Narew assault group to accelerate the fall of Warsaw through vigorous pressure from the north." General von Falkenhayn replied: "Although I consider an advance of the Russians from the Blonie position westward with further objectives unlikely, the release of forces by the 9th Army is temporarily waived in view of Your Excellency's position."

1) p. 406.

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Battles of the 9th Army before Warsaw.

However, for various reasons, the transition visit of the Army Detachment Woyrsch must be adhered to. A simultaneous operation of the 9th Army north of the Pilica estuary is urgently desired. The Commander-in-Chief East now ordered the 9th Army to cease the breakthrough attempt "due to the large expenditure of ammunition" and to support the operation of Colonel General von Woyrsch. The idea of breaking through the Warsaw positions was thus abandoned. Field Marshal Prince Leopold redistributed the troops more evenly along the front, especially strengthening the right wing, the Frommel Group, which had to push the enemy back to Gora Kalwarja before immediate support of the Army Detachment Woyrsch could be considered. Three heaviest batteries, which had meanwhile arrived for deployment against the fortifications of Warsaw, were to be withdrawn again, and the position reached so far was to be expanded for defense.

On July 28 and 29, the enemy retreated before the Frommel Group back to Gora Kalwarja, while simultaneously the left wing of Colonel General von Woyrsch surprisingly established a foothold on the east bank of the Vistula south of the Pilica. To advance further, the Colonel General also requested continued support from the 9th Army, which then initially carried out an attack by its 14 aircraft against the railway facilities of Warsaw on July 30. Further attacks, including by the airship Z 12, followed, but without achieving decisive destruction given the state of bombing at the time. Moreover, the 9th Cavalry Division, as before, was to cooperate with the Army Detachment Woyrsch. It soon joined with the Higher Cavalry Commander 3, General von Frommel.

During the course of August 3, it became apparent that the enemy had already begun the expected retreat from the Blonie position. By noon, without any fighting having occurred, they were in full retreat before the entire front of the 9th Army. Before the pursuing German troops, they seemed to have retreated with the main forces to the outer forts of Warsaw by the evening of the day; only in and north of the road from Blonie did they still hold the foreland. According to air reports, the rubble heaps of the blown-up Warsaw fortifications had been expanded and connected into a coherent position through field installations.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

Field Marshal Prince Leopold had ordered the enemy to be thrown into Warsaw the following day.

On August 4, the advance before the fortified line of the forts2 was halted again; behind it, the enemy seemed to continue the retreat through the city and across the Vistula to the east. The following day, the Scheffer Corps broke through along the road from Piaseczno. But already during the night, the Russians evacuated the forts line and Warsaw itself and retreated to the right bank of the Vistula. On the morning of August 5, the troops of the German 9th Army entered the city. The population remained calm. The Vistula bridges were destroyed; a firefight ensued across the river.

With the capture of the Polish capital, a widely visible success of the operations in Poland was achieved. Although military booty1) was hardly recorded, the impression worldwide was of considerable significance. The Russians had destroyed war equipment and militarily important supplies before their withdrawal. The city and population suffered little; traffic proceeded as usual.

5. Disputes between the Supreme Army Command and the Eastern Commander-in-Chief. — Formation of the Army Group Prince Leopold.

Maps 6 and 7.

Towards the end of July, when the attack in Courland was completed with the reaching of the Aa section2) and that of General von Gallwitz had again come to a halt3), the Eastern Commander-in-Chief considered it urgent to bring more momentum to the operation over the Njemen against Vilna, which had been advocated since the beginning of the month in Posen and repeatedly since then, lastly on July 22,4) and to first take Rowno. According to what General von Falkenhayn himself expressed in his statements of July 21 and 24,5) he also seemed to agree with this plan and only considered the time for its execution as not yet arrived. Just now, he had the supply of the heaviest 5t. batteries, which the Eastern Commander-in-Chief had requested for deployment against Kowno from Colonel General von Conrad and had also been assured to receive, prevented by the indication that they would be needed against Iwangorod, for the Vistula crossing, and for the advance of the 4th Army.

1) Information on the booty of the 9th Army during the advance against the Vistula could not be determined, the losses amounted to about 7000 men.  
2) G. 464. — 3) G. 326 ff. — 4) G. 271 ff. and 317 ff. — 5) Ibid.

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Capture of Warsaw. — Question of the Njemen Operation.

On July 26, Generalfeldmarschall von Hindenburg addressed

the following report to the Kaiser: “Your Imperial and Royal Majesty,

I respectfully and dutifully venture to submit my view of the current

war situation: Before the armies of Field Marshal von Mackensen, the

enemy forces are retreating towards Brest Litowsk. Their transport is

likely, I see against Army Group Gallwitz, whether in the direction of

Bialystok, the striking power of the armies of Field Marshal von Mackensen

seems to be essentially exhausted by the ongoing battles, and thus the success

of the operations ordered by Your Majesty is called into question.

The Vistula has become wider due to continuous rain, a crossing

between Iwangorod and Warsaw, as long as the enemy holds the right bank,

is therefore, in my opinion, no longer feasible1). The Army Group Gallwitz)

will probably gain ground. But if the enemy deploys his forces against them,

their striking power will soon weaken unless they are further immediately

reinforced. Even if they are successful, their advance will never lead to the

defeat of the enemy army. At most, they can push the Russians back against

the Brest Litowsk—Bialystok line. But this does not yet decide the war

despite all successes. The Russian must be hit much more sensitively! This

can only be achieved in the current war situation by strengthening the 10th

Army, capturing Kowno, and offensives by the 10th and Njemen Army

against the Russian connections. This operation could be initiated by

providing assault equipment on Kowno and by strengthening the 10th Army

with parts of the army division of Field Marshal von Mackensen, the army

division Woyrsch and 9th Army — but only after completing their current

attack — could be initiated.”

When the letter arrived in Pleß, General von Falkenhayn had

just departed for the western theater of war2). The response was therefore

delayed until July 30. On that day, the Chief of Staff, immediately after his return from the western theater of war, sought the decision of the Kaiser.

1) G. 320 and 336. — 2) G. 325 ff. — 3) G. 100.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

Just a week ago, on

July 24, he had presented to him the intention to close off the fortresses of Ivangorod,

Warsaw, Nowogeorgiewsk, "but otherwise to pursue the retreating

Russian army to destroy it before it crosses the Bug"1). Meanwhile, on July 29, the Vistula crossing

of the Woyrsch army detachment succeeded, and at the same time the Mackensen army group

resumed its offensive after a several-day pause with a

splendid initial success. Thus, General

von Falkenhayn now points out that the Eastern Commander-in-Chief, in assessing the difficulties of these two army parts,

had started from incorrect assumptions. The favorable turn on

the southern part of the Polish theater of war had also revived

the hope in him to achieve a great success on the chosen path. He did not believe that the Russians would still

retreat halfway to the Brest-Bialystok line to avoid the battle decision.

The relevant passage in the Field Marshal's letter

he annotated with the remark: "The Russians must be defeated beforehand

before they decide to do so."

The Kaiser agreed to the proposals of his chief of staff.

The letter, in which he informed the Eastern Commander-in-Chief of the decision,

contained for the first time a certain concession

to the operational basic idea, which he had been advocating with increasing emphasis since the meeting

in Posen on July 2.

General von Falkenhayn admitted that it was undoubtedly highly desirable

to advance with a strong army on the middle Njemen, but continued: "Time and space unfortunately make it

impossible to form this army from contributions from Woyrsch around

Mackensen in such a way that the enemy could not easily take timely countermeasures.

A certain consequence would be the immobilization of our

entire forces deployed here until winter. This

must be avoided under all circumstances. So it remains only

to defeat the enemy by the strongest continuation of the ongoing operations."

1) Diary entry of Colonel General von Plessen, who added:   
"This intention, I fear, will no longer succeed, as the departure is timely   
begun, very skillfully executed. With this situation, our   
cause worsens greatly, as we face the forces gathered behind the Bug more   
their army corps hurry to the west." In fact, the situation in the west at that time did not indicate this (p. 99 f.).

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Discussion with the Supreme Army Command.

His Majesty hopes that

Your Excellency can significantly contribute to success by advancing strong parts of the

Narew assault troops on the right Bug bank and similarly advancing

parts of the Njemen Army in the area east of the Njemen."

Decisive for this negative stance was thus still the desire to conclude the offensive on the eastern theater of war in the foreseeable future. This line of thought also corresponded to the intention to give further impact to the successful but not yet secured Vistula crossing of the Woyrsch Army Division by bringing in reinforcements. On July 31, the following inquiry was made to the Commander-in-Chief East:

"The Vistula crossing of the Landwehr Corps has already led to a welcome impact on the enemy. The effect would be significantly increased by bringing in additional forces. It will be attempted to make troops from the southeastern front available for these purposes. Support could be provided more quickly by the 9th Army. I therefore ask Your Excellency for prompt notification whether it is possible to release at least one infantry division from this army." Since the 9th Command did not consider the release of an infantry division feasible due to the width of its section, only a cavalry division was released2).

1) In contrast, the War Minister present at the Great Headquarters, General Wild von Hohenborn, and the Chief of the Field Operations Inspection, Major General Groener, essentially held the same position as the Commander-in-Chief East. General Groener noted in his private diary:  
"July 28. Meeting with General von Wild. We agree in a few minutes on an offensive with the 10th Army. General von Falkenhayn is too inflexible in his thinking, clings rigidly to the decision once made and does not come back. General von Falkenhayn is for further frontal advance at Gallwitz on Siedlce instead of Malin. — July 31. Conversation with Lappen about the operation. He believes that we lack the forces for the big pincer. He still wants to bring the III Army Corps from the west to Gallwitz, where everything available must be deployed. The mistake is that we did not aim at Falkenhayn to destroy the Russian army as much as possible. They want to be content with the defense on the Bug line, to then bring their ten corps through a breakthrough to the west. Falkenhayn comes up with this idea in the east through a major operation against the Russians' rear connections. For this purpose, everything that is somehow available from the Bug Army to Gallwitz should be extracted. We agree that the German war readiness to the question of whether the operation begun in Galicia, now encompassing the entire Russian army, can be brought to a successful end." — 2) p. 339.

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front:

The slow progress(1) threatened to nullify this hope at the beginning of August. He therefore considered further reinforcement of this group necessary and suggested to the Eastern Commander-in-Chief on August 2 whether the transfer of one to two divisions of the 9th Army to the Narew was now appropriate. "Even if the Russians wanted to advance on the right bank, from the fortress triangle to the west, which I consider very unlikely, they will not be able to change the course of the main decision in any way. The position of the Commander-in-Chief of the 9th Army would indeed be temporarily very impaired. However, I am ready to request an order from His Majesty that would remove any sharpness from the process."

Meanwhile, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief had already decided to reinforce the 10th Army with new forces as preparation for the future attack against Kowno(2). He replied to the Supreme Army Command on August 3: "I do not currently consider it possible to withdraw one to two divisions from the 9th Army, which is attacked along the entire front and in closest contact with the enemy. If the Russians evacuate the Blonie position, one to two divisions will be freed. I will prepare everything to expedite the transport. However, I do not consider their deployment at the Narew favorable. There is no lack of troops here(3), but we are fighting purely frontally in very difficult terrain conditions. I can only support the deployment of forces that may be freed up at the 9th Army at Kowno, to decisively act against the Russians' rear connections in conjunction with the Njemen Army after capturing the fortress. Kowno maintains only weak fire. A quick deployment is still possible here. However, I will also attack Kowno without reinforcing my weak left flank to prepare an offensive here. I have given the order for this. I request the allocation of ammunition for the heaviest artillery and heavy field howitzer ammunition. Should I still receive the heaviest artillery, I would be grateful." In response to a query from General von Falkenhayn, this position was supplemented: "From the 9th Army, the enemy apparently about to vacate the Blonie position."

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Formation of the Army Group Prince Leopold.

Any slackening of resistance before Gallwitz

is not noticeable. Should the attack of Gallwitz's left wing succeed tomorrow

and thereby the right wing of the 8th Army advance, further resistance

is initially expected, then in the Czerwony Bor position. The Russians

will probably also bring forces freed by shortening their front against

the left wing from Commander-in-Chief East."

When the withdrawal of the enemy from the Blonie position was

confirmed during the day, the Commander-in-Chief East considered the time

ripe to further weaken the 9th Army. He wanted to begin on

August 5 with a division that was to be assigned to the 10th Army for the attack

on Kowno1). In his war diary, the explanation is given on

August 3: "Even now it seems obvious from this side's point of view that the current

operation Mackensen-Böhm-Ermolli-Gallwitz will lead to a Russian retreat, but not to a

decision; on the contrary, the decisive operation over

Kowno against the Russians' rear connections no longer seems as promising as before, because

the enemy, then standing on a shorter line, can free up forces and parry the

blow, and indeed he will be all the more able to do so

the longer we wait with the offensive2)."

While the German 9th Army captured Warsaw, the

Commander-in-Chief East prepared the transport of the 84th Infantry Division

with five heavy field howitzer batteries (of the 23 previously

united before Warsaw) of the 9th Army for deployment against Kowno.

He also considered how the vast Russian territories conquered by his troops

should be administered in the future. At noon on

August 5, he received the following order from the Supreme Army Command: "His

Majesty has ordered: The 9th Army and Army Detachment Woyrsch

will be united into an army group under the command of Prince Leopold

of Bavaria and will temporarily come directly under the

Supreme Army Command."

Thus, the 9th Army was withdrawn from the Commander-in-Chief East. The

newly formed independent Army Group Prince Leopold was to break through with all means against and over the line Lukow—Siedlce, securing against any forces that might still be in the Vistula fortresses.

1) p. 475 f.  
2) A diary entry by then Captain von Waldow from   
August 4 read: "Hopefully we will finally free up forces that we can send to   
Kowno. If we have the fortress, we will be much more pleased than   
about Warsaw, which is much more important. We have always been of the opinion   
that Gallwitz would advance and capture Warsaw and Nowogeorgiewsk.   
Then we can finally strengthen our left wing."

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The Attack of the Commander-in-Chief East against the Russian Narew Front.

That the Supreme Army Command was considering such plans had been known to the Commander-in-Chief East for some time, and yet the order came completely unexpectedly now. After a series of incomparable victories and almost a year of successful activity as the sole commander over the German part of the Eastern Front, Field Marshal von Hindenburg felt the restriction of his command area, ordered just on the day of the capture of the Polish capital, as an affront. His staff felt the same way. This exacerbated the opposition to the Supreme Army Command to the utmost, in conjunction with the factual differences of opinion, and led to an irritated exchange of telegrams with it. That General von Falkenhayn explicitly described the formation of the new army group as a temporary, purely operational measure dictated by the war situation and the command arrangement vis-à-vis the Austro-Hungarian army, which did not restrict the administrative area of the Commander-in-Chief East, could not erase the feeling that, in addition to factual reasons, at least the intention had played a role to restrict the power area of the Commander-in-Chief East and thereby take away the possibility of strengthening the 10th Army and thus the planned thrust over the Njemen.

Despite the reorganization of the circumstances, the Commander-in-Chief East stuck to the plan to dispatch the parts of the 9th Army (84th Infantry Division and heavy batteries) already designated against Kowno there, but encountered decisive rejection from the Supreme Army Command. General von Falkenhayn expressed his conviction again on August 6, “that in the current situation everything depends on defeating the enemy in Poland by attacking from all sides, and that rapid advancement of the wings is only possible if a strong pressure from the Vistula is exerted.” For use against Kowno, he promised the 115th Infantry Division from the West as a replacement for the requested parts of the 9th Army, which, however, could only arrive on August 12. The heavy batteries were to be released only after the 9th Army had forced the Vistula crossing, thus at a quite uncertain time. From the troops of this army, the Commander-in-Chief East was left only with the division-strengthened, previously existing Westernhagen detachment, consisting of Landwehr and Landsturm, which had formed the northern flank and was designated against the southern front of Nowogeorgiewsk.

1) Operations of the Army Group Prince Leopold p. 410 and 414 ff.

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Conflicts with the Supreme Army Command.

The entirety of these events prompted a letter from

Field Marshal von Hindenburg to General von Falkenhayn,

in which he bitterly complained on August 12 that "the degree of independence essential for his

position, naturally serving the whole, had gradually and repeatedly been restricted in a rather diminishing manner to

an extent that not only impaired his creative enthusiasm but also significantly hampered the conduct of operations."

Meanwhile, the Njemen Army had reached Poniewiez and Mitau,

the 10th Army had launched the attack against the large Njemen fortress Kowno1). Despite the extremely limited means, which according to the

indicative instructions of the Supreme Army Command were only available for this purpose,

the Commander-in-Chief East was determined to continue to do everything possible to gain space in the Njemen area and thereby

pave the way for a future operation over Wilna. However, it was difficult to muster the necessary

forces after the transfer of the 9th Army,

and since the large fortress Nowogeorgiewsk also had to be overcome over Kowno, with about four divisions entrenched before it. On

August 7, General von Falkenhayn pointed out: "Our

ammunition situation makes it completely impossible to simultaneously besiege

two fortresses"; since the siege of Kowno

had already been initiated, that of Nowogeorgiewsk had to be postponed.

But just two days later, he demanded the deployment of the heavy Austrian-Hungarian batteries released from Iwangorod

against Nowogeorgiewsk first, on whose accelerated capture he "must place special value according to the

current situation and the reports on the condition of the garrison"2). Thus, in the following days,

the attack on Kowno and that on Nowogeorgiewsk3) proceeded side by side.

Once again, Field Marshal von Hindenburg reported his view of the overall situation to the Supreme

Army Command on the morning of August 13: "The operation in the East, despite excellent achievements

of the Narew thrust, has not led to the destruction of the enemy. The Russian has, as expected, evaded the pincer movement and allows himself to be pushed back frontally in the direction he desires. He is able to regroup at will with the help of his good railways and to lead strong forces against my left flank, which threatens his connections. I see this as endangered. On the other hand, a decisive blow is only possible from the Kowno area, although unfortunately a lot of time has been lost for this. I therefore urgently request again a reinforcement of my left flank, in order to either become offensive depending on the outcome or at least to hold the territory gained so far. I emphasize once again that I have seen the only possibility of destroying the enemy in the offensive of my left flank against the connections and rear of the enemy. This offensive is probably still the only means to avoid a new campaign, in case it is not already too late."

1) p. 466 and 476 f.  
2) The reasons for the change in perception could not be determined.  
3) p. 377 f.

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He is able to regroup at will with the help of his good routes and lead strong forces against my left wing, which threatens his connections. I consider this endangered. On the other hand, a decisive blow is only possible from the Kowno area, although unfortunately a considerable amount of time has been lost for this. I therefore urgently request a reinforcement of my left wing again, in order to either become offensive depending on their outcome or at least to hold the territory gained so far. I emphasize again that in the offensive of my left wing against the connections and rear of the enemy, I saw the only possibility of his destruction. This offensive is probably still the only means to avoid a new campaign, in case it is not already too late for this.”

In contrast, General von Falkenhayn stated in his detailed response of August 14: “The destruction of the enemy has never been hoped for from the ongoing operations in the East, but merely a decisive victory corresponding to the purposes of the Supreme Army Command. The destruction as a whole should not be pursued in the present case, in my opinion, which must remain decisive after approval by His Majesty. The basic conditions for this are simply lacking, one cannot drive the destruction of an opponent who is numerically far superior and facing frontally, who has excellent connections, unlimited time, and unrestricted space, while one is forced to operate in railway-less, path-poor terrain with tight time constraints and in conjunction with many non-impactful, sometimes even non-resistant troops. However, no one will doubt that the enemy has already been decisively defeated for our purposes, who realizes that the Russians have lost about 750,000 men in prisoners alone in three months, countless materials, besides Galicia the Kingdom of Poland and the Duchy of Courland, finally the possibility of seriously threatening Austria-Hungary during the initiation of the Italian war or at all in the foreseeable future, as well as the other, their Odessa army, to deploy at the critical moment in the Balkans. There is also some prospect that the results of the operations will increase, as it has been possible to push no less than five thoroughly defeated enemy armies into the area between Bialystok and Brest Litowsk.” — In contrast, the General Staff officer, that the operations so far, presumably still before decisive, as it would have been possible, simultaneously with it a thrust over the Niemen to conduct.

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Disputes with the Supreme Army Command.

to facilitate the frontal pursuit of the Mackensen army group by encircling the Russian northern flank and thus to achieve a significantly more favorable outcome of the operation. However, the Supreme Army Command had no forces for this, and Your Excellency considered the use of the Njemen Army in Courland more necessary. With the latter, as I note to prevent misunderstandings, no judgment is expressed, but simply the fact is stated.” Then General von Falkenhayn addressed the concerns of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief for his left wing and asked for information on the reports that justified this concern. He stated: “The Russian 13th Army2) is still in Volhynia, and the divisions withdrawn from the Galician front are mostly in Poland. I also suspect that the Russians will attempt to achieve successes in Courland. So far, however, I am not aware of any forces that Your Excellency could not counter with your own means, for example, the 3rd Reserve and the 115th Infantry Division3). Reinforcement of your left wing from the west or the Mackensen and Prince Leopold army groups is currently excluded; it would only be feasible from the Narew assault group once the current operation is completed. However, it will always be necessary to consider the then-existing general war situation before forces are withdrawn from the Njemen Army. How much my view on the effectiveness of the offensive actions of the mentioned parts agrees with Your Excellency's, I have already expressed in my telegram No. 43884).”

Regarding the situation in front of the northern flank, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief provided clarification on August 15, stating that the enemy had recently reinforced there with about three infantry and three cavalry divisions, and that reports of additional incoming troops were available5); since “the Russian has good rail connections, while ours are poor,” he could very well seek success there. Furthermore, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief emphasized that, in his opinion, the forces at the beginning of July were sufficient to facilitate the frontal pursuit of the Mackensen army group by encircling the Russian northern flank and thus to achieve a significantly more favorable outcome of the operation.

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Since this assessment included the renunciation of the Narew operation, it bypassed the thoughts of General von Falkenhayn, for whom such a renunciation was never an option.

That General von Falkenhayn finally made the forces available for the Niemen area, freed by the fall of Novogeorgiewsk on August 19, did not in any way alleviate the extremely heightened tension between the two highest German command posts. It had been continuously growing since the request of the army group Prince Leopold. A new point of contention had already arisen due to the need to lift the outdated subordination of parts of the homeland territory (six deputy general commands along with their fortresses) under the Commander-in-Chief East.

On August 24, General von Falkenhayn responded to the complaints of the Field Marshal from August 12. He emphasized that none of the measures he himself proposed or ordered according to his powers "had ever been carried out for reasons other than purely factual ones." In impressive sentences, he then stated: "In my position, I have to bear the responsibility for the overall course of the war before my conscience, before our King and Lord, and before our descendants entirely alone. No one can share it with me, no one can take it from me, no one can help me in the slightest. In this position, subordinating my honest, factual conviction to the opinion of anyone else, no matter how high they stand, or even to personal consideration, no matter how venerable the person in question may be, would be a crime for which there is no adequate description, not because I consider myself better than many others — I know my inadequacy all too well — but because in my office, which was not given to me through my own doing or at my own request, but rather solely through the trust of His Majesty in the most difficult moment of the war, according to my understanding, I must not make factual compromises, and because my absolute duty in this office is to unite all parts of our armed forces in joint action for the good of the whole according to the unified will of the supreme command, which of course only represents that of His Majesty."

This letter from the Chief of Staff was not yet in the hands of the Field Marshal when on August 24, the General Government of Warsaw was formed under General von Beseler, and contrary to earlier hopes, the main part of the Russian territory previously administered by him was also taken from him.

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Conflicts with the Supreme Army Command.

Field Marshal General von Hindenburg then stated on August 25 in a letter addressed to the Supreme Army Command and simultaneously in a copy to the Military Cabinet and the Ministry of War: Now the title "Commander-in-Chief of all German Forces East" granted to him in the urgency of need had become a cutting irony, he asked to consider a change. However, this was rejected by the Supreme Army Command with detailed reasoning, pointing out that the use intended for the Field Marshal General by His Majesty would still necessitate the creation of a similar title. This communication could no longer mitigate the sharpness of the resulting opposition in any way.

6. The 12th and 8th Army in Pursuit through Poland.

Maps 6 and 7, Sketch 22.

a) The Pursuit from August 7 to 11.

On the morning of August 6, General von Falkenhayn asked the Gallwitz High Command whether the army group would "get through." Colonel Marquard replied that there was good confidence. When asked for an operational proposal, he recommended strengthening the right wing of the 8th Army. Finally, General von Falkenhayn again pointed out the importance of the army group's operation. In the afternoon, Colonel Marquard, apparently at the instigation of General von Gallwitz, called Major General Tappen and repeated: "The operation must not be stopped; it is going well. If forces are available, they must be directed to the right wing of the 8th Army." At the border against the direction of attack maintained by the Gallwitz army group, already a larger gap was forming to the southeast. At the same time, General von Gallwitz also suggested to the High Command of the 8th Army that it should strengthen its right wing with its own forces. That the army itself meanwhile on August 3 had to transfer the 6th Landwehr Brigade to the 10th Army was a very surprising measure of the Commander-in-Chief East.

1) p. 346. — 2) Connection to C. 333.  
3) According to records at the A.O.K. Gallwitz. — To what extent the D.O.K. was informed about these discussions could no longer be determined (p. 352).

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which was a very surprising measure by the Eastern Commander-in-Chief. To comply with his directive to move the left wing towards Sniadowo, without abandoning his own intention of advancing southeast, General von Gallwitz extended the left wing with Landsturm battalions to connect with the 8th Army, while maintaining the southeast direction for the core of his army group.

To what extent the Eastern Command was informed about these intentions and the direct communication between the subordinate army group and the Supreme Army Command could not be determined<sup>2</sup>). In any case, it had a completely different view than General von Gallwitz. According to General Ludendorff, "there was nothing more to gain between the Bug and Narew." The Eastern Commander-in-Chief also felt how the Supreme Army Command ensured that "nothing independent was ordered from his side"<sup>3</sup>).

On August 7, the Gallwitz Army Group, long the strongest of all formations under the Eastern Commander-in-Chief, was named the 12th Army; its group Beseler, designated for the attack against Nowogeorgiewsk, came directly under the Eastern Commander-in-Chief the following day<sup>4</sup>).

The morning of August 7 brought the first visible success of costly frontal battles after almost two weeks of stalemate. On a broad front, the enemy had vacated positions they had stubbornly defended for about ten days during the night, as the Russian 12th Army, positioned east of Rozan, was, according to the official Russian account<sup>5</sup>, "gradually so worn down that it was no longer able to hold back the Germans even for a short time." Only in front of the center of the German 12th Army did the enemy still stand on the eastern edge of Pulmyn-Bruches.

<sup>1</sup>) p. 344 note and p. 475.  
<sup>2</sup>) The then First General Staff Officer of the Army Group, now Colonel a. D. Staff, wrote to the Reichsarchiv in the summer of 1931: "I fundamentally informed the Eastern Commander-in-Chief about everything, unless Colonel Marquard expressly wished it to be omitted. This happened more once or twice than to provide a solid basis for the later serious differences between Ludendorff and Tappen, whose assertion Colonel Marquard sought to avoid." In contrast, General Ludendorff stated in a letter from December 1931 to the Reichsarchiv that he had never heard of these discussions.  
<sup>3</sup>) p. 376.  
<sup>4</sup>) p. 376.  
<sup>5</sup>) Njesnamow, p. 192 f.

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Between Bug and Narew. The Objective of the Operation.

Following the enemy, often fighting against rear guards,

the troops of this army reached the lower Narew and the Bug from Dembe to below Wyszkow by the evening of the day. The fort Zegrze, abandoned by the enemy, was occupied and subsequently a line was taken, which ran six kilometers northwest past Wyszkow over the eastern edge of the Pultny marsh, east past Wolinow to the Ruz stream. Here, the 8th Army joined in the direction of the Narew lowlands west of Lomza. Again, 4000 prisoners were brought in. The enemy apparently was in a planned retreat eastward from the previously advancing bulge against the middle Vistula. The bridges over the lower Bug had been demolished, numerous localities set on fire.

General von Gallwitz still intended to pursue in a generally southeastern direction to intercept the Russian forces retreating eastward from Warsaw at the Bug. In contrast, General Ludendorff doubted the prospects of such an attempt during a telephone conversation on this matter and pointed again to parallel pursuit eastward and close connection to the 8th Army. Accordingly, the commander-in-chief P gave the 12th Army the order on August 8 to advance north of the Bug against the line Makow—Zambrow—Lomza, with main forces on Czyzew. Subsequently, the 8th Army received Rutki as its target; it was to take Lomza. Meanwhile, as General von Gallwitz again expressed hope of capturing the enemy retreating from the Vistula at the Bug, General Ludendorff wanted to take this possibility into account. However, General von Gallwitz was not very satisfied: "My new front," he wrote later, "left to the east, right to the south, then formed almost a right angle. Ludendorff, however, considered the army strong enough to turn sufficient forces southeast against Ciechanowice in addition to the front to the east and the Bug occupation in the south. In such an approach, I saw the idea of encircling the retreating enemy strongly fade." In the same matter, Colonel Marquard and Major Staff also approached Lieutenant Colonel Hoffmann, pointing out that if operations continued beyond the line Nur—Wizna, i.e., beyond the narrow point between Bug and Narew, the forces would not be sufficient. The commander-in-chief

1) von Gallwitz, p. 320 f.  
2) According to the communication from Colonel a. D. Staff from the summer of 1931 to the Reichsarchiv, the renewed inquiry was made at the special request of Gen. von Gallwitz.  
† World War. Volume VIII.

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Often, however, he did not let himself be deterred in his decisions. General Ludendorff had already informed the 8th Army that it was desirable to take Lomza as soon as possible to free up forces for the 10th Army, with the 3rd Reserve Division being considered for the task. In the evening, he agreed in a conversation with Colonel Marquard that the 12th Army no longer intended to cross the Bug, and concluded by saying: "If you want to wait a little longer, you must hold far ahead. I believe you have enough forces."

The view recorded in the files, which the Chief of Staff of the 12th Army, Colonel Marquard, presented to his commander in the evening, sought to bridge the differences: "The enemy cannot, due to poor road conditions, withdraw all the forces located there, about 16 corps, from the arc between the Vistula and the Bug over Brest Litowsk and south of it. Rather, at least five to six corps must cross the Bug northwest of the fortress, even if some corps are transported by rail. The task of the 12th Army is to prevent this retreat to the northeast or at least to hinder the enemy as much as possible. If the enemy immediately begins the backward movement, the 12th Army may no longer be able to catch him at the Bug. The operations must therefore be conducted so that in this most unfavorable case, one can fall on the enemy's flank further east — in the Bielsk area. The longer the enemy delays the withdrawal, the more likely it is to engage him in battle at the Bug. If he offers sustained resistance in a position forward of Brest, one can completely get behind him. To do justice to all these possibilities, one will have to pursue the now defeated enemy with a strong left wing and under echeloning to the right along the Bug." Accordingly, Colonel Marquard wanted, as soon as the current resistance was broken, to deploy the left wing, the Eben Corps, on Zambrow, the Hilsdorf Corps past north of Andrzeyin, the Watter Corps and the XVII Army Corps against the enemy north of Andrzeyin and at the Bug, the XVII Reserve Corps folded to the right. "The main idea" must remain to encircle the enemy "in the north and throw him back over the Bug or southeast. Only if the execution proves impossible and a concentration of the main forces on other parts of the front becomes necessary, should this viewpoint be abandoned. — If the enemy prepares in a bridgehead position at the Bug, it would have to be indicated: XVII Army Corps between Bug and the road Ostrow—Malkin, with the Watter Corps following from the north and northeast."

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Successes between Bug and Narew.

Meanwhile, the enemy had again vacated his positions in front of the right flank

of the 12th Army during the night, while he held stubbornly in front of the

left and in front of the 8th Army. In pursuit, the

XVII Reserve Corps (85th Landwehr and 86th Infantry Division) reached

Wizkow and east of it the Bug. At Tucholka, the front turned

north; the XVII Army Corps (88.1), 36th and 35th Infantry Division

came into this watercourse. In the area west of Ostrow, the

Corps Watter joined (3rd Infantry, 1st Guard Reserve and 4th Guard Infantry Division, followed by 26th Infantry Division), then the newly formed

Corps Plüskow (54th Infantry,

50th Reserve and 38th Infantry Division) and finally the Corps Eben

(83.2, 37th Infantry Division and Landsturm Detachments). The enemy

held a position about eight kilometers west and northwest of

Ostrow over the large artillery shooting range there and then followed

the Ruz stream along the road to Sniadowo. Here, the

2nd and 37th Infantry Division had unexpectedly broken into the Russian position south of the stream, but had to hold the captured ground

only with heavy losses. Further north, the

enemy held the Ruz stream and his position in front of the 8th Army, which now

south of the Narew with three divisions (58th Infantry, 75th Reserve and

10th Landwehr Division) advanced.

On August 9, the listening service revealed the further retreat of the

Russian radio stations on both sides of the Bug. The Corps Plüskow and Eben

broke through the enemy rearguard positions on the road Ostrow—

Sniadowo and in pursuit went several kilometers beyond them.

Also in other parts of the front, progress was made. The greatest

difficulties were in the direction of Ostrow, where knowledge of the

shooting range terrain of the Russian artillery may have offered special advantages.

In the 8th Army, the 10th Landwehr Division suffered the

weakly defended Westfort of Lomza, but the road Sniadowo—Lomza

was not reached. From the north, the 1st Landwehr Division approached the outdated fortress, which the enemy seemed to be evacuating.

On this day, the High Command 12 again communicated directly with the

Supreme Army Command about the situation and intentions,

when Colonel Marquard called Major General Lappen at noon and

explained to him on the telephone that south of the Bug the enemy was moving eastward, but was constantly throwing new forces against the 12th Army.

1) Previous Division Menges.

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The railway junction Malkin was reached, and with it, after more than three weeks of offensive, the northernmost of the major railway lines that connected Warsaw with the interior of Russia and had so far supplied the Russian troops in West Poland. The army's representatives were decreasing, and it was feared that they would arrive too weak at the decisive point in the enemy's flank. It was therefore desirable that the left wing of the 9th Army, whose XXV Reserve Corps stood west of Nowo Minsk on this day and was directed east towards Kaluszyn, while further north the 2nd Cavalry Division was gaining connection to the 12th Army in a northeasterly direction. If the left wing of the 8th Army's attack group passed the Wizna swamp, it would be threatened from the left, and it was questionable whether the army's strength would then be sufficient. Colonel Marquard therefore asked whether an army corps could be brought to the left wing of the 12th Army, and Major General Tappen assured him that he would keep an eye on the matter.

How the Commander-in-Chief East positioned himself in these negotiations, to what extent he was aware of them at all, is not known2). When the success of the Plüskow and Eben corps was reported to him at 7 p.m., General Ludendorff replied: "Then continue straight ahead and then turn." Accordingly, the two corps were set for pursuit in an easterly direction on August 9, with General von Gallwitz still hoping to "push as many parts of the enemy as possible into the bridgehead of Malkin and over the Bug," to catch the enemy withdrawing eastward on the flank east of the Bug bend). This seemed all the more possible to him, as the German 9th Army was still a strong day's march west of the river.

The morning of August 10 brought the gratifying certainty that the Russian 12th Army, whose southern wing was assumed to be on the railway south of Lomza, had begun the retreat; the concern about the connection to the 8th Army thus receded into the background for the moment. Almost without any resistance, the Eben corps was able to pass through the forest mountains of Czernowy Bor. The small fortress of Lomza was evacuated by the enemy and occupied by the German 8th Army. But the Russian 1st Army also gave way at Ostrow.

1) General von Gallwitz informed the Reichsarchiv in the summer of 1931 based on diary records that Colonel Marquard had spoken with the Commander-in-Chief East at noon that day. The main content apparently consisted of complaints from the 8th Army that the 12th Army was not holding far enough north and thus the 8th was advancing.  
2) G. 351 Note 2 and G. 352.  
3) von Gallwitz, G. 322.

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Operationally, this was now, however, a meaningless gain and also of value for the increasingly difficult own supply only if it was possible to restore the Vistula bridge at Warsaw, which was still in enemy hands, or to gain a connection to the German railway network through the connection line under construction from Willenberg to Ostrolenka. The enemy now seemed to be in full retreat to the east. Pilots reported retreating enemy columns in many places; villages were burning, the fields were devastated. A leap forward was achieved, as on no day since the beginning of the operation; it amounted to 20 kilometers and more for many corps. South of the Bug, contact was made south of Wyszkow with the cavalry of the 9th Army.

General von Gallwitz and his advisors were not entirely of the same opinion about the further direction to be taken. Since the end of July, the First General Staff Officer, Major Stäpf, had been more inclined (more in line with the view of the Commander-in-Chief East) that the Narew depression had done its part, and that the decision should henceforth be sought in the Njemen area. "The stretch we have gained in four weeks can be marched on the left wing in four days," he wrote on August 9. In contrast, General von Gallwitz himself still held firmly to the idea of pursuing with full force to the east. Colonel Marquard, however, now proposed a more northerly direction, "since there is nothing more to be gained at the Bug." The decision requested from the Commander-in-Chief East was fair to both possibilities and went as follows: the army should, with the main focus on the right, push further forward against Ciechanowice–Sokolv; the 8th Army, which had entered through the Wizna swamp, would maintain contact with them. However, since this army had just now to detach the 3rd Reserve Division, which was standing north of Lomza, to the 10th Army, it counted only five divisions, three of which were already south of the Narew.

On August 11, the 12th Army advanced well along the Bug; the XVII Army Corps reached Juzel. On the other hand, to the left of it, the Watter Corps in pursuit battles with the left wing only reached just in front of Czyzew.

1) p. 307. – Initially, only a field railway was laid here; at the end of July, full railway construction began.  
2) Communication from Colonel a. D. Stäpf from summer 1931 to the Reichsarchiv.  
3) von Gallwitz, p. 325.  
4) pp. 354 and 478.

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"The progress is quite time-consuming," it says in the war diary of the General Command, "and proceeds slowly. This was due less to the strength of the enemy than to the fatigue of the troops and the almost complete lack of visibility of the terrain. It was repeatedly expressed to the Army High Command that the advance was proceeding slowly, that the reinforcement of the lines by new masses did not change anything significant, but that with some rest for the troops, which had been in continuous combat for four weeks, much could be achieved." In the northern adjoining Plüskow and Eben Corps, the enemy offered considerably more resistance. It did not seem like the previous day to be weak rearguards, but rather stronger forces with artillery, and the whole day was spent struggling to advance only a few kilometers. In the evening, the Eben Corps had taken Zambrowo. The 8th Army had gained a foothold on the eastern bank of the Bac section.

Thus, the narrowest point between Bug and Narew was reached; on 45 kilometers of front, about 18 German divisions stood so close that it had already become necessary to move five of them into the second line. The Narew operation had long since tactically surpassed its peak and now threatened to run into frontal pressure. The Russian masses retreating before the Mackensen and Prince Leopold army groups east of the Bug could only be captured if the 12th Army advanced quickly, faster than the enemy could retreat. This had not been the case so far. In the 30 days since July 13, it had taken about 120 kilometers of space in total, which made only four kilometers per day; that it would advance significantly faster in the future was hardly to be assumed. Just August 11 had again shown what it meant when the enemy was willing to resist. With an enemy who had skillfully conducted his retreat operations up to that point, such will had to be expected as soon as his situation required it. The previous battles had clearly shown the difficulties of frontal pressure. Actual pursuit had hardly ever occurred: Almost everywhere and every time, the enemy had managed to retreat under the cover of darkness, to reposition further back in a new, often already prepared position. Each time, weak points of the enemy had to be identified first, the attack ordered, and the artillery concentrated against the breakthrough points. Every tactical advance had to be bought with an expenditure of time, ammunition, and blood that hardly corresponded to the operational gain.

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Combat Conditions and Results between Bug and Narew.

Every tactical advance had to be bought with an expenditure of time, ammunition, and blood, which hardly corresponded to the operational gain.

The unexpectedly large ammunition requirement, even for an experienced artillery general like the commander-in-chief of the 12th Army, which had to be used to overcome every single enemy rearguard position¹), significantly contributed to the delay of the advance. With increasing distance from the starting point, it became increasingly difficult to procure the necessary quantities. The railway construction could not keep pace with the operation despite its slowness. At the destroyed Vistula Bridge in Warsaw, on the Mława–Nowogorgiewsk line, otherwise on German territory and near Kolno, the endpoints of the main railway operations were temporarily located. A field railway rebuilt from Mława via Przasnysz had reached the area west of Rozan, coming from Willenberg to Ostrolenka, ending about 60 kilometers behind the front. The troops to be pursued between Bug and Narew had meanwhile grown to about 18 divisions with more than 700 guns.

Opposite them, however, the enemy had also further strengthened. By August 11, about 18 divisions of his 1st and 12th Army were standing, of which four divisions were gradually brought in from the Southwestern Front, with probably also about 700 guns²). Thus, the impression of the German troops seems correct that the enemy was now considerably stronger in artillery than at the beginning of the operation. The more his infantry dwindled, the more the essentially unchanged artillery had to make itself felt in numbers.

The severity, but also the peculiarity of the previous four-week battles, is illustrated by the following figures: The casualties of the Gallwitz Army and the right wing of the 8th Army involved in the attack had grown from about 37,000 between July 13 and 26 to more than 56,000 by August 8.

¹) Since the beginning of July, the army had been allocated: 370,000 rounds for field guns (7.7 cm), 27,500 for 10 cm guns, 192,000 for light field howitzers (10.5 cm), 129,000 for heavy field howitzers (15 cm), 15,000 for mortars (21 cm); a total of 734,000 rounds.  
²) On August 9/11 and 11, 1915, between Narew and Bug from Białystok: From the 12th Army V Corps (10th and 17th Div.) and IV Siberian Corps (9th Siberian and 10th Fib. 59th, 69th, ¾ 61st Div.); 1st Army, XXVII Corps (1st Rifle Brigade and 76th Div.), XXI Corps (33rd and 37th Div.), 1st Siberian Corps (1st Siberian 6th Div.), IV Corps and 30th Div. (1st and 2nd Siberian 1st and 2nd Fib. Div.). The mentioned enemy units: 17¾ infantry, 1¾ cavalry divisions. The listed 4¾ divisions had come from the Southwestern Front since July 13.

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This meant 3,000 to 4,000 men, more than a third of the infantry strength in each division, and is a significant testament to the sacrificial task that remained for the infantry to solve despite the high consumption of artillery ammunition. These losses were offset by spoils, which, including those of the participating parts of the 8th Army, amounted to about 80,000 prisoners and 250 machine guns by August 11, but only 20 guns.

b) Up to the Upper Course of Nurec and Narew. August 12 to 19.

The frontal pursuit, in which the army group Prince Leopold and the right wing of the Commander-in-Chief East (12th and right wing 8th Army) were involved, was to continue to have the sole aim, according to the will of the Supreme Army Command, of cooperating with the army group Mackensen, which was advancing from the direction of Cholm—Lublin towards Brest and the Bug below this fortress. General von Falkenhayn wanted to decisively hit the retreating enemy still west of the Rokitno swamps and the primeval forest of Bialowieza. The army group Prince Leopold, which stood close to Lukow and Siedlce on the evening of August 11, was therefore set to advance with the right wing on Brest!).

The Commander-in-Chief East also had hope on this day that his 12th Army, advancing with a strong right wing on Ciechanowice, could at least intercept parts of the Russian troops that were heading further south from the west and southwest towards the Bug. However, he did not promise himself decisive successes from this. He considered it certain that the enemy would succeed in systematically evading in a northeasterly direction and wished to place the emphasis in further advances initially still in a generally easterly direction on Bielsk, but later north of the forest of Bialowieza. In contrast, General von Gallwitz continued to advocate for the southeasterly direction.

While troops of the army group Prince Leopold entered Lukow and Siedlce on August 12, the 12th Army encountered sustained resistance on the entire front north of the Bug on this day. However, during the night the enemy also withdrew here; the pursuit led together with the right wing of the 8th Army to the lower Narec and subsequently into a line that ran west past Golyb almost straight north to the Narew swamps of Wizna.

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Last Efforts between Bug and Narew.

The enemy seemed to have set up for new resistance. The Supreme Army Command had General of Foot Artillery, Major General Schabel, examine whether it was possible to bring down the fortress of Osowiec by blowing and shooting gas. Since the reconnaissance had shown that with the available limited forces, for example only three heavy indirect fire batteries, even with the use of gas, there was no prospect of overcoming the place, they had to wait until it was opened by advancing on the eastern Bobr bank. Here the 8th Army now had four divisions, while on the western bank its 11th Landwehr Division alone blocked the 50-kilometer-long swamp stretch.

On the evening of August 13, the Commander-in-Chief East learned that the enemy was now retreating rapidly down the Bug before the Mackensen Army Group from the south. He had to, as it seemed, cross the river at Brest and below in a northeasterly direction. On the northern wing of the Prince Leopold Army Group, the Frommel Cavalry Corps had received the direction to Kleszczele, "to get behind the enemy parts retreating over the Bug." For the 12th Army, this initially changed nothing. Her commander was still full of hope. In an order he gave to the commanding generals that day, it was said that further advance of the army could lead to the destruction of the enemy. "We must break the resistance opposing us with all our might as quickly as possible. Extreme effort in the coming days will save us much blood later. The goal is worth the effort."

On August 14 and 15, the attack of the center (Plüskow Corps) and the XVII Reserve Corps, which had meanwhile moved in north of it, brought the decision for the 12th Army. East of Mazo wiec, the 4½ division strong Russian XXI Corps retreated before the attack of the German 54th, 38th, and 86th Infantry Divisions, losing 2000 prisoners, as it is called in the official Russian account1), "defeated" and thus gave the impetus for further retreat for the entire Russian front between Bug and Narew.

1) Njesnamow, p. 97 (there the battle is apparently mistakenly dated to August 22).

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When the Supreme Army Command again pointed out that 12 to 13 Russian corps were retreating before the Mackensen Army Group towards the Bug below Brest, the ruthless attack of the Prince Leopold and Hindenburg Army Groups promised great success, and the right wing of the 12th Army under these circumstances had to maintain the direction eastward, towards Kleckszelle, this did not change the fact that the focus of their advance — as determined by position and terrain — had to remain initially directed at Bielsk between Nurec and Narew. In this view, the Commander-in-Chief East and the 12th High Command agreed, whereby, as before, the latter hoped to catch the retreating Russians, while the former thought of opening the Osowiec front.

On August 16, the 12th Army reported, in response to a direct inquiry from the Supreme Army Command about the enemy's condition, that it had suffered heavy bloody losses and lost many prisoners, but was still making strong counterattacks; it was still combat-ready and had more artillery and ammunition than in the previous week, its units were very mixed. The 8th Army, similarly questioned, also pointed out that the Russian use of ammunition had increased significantly in recent days. August 17 seemed to confirm this assessment of the enemy. Reports of counterattacks against the right wing of the German 12th Army prompted General von Gallwitz to order the XVII Army Corps stationed there to hold and reinforce its positions for the following day, and for the 9th Army, whose northern wing was occupied only by cavalry over a wide area, to bring in infantry support. Nevertheless, the continued attacks of the army in the direction of Bielsk, in which the 38th Infantry Division lost the high number of 750 men on that day, caused the Russians to continue their retreat the following night, thus clearing the Bug crossing for the Prince Leopold Army Group.

The evening of August 18 saw the German troops in the line Niemirow on the Bug — holders of the middle Nurec — before Bielsk and on the left bank of the Narew to west of Tykocin. Here, the 8th Army had established the 10th Landwehr Division under Lieutenant General Clausius, which had already crossed the river in the swampy terrain on both sides of the road leading from the south to Ostowiec.

1) According to later captured Russian orders, it was likely only a counterattack by a single regiment of the Russian 55th Division.

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Further Pursuit between Bug and Narew.

On August 19, the 12th Army attempted to advance at the decisive point

towards Bielsk. The 86th Infantry Division of the XVII Reserve Corps suffered extraordinarily heavy losses, losing about

1300 men. However, decisive progress could not be achieved in the purely frontal

battle.

c) The Swing to the Northeast.

On August 19, the Commander-in-Chief East, to regulate

further pursuit, reported to the Supreme Army Command

that he intended to "place the main focus of the 12th Army in the direction of Bielsk—Narew

(city), assuming that the left wing of the 9th Army would also

be directed in a northeasterly direction, i.e., north of the Klejsczele—Gajnowka railway.

Is the Supreme Army Command in agreement?" — The response

was: "The Narew assault group of Army Group Hindenburg) must first

advance in a purely eastern direction, securing its left flank against

the Narew section with the right wing over Klejsczele, then north

of the Policzna section. As before, emphasis is to be placed on rapid

advancement over Bielsk. The group's departure to Ostrow can only occur when the situation with the enemy west and

southwest of the Sialkowo fortress is further clarified." This

instruction was further supplemented by General von Falkenhayn on the

same day, who explicitly emphasized that the opening of Ostowiec was at

this moment less important than the uninterrupted continuation of the

thrust along the left Narew bank along the river. At the same time,

the southern wing of the 12th Army, "due to good progress with Prince

Leopold," was to take a slightly more northerly direction; it

was now to advance north past Klejsczele towards Gajnowka. This

at least approximately corresponded to the intentions of the Commander-in-Chief East, who

then reorganized the tasks of all his armies. In the

order, it was stated: "Main focus 12th Army direction Bielsk—Narew

(city)—Mjalinowo, main focus 8th Army direction Tykocin—Anyszyn."

At the same time, the 10th Army was now to attack with the left wing towards Wilna.

For this, the allocation of the two cavalry divisions

of the 9th Army was requested from the Supreme Army Command, but on August 20 it was answered that only the German 9th Cavalry Division was released.

1) This designation appears here for the first time.   
2) The order primarily concerned the tasks of the 10th and Njemen Army;   
full text see p. 483 f.

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Furthermore, the enemy, according to his situation, retreated more before the army group Prince Leopold than before the northern adjoining 12th Army. On the other hand, the increasing pressure against the rear of Osowiec prompted him to evacuate this place after the demolition of the works and bridges already on the night of August 23 and thus to retreat before the 8th and the left wing of the 12th Army. While the northern wing of the army group Prince Leopold reached the western edge of the forest of Bialowiec by the evening of August 24 in pursuit, the strong southern wing of the 12th Army fought hard beyond Bielsk. The center was still fixed before the upper Narew, the extreme left wing, the 37th Infantry Division, had already crossed it in connection with the Seydlitz Corps of the 8th Army west of Bialystok. Further north, three Landwehr divisions of this army could follow the enemy over the abandoned Osowiec almost in one go to Knyszyn and to the Berezowka section.

The difficulties that stood in the way of a more effective continuation of the offensive had increased significantly in the last ten days with the 12th Army. Already in the "special orders" of August 12, General von Gallwitz had pointed out that it was impossible for the stage to keep pace with the troops. The space to be bridged by the columns of the corps had to be stretched far beyond the usual measure, the oat supply had to be reduced to half of the normal requirement. Since the harvest was now in the field or had just been brought in, the troops should feed as much as possible from the land. In the area still untouched by the war, which had now been reached, essential parts of the supply needs were also provided in a reasonably sufficient quantity, because the enemy had not succeeded in removing or burning all the supplies of the vast area in time; but even the flour and bread supply could hardly be provided alongside the ammunition supply by the vehicle columns.

Even a leader as strong-willed as General von Gallwitz had to take these conditions and the reduced attack power of the troops into increasing consideration. Records of the responsible offices and leaders provide a picture of what it looked like in the army: In the war diary of the Watter Corps, it was already written on August 20: "37 days continuously in combat, the infantry had only half the strength, the field artillery material was unusable to a worrying extent."

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Supply Difficulties and Reduced Attack Power.

This, as well as the length of the rear connections, which measured 100 kilometers to Ostrow and another 35 kilometers to the railhead Rozan, and the poor feeding condition of the horses due to a lack of oats, made a pause urgently desirable. On August 22, "with regard to the urgently necessary ammunition savings, only very quiet artillery fire was maintained." The following day, the enemy gained the impression in a conversation with the commanding general that the attack capability of the troops had significantly decreased due to overexertion. It was expected from the artillery that "it should do everything."

In the Corps Stieren, according to its war diary, the last ammunition column was emptied on August 20, and the next filled one could only arrive on the 23rd. The heavy losses, it was said, especially of the 86th Infantry Division, were attributed to the inadequate artillery preparation due to a lack of ammunition. A regiment of the 50th Reserve Division had to be withdrawn from the front after it had shrunk from 57 officers to 6, from 3700 men to 600. The remaining troops, it was said in the report, mostly came from the "last replacement, which arrived during the operation, was already transferred as inferior and also proved to be inferior. New replacements, which were requested, would not find any old core in the regiment that would give them support. The regiment needed 14 days to reorganize and regain internal strength.

On August 22, the chief of staff of Corps Plüskow, Colonel Baercke, personally arrived at the army headquarters to describe the "lack of striking power due to the low strengths and the shortage of officers."

On August 24, Corps Parnewitz also reported: Since ammunition and supplies could not be brought up according to consumption, a three-day pause in the attack was necessary.

General von Gallwitz himself judged in his diary entries on August 20: "The Russian army report emphasized the persistence of our attacks." But I could not deny that our strength was no longer the same. For 39 days we were in combat and had since then given up 1,400 officers and 60,000 men. A stop in the relentless pushing soon seemed inevitable.

1) von Gallwitz, p. 344. — 2) p. 363. — 3) von Gallwitz, p. 342 f.  
4) Ibid., p. 341.

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A stop in the relentless push soon seemed inevitable." The war diary of the High Command also pointed out the low combat strength of the infantry, which, as always, had to bear the brunt of the bloody losses as well as the mental and physical strain. Thus, the battalions of the 38th and 54th Infantry Divisions did not have 400 men combat strength, and the 4th Guards Infantry Division counted only 4000 rifles in total. On August 21, General von Gallwitz could "no longer overlook the exhaustion of the troops." The hope, temporarily held the following day, to defeat the enemy once more, quickly shattered in view of the increasing difficulties. "It would be a pity," he wrote in his diary, "if we falter now, because according to prisoner statements, letters, and their enormous losses, things look much bleaker for the Russians. They are ripe for overthrow if we can only apply the necessary force. Everywhere they show hopelessness, mainly because of our artillery... I wanted to wait yesterday to bring up artillery ammunition replacements. But the troops, who are of the best will, always act again and thus renew the belief in the upper leadership that it would still work. With battalions of 325 men, there is not much to start with. Well, the army has fulfilled its duty." Russian counterattacks, which were also reported on this day, the General considered "to be ordered from above to cease, as last attempts to turn the tide or at least to gain freedom of movement."

More favorable than with the 12th Army were the conditions with the 8th Army, which had not had to fight for so long and not so hard and had better supply conditions.

With such a decisive reduction in the attack power of the main army, it was ultimately of lesser importance which direction was given to the right wing of the Commander-in-Chief East for further action. The Supreme Army Command still wished to let the main force act in a purely eastern direction, while the Commander-in-Chief East, since the capture of Osowiec, considered a northeastern direction necessary to at least indirectly support the advance of the 10th Army against Vilna²). He therefore ordered on August 24, in continuation of the instruction given on August 19 — as he had to believe — in agreement with the Supreme Army Command³), that "after the capture of Białystok" the railway from there via Sokolka to Grodno should form the boundary for the further operations of the 12th and 8th Army.

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The Turn to the Northeast towards Grodno.

Not three hours after the departure of the order, the following directive from the Supreme Army Command arrived: "Development of the conditions between Bug and Narew urgently suggests that the upper course of Swislocz should be reached by parts of the 8th Army as soon as possible." This seemed to give this army a precisely obligatory direction and at the same time a target about 70 kilometers away. The Commander-in-Chief East could not form a picture of what operational intentions the Supreme Army Command was now pursuing. He reported to General von Falkenhayn on August 25: "8th Army is facing the enemy across the entire front, who is offering stubborn resistance everywhere, so that a rapid advance of parts of it to the upper course of the Swislocz is currently completely out of the question." The extremely tense mood of these days1) prompted him to add: "To be able to lead, I ask for directives." The Supreme Army Command, which had temporarily hoped to catch the enemy through a southern thrust of the Prince Leopold Army Group2), now found itself in a changed situation, as the enemy had already begun to evacuate the strong fortress of Brest. So it now set the railway line leading from Kleszczele via Gajnówka to Wolkowysk, thus to the northeast, as the right boundary of the Commander-in-Chief East and also had "no more objections if our forces were shifted from the Gallwitz strike group to the northern Narew bank."

This boundary setting essentially corresponded to the wishes of the Commander-in-Chief East. He ordered on August 26 for his two armies: "12th and 8th Army follow the enemy, right wing 12th Army along the railway Gajnówka—Siemionowka. Thereafter general advance direction: 12th Army with deep right wing Swislocz—Soflowla; 8th Army Soflowla—Dombrowo, ready to extend the left wing from here to Lipitz. Further instructions for 12th and 8th Army to follow." The 10th Army was to continue advancing towards Vilna, the Njemen Army to continue covering the northern flank3). Since the Supreme Army Command had now approved shifts from the 12th Army to the northern Narew bank, the Commander-in-Chief East, as he had explicitly noted in his war diary on this day, felt entitled to move his forces there, where success beckons4). He ordered the previous strike armies (12th and 8th Army), "to increase the pressure of the left wing of the 10th Army" to deploy a total of three infantry and one cavalry division there.

1) G. 350 f. — 2) S. 428.  
3) Wording and details of the orders for 10th and Njemen Army see p. 487.

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For this reason, the Chief of Staff of the

12th Army, Colonel Marquard, while advocating a frontal pursuit to the

east to throw the Russians "into the swamps," even on the

same day, during a telephone conversation with Major General Tappen,

appealed to the Supreme Army Command, but without success.

In fact, the 12th Army did not even have the opportunity in the following days

due to supply issues to leave its remaining forces in pursuit. On the evening of August 26,

its left wing, together with the right of the 8th Army, was able to occupy the important city of Bialystok without a fight. On August 27, the

12th Army reached the city of Narew behind the now faster retreating Russians,

and on the 28th, the pursuit could only be continued with partial forces.

The offensive of the strongest army advancing through northern Poland

had run out of steam. A record

by Captain von Baldow from the Eastern High Command from the next

day stated: "The Russian is retreating systematically, and so quickly that

we cannot follow with our rear connections. The

railways are too badly destroyed. One could howl with rage. The

12th Army must actually halt in pursuit and wait, and

the Russian gets time to move forces to Vilna. Just now comes

the news that a new corps is being unloaded there and is marching north.

Our operation has not succeeded."

Meanwhile, a fundamental new order from the Supreme

Army Command of August 27 halted the army groups Mackensen and

Prince Leopold in view of the Rokitno Swamps. Only the operations

initiated by the Commander-in-Chief East were to be continued.

However, their focus was no longer on the 12th,

but on the 10th Army assigned to Vilna.

d) Considerations.

"The army has fulfilled its duty." — This statement by General

von Gallwitz about the achievements of the 12th Army, which at times

was the strongest with 14 divisions involved in the pursuit through Poland,

must be at the forefront of considerations about the results;

it equally applies to the 8th Army, which had only

seven divisions. The troops marched, fought, and bled with a willingness to sacrifice

and dedication, as they did under the given circumstances could not have been greater.

1) General von Gallwitz writes about this in the summer of 1931 to the Reich Archives,  
that Colonel Marquard was not commissioned by him for this.  
2) See wording on p. 489.

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As countless testimonies attest, it repeatedly approached the almost daily new attacks with enthusiasm as far as its strength allowed, and was rightly filled with the proud awareness of having driven back an enemy superior in numbers through all of Poland and 200 kilometers.

Tactically, what was achieved was only what could be achieved — considering the circumstances given1). If the attack results were not fully satisfactory in terms of loot and operationally, it primarily expresses that it was purely frontal work, starting with the breakthrough through a very strong and deeply structured trench system that had developed over months of work, continued over a river section also prepared for sustained defense, and culminating in pushing back an opponent who repeatedly defended himself anew but always managed to evade a decision in time. Stubborn resistance at strong natural sections, often combined with local counterattacks, alternated with unnoticed nocturnal withdrawal. The pursuit repeatedly stalled on very weakly occupied enemy positions. This constantly recurring game required not only time and effort but also disproportionately much ammunition and cost the impatient infantry many officers and the best of the troops, so that eventually only quickly trained recruits and older age groups were the bearers of the fight. The need for effective artillery preparation had to assert itself all the more. But even its performance was no longer at the same level as at the beginning of the war due to worn-out barrels, less effective makeshift ammunition, and inadequate shooting training of some batteries manned with older age groups. When one considers how much the strength of the Russian defense had simultaneously increased, despite a great shortage of equipment and ammunition, through the long-range effect of artillery and machine guns, one will rightly appreciate the magnitude of what was achieved by leadership and troops.

The destruction of the enemy was not achieved, only attrition. The loot figures speak a clear language. They amounted to about 125,000 prisoners, 350 machine guns, but only 23 guns for 21 divisions of the German 12th and 8th Army in 6½ weeks. How little this meant in its entirety, especially regarding the number of guns, becomes clear when one considers that at Tannenberg, 13 German divisions captured 92,000 prisoners and 350 guns in six days.

1) See p. 358 f.

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Due to the slowness of the purely frontal attacks, the enemy was always able to withdraw his artillery in time and almost always evade in good order. How high his total losses were is not known¹).

General von Falkenhayn pointed out after the war²) that the Gallwitz army, due to a lack of forces, was unable to give real emphasis to its left wing and thus was increasingly pushed in a purely Westphalian direction. The Commander-in-Chief East could very well have brought more forces to their attack, four divisions from the 9th and two from the 10th and the Niemen Army³). "Had the Narew shock group conducted their attack on the 14th with 20 divisions, it is highly probable that they would have been able to prevent strong parts of the enemy from withdrawing from the pincer. It is therefore a mistake that the reinforcement was omitted. Its cause must... be sought solely in the fact that it was not possible to bring about a unified understanding of the situation between the leading and executing positions." It should "not have been tolerated" that the main operation, "for whatever reasons, a single man was withdrawn. As it would have been the responsibility of the high command to integrate into the overall operation, so certainly a part of the responsibility for this not happening lay with the Chief of the General Staff. His task was to ensure the complete integration of each part into the whole and to secure it, even where, as in this case, extraordinary personal difficulties stood in his way."

The Commander-in-Chief East, who was from the outset decidedly opposed to the Narew operation and considered its continuation deep into August to be misguided, nevertheless did everything in his view to ensure its success. After having once very early decided in favor of the proposal of his Chief of the General Staff, Field Marshal Hindenburg considered it his duty to leave nothing undone to help this plan succeed. Since then, he has used his entire authority for the success of the operation and personally positioned himself at the start of the attack on the battlefield at Przasnysz because he knew "what decisive importance our Supreme Army Command attached to the success of the ordered breakthrough."

¹) For more on the enemy see pp. 301, 323, 325, 359, 374, and 436 ff.  
²) From Falkenhayn, pp. 104 and 109 f. — ³) Ibid. 275 ff. 281 around 1917 ff.  
⁴) Personal communication to the President of the Reich Archives from November 7, 1931.

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Reflections.

General Ludendorff, as the Field Marshal further wrote in his book, had indeed often internally adhered to the plan of the Njemen operation. This deviation "had neither any influence on our further joint thinking and actions," nor did it impair the "strength with which we implemented the decision of the responsible Supreme Army Command in mid-July." Similarly, General Ludendorff himself wrote that the disagreements with General von Falkenhayn imposed a special obligation on him to implement the Supreme Army Command's differing thoughts "if possible with even greater care than consistent or own ones."

The Supreme Army Command was continuously informed about the measures of the Commander-in-Chief East, especially as far as they concerned the Gallwitz Army Group. Had it considered the deployment of forces against the Narew insufficient, it would have had to intervene decisively. Regarding the question of complete exposure of the Vistula, General Ludendorff expressed himself as follows: "The release of the left bank of the Vistula west of the Sam mouth Nowogrodsweg was correct if the Supreme Army Command was firmly determined to fight for the decision in the East. Then it had to accept the risk of front exposure. The enemy could not advance into the empty front. It was different if the possibility had to be considered that the operation against Russia might come to an early conclusion. Then the enemy, who no longer felt threatened far in Poland and Lithuania, could attack west of the Vistula." In a similar sense, General von Falkenhayn also expressed himself to the Commander-in-Chief East on June 28, stating that the enemy would not be able to derive any significant benefit from the exposure of the front west of the Vistula "as long as the advance between Bug and Vistula" — that is, the offensive of the Mackensen Army Group — "remained in progress." On the other hand, he also urged almost continuously for an attack by the 9th Army after July 2, even considering temporarily adding two more western divisions to it. Thus, the Supreme Army Command is at least fully responsible for the burden of stronger forces west of the Vistula. A significant contrast between their view and that of the Commander-in-Chief East does not seem to have existed on this point.

1) von Hindenburg, p. 128. — 2) Ludendorff, p. 120.  
3) Letter to the Reich Archive from December 29, 1931.  
4) p. 266 ff. — 5) p. 315.

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However, it can hardly be proven that these contradictions hindered the success of the operation. Even if, in the sense of the Supreme Army Command, an attempt had been made at the beginning of August to strengthen the attack front between Bug and Narew more than it was, the result would hardly have been greater. The already serious supply difficulties at that time would have increased with further accumulation of troops, in all likelihood, to such an extent that they would have outweighed the advantage of the larger number.

The Commander-in-Chief East and the Gallwitz and Scholtz Commands tried to make the most of the situation with the limited number of forces assigned to the Narew operation. This was, of course, especially true for General von Gallwitz, who believed with full inner conviction until the end in the possibility of intercepting significant parts of the Russians. The small forces that the Commander-in-Chief East, but only in the course of the later pursuit operations directed eastward through Poland and almost always only after consultation with the Supreme Army Command, gradually set aside to nourish the battle in the Niemen area, could hardly have changed the outcome between Bug and Narew. Due to the contrast between the two highest command posts, the Gallwitz Command found itself in a difficult position, as it was in constant direct contact with the Supreme Army Command, whose views it shared, but at the same time had to act according to the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief East. It managed these particularly difficult circumstances with tact, so that serious frictions were avoided and the operation essentially proceeded in harmony.

That the Narew campaign was not granted greater success was solely due to the fact that the attack had to begin with the always difficult and time-consuming breakthrough through a developed position system and subsequent river crossing. Meanwhile, the enemy found time to reinforce itself from the troops fighting west of the Vistula and in Galicia to such an extent that the German attackers soon faced an opponent equal in number of divisions, at least equal in number of rifles, if not superior, and only inferior in artillery. This ratio shifted with the progress of the fighting rather in favor of the Russian defenders than the German attackers. Thus, rapid progress in the described battles and supply difficulties was out of the question, and the disagreements about the operational direction to be maintained had only subordinate significance for the actual course.

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The Commander-in-Chief East and the High Commands Gallwitz and

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operation to make the most of the situation. This was naturally the case especially with General von Gallwitz,

who believed until the end with full inner conviction in the possibility

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The Attack of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against the Russian Narew Front.

The task of driving an enemy retreating in a broad, closed front into the Rokitno Marshes, or as General von Gallwitz occasionally expressed it, "to encircle," was not feasible when the operational gain in 46 days was only 200 kilometers, averaging less than five kilometers per day. In contrast, the Russians, relying on relatively efficient railway connections, always had the opportunity to secure not only the fighting troops but also many other valuable assets. It might have seemed tempting to throw the parts that appeared to retreat northeast between the Rokitno Marshes and the advancing German armies from the west, consisting of 13 to 14 corps, into that rather manageable area and thus decisively damage them. However, the Russian retreat direction was not hit by the advance direction of the Gallwitz army in such a way that a flanking effect could be achieved. The northern Russian armies (2nd, 1st, and 12th Army) were almost purely redirected eastward to the Brest-Bialystok line, thus frontally, and only gradually adjusted to the growing demand for forces on the northern wing after abandoning the Slonim Front; the 4th, 3rd, and 13th Army marched obliquely from the south towards them. Thus, the transport of forces by rail in the general direction of Minsk-Wilna went hand in hand. Such a generously and properly conducted retreat movement, even for parts of the army, to turn into a catastrophe, was not sufficient — quite apart from the strength that the defense already possessed in 1915 — the striking power of a pursuer who had almost four weeks of continuous fighting behind him in the first half of the attack and was already more than 100 kilometers away from the endpoints of efficient railway stations. And yet, great achievements were made. In cooperation with the Mackensen army group, the victories of the Gallwitz army and its neighbors on the right and left drove the enemy away from the threatening proximity of the German border. The capture of Warsaw and the spoils obtained during the yet-to-be-described conquest of the large fortress of Nowogeorgiewsk must also be regarded as direct consequences of the Narew campaign.

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The Beginning of the Encirclement.

7. The Conquest of Nowogeorgiewsk¹).

Nowogeorgiewsk was the largest and strongest of all Russian fortresses and the only fortification in western Poland that was exempted from decommissioning in 1910 and has since been further modernized. Located at the confluence of the Narew and Vistula, it secured, together with the outdated forts Dembe, Zegrze, and Benjamino to the east, the Narew crossing north of Warsaw and blocked the railway leading east of the Vistula to Warsaw, which had to cross the Wkra and Narew rivers within the fortress. Eight older forts extended beyond the city walls, enclosing an area of about eleven kilometers in diameter. On the north and west fronts, the Russians had begun a new line of fortifications consisting of armored groups four to five kilometers ahead of the old one. This line had been rapidly expanded since the beginning of the war and extended to other fronts. In about the same distance beyond this outer line of fortifications, deeply structured, advanced positions had been established.

On July 17, the right wing of Army Group Gallwitz, Corps Dickhuth, and XVII Reserve Corps advanced against the northern front of Nowogeorgiewsk. It was a fortunate coincidence that the chief engineer officer of the fortress, who had driven beyond his own lines in a motor vehicle, fell into German hands dead, but with valuable maps. The next day, the left wing of the 9th Army, Westenhagen Division, also approached the fortress's positions on the southern Vistula bank. By July 20, the XVII Reserve Corps command had gathered from intercepted Russian radio messages, aircraft, and patrol reports that only a weak enemy was opposite²); strong elements, the Russian XXVII Corps, seemed to be leaving the fortress to the south and east. Lieutenant General Surén considered it possible to take the fortress by storm the following day. However, General von Gallwitz prevented the execution of this plan, which was unlikely to succeed, although preparations had already been initiated. At the same time, the Commander-in-Chief East appointed the commanding general of the III Reserve Corps, General of Infantry von Befeler, to lead the unified attack against the large fortress, who had already successfully led the conquest of Antwerp.

¹) A detailed account is contained in Issue 4 of the "Battles of the World War"; Bettag: "The Conquest of Nowogeorgiewsk." — ²) Cf. E. 309.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

feler, for the leadership of the unified attack against the large fortress available, who had already successfully led the capture of Antwerp1); the previous chief quartermaster of the 9th Army, Major General von Gause, joined him as chief of staff. On July 21, General von Beseler took command of all troops in front of the northern front of the fortress, Corps Dickhuth and parts of the XVII Reserve Corps. The infantry gradually advanced further. Heavy batteries gradually arrived in greater numbers, whose deployment was directed by the General of Foot Artillery, Colonel von Berendt, who had been detached since the fall of Pultusk2).

The news of the impending fall of Warsaw prompted the acceleration of the attack: On August 5, the advance was to be made against the Narew bend Dembe–Serock; given the composition of the assault infantry from predominantly older age groups, General von Beseler demanded that the artillery must manage it. The bombardment of the positions advanced north of the forts Dembe and Zegrze was successful in that the Russians, who had already abandoned Warsaw, vacated these positions very quickly. After the forest area behind it was cleared on August 6, the two forts could be occupied without a fight the next day, while at the same time on the eastern Narew bank the right wing of the 12th Army reached the Bug3). On August 9, the Woyrsch detachment4), corresponding to the advances of the 9th Army5), completed the encirclement of the fortress in the south up to the Vistula, above Iwangorod. The Beseler Army Group now also joined the siege troops, which on the same day were immediately subordinated as an independent Beseler Army Group to the Supreme Commander East. When on August 10 a brigade of the 85th Landwehr Division could also seal off Nowogeorgiewsk in the east between Narew and Vistula, the ring around the fortress was closed. To carry out the attack, General von Beseler now had troops of about four divisions, which, with the exception of part of the siege batteries, consisted only of Landwehr and Landsturm6) and could deploy around 300 guns in total, including over 100 heavy and 14 heaviest howitzers.

1) Volume V, p. 221 ff. — 2) p. 311 ff. — 3) p. 352 f. — 4) p. 414 f. — 5) Corps Dickhuth, mostly Landsturm; 14th Ldw. D. and Brig. Pfeil, half Landsturm; 169th Brig. of the 85th Ldw. D.; Westernhagen detachment; also predominantly siege artillery. — Total: 55 battalions, 10 squadrons, 69 ½ batteries (including 42 ½ heavy and heavy, among the latter five with motor batteries).

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The Attack on Nowogeorgiewsk.

For the attack¹), the northeastern front of the fortress between Wkra and Narew was primarily considered, against which the only railway from Mlawa led. Here, General von Beseler wanted to deploy his main forces and proceed similarly to the autumn of 1914 against Antwerp. Without formal siege, under the sharpest concentration of artillery effect, a breach was to be shot in a narrow strip of the attack section into the individual resistance lines, through which the closely following infantry was to penetrate in a rapid thrust. Operations against the other fronts were to make it difficult for the enemy to shift forces within the fortress area.

The heaviest and heavy artillery alone counted 26 batteries with 113 guns²) at the attack front. However, a large part of these, especially among the inherently less worn flat-trajectory guns, were of older type with only limited firing speed and range. Additionally, the ammunition situation imposed restrictions, as the large fortress Kowno was also attacked simultaneously³), and a lack of columns made the procurement of ammunition extraordinarily difficult. Thus, the gun, the heavy field howitzer, initially had only 200 to 300 rounds each⁴).

On August 11, the Commander-in-Chief East pointed out that he "must place great importance on the rapid execution of the attack against the fortress" to soon free up the deployed forces for further tasks. General von Beseler was already willing to comply with this.

After three days of artillery effect, on August 13, the 14th Landwehr Division under Lieutenant General Schalscha von Chrenfeld and the Pfeil Brigade broke through the front enemy defense lines between Wkra and Narew on a narrow front and advanced close to the permanent tank groups XIV, XV, and XVI; about 2000 prisoners were the booty. At the same time, operations against the other fronts took place.

¹) The attack plan against the fortress drafted by the Great General Staff in peacetime can no longer be found, so it could not be determined how the strength of the fortress was assessed at that time and what attack means were considered necessary against it.  
²) High-angle fire: 3 batteries 42 cm, 5 batteries 30.5 cm, 2 batteries Mrs. (21 cm), 11 batteries heavy field howitzers (15 cm); total 21 batteries. Flat fire: 2 batteries 15 cm-Ran., 3 batteries 12 cm-Ran., 2 batteries 10 cm-Ran.; total 5 batteries.  
³) G. 347 tkm. 472 ff.  
⁴) At Gorlice 600 each, at Przasnysz 1000 rounds each.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

The attack was to be continued against the section of Groups XV and XVI, each consisting of two forts with several intermediate works, connected and secured by obstacle belts. Already on the night of August 14, the artillery carried out the necessary change of position and began on this day the destructive fire against all works between Bieka and Narew.

Under the impression of the previous German attack successes, the Russians evacuated their advanced positions on the entire northwest front up to the Vistula on the night of August 15. However, at the attack front itself, progress was initially not as desired. An assault attempt by General von Schalscha against Fort XVa at the railway failed. General von Beseler considered refraining from the sap attack under these circumstances, but then decided to continue the artillery attack immediately and repeat the assault on August 16. After planned strongest artillery preparation against Groups XV and XVI and a subsequent multi-hour crisis, the assault against Group XV finally succeeded; Fort XVb was taken by Brigade Pfeil, capturing 500 prisoners, Fort XVa, the strongest work of the entire fortification belt, somewhat later by the 21st Landwehr Brigade; 2400 prisoners and 19 guns were the total booty of the day. The simultaneous attempts against the west, south, and east fronts initially brought no decisive progress, but the enemy also retreated to his armored groups here in the following night.

The new assault planned for August 17 after strong artillery preparation against Fort XVIa led Brigade Pfeil only to the glacis of this work, where the troops remained exhausted. General von Beseler therefore wanted to use August 18 and 19 for further preparation of the attack and then renew the assault. The order for this had already been given when the enemy evacuated the armored groups XIV and XVI on the night of August 18, leaving behind many prisoners and much equipment. Without a fight, the German troops could follow up to Narew, behind which the enemy, supported by the old forts, had again established a new defense. On August 18, the attack artillery opened fire against these forts; the infantry of the 14th Landwehr Division gained a foothold on the western Bieka bank. The left wing of Corps Dichuth could, advancing south over the fort XIIIc, which had also been abandoned by the enemy, connect with them.

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The Capture of Nowogeorgiewsk.

General von Beseler decided to continue the attack with all emphasis despite the previous great efforts. Throughout the night of August 19, the outer works and the interior of the fortress were kept under disruptive fire. Meanwhile, the enemy also evacuated all armored groups from the northwest front and retreated to the line of the old forts. Explosions and fires suggested that structures, ammunition, and supplies were destroyed.

Fighting, the German troops penetrated the inner forts of the northeast front on August 19, later also entering the citadel. Here, the commander of the fortress, General Bobyr, was captured. The bulk of the garrison seemed to have retreated to the southern bank of the Vistula, whose bridges they had blown up, but surrendered there without making a serious breakthrough attempt, still in the afternoon to the German encirclement troops. By evening, the entire fortress was in German hands. The railway bridges over Wkra and Narew were thoroughly destroyed. The spoils, 6 generals, about 90,000 men, including 30,000 construction soldiers, 103 machine guns, and about 700, later more accurately counted as even 1600¹) guns, exceeded all expectations; rich supplies of ammunition, clothing, equipment, and provisions as well as significant stocks of war-important metals were added. The capture of the largest, most modernly developed Russian fortress was achieved in just under twelve days. The heavy artillery had fired around 34,600 rounds (519 from German, 678 from Austro-Hungarian heaviest guns) and overcame all difficulties, the inevitable ammunition supply and position changes with outdated equipment, paving the way for the infantry consisting only of older cohorts.

On the day after the capture of the fortress, August 20, the Supreme War Lord visited the victorious troops with General von Falkenhayn. The Supreme Commander East with General Ludendorff had also gone to Nowogeorgiewsk for this purpose. Operational questions were not discussed here. The Supreme Commander East had already received permission to use the forces becoming available before Nowogeorgiewsk in the future on the Njemen front.

¹) Including all older and close combat guns.

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The Attack of the Supreme Commander East against the Russian Narew Front.

The evacuation of Warsaw had fully occupied the railways, and the evacuation of Nowogeorgiewsk would have required numerous additional 1000 trainloads. Thus, the Russian Supreme Command had already made the explicit decision on July 5th that the fortress of Nowogeorgiewsk should be defended as an independent position to the utmost. This corresponded to the garrison and artillery equipment. It was believed that the fortress could hold out for at least two months. The reason for the unexpectedly rapid fall was rightly attributed to the destructive power of the German artillery—during the last radio message from the commander, one of their explosions had spoken in the citadel. Moreover, the Chief of General Staff, General Januschkewitsch, remarked, "God knows whether the German cannons alone are to blame. If 10,000 men had surrendered and 80,000 had fallen, that would be understandable. But 80,000 surrendered, and only 10,000 fell. One really cannot say that Nowogeorgiewsk fulfilled its task honorably."

1) Krolow, "The Failed Kamnä," p. 41.  
2) Kudaschew letter from August 26, 1915. — According to Knor, p. 320, the Supreme Command of the 1st Army, to which the fortress had last been subordinate, estimated the resistance duration to be only ten days.

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D. The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

I. The Pursuit between Bug and Vistula in the First Half of July.

Soon after the capture of Lemberg, the armies fighting in Galicia were given new, separate tasks by the allied military commands¹). The 11th and Austro-Hungarian 4th Army were to advance northward between the Bug and Vistula under the unified command of Field Marshal von Mackensen to press the southern flank of the Russian forces in Poland. The three armies of the right wing, the Austro-Hungarian 2nd, the Southern Army, and the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army, were tasked with covering this operation with a front directed eastward. To avoid creating a gap between the inner wings of both army groups and to ensure the immediate flank protection of the 11th Army, the rapid advance of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army positioned between the Bug and Vistula via Lemberg was intended²). Until this could be effective, the 11th Army had to protect its flank directly and hold back its right wing — Beskiden Corps, Corps Kneussl (119th Infantry Division and 11th Bavarian Infantry Division), Austro-Hungarian VI Corps — folded to the right.

The left wing of the 11th Army (Guard Corps, XXII Reserve and X Army Corps) opened in the last days of June by continuing its advance towards Zamosc, the section of Taneo previously unsuccessfully attacked by the neighboring Austro-Hungarian 4th Army. In a rapid march, this army overcame the swamp and forest area of that section on June 30 despite significant path difficulties and pushed its left wing almost up to the height of Krasnilt. From the results of reconnaissance, a retreat of the Russians along the entire line to the northeast behind the Bug and into a position running from Hrubieszow via Krasnilt to Szozefow could be concluded. In the foreground of this position, northeast of Zamosc, at the Labunka and especially at the Por, the three corps of the left wing of the 11th Army already encountered sustained resistance on July 1.

1) See pages 247 and 253.  
2) The railway Jaroslaw–Przemysl–Lemberg was restored by July 5.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

At Labunka and especially at Por, the three corps of the left

flank of the 11th Army encountered sustained resistance on July 1,

while the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army was still able to advance to the enemy's main position in

the line Turóbin—Kraśnik—Józefów.

The next day, a certain relief of the far-advanced

right flank of the 11th Army occurred with the return of the XXXXII.

Reserve Corps1). It had hurried in strong marches from Jaroslaw and was now inserted

between the 119th Infantry Division, stationed northwest of Krystynopol, and the Kneussl Corps

(now consisting of the 11th Bavarian and the newly arrived 107th Infantry Division).

This strengthening of the flank protection made it possible

to use the corps of the center (Kneussl and Austro-Hungarian VI Corps) for the push northward.

While both encountered strong resistance, the enemy retreated before the Guard and XXII Reserve Corps

under night maneuvers behind the stream sections of the Wolica, Wieprz, and Por.

The X Army Corps succeeded in advancing over the lower Por.

It was supported by the right flank of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, which

also broke into the Russian main position east of Kraśnik. When the

11th Army, on July 3, under the protection of its northern Bug security, which had advanced

west of Krylow, prepared to continue its push northward, its center and left flank

were unexpectedly attacked by strong enemy forces. In heavy

fighting, the army managed to generally hold or regain its line. However, as further strong

Russian reserves were identified near Hrubieszów and Cholm, Field Marshal

von Mackensen believed the 11th Army should only continue its offensive

when its right flank was relieved by the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army,

thus freeing additional forces of the 11th Army for the attack.

Only the left flank of the 11th Army, advanced over the Por,

was to reach the line Ploska—Turóbin to gain a favorable starting

position for the later continuation of the offensive.

From the not entirely accurate reporting of the intelligence

officer of the Supreme Army Command at the Army High Command II about

this intention of the Field Marshal, General von Falkenhayn

gained the impression that besides the 11th Army, the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army

should also be held back. However, this would not have corresponded to his wishes.

1) G. 248. Instead of the General of Infantry von François, appointed as the commanding general of the VII Austro-Hungarian Corps,   
Lieutenant General von Winkler took over the command of the XXXXII Reserve Corps. For this, the leadership   
of the 2nd Guard Infantry Division was given to Lieutenant General Baron von Lüttwitz.

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The pursuit stalls between Bug and Vistula.

Already on July 1, he had placed decisive importance on the fastest possible and uninterrupted advance of the army group in a discussion with Army Command 11 in Rawa Ruska and had Generalmajor Kappen in Teschen point out the next day that the right wing of the 11th Army in the Bug defense should be quickly relieved by the 2nd Army and that the 1st Army, designated as future flank protection, should be made as strong as possible. In a personal discussion with Generaloberst von Conrad on July 3 in Teschen, he further suggested reinforcing the 11th Army with the entire Southern Army to give the thrust of Army Group Mackensen the greatest emphasis. However, since the Austro-Hungarian Chief of General Staff expressed concerns about whether the eastward-facing defensive front would remain strong enough, it was finally agreed to initially withdraw only two divisions from the Southern Army to reinforce the 11th Army after crossing the Zlota Lipa. On the evening of July 3, General von Falkenhayn urgently pointed out to Army Command 11 that any delay in the advance must be avoided, "for the longer the enemy holds time and the railway at Lublin, the harder he will be to defeat." However, Field Marshal von Mackensen was able to report to him on the morning of July 4 that the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, which had meanwhile significantly expanded its breakthrough east of Krasnik on July 3, had by no means been halted; rather, it should continue the offensive together with the left wing of the 11th. He dutifully combined this report with the note that the attacked armies had already experienced a very strong depletion of forces and that the bulk of the 11th Army would only be capable of new attacks when effective relief for it was achieved through the deployment of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army around July 13. General von Falkenhayn now urgently pointed out again to Army Command 11 on the evening of July 4 that any delay in the advance must be avoided. He also once again appealed to Generaloberst von Conrad with the request to expedite the relief of the Beskiden Corps by the 2nd Army and the transport of the 1st Army. At the same time, he requested the immediate transfer of the two divisions of the Southern Army and its command to form a new army within the Army Group Mackensen.

The continuation of the partial offensive initially brought some successes. On July 4, the left wing of the 11th Army managed to reach the Plon?a—Turbin line under fighting. Also, the attack section of the 4th Army was pushed a good distance further north.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

On July 5, the enemy gave way further in front of the inner wings of both armies. Then, however, their resistance stiffened along the line Stierbizów—Urzendow. On July 6, only minor advances could be made on the left wing of the 11th Army and west of Urzendow by the 4th Army. The Mackensen High Command reported in the evening that no fewer than four new Russian corps¹) had been identified in front of their front. The pursuit of the 11th Army had essentially come to an end. Nevertheless, the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army hoped to continue its thrust towards Lublin after replenishing its ammunition stocks. However, July 7 and 8 brought significant setbacks. The right wing and center were pushed back to the area of Krasnix. A relief by the left wing was widely dispersed and the heavily weakened 11th Army was no longer possible. The attack between the Bug and Vistula had stalled. Meanwhile, the Russians also continued their counterattacks only briefly and without particular force. Both sides dug in along the entire front.

The reinforcement deemed necessary by General von Falkenhayn for a successful continuation of the offensive in the area between the Bug and Vistula depended on the course of events on the neighboring army fronts. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army (like the Southern Army) had only slowly gained ground from section to section since the end of June in daily, partly heavy fighting. The tenacious enemy had often advanced to strong counterattacks on this front. Only on July 5 was the 2nd Army in undisputed possession of the line Dunajow—Busk—Kamionka Strumilowa. To its right, the Southern Army had already reached the west bank of the Zlota Lipa from Dunajow the day before. On the same day, the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army advanced very small forces of its left wing at Butowka to the northern Dniester bank, while gathering all dispensable forces to form a strong reserve around Horodenka, as it expected Russian attacks in the area of Jaleszczyki. With the occupation of the Zlota Lipa and Bug lines, the allied army commands considered the advance of the right army wing in Galicia to be temporarily concluded. The 2nd and Southern Armies were ordered to sustainably expand the positions they had captured for defense.

¹) In fact, Guard Corps, XXXI., II. Siberian and VI. Siberian Corps were newly deployed there. — ²) G. 249 ff.

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Reinforcement of the Mackensen Army Group.

Already on July 4, Generaloberst von Conrad had given his approval to the weakening of the Southern Army requested by General von Falkenhayn, but at the same time expressed the wish that it be subordinated to the commander of the k.-u. 7th Army, General von Pflanzer-Baltin, in the event of a resumption of the offensive. The German Chief of Staff had rejected this and added that instead of the former command of the Southern Army transferring to the Mackensen Army Group, General of Infantry Count von Bothmer would take over the command of the army with his general command. Consequently, the Southern Army relinquished its general command of the X Reserve Corps (General of Infantry Kosch) with the 101st and 105th Infantry Divisions. On the evening of July 6, the commander-in-chief, General von Linsingen, was recalled with his staff and took command of the newly formed Bug Army on the right wing of the Mackensen Army Group. In the following days, the Southern Army was further weakened by the transfer of the 1st Infantry and 5th Cavalry Divisions, as well as the general command of the XXIV Reserve Corps (General of Infantry von Gerok) to the Mackensen Army Group.

West of the Vistula, the Russians had once again retreated at the turn of June/July. The ö.-u. 1st Army initially followed them to the Kamienna and was then withdrawn except for one infantry regiment and half of the 2nd Cavalry Division. An infantry division joined the ö.-u. 4th Army east of the Vistula, while the remaining parts were transported by rail via Lemberg behind the right wing of the 11th Army to the Bug downstream from Kamionka Strumilowa. Here, the Szurmay Group and the 46th Infantry Division from the ö.-u. 2nd Army joined them. The Woyrsch Army Detachment took over the entire front west of the Vistula up to the Pilica. Its right wing advanced to the heavily fortified enemy position along the Zemborzyn—Sienno—Ilza line and attacked it unsuccessfully on July 7.

On July 11, the chiefs of staff of the allied army commands agreed in Plesk on guidelines for the continuation of operations on the southeastern theater of war. Initially, opinions on this differed significantly in several points.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

Generaloberst von Conrad proposed that the Austro-Hungarian 4th and

11th Armies, with their left wing along the Vistula, and their right on

Cholm, should attack, with the Bug Army to the right — this with a

strong group east of the Bug on Wladimir Wolynsk. On the western

bank of the Vistula, the Army Detachment Woyrsch was to advance in

coordination with the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army in the general direction

towards Iwoslen. Generaloberst von Conrad envisioned the cover of this

decisive main operation to the east in an offensive form by advancing

the Austro-Hungarian 1st and 2nd Armies as well as the Southern Army

to the line Rymno (south of Wladimir Wolynsk)—Druzkopol—Pieniaki—

course of the Sereth, while the 7th Army was to simultaneously push

northward east of the Strypa. In these proposals, General von Falkenhayn

saw the danger of a fragmentation of forces; he agreed with them only

regarding the use of the 4th and 11th Armies and the Army Detachment

Woyrsch. However, he wanted the Bug Army to closely cooperate with

the 11th Army to increase the striking power on this side of the Bug.

Furthermore, he desired the participation of the Austro-Hungarian 1st

Army in the operations of Army Group Mackensen under the command

of the Generalfeldmarschall. It was to advance east of the Bug against

the line Wladimir Wolynsk—Luzk to protect the Allies' offensive on the

right flank. The head of the operations department, Generalmajor Tappen,

went even further in the objectives for this army. He advocated that it

should be reinforced by German troops to quickly and securely take

control of that line "as a starting point for repelling the Russians."

If the foundation were thus laid for the possibility of always keeping

the Russians from evading eastward, then they would have to come into

a very bad situation under the simultaneous pressure of General von Gallwitz's

offensive, and they might even be encircled if they held their ground.

This aligned with the view of the head of the Field Marshal's staff,

Generalmajor Groener, who wrote in his diary on July 4: "In my opinion,

a strong army east of the Bug is necessary." General von Falkenhayn

spoke against such an extensive offensive goal east of the Bug, as "given

everything known about the terrain beyond the Bug, it was feared that

this alone would already hinder further operations in the course of which insurmountable obstacles would arise."

1) From unpublished war memoirs of the current Lieutenant General a. D. Tappen.

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Reorganization of the Mackensen Army Group.

Course would create insurmountable obstacles“). He also had

concerns about weakening the striking power of the decisive main group in the area

between Bug and Vistula by transferring German troops to the Austro-Hungarian

1st Army. However, Generaloberst von Conrad, who gratefully and joyfully welcomed

any reinforcement of his troops by Germans, quickly warmed to General Tappen's

proposal and also withdrew his objection to placing the 1st Army under the

command of Field Marshal von Mackensen. Thus, General von Falkenhayn finally

agreed to the transfer of the XXXXI Reserve Corps and the 5th Cavalry Division

as well as the Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division to the 1st Army, although he

maintained his concerns about a far-reaching operation in the difficult terrain east

of the Bug“). The Austro-Hungarian 1st Army was tasked with accompanying the

offensive on the southern flank by advancing over the Bug into the area near

Wladimir Wolynsk, securing the Bug line upwards to the height of Dub with its

remaining forces. The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army and the Southern Army were

initially to remain defensive, while the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army was to attack

east of the Strypa in the direction of Czortkow—Buczacz. Corresponding instructions

were issued to the armies as early as July 11.

Field Marshal von Mackensen ordered that the new offensive

should be launched by the Bug Army on July 15. On the same day, the 81st

Reserve Division of the XXXXI Reserve Corps, already deployed on the left

flank of the 1st Army at Krylow, was to join, while the assembly of the other

parts of this army, intended for the attack on Wladimir Wolynsk, which could

only be completed on July 18, postponed the operation to a later date. Field

Marshal von Mackensen also assigned it the 103rd Infantry Division“) rolling

in from Strymien, whose deployment General von Falkenhayn had secured

despite initial concerns from Generaloberst von Conrad. The 11th and Austro-Hungarian

4th Army were to advance one day later than the Bug Army, on July 16. The

necessary troop movements for the deployment proceeded according to plan

without interference from the enemy. In total, 33 infantry and two cavalry

divisions were available to the Bug, 11th, and Austro-Hungarian 4th Army.

1) von Falkenhayn, p. 93.  
2) General Tappen noted in his diary: “It was only a compromise, nothing whole.”  
3) p. 260.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

The vast area between the Bug and Vistula, into which the army group had already entered around the turn of June/July and where the decision was to be fought in the future, has in its southern part up to about the height of Cholm—Jangrod the character of hilly land, north of which it increasingly turns into flatland. Mostly covered with extensive, dense forests and crisscrossed by numerous watercourses with marshy lowlands in various directions, the sectional terrain offered generally favorable positions, for the artificial strengthening of which the population was extensively recruited. Large roads with firm ground were only available in limited numbers. Railways were absent in the 100-kilometer-deep area from the Galician-Russian border to the line Cholm—Lublin altogether, except for the section Rowno—Lublin¹) not yet fully completed by the Russians and meanwhile destroyed again. It was therefore to be expected that the regulation of supplies would encounter serious difficulties. According to a suggestion from the Army High Command 11, the head of the field railway service had already ordered the immediate expansion of a single-track field railway at the end of June, which was to establish the connection with the Russian main railway network in general direction on Cholm via Zamość, following the railway line Rawa Ruska—Belzec²).

The conditions were similar in the area east of the Bug. Here, the southwestern offshoots of the large Rokitno swamp area extended with wide stretches close to the river. The difficulties arising from this for the movements of large troop bodies were indeed overestimated by General von Falkenhayn according to his own later testimony based on the existing maps and terrain descriptions as well as gathered reconnaissance at that time. It was not known that "the magnificent works carried out in the years before the war to improve the drainage conditions in the swamp area had lowered the water level to such an extent that the passability of the area in such dry summers as that of 1915 was actually only hindered by the watercourses themselves. It would have been quite possible," writes General von Falkenhayn³), "to move even with stronger troop formations in it, if it had been possible to overcome the supply difficulties."

¹) Only on August 9 could this section be put into operation after extensive restoration work.  
²) The construction started on June 29 came into operation on August 1 up to Zamość. Only on August 25 was the connection to the main railway Cholm—Lublin, which had been made operational shortly before, reached.  
³) von Falkenhayn, p. 93.

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The Russian Forces in Front of the Mackensen Army Group.

The Mackensen High Command calculated, based on the information available to it about the distribution of the R u s s i a n F o r c e s, that parts of the 4th, 3rd, and the newly formed 13th Army, with a total strength of about 15 corps and 8½ cavalry divisions, were facing the army group in the area from the Vistula to the area south of Vladimir Volynsk. It was assumed that the front of the 4th Army on this side of the Vistula (XXV., XV., VI. Siberian Corps, 2½ Cavalry Divisions) extended eastwards to Zychana, with the front of the 3rd Army (IX., X., III. Caucasian, XIV., XXIV., II. Siberian Corps, Guard Corps, one Cavalry Division) adjoining to the left, extending to west of Grabowice, and the front of the 13th Army (II. Caucasian, XXIII., XIX., XXXI., V. Caucasian Corps, five Cavalry Divisions) on both sides of the Bug with the left wing extending to the area of Bzary. Prisoner statements revealed that there was a lack of rifles and that replacement troops often arrived without firearms. Behind the combat front, Russian infantry regiments were reportedly formed without rifles. Ammunition seemed to be more plentiful. However, it was doubted whether it would be sufficient for prolonged artillery battles.

The assumptions about the composition and strength ratios of the Russian armies generally corresponded to reality. The 4th Army under General Ewcrt (XVI., Grenadier-, XXV., VI. Siberian, XV. Corps, a total of 10 infantry and 2½ cavalry divisions) stood on both sides of the Vistula, the front of the 3rd Army under General Lisch (IX., X., III. Caucasian, XIV., XXIV. Corps, a total of ten infantry and two cavalry divisions) extended from Zychana to Grabowiec. Behind it were in reserve the II. Siberian Corps, Guard Corps, and the 56th Infantry Division, a total of 5½ infantry divisions. The newly formed 13th Army (II. Caucasian, XXIII., V. Caucasian, XXXI., XXXI. Corps, a total of 13 infantry divisions, and 4 cavalry corps with four cavalry divisions) under the command of General Gorbatowsti, from the previous group Olschozy, held with its left wing on the eastern Bug bank in the area north of Sofal, loosely connecting to the 8th Army.

¹) In contrast to the completely railway-less area west of the Bug, there was a connection between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian main railway networks south of the river in the railway line Vladimir Volynsk—Sokal, already established by the Russians in the autumn of 1914.  
²) See p. 262.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

At the beginning of July, the assembly of strong German and Austro-Hungarian forces between Bug and San, especially against the inner flanks of the Russian Northwest and Southwest Front, had indicated an attack from the south and southwest direction, the 3rd and 13th Army had been instructed to offer stubborn resistance to enable the bringing up of reinforcements. The 4th Army was to maintain the connection to the 3rd Army on the eastern Vistula bank, if necessary, by giving up terrain on the opposite bank. This task had been successfully solved by the three Russian armies in the previous battles. They were determined to accept the upcoming decision as well.

2. The Battle of Krasnostaw and Hrubieszow from July 15 to 22.

Maps 5 and 6, sketches 24 and 25.

The attack of the Bug Army¹) starting on July 15 initially brought no success. The attempt of the Gerok Corps to break through on the right army flank at Malomince failed. In repeatedly renewed counterattacks, the enemy threw the attackers back to the starting position. The advance of the Beskiden Corps with the main focus in the direction of Zabrce also came to a halt. In the evening, General von Linsingen reported that ten divisions were facing his army in defensive combat. This deployment of forces revealed the enemy's firm intention to cover his retreat on the roads leading east behind the Bug with strong resistance. He assumed that it was primarily important not only to throw the enemy but also to cut off a retreat in an easterly direction. Only by quickly advancing the Bug Army on the western, the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army on the eastern bank, could the enemy's retreat still be blocked. However, this required a reinforcement of the Bug Army and a reduction of its attack front.

The Austro-Hungarian 1st Army²) had to postpone the crossing over the Bug at Sofal due to high water.

¹) The Bug Army consisted of: Corps Gerok (Genlt. XXIV. R. K., 11th Bavarian I. D., 107th S. D.), Beskiden Corps (2nd R. D., 35th R. D., 4th G. D.), 1st S. D.  
²) The army consisted of: 1st Corps (5th R. D., 6th R. D.), Szurmay Group (47th, 40th H. D.), I. Corps (46th S. D.), German XXXXI. R. K. (81st, 82nd I. D.), Bavarian 103rd S. D., German 5th R. D., Austro-Hungarian 4th and Hungarian 11th I. R. D. (Rad.-Corps Theodory)

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The Prussian Guard Storms Krasnostaw.

Only weak parts reached the eastern bank during the

night.

Even on July 16, the Bug Army did not break through. With the

11th Army, the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps in a frontal attack against the

strong position behind the broad Wolica lowlands could only achieve local

progress with significant losses. However, a full success was achieved west of

the Wieprz. Under the pressure of a powerful thrust

from the inner wings of the XXII Reserve and X Army Corps, exemplary of the

militia, the enemy, simultaneously pressured by the Guard Corps at the front,

was forced to quickly abandon the Wieprz-Wolica corner.

By deploying the 119th Infantry Division on the right wing of the X Army

Corps, the attack wedge could be pushed further north to Izdebno. With the

Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, there was no unified attack on this day.

On the right wing of the Bug Army, on July 17, even the

deployment of the 1st Infantry Division with the Gerok Corps could not bring the attack

into flow. However, the 11th Army succeeded in exploiting its success west of the

Wieprz despite increased resistance. Krasnostaw

succumbed to the assault of the Guard. Under a flank protection pushed northward

on the west bank of the Wieprz, the infantry of the Guard Corps crossed the Wieprz and

gained a bridgehead east of Krasnostaw. To be able to quickly move the parts of the

2nd Guard Infantry Division of Lieutenant General Freiherr von Aßtußv still standing

at the Wolica front there, the 105th Infantry Division was to be deployed for their

relief. This division and the 22nd Infantry Division, which had succeeded in crossing

the Wolica at a spatially limited point, were subordinated to General of Infantry Kosch.

To the left of the Guard Corps, the XXII Reserve and the X Army Corps fought their

way forward over Izdebno in fluctuating battles. The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army,

attacking on a broad front, also gained no ground today. Field Marshal von Mackensen

therefore advised shifting the focus to their right wing, in order to connect with the victorious left wing of the 11th Army to advance the attack.

1) The 11th Army consisted of: Austro-Hungarian VI Corps (12th, 39th I.D.), Guard Corps   
(1st, 2nd, G.J.D.), XXII R.K. (42nd, 43rd, 44th R.D.), X R.K. (19th, 20th G.D.), Corps   
Kosch (Bentsch. X R.K., 101st, 105th I.D.), 119th I.D., 3rd G.D. (The latter   
brought from the western theater of war in early July G. 99).  
2) The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army consisted of: XVII Corps (11th, 45th F.D.), XIV Corps   
(3rd, 8th, 10th I.D.), IX Corps (106th, 4th, 41st, 21st S.D.), X Corps (2nd, 24th, 26th G.D.),   
Russian Corps (37th, 62nd S.D., German 47th R.D. and 1st and 3rd Brig. of the Polish Legion),   
2nd R.D.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

The previous result of the offensive was small. Only the three corps of the left wing of the 11th Army had made a spatially limited breach in the Russian front west of the Wieprz. The stubborn resistance that the enemy had offered in the first three days of fighting, and the reports received by July 18 about his force distribution, gave the commander of the army group the conviction that very strong Russian forces must have been deployed between the Bug and the Vistula, who seemed determined for the decisive battle. He even expected a counterattack from the Cholm—Lublin line, at least the strongest defense in this line. On the other hand, he no longer considered an advance of the Russians from the east over the Bug against the right flank likely. He therefore believed that he had to keep his forces as much as possible in the area between the Bug and the Vistula, where the decision was being fought, but could refrain from the nerve-wracking exchange of stronger forces of the b.-ö. u. 1st Army to proceed from Krylow to Wladimir Wolynsk. This army was instructed to only gain bridgeheads on the Bug, which should serve as a fallback for the cavalry corps of General von Hebler (German 5th, Austro-Hungarian 4th, and Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division) to be deployed later on Wladimir Wolynsk—Luzk. The Bug security of the 1st Army had to extend downstream to Slupce. Since the army no longer needed the XXXXI Reserve Corps for this purely defensive task, it was to join the Bug Army and increase its striking power. This seemed all the more necessary as this army had not yet succeeded in advancing by July 18.

In the 11th Army, the breach in the enemy position widened on this day. The bulk of the 105th Infantry Division of Major General von der Esch, deployed to the Wolica front, was moved west of the Wieprz behind the guard and pushed through the bridgehead of the Wieprz to the east. Immediately starting heavy counterattacks by the Russian guard from the north and east brought this advance to a halt and thus enabled the extremely threatened Russian garrison of the Wolica position to retreat. The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps and the 22nd Infantry Division simultaneously pushed frontally over this section after the retreating enemy. Also west of the Wieprz, the cavalry corps of the right wing of the XXII Reserve Corps had to fend off strong counterattacks. The initially well-advancing left wing of this corps did not get beyond Olszanka. In front of the X Army Corps, the enemy first offered sustained resistance in a new position northwest of Izdebno.

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The Battle of Hrubieszow.

West of the Gielczew stream, the 19th Infantry Division, in cooperation with the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, pushed them back to Rzczonow.

On July 19, the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army expanded its bridgehead at Sokal and was able to establish a foothold north of Iczary on the eastern bank of the Bug. The Heydebreck Cavalry Corps began to cross the river. The army was again advised that further advances beyond the Bug were not feasible, but a prompt relief of the XXXXI Reserve Corps was necessary, as it occupied the western Bug bank on both sides of Krylow and was simultaneously striving to maintain the connection to the Bug Army to the north. This was now in full forward movement, as the enemy had retreated along its entire front during the night of July 19. Covered on the right flank by the 1st Infantry Division at the Bug, the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division pushed the enemy back behind the Huczwa, which had become swampy due to recent rains. The 107th Infantry Division, under the leadership of Major General von Moser, advanced north of Zaborez. Here, it successfully countered further advances into the rear of the enemy's position at Hrubieszow. The territorial gain was significantly greater on the left army wing, where the Beskiden Corps under General of Cavalry von der Marwitz was able to follow the retreating enemy to Woslawice. To continue the pursuit the next day along the entire line, Hrubieszow was to be taken early by encirclement from the west.

East of the 11th Army, the enemy retreated further east of Wierpz under the double pressure in the front and against its rear from the bridgehead east of Krasnystaw. The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps followed and reached the stream section at Siemnica Krolewska with its left wing. As the troops of General Kosch (22nd and 105th Infantry Division) and parts of the Guard Corps gathered northeast of Krasnystaw, the former were to be withdrawn again. Along this entire line, new reinforced positions were now taken. However, on the eastern bank of the river, the advance already took on more of the character of a pursuit. The left wing of the Guard Corps swung towards Wierpz. The XXII Reserve Corps advanced beyond Lopiennik. The X Army Corps, however, pushed forward with great marching effort towards Piaski and thus stood close to the intended target, the Cholm—Lublin road.

Also in front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, the enemy advanced in one move up to a new position in the Chmiel—Opole line, to which the army approached.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

Thus, by the evening of the fifth day of attack on the battlefield between Bug and Vistula, a great spatial success was recorded almost along the entire line. However, the enemy had managed to avoid a decision by a systematic retreat into well-prepared positions. Its combat strength, which had also manifested in effective counterattacks, was by no means broken.

Meanwhile, on the western bank of the Vistula, the army detachment Woyrsch had been able to achieve a great success south of the Ilzanka, which did not remain without influence on the enemy front opposite the Mackensen army group. On the morning of July 17, the right wing of the army detachment broke into the Russian position and forced the enemy to retreat. In pursuit, the Ilzanka was reached by the evening of July 18. The group Kövesz on the left wing was also able to follow the withdrawing enemy on July 19 to the line Starzyez—Kowala—west of Przylot—west of Wysmierzyce. Thus, the operational cooperation of the forces on both sides of the Vistula began to become noticeably threatening for the Russians. According to the orders of Field Marshal von Mackensen, the enemy between Bug and Vistula was to be withdrawn to its main positions everywhere on July 20 and these were to be attacked themselves on July 21.

Things did not proceed so systematically, however. The Russian surprise initially meant that the enemy attacked the bridgeheads of the southern and 1st Army on the eastern Bug bank with strong forces on July 20 and pushed back their garrisons. The cavalry corps Heydebreck had to vacate the barely won Olsufje again. This delayed the relief of the XXXXII Reserve Corps intended to strengthen the Bug Army. Field Marshal von Mackensen did not allow the deployment of the 103rd Infantry Division of Major General von Esfom, requested by the 1st Army, for a counterattack on Olsufje.

The Bug Army also encountered unexpected obstacles. The hope of General von Liningen that the enemy would succumb to the comprehensively planned attack against Hrubieszow was initially not fulfilled. The thrust of the 107th Infantry Division, conducted from the west against the heights north of Hrubieszow, did not penetrate. To give this flank attack greater force, the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division of Major General Ritter von Kneussl was replaced south of Hrubieszow by the 1st Infantry Division of Lieutenant General von Conta and moved across to the western bank of the Huczwa.

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The Bug Army Breaks the Resistance at Hrubieszow.

However, on July 20, due to the late hour, it could no longer engage in battle. As the

Beskiden Corps also had to postpone its attack due to unfavorable weather

to July 21, General von Linsingen decided to bring down Hrubieszow the

next day through a frontal attack by the 1st Infantry Division south of the

Huczwa and by encircling with the 11th Bavarian and 107th Infantry

Divisions from the west. He hoped in this way to separate the Russian

forces west and east of the Bug.

The striking power of the 11th Army was reduced by the days of fighting

and marches on roads made impassable by rain. Its territorial gain on July

20 in new fierce battles against the enemy, reinforced by significant fresh

forces, was therefore only slight. The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, which

had shifted its focus to the right flank, unsuccessfully attempted to break

through in connection with the 11th Army at Chmiel.

Field Marshal von Mackensen saw no danger in the strong deployment of

forces against the Bug bridgeheads of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army. It

even seemed desirable to him that the enemy, feeling threatened here,

would tie down forces away from the decisive battle. Apparently, the

Russians had no intention of advancing over the Bug themselves. Since

the use of the Heydebreck Cavalry Corps east of the Bug was not possible

at the time, the Field Marshal ordered on July 21 that the XXXXI Reserve

Corps should be freed up as soon as possible for use at the front of the Bug

Army. The Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division was assigned to the Bug

Army. Due to shifts within the front, the attack of this army was only

carried out in the course of the afternoon. The enemy abandoned Hrubieszow

under pressure against his right flank and rear. He was pushed back from

Hrubieszow to the north and towards Zabudce. The Beskiden Corps

succeeded in taking the position on both sides of Wosjlawice on a broad

front and then holding it against counterattacks. General von Linsingen

believed that these counterattacks served as the prelude to further retreat,

and therefore ordered that the XXXXI Reserve Corps should soon engage

in the battle over Hrubieszow with the 1st Infantry Division, and the 11th

Cavalry Division should follow the right army wing. The 11th Army

encountered the hardest resistance on both banks of the Huczwa. However,

the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army succeeded in breaking into the enemy on

both sides of Trzciniec.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

Field Marshal von Mackensen informed the commander-in-chief, Field Master of Ordnance von Puhallo, that for operational reasons he no longer placed value on the bridgeheads, only the absolute holding of the river section was necessary. The b. u. 2nd Army continued its attack on the right wing. The foremost parts of the XXXXI Reserve Corps had to turn east against the enemy immediately after passing through Hrubieszow, who was standing in the river bend west of Uscilug. To the north, the 1st Infantry Division fought for Wladimirzec. The Gerdt Corps also advanced westward, but encountered new strongly fortified positions at and east of Teratyn. The Beskiden Corps could only hold its lines in changing battles. The divisions of the 11th Army were at the end of their material strength and dug in. The b. u. 4th Army was able to further expand the success of its center. The left army wing advanced on the Vistula at Sniatynowice, as ordered by the Mackensen High Command, to maintain the connection with the Woyrsch Army Division.

Before this, the enemy had already evacuated the stubbornly defended position north of the Ilzanta on the morning of July 19 after fierce nightly battles. By the evening of July 22, partly only after overcoming new resistance, the two wings of the Woyrsch Army Division reached the Vistula, above Iwangorod in the line Janowice—Patkowice, below Iwangorod in the line west of Pawlowice—Ryczwol to the Pilica estuary. In the gap in between, the fortress was closed off from the west, and strong parts were prepared for crossing the river on both sides of the Zwolen—Nowo Aleksandrija road.

The Mackensen High Command assessed the intentions of the enemy on July 22 in a report to the Supreme Army Command as follows: "Enemy is preparing retreat with 13th Army to the northeast. From the 3rd Army, counterattacks are initially to be expected, then retreat to the north, later to the northeast. The 4th Army will initially cover the middle Vistula, then withdraw, first to the north." The enemy thus seemed to be preparing a large backward swing behind the Bug. Field Marshal von Mackensen did not conceal that a strong thrust of the army squadron would be desirable to hit the flank of the Russian retreat. However, he was unable to close his mind to the realization that the battles at the Bug had severely affected and exhausted the 11th Army, which was no longer capable, in its current grouping of forces, of achieving decisive successes against the enemy, whose defensive strength remained unbroken.

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Pause in Combat for the Mackensen Army Group.

The heavily battered and exhausted 11th Army was no longer able, in its current grouping of forces, to achieve decisive successes against the enemy, whose defensive strength remained unbroken. Therefore, he reported with a heavy heart to the Supreme Army Command his decision to first "continue the advance northward with a strong center and cover against the east after a necessary pause in combat."

This decision did not surprise the German Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army. He himself had viewed the prospects on July 19 as extremely favorable¹), but on the 21st wrote to the Commander-in-Chief East: "The Mackensen Army Group faces a far superior enemy. Those of its troops that must advance have been severely battered by almost three months of mobile warfare, and their right flank requires constant attention. It is therefore not to be assumed that the army group can advance on its own." For the leader of the overall operations, however, an interruption of the Mackensen Army Group's offensive called into question the success of his own plans, which were aimed at a decisive blow against the main mass of the enemy. The previously favorable course of events, especially on the Narew Front, had only recently awakened in him the hope "that the decision in the fight against Russia would fall in the area south of the Narew"³). To achieve this goal, the concentric pressure from the northwest and south against the masses of the enemy located in the area east of the Bug from the Vistula could not be allowed to slacken even temporarily at any point. It was therefore necessary to get the stalled offensive of the Mackensen Army Group back on track as quickly as possible. General von Falkenhayn, in the aforementioned letter to the Commander-in-Chief East, identified the uninterrupted continuation of the Narew operation, using all available forces, as the most effective means, since immediate support of the Mackensen Army Group by bringing in fresh units appeared unfeasible due to unfavorable railway and supply conditions⁴) in Galicia and southern Poland.

At the same time, he was also eager to bring the forces still west of the Vistula, such as the 9th Army and the Woyrsch Army Detachment, to bear on the course of the war beyond the river as soon as possible⁵). Therefore, on July 21, he proposed to Colonel General von Conrad to combine these two formations into an army group directly subordinate to the German Supreme Army Command under the command of Prince Leopold of Bavaria.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

To unite and launch an attack across the Vistula between Iwangorod and Warsaw in the direction of Lublin-Siedlce. This idea undoubtedly corresponded to the understandable wish of the German Chief of General Staff to secure a stronger immediate influence on the continuation of overall operations on the eastern theater of war by incorporating some Austro-Hungarian units into the German command area, in line with the numerous German contributions to the Austro-Hungarian command. He also had sufficient reasons from the overall war leadership standpoint to bring the fight against Russia to a successful conclusion as quickly as possible, to free up forces for use in the West and — given the precarious situation of the Turkish ally — to exert "pressure on the Balkan states"¹).

However, his proposal met with decisive rejection from the Austro-Hungarian Chief of General Staff. He had already previously ordered, in line with the existing agreements of the Army Group Woyrsch, to cross the Vistula above Iwangorod under protection against the fortress and to engage in the battle of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army. He now asked General von Falkenhayn to maintain the existing command relationships, as the operations of the Army Group Woyrsch were connected with those of the Mackensen Army Group, while the 9th Army was connected with the Narew attack. General von Falkenhayn immediately pointed out in his response that the unification of the two armies was precisely intended to deploy them in the most effective direction, in this case, to attack the Russian forces opposite Field Marshal von Mackensen from the rear. However, Generaloberst von Conrad insisted on his position, arguing that an attack across the Vistula below Iwangorod would be too time-consuming and would give the enemy the opportunity to shift forces from the Vistula bend both against the Mackensen Army Group and against the Gallwitz Army Group. The exchange of views on this matter continued for several days without result. Even a personal discussion between the two Chiefs of General Staff in Teschen on July 24 initially brought no agreement. Only after Field Marshal von Mackensen assured General von Falkenhayn in response to an inquiry that he could definitely hold the front of his army group by his own means until the Vistula crossing became effective, did Generaloberst von Conrad agree to General von Falkenhayn's proposal to the extent that the Army Group Woyrsch should force the crossing below Iwangorod. The German Chief of General Staff then temporarily refrained from further discussing his plan to form a new army group under Field Marshal Prince Leopold of Bavaria.

¹) Letter from General von Falkenhayn to the Commander-in-Chief East dated July 21, 1915.

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The Army Detachment Woyrsch is to relieve the Mackensen Army Group.

The German Chief of General Staff temporarily refrained from further discussing his plan to form a new army group under General Field Marshal Prince Leopold of Bavaria.

General Field Marshal von Mackensen had accurately assessed the situation and intentions of the R u s s i a n s in his report of July 22 to the Supreme Army Command. Despite the deployment of reinforcements (II Siberian and Guard Corps at 3rd Army, 56th and 27th Infantry Division at 13th Army), it was not possible to hold the previous positions. The commander of the Northwest Front, General Alexeyev, ordered a gradual withdrawal to the prepared position Iwangorod—Koch—Ostrow—Opalin—Luboml—Kowel for the three armies of his southern wing (4th, 3rd, and 13th Army) on July 22. The 3rd and 13th Armies were tasked with delaying the advance of the Mackensen Army Group towards Brest Litovsk through offensively conducted resistance. In particular, the area around Vladimir Volynsk east of the Bug was to be held as long as possible. Due to the pause in attacks by the allies, the Russians gained time for the systematic preparation of the ordered retreat. They refrained from immediately initiating movements.

3. The continuation of the offensive on Cholm—Lublin from July 23 to 31. Maps 6 and 7, Sketch 24.

Until the resumption of the offensive on the front of the Mackensen Army Group, the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army successfully repelled enemy attacks against their bridgeheads on the Bug as before. Their cavalry divisions were deployed for flank security down to Stitcze.

At the Bug Army, General von Linsingen, who saw in the enemy's counterattacks only the concealment of his further retreat, initially attempted to continue the offensive. The XXXXI Reserve Corps and parts of the 1st Infantry Division had to fight long, heavy, bloody battles for possession of Spiczilosi (east of Moniatycze) and the forest east of Annopol in their front directed eastward against the Bug loop between Uscilug. The fighting power of the enemy was also expressed in the often repeated counterattacks from the woods. Nevertheless, after a few days, the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division succeeded in taking the enemy positions west of Annopol.

1) p. 396.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

Nevertheless, after a few days, the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division succeeded in taking the enemy positions west of Annopol. Attempts to advance at Teresyn on the road to Cholm were unsuccessful. Only the Besziden Corps, supported by neighboring troops of the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, achieved some local advantages on July 25. Counterattacks by the Russians in the following days were repelled. The overall result of these several days of bitter fighting by the Bug Army was small. They only proved that their severely exhausted and weakened divisions alone were unable to break the enemy's stubborn resistance. Here too, a pause in fighting was absolutely necessary to resume the attack together with the other armies.

Against the 11th Army, the Russians only launched connected, unsuccessful attacks on July 23. Otherwise, the regrouping and preparation of forces for a new advance could be carried out undisturbed by the enemy until July 28. Reinforcements to raise the heavily depleted troop strengths arrived in the meantime.

Before the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, the enemy began to retreat on July 23 to a prepared position only a few kilometers back. The army followed them; the deployment for the new attack also remained undisturbed here.

For the resumption of his offensive, Field Marshal von Mackensen chose the middle of the enemy front between Bug and Vistula, the line Cholm—Lublin, as the main direction of attack. He did not fail to recognize that a thrust further east, with partial forces on the right bank of the Bug, could effectively hit the enemy if he, as assumed, retreated northeast. However, this would have required time-consuming regroupings. The terrain near the Bug, with its numerous watercourses and swampy areas, was also considered particularly unfavorable for movements and battles of large troop masses. Furthermore, it was expected that the enemy would offer particularly stubborn resistance on his outer army wing to cover the withdrawal of his masses over the middle Bug. From a further westward thrust, the Field Marshal finally hoped, in close cooperation with the Woyrsch Army Detachment, to quickly make the Russian Vistula front, still held on both sides of Swangorod, untenable. He also considered an early withdrawal of the enemy possible and believed that such a move would certainly be covered by heavy partial attacks.

1) The Austro-Hungarian army command withdrew the 8th Infantry Division from the army for use on the Italian theater of war.  
2) See page 388.

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Resumption of the Offensive of Army Group Mackensen.

"The army is ready," it was therefore ordered, "to repel these attacks as before and to follow the retreating enemy. A premature advance against his strong positions does not promise the desired success and would play into his hands." Only on July 29 were the 11th and 4th Armies to launch a new attack together.

The main breakthrough point for the 11th Army was again determined to be the front west of the Wieprz. Here, a strong assault group under the command of General von Emmich (XXII Reserve Corps, Corps Roßki, X Army Corps, 119th Infantry Guard Cavalry Division) was to break through at Biskupice and then throw strong rear echelons to the east over the Wieprz for a flank attack. This was intended to ease the difficult frontal attack over the lake-rich Siemnica section for the right-adjoining front (Guard Corps and Austro-Hungarian VI Corps). After reaching the first objectives, the main pressure was to be shifted from the western to the eastern bank of the Wieprz. The army reserve (the 22nd and the 103rd Infantry Division, transferred from the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army) was therefore positioned immediately east of the river. The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army was to join the attack with a strong right wing in the direction of Lublin. It extended to the right into the area northeast of Chmiel to facilitate both the crossing of the Giełczew Brook by the left wing of the 11th Army and to flank the enemy standing in front of its own front. The center, where the German 47th Reserve Division was located, was to continue the frontal breakthrough northwest of Trzciniec. Additionally, the army was instructed to pivot its left wing on the Vistula to hold Russian forces that might otherwise turn against the army detachment Woyrsch tasked with crossing below Iwangorod. The Bug Army was assigned the dual task of covering the right flank of the 11th Army and participating in the new offensive by advancing on Cholm as long as possible.

According to the enemy force grouping, the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army (five infantry and two cavalry divisions²) faced seven Russian infantry divisions and two cavalry corps on the eastern Bug bank. More than ten Russian divisions had massed in front of the eight infantry divisions of the Bug Army.

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However, the 11th Army with 12½ infantry divisions was almost four divisions superior to the enemy in front of their line, and the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army (14½ infantry divisions) was about seven superior. The Russians were supposed to have freshly assembled their formations. Artillery ammunition also seemed to be more plentiful with them now.

General von Emmich wanted to lead the decisive attack assigned to him by breaking out fan-like from the area on both sides of Fajslawice. The Kosch Corps was to break through the enemy position in the direction of Biskupice. Accordingly, the mass of heavy artillery was deployed here. To the right of this, the XXII Reserve Corps was to advance with a strong left wing north of Fajslawice and then attack eastwards below Lopiennik over the Wieprz. The flank security above Lopiennik was taken over by the Guard Cavalry Division. The X Army Corps had to prepare strong parts on its right wing to cover the left flank of the Kosch Corps against a threat from the large forest west of Fajslawice. The task of the left wing of the corps, however, was to join the attack of the neighboring army directed to the northeast west of the Gielczew Brook.

General Kosch focused on the left wing of his corps. Here, the 105th Infantry Division of Major General von Seydlitz succeeded in repeated sharp fire concentration soon after 7 a.m. in the assault against the elevated group of houses Ignasin (west of Fajslawice), the focal point of the enemy position. In powerful momentum, the division expanded its success to both sides. The 101st Infantry Division, led by Major General Reiser, also managed to advance its attack east of this place at noon, supported on the left flank over Fajslawice, and to pull along the left wing of the XXII Reserve Corps. In the early afternoon, the 44th Reserve Division, following in the second line under Lieutenant General von Dorrer, advanced east over the Wieprz. The coverage of the left flank of the Kosch Corps was offensively carried out by the 20th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Ritter and Edler von Deiting, advancing east of the Gielczew Brook in the direction of Piaśki. Under the impact of these all-round successes, the enemy abandoned further resistance in a rearwardly fortified position and vacated the area in the Wieprz-Gielczew arc. Advancing, the 101st Infantry Division also seized the Wieprz bridges northeast of Fajslawice, while the 105th Infantry Division on the left of unrelentingly advanced northwards and captured Biskupice by midnight.

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Breakthrough Attack on Biskupice.

The X Army Corps reached Piaski.

The battle on the eastern bank of the Wieprz was not as successful. To make the flank attack of the XXII Reserve Corps over the river as effective as possible, General von Emmich advanced the 119th Infantry Division to Fajsławice. By 4 p.m., strong parts of the XXII Reserve Corps had already crossed the Wieprz after executing the right turn. However, strong resistance then set in, as the enemy recognized the threat to its south-facing front opposite the Guard Corps and the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps due to this rear threat. Therefore, the XXII Reserve Corps was unable to advance further east today. Consequently, the Prussian Guard Corps, in its frontal attack against the stubborn resistance of the Russian Guard, could only achieve minor local successes on both sides of Krupc. Fortunately, the left wing of the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, which joined this attack, achieved significant territorial gains.

The Bug Army now showed how much the previous battles had depleted the troops' striking power. The combat pause had been too short. The attack, centered on the 1st and 11th Bavarian Infantry Divisions west of Annopol, did not break through despite local advances by both divisions. The Austro-Hungarian 1st Army maintained its bridgeheads on the Bug despite some local losses. The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army also did not achieve any major success.

Overall, the gain of the first day of the attack was thus limited to the successful breakthrough of Emmich's assault group into the enemy's position west of the Wieprz. The aim was to expand this success so that it also affected the adjacent fronts to the right and left. To this end, Field Marshal von Mackensen ordered General von Emmich on July 30 to continue with as strong forces as possible, holding the line from Borstów to east of the Wieprz, to bring down the particularly well-fortified enemy position in front of the Guard Corps and the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps. At the same time, these two corps were to attack the front anew. If the strike east of the Wieprz succeeded, it was hoped that the difficult attack of the Bug Army would also proceed more swiftly.

The commander of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, Archduke Josef Ferdinand, now intended to shift the emphasis of the attack to the left wing, to break through the enemy here and then roll him up to the right.

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The decisive factor for this change was the fact that the Woyrich Army Detachment had succeeded on July 29 in crossing the Vistula below Iwangorod at several points. It was hoped that this threat to the rear would weaken the enemy's resistance in front of the left wing of the 4th Army.

On the early morning of July 30, Field Marshal von Mackensen was unexpectedly faced with a new situation: The enemy, in timely recognition of the great danger threatening east of the Wieprz, had begun a retreat during the night almost along his entire front between the Bug and the Vistula into a new position, which, as reconnaissance revealed, ran approximately along the line Matcze (on the Bug)—south of Cholm—north of Lublin—Kurów. This too was strongly fortified according to intelligence reports, with the involvement of the civilian population. West of Kurów, it found support at Nowo Alexandrija on the Russian imperial front around Iwangorod. Again, as so often before, the enemy had evaded the decisive blow intended for him at the last moment. Again, the army group seemed to face the equally difficult, exhausting, and thankless task of a frontal attack against a strong position. For the pursuit, immediately taken up by all three armies, quickly came to an end.

On July 31, the enemy was pushed back from the field to his main position, partly already under fierce fighting. In the Bug Army, the 1st and 11th Bavarian Infantry Divisions successfully advanced over Strzelce. The army was instructed to focus its further advance in the direction of Cholm. Also, on the left wing of the 11th Army, the X Army Corps succeeded in breaking into the Russian position west of the Wieprz. The left wing of the 4th Army advanced into the area of Kurów. Its right wing received a direction towards the northeast on Lenczna. The 11th Army was to succeed in making a convergence of its striking power in a narrower space impossible. Field Marshal von Mackensen planned the decisive attack on August 1 with the Emmich Group on both sides of the main road Fajslawice—Wlodawa, with the Plettenberg Group (Guard Corps, 22nd and 103rd Infantry Division) east of it, left wing over Pawlow. Although the Russians still seemed determined to hold their overall front in Poland against the concentrated attacks of the Allies despite previous failures.

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The Order for Crossing the Vistula below Iwangorod.

4. The Vistula Crossing of the Army Detachment Woyrsch.

The military success of the 11th Army at Biskupice, which had revived the offensive of the Mackensen Army Group, coincided in time with an equally important event on the left neighboring front, the crossing of the Vistula by the Army Detachment Woyrsch. Generaloberst von Woyrsch, based on the directive received on the evening of July 21 from the Austro-Hungarian High Command, to engage with as strong forces as possible over Nowo Aleksandrija in the battle of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, immediately set out to reach the Vistula above the fortress Ertrunkungen against the line Nowo Aleksandrija—Golomb. The crossing was to take place on the night of July 24 to 25 at Nowo Aleksandrija, with a simultaneous feint operation by the Landwehr Division of General Count von Bredow at Janowice. During a meeting with General von Falkenhayn on July 23, however, the Chief of Staff of the Army Detachment, Lieutenant Colonel Heye, expressed concerns about the crossing at Nowo Aleksandrija, as the advantage of surprise would be lost at this location, and suggested crossing below the fortress. Apart from the possibility of surprise, this would allow the continuation of the thrust to hit the rear of the enemy opposing the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army and have a significantly more favorable operational impact. General von Falkenhayn, who, as already mentioned, shared the same view, proposed a corresponding amendment after consultation with Generaloberst von Conrad.

Meanwhile, preparations for the crossing at Nowo Aleksandrija were begun for all eventualities. Only on the late evening of July 24 did the new directive from Teschen reach the High Command in Radom, according to which the Vistula crossing below Iwangorod in the area of the Radomka estuary was to be forced by the Landwehr Corps and the Landwehr Division Bredow. The Austro-Hungarian XII Corps of General von Kövess was tasked with securing the river from the Chodel estuary downstream to Kozienice, enclosing Iwangorod, and attacking the fortress upon the arrival of heavy artillery. General von Falkenhayn added to this directive on July 25 that the main requirement for the success of the crossing was the surprise of the enemy.

1) The Army Detachment Woyrsch consisted of: 2nd Division Bredow, Landwehr Regiment (3rd and 4th Austro-Hungarian Divisions), Group Kövess (Austro-Hungarian XII Corps with 16th and 35th Infantry Divisions), Austro-Hungarian 7th and 9th Austro-Hungarian 2nd Divisions.  
2) C. 398.  
3) C. 398.  
4) C. 398/399.

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The choice of the crossing point remains with the high command and should not be limited by the reconnaissance of the Radomka estuary. The crossing should occur as soon as possible, without regard to any parts of the 9th Army that might be drawn in.

Although the crossing at Nowo Aleksandria had already begun on the night of July 25th upon receiving the new instructions, the left march of the three Landwehr divisions was immediately initiated: the Landwehr corps was to reach the area Swierze Gorne—Glownaczow—Magnuszew by July 27th, and the Landwehr Division Bredow was to reach the area of Brzuzza by July 28th. Despite the extraordinarily long and strenuous marches required for this regrouping of all troops, especially the bridge trains already deployed at Nowo Aleksandria, all three Landwehr divisions were in the ordered accommodations by July 27th. After the relief of the Landwehr corps, General von Kövesh took over with the Austro-Hungarian 7th Cavalry Division the Vistula security from south of Janowice to Opatkowice and closed off the fortress Iwangorod with the Austro-Hungarian XII Corps from the west. The Austro-Hungarian 9th Cavalry Division maintained the river security between Kozienice and the Pilica, and it was immediately subordinated to the high command Woyrsch.

Based on the reconnaissance results, Generaloberst von Woyrsch ordered the crossing for the night of July 28th to 29th between Swierze Gorne and Tarnow with the main focus at Ryczywol. However, on July 27th, the Russians attacked the cavalry stationed on the right wing of the German 9th Army north of the Pilica. Generaloberst von Woyrsch was thereby faced with the serious question of whether to adhere to his decision to cross the Vistula or to first turn north to support the 9th Army. The situation seemed not particularly worrying, as it had been assumed since July 24th that Russian attacks between Iwangorod and Warsaw would have to be expected: 4½ Russian corps had been identified at the Vistula section, occasional troop movements between Radom and the Vistula crossings below the Pilica estuary were in Russian hands. Generaloberst von Woyrsch, however, remained firm in his decision, as he saw in his own river crossing the most effective countermeasure against any threatening enemy attacks south of Warsaw. In the order issued on the morning of July 27th, he entrusted the leadership of the crossing to the commander of the Landwehr corps, General of Cavalry Freiherrn von König.

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Preparations and Execution of the Vistula Crossing.

Initially, the hilly terrain on both sides of the road

Maciejowice—Gósolew and the forest area on the eastern bank of the Vistula were to be secured.

To carry out this operation, the 3rd (Major General von Arnim) and 4th (Major General von Hofacker) Landwehr Divisions were primarily designated; the Landwehr Division Bredow, whose artillery

was made available to the Landwehr Corps for the crossing, was to be ready to advance immediately to the eastern bank, as Russian counterattacks were expected soon.

The k.u.k. 9th Cavalry Division retained its security mission at

the Vistula initially, while the Köves Group at Kazimierz and

Nowo Aleksandja was to simulate crossing attempts and otherwise pin down the

enemy with artillery fire. The 9th Army was also called upon to support with feigned operations.

The technical management of the river crossing was, according to the instructions of the

General of Engineers at the Supreme Command Woyrsch, Major General

Adams, in the hands of the k.u.k. Colonel Michel. He had four

German, six k.u.k. pioneer companies with two German divisional,

½ corps bridge train and 21 k.u.k. war bridge equipment at his disposal.

This bridge material, equivalent to the equipment of six German corps,

allowed a strong combat force to be thrown across the approximately 900-meter-wide river with the first echelon. The crossing itself

was to be carried out in five groups at ten crossing points over a front width

of 20 kilometers. Each group was to take four guns with them;

the bulk of the artillery was deployed close to the Vistula. East of

Ryczynwol, the construction of a military bridge was to begin immediately. Since

on July 28, the 9th Army expressly waived support from the

Army Detachment Woyrsch on the northern Pilica bank, and

all indications were that the preparations had remained hidden from the enemy

below Iwangorod, the prospects for success of the river crossing had significantly improved.

On the night of July 28 to 29, at 1 a.m., the first

echelon set off. Less than two hours later, the entire front had the

bulk of the infantry on the eastern bank of the river; on the left flank

Kobylinica, Przewoz, and the large island east of Ryczynwol were in German

hands, 300 prisoners and 5 machine guns captured. Still under enemy

artillery fire, the bridge construction east of

Ryczynwol could begin at 7 a.m.; by noon, the first parts

of the artillery and the train had crossed. The strongest resistance had to be broken by the

22nd Landwehr Brigade of Lieutenant General Sachs at Tarnow.

It managed to bring only a few guns across the Vistula and faced a difficult situation against soon-to-be-launched Russian attacks.

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Only when artillery arrived over the bridge at Ryczywol for support, did their situation improve.

The crossing was successful, but now it was necessary to quickly advance to gain space for deeply structured bridgehead positions. Although the corps reserve and the flank protection from the Pilica were immediately brought up, it was no longer possible, in view of quickly brought up enemy reinforcements, to make further progress on the eastern bank on July 29.

The next day, strong counterattacks were launched particularly against the two flanks at Kobylinica and Tarnow. The Landwehr Division Bredow was brought up over a now completed second bridge at Swierze Gorne and took Maciejowice after heavy fighting.

On July 31, the water of the Vistula rose significantly due to heavy rainfall in recent days and made the northern bridge unusable.

This created a critical situation as the Russians brought up reinforcements and continued their counterattacks. Although the Landwehr Division Bredow, after repelling heavy attacks from 16 Russian battalions, managed to take the village of Podzamcze in pursuit, it was only when the Landwehr Corps captured Domaziew in bitter fighting on August 1 that a bridgehead was secured, ensuring a safe crossing.

Already on July 29, and again on the 30th and 31st, after the left flank of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army had also moved and reached the height of Nowo Aleksandrija, Generaloberst von Woyrsch had appealed to the allied army commands for reinforcement by powerful infantry, as his Landwehr divisions were too weak to exploit the success achieved. General von Falkenhayn then attempted to obtain the transfer of a division to the army section from both the Supreme Commander East and Generaloberst von Conrad, but was refused by both. The only support came on July 29 from the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Cavalry Division from the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army and on July 31 the German 9th Cavalry Division from the 9th Army was assigned; in addition came the Austro-Hungarian 7th Cavalry Division, which had become dispensable before Iwangorod, and the Austro-Hungarian 9th, which still secured in the Pilica-Vistula angle. For cavalry, however, there was initially no possibility of use east of the Vistula, as the Russians still held their bridgehead position tightly. Stronger concentrations near Jelechow, reported by aircraft, suggested the continuation of their attacks.

1) p. 404. — 2) pp. 338 and 343.

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Strong Counterattacks by the Russians on the East Bank of the Vistula.

Although the Kövesz Group had achieved successes before Iwangorod on August 1 and during the night of August 2, and had advanced to the enemy's position, the stubborn resistance of the Russians on the eastern Vistula bank in front of the Landwehr Corps continued on August 2. Generaloberst von Conrad was now inclined, after further representation by General von Falkenhayn, to accede to the requests of the High Command Bövich for reinforcements, and declared himself ready to provide him with the German 47th Reserve Division of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, although only after reaching the Bzura.

August 3 also brought no noticeable relief. Although the Russians withdrew on this day on the southern flank of the Landwehr Corps to the heights east of Kruszyna, they continued to hold stubbornly on the heights southwest of Sobolow and Laskarzew on the eastern edge of the forest area. However, the Kövesz Group succeeded in taking possession of the Russian position on the road Gniewoszów—Slowik on the western front of Iwangorod. By evening, explosions and fires in Iwangorod seemed to indicate the evacuation of the fortress. On the night of August 4, the Russians indeed abandoned the western front of Iwangorod and withdrew to the east bank of the Vistula into the city and some outdated works, already abandoned in peacetime. Generaloberst von Bövich then ordered, on the instructions of the Austro-Hungarian Army Command, the preparation of a division of the Kövesz Group for crossing at Rozienice; at the same time, however, Generaloberst von Conrad, in agreement with General von Falkenhayn, ordered that the German 47th Reserve Division, in view of the "changed situation at Iwangorod," should remain with the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army.

Even in the following days, the Landwehr Corps was unable to completely break the enemy resistance. Nevertheless, local progress was made. During August 2, the left wing took the stubbornly defended Damirow, and on the night of August 5, the north of Razum was also taken, finally giving the 22nd Landwehr Brigade some breathing space, which had had to fend off strong Russian attacks for days, closely aligned with the Vistula. In the center, too, it was possible to break into a height position southwest of Laskarzew and occupy Budy. The Kövesz Group, however, unsuccessfully attempted to gain the east bank at Iwangorod. As the Austro-Hungarian 35th Infantry Division had completed its assembly at Rozienice on the morning of August 5, Generaloberst von Bövich intended, after a short pause, to resume the attack on the east bank.

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The change in the overall situation that had occurred in the meantime no longer allowed this.

After the capture of Warsaw¹) by the 9th Army, General von Falkenhayn resumed his previously expressed plan to unite the 9th Army and the Woyrsch Army Detachment into an army group under the command of Field Marshal Leopold Prince of Bavaria²). Colonel General von Conrad immediately agreed with him. The corresponding orders were issued immediately on August 5. The new army group was directly subordinate to the German Supreme Army Command and was given the operational task of advancing with all means against and over the line Autow—Siedlce³).

The command area of the newly formed army group Prince Leopold of Bavaria extended along the Vistula from the area just south of Iwangorod to the southern front of Nowogeorgiewsk and initially included 9½ infantry and four cavalry divisions on this approximately 150-kilometer-long stretch, two or three of which belonged to the 8th Austro-Hungarian Army. Field Marshal Prince Leopold directed the right wing of the Woyrsch Army Detachment towards Lublin for further advance. With the main forces of the 9th Army, the commanding general of the XXV Reserve Corps, General von Scheffer-Boyadel, was to force the crossing of the Vistula at or south of Warsaw. Against the southern front of Nowogeorgiewsk, only the German western garrison, consisting of Landwehr and Landsturm, was to remain. It was withdrawn, reinforced by a division, from the army area on August 7 at the request of the Commander-in-Chief East and was subordinated to General von Beseler for the attack on the fortress⁴).

5. The Pursuit between Bug and Vistula  
in the First Third of August.  
Maps 6 and 7, Sketch 24.

Also, east of the Bug, he now retreated. In the meantime, the enemy, who was facing the Mackensen Army Group between Bug and Vistula, had again evaded the threatening blow by timely withdrawal on August 1.

¹) G. 340. — ²) G. 345/346. — ³) G. 398 f.  
⁴) Thus, the army group Prince Leopold of Bavaria consisted of: Army Detachment Woyrsch; Austro-Hungarian XII Corps (16th and 35th Infantry Divisions); Cavalry Division Bredow, Cavalry Corps (3rd and 4th Cavalry Divisions); 9th Army: Cavalry Division von Woyrsch, Cavalry XXV Reserve Corps (49th Reserve Division, 3rd Landwehr Division), Cavalry Division von Scheffer-Boyadel, Cavalry Division von Frommel, Cavalry Division von Ray. Corps Frommel (9th and Austro-Hungarian 2nd Reserve Division, the latter now August 7, previously with Army Detachment Woyrsch).

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Retreat of the Russians to the North.

Only south of the Vistula

opposite the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army and the Woyrsch Army Detachment did he

still stand. General von Seeckt reported to the Supreme Army Command that the

armies would initially press the enemy along the entire front,

until they encountered serious resistance, which would require special preparation to overcome.

The Austro-Hungarian 1st Army had the Heydebreck Cavalry Corps cross the Bug between Krylow

and Slipez and sent it after the enemy retreating towards

Wlodawa Wolhynsk. The Bug Army occupied

Horodlo and Dubienka on the Bug and pushed its left wing in strong

marches on deep sandy paths northwards beyond Cholm. The

pursuit of the 11th Army encountered new resistance in the line Cholza—Wiepz south of

Lenczna. The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army gained only a little ground on the left

wing on both sides of Kurow.

The aerial reconnaissance gave the impression that the main forces of the

Russians west of the Bug were retreating towards Wlodawa, but on the way

there they still occupied strong positions in several sections.

Since artillery, apparently well supplied with ammunition, had appeared,

the Mackensen High Command believed that second-line forces had

taken in the defeated corps.

On August 2, the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army increased its pressure east of the Bug,

by advancing the Szurmay Group from Bzary in a

northerly direction to the right of the cavalry corps that had advanced to the Grzybownica—Uscilug

stream section. The Bug Army advanced over Uchanie and

along the railway and road Cholm—Wlodawa. On this day, only the left wing of the 11th Army,

reinforced by the 119th Infantry

Division, pushed the enemy back over the Swinka stream

east of Lenczna.

Under the impression of their failure, the Russians retreated further on

August 3 along the entire front of the 11th Army. This followed

up to the line Koziagora—Lenczna, and the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army

joined in. However, the enemy resistance remained strong

north of Kurow and east of the Vistula opposite their left wing.

From the burning of numerous villages, systematic road and

bridge destructions, the dismantling of many spark stations, and other signs,

the High Command of the Army Group concluded that the enemy,

despite the local resistance still offered in many places, was deliberately continuing

the retreat of his entire front and no longer intended to engage in a decisive battle.

This impression was confirmed on August 4, as the Russians not only in the area east of the Bug and Vistula, but also on the eastern Bug bank in front of the left wing of the 8th and 1st Army continued to retreat.

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The Allies' Offensive on Brest-Litovsk.

The armies of the Allies followed.

In a report to the Supreme Army Command, Field Marshal von Mackensen defined his task as "advancing with strong forces to the north, regardless of whether this would finally compel the enemy to abandon their positions on the Vistula or whether it would strike the southern flank of their retreat. Main thrust direction over Parczew against the Warsaw—Brest-Litovsk railway line. For this, initially move the 11th Army forward to the left to roll up positions behind Wieprz and Tysmienica and simultaneously gain freer operational terrain than a frontal pursuit offers. Broader front of 1st Army is considered sufficient after enemy withdrawal, after the 13th Russian Army moves north. Bug Army extends to the left to initially cover against Wlodawa, then renews advance in the direction of Wlodawa. 11th Army to conduct main thrust via Ostrow—Parczew on both sides of the Tysmienica, 4th Army to advance in main direction Rock towards the Wohyn—Lukow line and gain connection with Woyrsch, whose march direction is assumed to be towards Siedlce."

Field Marshal von Mackensen thus believed he could achieve a faster and therefore greater success if he placed the focus of his advance not, as previously intended, in a northeastern direction towards Wlodawa, but northward towards Parczew. Through the necessary leftward movement of the 11th Army, he simultaneously wanted to give the Bug Army the opportunity to outflank on the left the frontally difficult to overcome woodland area southwest of Wlodawa, which was crossed by marsh strips, and also to open the crossing over the difficult river sections of the Wieprz and Tysmienica for the 3rd and 4th Army. The High Command did not yet consider the enemy's major withdrawal movement behind the Bug so far advanced that a powerfully conducted thrust to the north could no longer effectively strike the southern flank. It still saw the surest guarantee for a great success against the main body of Russian forces in Poland in the closest possible operational cooperation with the Army Detachment Woyrsch and the 12th and 8th Army. Through army order at 10:30 AM, it was ordered to initiate the corresponding regrouping in the further advance on August 4th.

Field Marshal von Mackensen's view aligned with that of the German Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army, while Colonel General von Conrad now directed the entire army group in the direction of the northeast, as the enemy seemed to be about to abandon his Vistula front, thus turning the battles along the entire line into an operational pursuit.

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Left Shift of the 11th Army.

He therefore suggested

on August 4 in a telegram to General von Falkenhayn, to direct the

k. u. k. 4th Army towards Parczew, the 11th Army towards

Błodawa and to take the Bug Army to the eastern bank of the Bug.

Although General Lappen also supported this idea, General von

Falkenhayn was opposed, arguing that

this would disrupt the "one-day pursuit" already ordered and initiated

by Field Marshal von Mackensen in a northerly direction.

The k. u. k. 1st Army reached the Bug on August 4 as ordered with the

Szurmay Group and crossed this river with the Cavalry

Corps Heydebreck at Wladimir Wolynsk and Uscilug. The army was to

take over the Bug security up to Dubienka through the Hungarian 11th Cavalry

Division assigned to it.

The commander of the Bug Army, General von Linsingen,

considered, given the fact that the enemy was retreating not only in front of his front,

but also east of the Bug in a northerly direction, an

overlapping of his right wing to the opposite bank of the Bug for the purpose of

cooperation with the Cavalry Corps Heydebreck more effective than

continuing the pursuit with all forces on this side of the river.

He therefore ordered the XXXXI Reserve Corps to "force the Bug on the line

Uscilug—Dubienka and advance against Luboml and Wlodawa".

This order had to be reversed after the arrival of the army group's

command. The XXXXI Reserve Corps

was now moved to the right wing of the army to

later be deployed here. The entire army front carried out the

ordered left shift in advance and reached after relieving the

k. u. k. VI Corps and parts of the Guard Corps with the left wing

Garbatowka.

The 11th Army formed three assault groups under Generals

Baron von Plettenberg (Guard Corps and 22nd Infantry Division), von

Falkenhayn (44th Reserve Division and k. u. k. VI Corps) and von Emmich

(Corps Kosch and X Army Corps with Guard Cavalry Division). Army

reserves followed behind the right wing the 43rd Reserve Division,

behind the left wing the 119th and 103rd Infantry Division. By evening

the army reached the new narrow front Garbatowka—Czerniejow

on the Wieprz.

The k. u. k. 4th Army was to proceed with the right wing on Lubartow initially, then move forces behind the 11th Army advancing northwards over the Wieprz, thereby opening the crossing over the river with the main direction towards Kock.

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The army approached Lubartow closely on August 4 and otherwise reached the line Samokleski—Bronow. West of the Vistula, the enemy had already freed the fortress area of Iwangorod1).

From the reconnaissance results regarding the Russian retreat, the picture of a separation of their forces on the battlefields in Southern Poland and Eastern Galicia now clearly emerged. The right wing of the Russian Southwestern Front (8th Army) was still at Sokal on the Bug. However, the left wing of the Northwestern Front (13th Army) had moved north towards Kowel. In the gap that had formed between the two fronts, seven Russian cavalry divisions were supposed to be concentrated.

In the following days, the ordered movements continued. The enemy withdrew in the area between the Bug and Vistula, partly under stubborn and skillful rearguard actions, further to a strong position recognized by aircraft in the line Uhruf (on the Bug)—Ostrow—course of the Tysmienica and the lower Wieprz. The armies advanced against this position fighting. Of decisive importance was a success on August 7 of the right wing of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, which led over Lubartow on the road to Kock up to Firlej. This resolved the crossing ordered on August 4 behind the 11th Army into the area beyond the Wieprz. On its own strength, the right wing could now gain the eastern bank of the Wieprz on both sides of Lubartow. In the extension of this success, on August 8, the 4th Army reached its entire front up to the lower Wieprz, thus already entering the fortress area of Iwangorod, which had meanwhile been evacuated by the enemy, with its left wing. Also between the Tysmienica and the Wieprz, the left wing of the 11th Army could advance accordingly on this day. By August 9, the necessary movements were completed. It also approached the enemy's position east of the Tysmienica under fighting. However, the left neighboring army could already advance the center and left wing beyond the Wieprz.

This rapid advance of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army was related to the events that had meanwhile occurred at the front of Army Group Prince Leopold. Already on August 7, intercepted radio messages had given the impression that the enemy, as before the left neighboring Army Gallwitz'), as well as before the 9th Army, had continued the retreat, with the main forces already at Garwolin, Nowo-Minsk, and Stanislawow, and only weak rearguards at the Vistula.

1) p. 409.

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General von Linsingen Considers Focus on the Bug More Effective.

On the night of August 8, the 84th Infantry Division, the 49th Reserve Division, and the Gereke Division succeeded in gaining the eastern bank of the river near Warsaw with parts. Weak enemy forces withdrew eastwards; construction of a military bridge in Warsaw began, over which the crossing started on the morning of August 9. Meanwhile, the enemy had been retreating since the night of August 8, where before the Army Detachment Woyrsch; this itself followed and reached on August 9 with the Landwehr into the area of Stamin and northwards, with the group Köves on the right wing extending beyond Rosfisz.

On August 10, the k.-k. 4th Army north of the Wieprz, in conjunction with the right wing of Prince Leopold's army group, continued its gain of the right bank over Koch and to the upper Bystrzyca. Also before the Emmich group of the 11th Army, the enemy voluntarily relinquished the western bank of the Tysmienica. It then prepared for a flanking attack over the widely flooded lowlands of the river due to damming.

The Bug Army, on the other hand, could make only slight progress in these days in difficult swamp terrain, especially against the elevated positions between the railway and road Cholm-Wlodawa north of the Ucherka, under heavy, loss-rich attack battles. Already on August 6, General von Linsingen had attempted, in line with his earlier assessment of the strategic situation²), to effect a shift of forces to the right wing of the army under Field Marshal von Mackensen. He argued that the Russians could only be defeated by a "quick and strong advance on both banks of the Bug or at least on the western bank." An advance of the left wing or the center of the armies operating between the Bug and Vistula would no longer hit the flank of the enemy retreat. Rather, the enemy would resist the relatively weak forces of the German right wing in strong positions immediately west of the Bug until the withdrawal of its main masses over this river section was completed. General von Linsingen has therefore aimed to enable the Bug Army, by reinforcing with one to two army corps or by shortening their front, to force a breakthrough just west of the Bug as quickly as possible.

1) C. 352. — 2) G. 390 and 413.

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"I consider," he replied, "the thrust of a strong center still indicated, as it offers the best prospects for a rapid advance of the offensive. This must first force the enemy, who has not yet been completely driven back, to retreat and must reach his southern retreat flank as quickly as possible. I do not expect this speed of success from an advance on both sides of the Bug. Furthermore, the advance of the Bug Army can be halted by an enemy thrust into our right flank. Securing the 11th and 4th Armies from such an impact is the task of the Bug Army. If it also succeeds in advancing over Wlodawa with adjacent forces, it will significantly support the operation of the 11th Army." The Chief of the General Staff, General von Seeckt, also expressed hope in a telephone conversation with General Lappen on August 6, that by continuing operations in the ordered directions, the enemy could be "caught before Brest Litowsk."

The commander-in-chief of the Russian Northwestern Front had already decided on August 3, in view of the dangerous overall situation, to withdraw his 12th, 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 3rd Armies, yielding to the concentric pressure of the Allies, to the line Lomza—Ostrow—Koch—Pralin. On August 10, he was forced to order the continuation of these movements to the line Osowiec—Bialystok—Brest Litowsk—Grodno, while the 13th Army east of the Bug had to withstand the pressure of an operational encirclement against the flank and rear of the shortened front and simultaneously maintain the connection to the Russian Southwestern Front through cavalry.

6. The Pursuit from August 11 to 16.

Maps 6 and 7, Sketch 24.

Already on August 3, General von Falkenhayn had informed the Austro-Hungarian Chief of the General Staff that he considered the joint task of the Allies on the Eastern theater of war to be solved as soon as the pursuit operation reached the general line Bug—Brest Litowsk—Grodno. Then, strong forces would have to be deployed on other theaters of war, so that a state of equilibrium would arise in the East, separating the operational areas of the Allies.

1) Ostrow south of Lomza.  
2) P. 483. The Commander-in-Chief East received this message only on August 18.

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Colonel General von Conrad Proposes Pursuit to the Northeast.

On August 5, Colonel General v o n C o n r a d had fundamentally agreed with this spatial objective, but also expressed the opinion that the continued presence of the Russian front in Galicia, 40 kilometers from Lemberg, could not be tolerated in the long run, and announced that he would either seek to advance his own front east of the Bug and in Galicia in connection with the current operation or following it.

A few days later, on August 8, he himself submitted a detailed proposal to the German Supreme Army Command for the continuation of joint operations in the east. He maintained the previous strategic goal of thoroughly defeating the Russians in the Narew—Vistula—Wierpz—Wlodawa arc through concentric pressure from the northwest, west, and south. However, since the enemy was trying to escape encirclement by rapid retreat under stubborn resistance on its flanks, the Mackensen army group now had to take the general direction to the N o r t h e a s t towards Brest Litowsk, while the pressure of the Bug Army on the outer flank would be reinforced by the addition of the German 47th Reserve Division. This time, however, there was no mention of crossing this army to the eastern bank, which Colonel General von Conrad had previously advised several times. It had to result inevitably from the change in direction of the army group to the northeast. Colonel General von Conrad also intended to have the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army advance in the direction of Rowel and to further strengthen it from the 4th Army¹). Parts of the Russian 13th Army were apparently being transported away from Rowel, while the Russian 8th Army was extending its front northwards along the Bug. Simultaneously with the 1st Army, he also wanted to have the 2nd and the Southern Army become offensive with their inner flanks against the line Bialykamien—Oleszow—Zborow.

The response of General von Falkenhayn on August 9 already revealed some uncertainty: In his view, the Mackensen army group would come to the desired direction to the northeast by itself in the course of the ongoing pursuit. However, he feared that issuing new instructions to them at the present moment would cause an undesirable delay, while the utmost urgency was required.

¹) Already on August 5, Colonel General von Conrad had ordered the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army to transfer the Austro-Hungarian X Corps to the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army.

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Undoubtedly, his previously expressed concern about the terrain difficulties of the Rokitno Swamps played a role here. He agreed to the other proposals and intentions with certain reservations. Generaloberst von Conrad immediately made a new representation: Only by a strong thrust of the right wing of the Mackensen Army Group could success still be achieved, which was all the more serious as the enemy was daily withdrawing more from the flank attack. A loss of time could not arise from a new directive, as the attack on the current Russian position was to be carried out first.

Upon receiving the report on the morning of August 10 that the Russians were now also retreating in front of the right wing of the k.u.k. 4th Army, Generaloberst von Conrad again turned to General von Falkenhayn with an urgent request to change the operational direction for the Mackensen Army Group, as otherwise not only the 4th, but also the 11th and Bug Army would come to the front instead of the enemy's flank. In a personal discussion, to which Generaloberst von Conrad again traveled to Ples, General von Falkenhayn, however, maintained the position that "given the exhaustion of the troops and the terrain or supply difficulties, it had been impossible to break through to the 11th and Bug Army, as it would really succeed at any point." When during this discussion the news arrived that the enemy was now also retreating from the left wing of the 11th Army, it was easy for Generaloberst von Conrad to demonstrate that the conditions for the thrust of the 11th Army in a northerly direction towards Parczew had become obsolete. General von Falkenhayn now agreed that the Mackensen Army Group was given the direction northeast towards Brest Litowsk. The 4th Army was to advance with its left wing via Radzyn to Biala, the 11th Army with its left wing via Parczew to Lomazy, and the Bug Army with its right wing in the river valley northward.

Field Marshal von Mackensen then issued corresponding orders. He also ordered that the 4th Army should transfer a k.u.k. division to the 1st Army and the German 47th Reserve Division to the 11th Army, which in turn had to transfer the 22nd Infantry Division of the Bug Army. The 1st Army received a double assignment depending on the behavior of the Russian 13th Army assembled in the area around Kowel.

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The Pursuit Presses On Only With Difficulty.

Field Marshal von Mackensen anticipated that this army could become offensive from Kowel to facilitate and relieve the retreat of the main Russian forces behind the Bug. If it advanced westward against the right flank of the Bug Army, it was to be attacked in the flank by the 1st Army itself; if it directed its advance southwest against the 1st Army, then this had to fend it off at the Aug and Bug section, while the Bug Army could then find an opportunity for flanking intervention across the Bug. In the third case, that the Russian 13th Army did not become offensive at all, the 1st Army received no new instructions.

The next task of the Mackensen Army Group was purely tactical: it was necessary to drive the enemy out of his positions not directly opposite. However, the strength of the Bug Army was not sufficient even on August 11 to break the resistance of the Russians in the strong elevated positions leaning against the Bug north of the Ucherka and in the swampy lowlands on both sides of the Garbatowka—Wlodawa road. Even the 11th Army achieved only insignificant partial successes east of the Tymienica despite brave efforts. A relief of this front by the intended flanking attack of the Emmich Group over the Tymienica did not occur, as it did not succeed in overcoming the swampy lowland. In front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, however, the enemy surrendered the Bystrzyca above Ossowno without a fight.

The army detachment Woyrsch, located on the right wing of the Prince Leopold Army Group, occupied Lutow and advanced close to Siedlce. It was to continue the pursuit north of the Lutow—Brest Litowsk railway on orders from the Supreme Army Command, "to prevent a withdrawal of the enemy from the area west of the Pripjet swamp area in a northeasterly direction"¹). The 9th Army, extending with the left wing over Wengrow, encountered stubborn resistance at the Kortrzyn and Siwice sections. The conditions here were similar to those of the neighboring 12th Army on the left: the pursuit was characterized by laborious and time-consuming ridge advances from section to section²).

At the front of the Mackensen Army Group, the execution of the attacks on August 12 was resolved, as the enemy evaded the Bug and 11th Army. When extensive marches to the north and northeast were detected by aerial reconnaissance in the early morning hours, Field Marshal von Mackensen ordered the Bug Army to advance northward towards Wlodawa.

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It was also to spare forces for use in a northeasterly direction beyond the Bug. However, the pursuit came to a halt on the main roads to Wlodawa already before Macoszyn and Bruszki. The artillery could not follow in the difficult terrain in time. The 11th Army, where strong parts (XXII Reserve Corps, Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, X Army Corps, 47th Reserve Division) were moved to the second line as the front narrowed, also encountered the enemy again after passing through the forest zone in front and south of Parczem. The inner flanks of the 11th and 4th Armies still did not succeed today in crossing the Lhynienica west of Parczem. The left flank of the 4th Army, on the other hand, swung completely to the east. The army was instructed to hand over two more divisions with the command of the Austro-Hungarian IX Corps to the 1st Army.

In the Prince Leopold Army Group, the advance of the Woyrsch Army Detachment beyond Lubow—Siedlce had the effect that the enemy also abandoned his resistance in front of the 9th Army at the Kostrzyner section and further north.

Already on the evening of August 11, General von Falkenhayn had asked the Austro-Hungarian Chief of Staff for instructions to the Mackensen Army Group to adjust its left flank to the forward movement of the Prince Leopold Army Group. Generaloberst von Conrad then ordered, beyond the agreements made the day before in Plesk, a sharp right turn against the Bug for the entire Mackensen Army Group in the sense of overtaking pursuit. The Army High Command 11 now determined as boundaries for the advance of its army to the right the line Piesia Wola—Süszno on the Bug (north of Wlodawa), to the left the line Parczew—Roznadwoda. Against this, General von Falkenhayn raised an objection the next morning at the army headquarters in Lublin, where he had gone for oral consultation with Field Marshal von Mackensen, and set, in accordance with the agreement of August 10, the line Parczew—Lomazy as the direction of advance for the left flank of the 11th Army. He designated the rapid reaching of the Slawatycze—Radzyn road as the task of all armies, in order to still catch the enemy retreating in front of the Prince Leopold Army Group in the flank.

Contrary to expectations, the Russians continued their retreat west of the Bug on the night of August 13. General von Linsingen requested further reinforcement of his army, as the river security would have to stretch further with the rapid advance northward.

1) p. 418.

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General von Falkenhayn still hopes for great successes before Brest Litowsk.

Consequently, the X Army Corps, following in reserve behind the left wing of the 11th Army, was dispatched with the Guard Cavalry Division to relieve the XXXXI Reserve Corps at the Bug. In a strong march, where the terrain and the enemy's road and bridge destructions often caused greater delays than the resistance of his rearguards, the three armies advancing west of the Bug reached the line Rozanka (north of Blodawa)—Rundo—area south of Miedzyrzec on August 13. Here, the right wing of Prince Leopold's army group joined, whose left wing approached the middle Bug south of the Nurzec estuary.

The intention of Field Marshal von Mackensen was to let the Bug Army advance west of the river up to Koden. The 11th Army was to reach the line Koden—Pertowice on the railway to Brest Litowsk and probe towards the fortress. Thus, the Bug Army was assigned the area east of the Bug as a later operational field. For the s.e. 4th Army, there was no more room in the front of the two army groups. It could be excluded for other purposes.

According to the findings of the aviators, the enemy moved north before the Bug and 11th Army, northeast before the 4th Army, and east before Prince Leopold's army group. General von Falkenhayn concluded that large troop masses had gathered in the area northwest of Brest Litowsk and hoped that with the sharp pursuit of the allied armies on all sides, it would be possible to engage large parts of the enemy retreating over the Bug still on this side of the Bialowieza forest in the area between the upper Narew and middle Bug, at least significantly disrupting their retreat. Based on this assessment, he sent the following directive in the evening: "Army Group Mackensen is to advance with the left wing of the 11th Army from Lomazy via Biala to Janow under cover against Brest Litowsk. Operations against the roads leading east from Brest Litowsk are recommended." Prince Leopold's army group was deployed with the right wing from Mienowce to Niemirow on the Bug, with the cavalry corps Frommel in the general direction of Kleiszczele. This directive involved a new change in the operational direction for Mackensen's army group. The 11th Army was to push directly north past the fortress of Brest Litowsk.

1) p. 361.

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The directive was issued in agreement with the Austro-Hungarian

command. Thus, Generaloberst von Conrad also abandoned the

intention of exerting significant pressure beyond the Bug east of Brest Litowsk

against the southern flank and into the rear of the enemy's retreat.

Accordingly, Generalfeldmarschall von Mackensen had to change his orders.

The 11th Army was assigned the Bug route Brest Litowsk—Janow as its target,

to be accompanied on the right by the Bug Army, which was also tasked with

operations against the roads leading east. The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army

was to participate in the pursuit to the Bug, even on an ever-narrowing front.

All three armies were to stay on the heels of the enemy retreating north and northeast.

Participation of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army by advancing beyond the river

northward against the Russian 13th Army was abandoned, as no counterattack

was expected. The 1st Army was also to limit itself to holding its positions

after receiving reinforcements.

However, by August 14, it became apparent that the Russian command

had correctly recognized the impending danger and had ensured a strong

defensive front on the southern flank of their retreat. The three armies of

Mackensen's group made little progress against the stubbornly resisting

rearguards along the entire line. Behind this line of resistance, the masses

of Russians continued their withdrawal, east of the Bug northward, west of

the river eastward to Slawatycze and Brest Litowsk, and northward over Janow.

Aviators found the area around Brest Litowsk heavily occupied with troops.

By August 15, the general retreat of the Russians had progressed so

far that the southward-facing defensive front could be withdrawn a bit.

The previously still occupied eastern Bug bank was now also vacated by the

enemy north of Dubienka. On the right flank of the Bug Army, parts of the

XXXXI Reserve Corps, which had been relieved by the X Army Corps at the

river height, and the 22nd Infantry Division, were able to gain a foothold on

the opposite bank, even under heavy fighting, near Wlodawa. Downstream,

the army advanced beyond Slawatycze. The 11th Army followed the skillfully

evading enemy despite the greatest terrain difficulties up to the Luczna—Krzna-Bach south of Biala.

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The Russians continue the planned retreat before the Mackensen Army Group.

South of Biala, the 4th Army subsequently reached westward up to and over the Krzna River. The right wing of the Prince Leopold Army Group stood about 14 kilometers northeast of Niemirowicz. "The retreat routes of the Russians made a very orderly impression; nothing had been discarded; no broken wagon, no dead horse lay on the road"¹). However, along the entire wide-ranging pursuit front, the bridges, villages, and harvest supplies set on fire by the enemy were in flames. Explosions were audible from the direction of Brest Litowsk.

In view of the rapidly progressing retreat movement of the Russians on the entire front of all three army groups, General von Falkenhayn now deemed it necessary to point out to the Mackensen Army Group the increased importance of a strong pressure along the Bug. At the same time, the Commander-in-Chief East was designated Klejsczale as the direction for the advance of the right wing of the 12th Army²). The Prince Leopold Army Group was also to advance seamlessly over the middle Bug.

Field Marshal von Mackensen therefore ordered the Bug Army, in conjunction with the Guard Corps advancing on the right wing of the 11th Army, to throw the enemy back onto the fortress of Brest Litowsk. The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps was to take over the security against Brest Litowsk to the left of the Guard, the left army wing (Kosch Corps) to advance over Biala and drive the enemy back over the Bug below the fortress.

On August 16, the enemy continued the retreat on both banks of the Bug northward. Intercepted Russian radio messages already reported heavy congestion at the crossings. To protect its march on the east bank, the enemy partly hastily deployed troops brought in by motor vehicles against the bridgehead created the day before at Wlodawa and prevented the attempt to expand the bridgehead as a starting position for offensive operations through strong counterattacks. On the west bank, strong parts of the Bug Army swung north from Slawatycze into the area south of Koden against the river. The 11th Army pushed its right wing to the Bug at Koden.

The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army crossed the Klukowka, while the Prince Leopold Army Group was already advancing against the Bug below Niemirow. The Trommel Cavalry Corps reached Siemiatycze.

¹) Transcript from August 15 in the war diary of the Prince Leopold Army Group.  
²) G. 362.

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7. The Battles for Brest Litowsk from August 17 to 26.

Maps 6 and 7, Sketch 24.

The allied army commands established the Niemirow–Tumin line as the boundary between the two army groups on August 16. The Mackensen army group was to continue the pursuit uninterrupted with its left wing in conjunction with the Prince Leopold army group, and in addition, initially close off the Brest Litowsk fortress on this side, later also on the northwest front on the opposite Bug bank. Furthermore, General von Falkenhayn decided, upon inquiry from General von Seeckt, that larger operations of the Bug Army on the eastern bank were not necessary in terms of the general situation. He justified this by stating: "The enemy does not retreat voluntarily, but heavily beaten, although in an extraordinarily skillful manner. Nevertheless, it is possible that he still thinks of a reversal of the situation through a counterattack similar to the Marne Offensive. Given the condition of his 12th, 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 3rd Armies, he could mainly rely on the 13th Army, now located in the northern march through the western Polesie1). However, its intervention would hardly lead to the hoped-for result. It is necessary that the Mackensen army group, by strengthening its positions along the Bug above Brest Litowsk and later in front of the fortress, creates the possibility of pulling forward forces as a reserve behind the right wing of the parts that continue the thrust past the fortress over the Bug. These must be made as strong as possible to attack ruthlessly." General von Falkenhayn further shared the agreement2) made with Generaloberst von Conrad at the beginning of August, that the continuation of the pursuit operation over the general line Brest Litowsk–Grodno is not currently intended, unless there is a prospect of inflicting significant damage on the enemy through a short advance beyond this line. Smaller operations over the Bug above Brest Litowsk against the connections leading east are recommended. On the other hand, "measures of a larger scale in this direction fall outside the framework of the overall operation." The Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army thus decided once again in the spirit of the operational idea that had guided him from the beginning of the offensive.

Field Marshal von Mackensen pointed out the Bug Army and 11th Army to strongly expand their encirclement positions and decided to move the X Army Corps, which had been deployed shortly before as a security measure on the Bug, behind the left wing of the 11th Army.

1) Another term for Rottino-Gimpfe. — 2) See p. 416.

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Right Turn of Army Group Mackensen against Brest Litowsk.

During the execution of the ordered relief movements, on August 17, the left wing of the Bug Army and the 11th Army could swing to the right into the line north of Roden–Janow. The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army reached the Bug southeast of Niemirow in a narrow space, where it joined Army Group Prince Leopold. On the opposite bank, the enemy was entrenched. The main road from Brest Litowsk to Kobryn was covered with marching columns of all arms. According to intelligence reports, the Russian leadership intended to hold the fortress as long as it could be used for the retreat of the field army. There was a lack of ammunition for prolonged defense. However, strong forces had to be crammed into a narrow space in the fortress itself. Since a new general command (XXXIV) was also detected in front of Brest Litowsk by eavesdropping, the Mackensen High Command, following the advice of General von Falkenhayn, considered the possibility of an advance from the fortress and prepared against the Guard Corps as well as the 103rd and 119th Infantry Divisions behind the right wing of the 11th Army. Since the Supreme Army Command was already considering the imminent attack on the fortress, Field Marshal von Mackensen ordered the Bug Army to encircle the south and west front and soon to attack, and also subordinated the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, now standing on the right wing of the 11th Army, to it.

The retreat of the Russians east of the Bug continued. Consequently, Field Marshal von Mackensen, within the framework of the instructions given to him, now believed he should attempt to cut the communication line of the Russian 13th and 8th Armies and thus also that from Brest Litowsk to the southeast by an advance of the Cavalry Corps Heydebreck) from Wladimir Wolynsk on and over the railway junction Kowel. The Austro-Hungarian 1st Army received corresponding orders. Generaloberst von Conrad, however, attached great importance to the early capture of Kowel for other reasons. Already on August 14, he had expressed to General von Falkenhayn in Teschen, referring to his previously indicated plans, the intention to gradually unite the 4th Army, largely pushed out of the front of Army Group Mackensen, with the 1st Army on the Bug front and to move both armies from there initially in the direction of Kowel to lead them forward.

1) p. 413. — 2) p. 417.

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Then they were no longer to participate in the operations of the

Mackensen army group, but to comprehensively attack the Russian 8th Army from the north,

while at the same time the inner flanks of the

2nd and the Southern Army south of the Krasne—Brody railway were to take the offensive.

Colonel General von Conrad therefore saw in the advance

of the Heydebreck cavalry corps a welcome means to gain a suitable starting position for this encirclement operation against

the Russian 8th Army as soon as possible. General von Falkenhayn declared himself

in agreement with the intentions of the Austro-Hungarian Chief of General Staff on August 19.

The Bug Army succeeded on August 18 in significantly expanding the bridgehead at Wlodawa

and advancing the 1st Infantry Division from it against Piszca, although it soon encountered strong resistance

favored by the swampy terrain. On the front of the Mackensen army group

west of the Bug, there were only preliminary skirmishes in the wider fortress area. The Prince Leopold army group crossed the

Bug south of Niemirow.

On August 19, the Heydebreck cavalry corps began its broad

deployment in the area of Wladimir Wolhynsk—Luboml, the concentric

advance in the direction of Kowal, without initially encountering the enemy.

However, the resistance of the Russians east of Wlodawa

proved so strong that the 1st Infantry Division still did not succeed in reaching the

road junction Piszca. In the 11th and 4th Armies, the

swing north around Brest Litowsk was continued, with the left flank reaching

after crossing the Bug near and north of Janow to the

Koterka section, where it found a connection north of Wolka to the army

detachment Woyrsch. Desperate counterattacks, in which strong Russian cavalry

was also used ruthlessly in the attack, suggested that larger troop masses

must still be assembled in the area around Brest Litowsk.

General von Falkenhayn therefore urged the 11th Army to accelerate

its advance. He hoped to achieve significant successes against the enemy north of the

middle Bug and gave the line Tumlin—Ruskij as

the further separation line for the advance of the Mackensen and

Prince Leopold army groups. He directed the left flank of the

latter towards Klejsczele—Gajnowka. However, reports that the

command of the Russian 3rd Army had already left Brest Litowsk raised

doubts about the feasibility of the Chief of General Staff's hopes. Large supplies and much artillery material with ammunition were to be transported away. This indicated a planned evacuation of the fortress.

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Advance of the Bug Army East of the Bug.

This indicated a planned evacuation of the fortress.

Indeed, on August 20, the Russian 4th Army (XVI, Grenadier, XXV, XV, VI Siberian, IX Corps) swung back into the line Kleszczele—Bjelostok—Brest Litowsk—east of Drogniki, followed by the 3rd Army (XXIV, X, XIV, III Caucasian, XXIX, XXIII, XXXI Corps, 4th Cavalry Corps) on this side of the Bug reaching the line east of Drogniki—Koden, beyond the river it held the extended line Koden—Sack—Kursk—Wladyslawow (east of Wladimir Wolynsk). The Russian 13th Army had been dissolved on August 17. Its troops, insofar as they were not transported to other fronts, were assigned to the 3rd Army. The fortress Brest Litowsk was also subordinated to this. The Russian leadership was apparently aware of the serious danger that the execution of their retreat movement from a pressure of the enemy on the right Bug bank east past Brest Litowsk had to arise. They therefore ensured the strongest defense there.

As a result, on August 20 and 21, the Bug Army also failed to advance to the road Luboml—Piszca, although the entire XXXI Reserve Corps from the south tried to encircle through the lake district and the 22nd Infantry Division intervened to the left of the 1st. Only on August 22 did the XXXI Reserve Corps advance over this road to Mielniki. Simultaneously heavily engaged at the front, the enemy finally also released Piszca and the area north of it. Although General von Linsingen reinforced his forces east of the Bug with the Gerok Corps (11th Bavarian and the 107th Infantry Division), the tenacious enemy could only be pushed back a few kilometers in the difficult forest and swamp terrain in the following days. Behind strong barrier positions, his main forces continued to flow off to Kobryn.

On August 24, the Heydebreck Cavalry Corps, after days of fighting, took possession of the railway junction Kowel and advanced from there in a northerly direction to Ratno. It now came under the command of the High Command of the Bug Army. Parts of the b. u. l. Army had already followed the Cavalry Corps to Kowel in recent days. The army, further strengthened by detachments from the 4th Army, was already regrouping for the ordered offensive to the southeast. On August 22, it had left the command area of the army group command on the request of Generaloberst von Conrad.

General von Linsingen saw in the strong resistance that his army encountered on the east bank of the Bug the enemy's intention to enable the planned evacuation of the fortress Brest Litowsk and the orderly retreat of the Russian masses to the east.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

He therefore considered a quick grasp and accelerated attack on the fortress west of the Bug absolutely necessary. On August 22, he instructed his corps not to wait for the decisive attack until the siege artillery, expected to be ready for action at the earliest on August 28 and 29, had arrived. The following days were spent on the necessary preparations for a coup de main attack.

Consequently, the front of the Mackensen army group west of the Bug initially achieved northern progress only north of the Krzna brook. Here, the 11th Army reached the Bug as early as August 21, its left wing (Kosch Corps) pushed beyond it to the Nareka section, where it became involved in heavy fighting. In the following days, the 44th Reserve Division from the south over the Bug and from the north the 103rd Infantry and 47th Reserve Division as well as rear parts of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army intervened, without achieving the intended encirclement of the enemy. It seemed that the Russians had brought artillery from the fortress with ample ammunition to support their defense. Only when the Guard Corps also advanced over the Bug below the Krzna mouth on August 24 did the enemy swing back into a west-facing front.

On this day, the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army reached with its left wing in close connection to the Woyrsch army detachment the area south of Ruski, the northern wing of the 9th Army over Kleszczele the western edge of the Bialowiec forest. In serious fighting in the source area of the Nurec on August 22 and 23, the German Landwehr Corps, the Bredow Landwehr Division, and the Scheffer Corps were again able to report larger numbers of prisoners, totaling around 10,000 men and 25 machine guns. Already on the evening of August 23, the Supreme Army Command had informed the High Command of the Prince Leopold Army Group that it was not intended to let the left wing follow further than to the western edge of the Bialowiec forest. It would be of great importance to block there only with weak parts, but to advance as quickly as possible with strong forces south of the forest, and then to operate in a general southern direction against the retreat route of the enemy still in front of the Austro-Hungarian 4th and German 11th Army¹).

However, as things had developed by the evening of August 24 with the Mackensen and Prince Leopold army groups, there was no longer any prospect that the hope expressed in this directive would still be fulfilled.

¹) p. 367.

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The Enemy Abandons Brest Litowsk.

The Mackensen Army Group, despite all attempts to intercept the Russian retreat movement on the flank, had come up against their front in its pursuit operation. Continuing the attack against the Leina position, where sustained resistance was expected, could only push the enemy back in the direction they themselves desired, to the east. A change in this operationally unsatisfactory situation could only be hoped for if the Bug Army succeeded in quickly capturing the fortress of Brest Litowsk and simultaneously breaking the enemy's resistance with their forces deployed in the forest and swamp area east of the Bug. General von Seeckt, however, no longer expected any great success from the flanking action south of Brest Litowsk in an assessment of the situation submitted to the Supreme Army Command on the evening of August 24. Indeed, on August 25, the enemy strongly resisted the pressure of the Bug Army at Maloruta and northwest of it up to the Bug. The Heydebreck Cavalry Corps was still far behind. However, on the evening of the same day, the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps succeeded in capturing several forts on both sides of the road to Brest Litowsk with a storming hand. In front of the right wing of the northern adjoining XXII Reserve Corps, the enemy retreated south of the Krzna to their positions in front of the fortress area. On the northern Bug bank, the left wing of the XXII Reserve Corps swung to the right over the lower Leina, while the other corps of the 11th Army pushed the enemy back behind this section, and the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army reached as far as Rusilty with its left wing.

In the area of the fortress, strong firelight and numerous explosions were observed. The marches out of the fortress towards Kobryn continued. In the evening, enemy radio messages intercepted by the Mackensen High Command indicated that the Russians would also evacuate the Leina position at night. Similarly, the retreat was to begin at 2 a.m. in front of the Bug Army. Consequently, Field Marshal von Mackensen ordered the uninterrupted continuation of the pursuit by the Bug Army south and the 11th Army north of the Brest Litowsk—Kobryn road at 10 p.m. General von Falkenhayn also pointed out late at night the great importance of a rapid advance north and south around Brest Litowsk. At the same time, the Prince Leopold Army Group received orders to continue the offensive south of the Bialowieza fort with the Woyrsch Army Detachment, while the left wing of the 9th Army was also to take over the blockade of the fort on the Gajnowka–Siemienowka railway.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

Already in the early morning hours of August 26, the right wing of the Bug Army, the XXXXI Reserve Corps and the 22nd Infantry Division, crossed the railway on both sides of Maloruta and pursued the enemy retreating towards Kobryn, who, however, offered strong resistance in the sectioned terrain. The right wing reached Motrany after hard fighting and blocked the enemy, pushed back northwards through the swamps by the Heydebreck Cavalry Corps from the south, from retreating northwards. It was pushed southwards. The Cavalry Corps reached Ratno. Under the pressure of the right wing of the Bug Army on the road to Kobryn, the Russians also evacuated the forest area to the west up to the Bug, abandoning the heavily fortified Brest Litowsk fortress. Without serious fighting, the Beskiden Corps and the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps were able to occupy the southern part of the fortress and cross the Bug in the early morning hours. The VI Corps was then gathered and returned to the 11th Army. The XXII Reserve Corps had already occupied the citadel between 2 and 3 in the morning; the forts were mostly blown up by the enemy. The Bug Army was instructed to advance sharply with its left wing on and south of the road to Kobryn, in conjunction with the parts of the 11th Army pursuing further north over the Lesna to the east, to displace the enemy forces still holding out on the swamp sections on both sides of the Wlodawa–Kobryn road from this beautiful marshy terrain. The Bug Army then reached the Ryta section. The 11th Army followed the enemy retreating east of the Lesna under rearguard fighting to the line Raczki (on the railway)–Kamieniec Litowsk.

The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army occupied a bridgehead east of Kamieniec Litowsk after crossing the Lesna. It was only to hold it for the security of the side change of the right wing of Prince Leopold's army group, which reached the Lesna Prava north of Kamieniec Litowsk in the evening. Then the rest of the 4th Army, as well as the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, had to march to the 1st Army.

Upon the report of the capture of Brest Litowsk, the Supreme Army Command determined on the evening of August 26 that the Lesna would be the boundary between the Mackensen and Leopold army groups. It was stated: "An advance through the swampy terrain east and south of Pruzana is not intended." Thus, a goal was set for the further pursuit operation of both army groups.

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The Operational Success Remains Denied.

At the same time, however, it had become apparent that the hope cherished by General von Falkenhayn until the end, to cut off significant parts of the enemy, had been nullified. The Russian retreat had been carried out quite systematically under skillfully conducted rearguard actions. The evacuation of Brest Litowsk had been thoroughly prepared. The forts were blown up, the magazines and the city abandoned by the population were mostly set on fire. Considerable food supplies could still be saved from destruction. However, only small ammunition stocks fell into the hands of the attacker. All the modern artillery material was also transported away, only a few old guns formed the booty. Despite the concentration of strong troop masses in the fortress area, the number of prisoners was also small. Aerial reconnaissance revealed that the withdrawal of the enemy marching columns on the roads via Kobryn and Prusana to the east and northeast remained in constant flow. The main mass of the southern wing of the Russian Northwest Front was thus moving north of the Rokitno swamp area. The connection to the Russian Southwest Front was thus finally severed. Only the Russian 4th Cavalry Corps still held south of the swamp area in the region of Kamien Koszyrski. It had, as determined by intercepting radio messages, the task of blocking the roads leading from there north through the Rokitno swamps. Characteristic of the confident mood with which the higher Russian leadership, despite all tactical setbacks, looked forward to the outcome of their strategic retreat, was an intercepted radio telegraphic call from General Ewert, the leader of the 2nd Army. In it, the decision to break out was given, "that the troops would disengage from close contact with the enemy with honor." Added was: "May they remember the great war of 1812 and draw from it instruction and the deep belief in our eventual victory." Indeed, the traditional skill of the Russians in conducting the retreat, supported by the sectional terrain, had proven itself once again. Although the operations of the Mackensen Army Group, which alone cost the Bug Army about 33,000 men and the 11th Army over 50,000 men in losses, had failed to achieve the desired operational success, they had still managed to significantly weaken the enemy's combat strength, apart from his certainly considerably heavier bloody losses and prisoner losses, and deprived him of any offensive capability for a long time.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

Additionally, the moral impact that the rapid fall of Brest Litowsk

had on both friend and foe was not to be underestimated. The surrender of this

last stronghold of Russian national defense in Poland, newly expanded at great expense,

was an open admission that the vast area west of the major river barrier of the Bug was

permanently lost to Russia.

8. Considerations.

In view of the operationally not fully satisfactory results that the

offensive of Army Group Mackensen had from mid-July to the end of August,

the question arises whether a greater, decisive success could have been achieved with different

leadership of the operation. One would have to consider the possibility of using strong forces

on the eastern bank of the Bug for the purpose of an operational encirclement of the southward-directed

defensive front of the Russians and a push against their rear connections. This idea was not only

discussed in the fundamental meeting of the allied general staffs on July 11 in

Pleß before the start of the offensive, but also repeatedly during its course. General von Falkenhayn

initially opposed it due to the unfavorable terrain east of the Bug and the

expected supply difficulties and steadfastly maintained this view until the end. His concerns

about the possibility of using larger troop masses in those

areas were not shared, at least not to the same extent, by his colleagues,

nor by Generaloberst von Conrad and General von Linsingen. They later admitted

that General von Falkenhayn's concerns were exaggerated. For supply, the conditions east of the Bug

might have been less unfavorable than west of the river, as the Galician railways there were connected by the line built by the Russians in autumn 1914 from Wladimir Wolynsk to Sokal, linking to the Russian railway network.

1) The Bug Army captured over 33,000 prisoners in July-August, and the 11th Army captured 55,000. The number of captured guns (15) and machine guns (174) was small. The Woyrsch Army Detachment captured 16,500 prisoners in August, bringing in 48 guns (mostly spoils from Ivangorod) and 60 machine guns.  
2) p. 385. — 3) p. 386.

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The Operational Leadership of Army Group Mackensen.

The head of the German military railway system therefore already considered the deployment of a strong army east of the Bug at the beginning of July to be feasible and necessary.

It is not disputed that it would have been possible to create the conditions for simultaneous operations on both banks of the river by regrouping forces on a large scale and by exchanging the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army with the Bug Army, which was in the process of formation, in time before the opening of the new offensive. Apparently, this idea was not considered by the connecting general staff chiefs at that time, because the difficulties of the upcoming task only gradually became apparent from the increasingly solidified, eventually even openly conducted resistance of the Russians in the area between the Bug and the Vistula in the first week of July. When the question of using stronger forces on the east bank was discussed for the first time in Plesz on July 11, it was already too late for such extensive and time-consuming regrouping of forces before the start of the offensive, as the timing for this could no longer be postponed in view of the simultaneously planned Narew operation. Consequently, the conditions for a far-reaching offensive of strong forces on the east bank of the Bug were lacking in the initial situation in mid-July, as it had developed through the course of events in the first half of the month. The weak attempt to change banks, which the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army then made in the first days of the operation, served only to protect the right flank of the army group against possible attacks by the Russians from the east. When these did not materialize, Field Marshal von Mackensen immediately abandoned the continuation of the attempt.

Certainly, even after the start of the offensive, the shift of stronger forces of the Bug Army to the east bank was still possible. They could have exerted increased offensive pressure there together with parts of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army. However, it was not assumed that they would find easier work against the Russian 13th Army there than west of the river. A complete encirclement of the outer flank of the Russian Northwest Front seemed hardly to be hoped for. Rather, there was a danger that the forces predicted east of the Bug would become entangled in barely manageable battles and could easily be diverted in an eccentric direction from the main decision-making site. That these already in view of the need for the closest possible cooperation with the Narew assault group in the area between the Bug and the Vistula should be sought was in line with the guiding idea. Field Marshal von Mackensen therefore had the justified desire and, after the course of the first heavy days of fighting, even more reason to keep his forces as concentrated as possible in this area. As long as the enemy seemed determined not only to defend to the utmost but to fight a decisive battle in Poland—this impression persisted, apart from temporary fluctuations, until the end of July—the leader of the army group saw an extension of his right flank beyond the Bug to the east as an impairment of his striking power at the decisive point. He even welcomed the fact that the strong river obstacle provided effective protection against an offensive threat to the right flank of the army, and consequently, the number of troops falling out for security purposes could be kept within tolerable limits.

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The Offensive of the Allies on Brest Litowsk.

Field Marshal von Mackensen therefore had the justified desire, and after the course of the first heavy days of fighting even more reason, to keep his forces in this area as concentrated as possible. As long as the enemy seemed determined not only to defend to the utmost but also to fight a decisive battle in Poland — this impression persisted, aside from temporary fluctuations, until the end of July — the leader of the army group saw the extension of his right wing beyond the Bug to the east as an impairment of his striking power at the decisive point. He actually welcomed the fact that the strong river obstacle provided effective protection against an offensive threat to the right flank of the army, and consequently the number of troops falling out for security purposes could be kept within tolerable limits.

Thus, until the end of July, it was mainly tactical reasons that made the concentration of the strongest possible forces necessary to achieve victory at the main battlefront. From the beginning of August, as the large, apparently uniformly planned retreat movement of the entire Russian forces in Poland began to become clearly visible, operational considerations suggested the crossing of strong forces to the east bank of the Bug. Generaloberst von Conrad and independently of him also General von Linsingen supported this idea in the sense of a northward pursuit aimed at the retreat routes of the Russians. In contrast, if Field Marshal von Mackensen, in agreement with General von Falkenhayn, adhered to the continuation of the operation in a generally northern direction on this side of the Bug, he nevertheless had the strategic overall picture in mind. He hoped to advance more quickly with the 11th Army, made the main carrier of the pursuit, on a shorter route in more favorable terrain and thus exert more effective pressure against the retreat routes of the Russians than seemed possible in the feared swampy terrain beyond the Bug, where stronger enemy resistance was to be expected. This calculation proved to be quite correct, as the Russian retreat movement from Poland had already progressed further than the German leadership had believed possible. Instead of hitting the flank, the pursuer often ended up in their front. It remains to be seen whether a lateral pursuit conducted with greater consideration past Brest Litowsk to the northeast would have achieved significantly greater material successes. The determined resistance, which parts of the Bug Army encountered there from mid-August onwards after their crossing at Wlodawa, even suggests that it would have been very difficult to quickly achieve direct impact against the retreat area of the main Russian forces north of the swamp area.

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Question of Stronger Flanking Pressure East of the Bug.

Nevertheless, from a retrospective point of view, the possibility cannot be dismissed that an earlier and stronger flanking pressure here would have strategically threatened the Russian retreat movement more significantly. This would have more severely disrupted the orderly and planned execution of this retreat movement, particularly the evacuation of the Brest Litovsk fortress, and could have further shaken the combat strength of the Russian army than the frontal pursuit managed to do.

The question of using strong forces east of the Bug would be fundamentally different under the assumption of a simultaneous offensive directed not against the Narew from the front of the Commander-in-Chief East, but on and over Wilna against the northern flank of the main Russian forces. In such a case, it would have corresponded to the idea of concentrated cooperation against the rear connections of the enemy masses standing in Poland if the Mackensen Army Group had already placed the focus of its operations in the area east of the Bug from mid-July.

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E. The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August¹).

Since Gorlice, the Russian Supreme Command was primarily focused on defense. It hoped for relief through the attack of the Western Powers²) begun on May 9 and the entry of Italy, soon Romania, perhaps even Bulgaria into the war. On the other hand, it was concerned whether it would actually succeed in halting the advance of the Central Powers in Galicia. Both were interrelated: successful defense in Galicia had to promote the acquisition of new allies, whose intervention would also bring relief for the situation in Galicia. Besides domestic and economic considerations, foreign policy concerns also argued for a tenacious fight for every inch of ground, while purely militarily, the idea was to maintain the army's striking power and therefore to retreat into the vastness of the empire as needed, regardless of territorial loss. The duality of these viewpoints played a decisive role in the measures of the Russian leadership alongside the impact of the Central Powers' attack.

At the beginning of May, the entire front, measuring over 1300 kilometers, was commanded as before by General Alexeyev in Siedlce, leading the Northwest Front consisting of five armies (10th, 12th, 1st, 2nd, 5th) with about 55 divisions, and General Ivanov in Cholm, leading the Southwest Front also consisting of five armies (4th, 3rd, 8th, 11th, 9th) with 50½ divisions³); the center divided the entire front into two approximately equal parts. The Supreme Command, as before, Grand Duke Nicholas with General Janushkevich as Chief of Staff and General Danilov as Quartermaster General, was located in Baranovichi. Directly under the Grand Duke, the 6th Army in the north, with troops not fit for field use, had to protect the Baltic Fleet, Petersburg, and the coast, while in the south, a similarly composed 7th Army and the Black Sea Fleet had a corresponding special task.

¹) Volume VII, p. 436 (regarding Dardanelles, p. 329). — More about Southwest Front p. 189 ff. and 261 ff.  
²) p. 51 ff.  
³) Landwehr units are not included here. General Danilov (p. 521) gives the total strength for the end of June, fully including Landwehr, as 108 infantry divisions, 16 rifle and foot-cavalry brigades, and 35 cavalry divisions.

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Structure and Combat Power of the Army.

The sea had a corresponding special task. In Odessa, after the transfer of the V. Caucasian Corps²), a weak landing corps was kept ready for Constantinople, whose use, however, was only considered in view of the strength of the Turkish fleet if the connection with the Caucasus was achieved or if the Allies had already advanced to the Bosporus³). The Caucasus army, still about six divisions strong, was almost entirely stuck on Turkish soil in impassable mountainous terrain at the border.

The organization of the Russian army was essentially the same as at the beginning of the war, but they had begun to expand the existing independent rifle brigades into divisions and later began to consolidate Landwehr units into divisions. The infantry regiments still had a target strength of four battalions, and the light batteries, originally equipped with eight guns, were reduced to six guns with few exceptions, so that each division probably had about 36 field guns⁴). The heavy artillery (flat fire of 10 cm, high-angle fire of 15 cm upwards) counted only 104 batteries with 386 barrels in June 1916⁵). After the fighting, which had continued with few interruptions since August 1914, the troops were all too much in need of rest and replacement of officers, trained personnel, weapons, and ammunition. There had been a serious shortage of all this for a long time. The Russian war industry was unable to meet the demand. Deliveries expected from abroad, especially through British mediation from the United States⁶), were delayed because the Western powers themselves had the most urgent needs. Apart from the always uncertain route through the neutral countries of Scandinavia and especially the Balkans, the only permanently open connection still led through the Far East; for the port of Archangelsk was only usable in a few summer months, and the new railway to the ice-free Murman coast was barely a third completed. Deliveries from Marseille to Petersburg had taken two months in the spring⁷).

¹) Volume VII, pp. 330 and 434.  
²) Another unit intended for the "entry" into Constantinople was ready in Vladikavkaz. England, which placed no value on such participation, is said to have refused sea transport (Kudaschev letter of June 22, 1915).  
³) Volume II, Appendix 2.  
⁴) It is not possible to determine with certainty.  
⁵) Manikowski, II, p. 81.  
⁶) Volume VII, p. 136.  
⁷) French official report, Vol. III, Annex 612; the route is not known.

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The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August.

Behind the front lines, which apart from the breakthrough front in Galicia and southern Poland and the area north of the Njemen were quite rigidly constructed, in Poland from south of Iwangorod over Nowogeorgiewsk to near Lomza, deeply staggered rear positions and behind them the Narew-Vistula line, further strengthened by fortifications, offered stubborn resistance. However, if the pressure from the opponents unexpectedly forced them to abandon this "front theater of war," there was still the large rear main defense line of the Njemen and Bug with the strong and newly expanded fortresses of Kowno, Grodno, and Brest available. Their right flank seemed sufficiently protected by the absence of railways and roads north of the Njemen, while the left wing found secure support behind the Dniester at the Romanian border. This last position was hoped to be held even under the most unfavorable developments.

Since the beginning of May, the focus of the Supreme Army Command had been captivated by the situation at the front in Galicia. Information about the German force distribution was generally quickly and well informed, presumably through espionage and prisoner reports. The German advance north of the Njemen was not considered significant, as the forces identified there were too weak to pose a threat. Thus, the Northwest Front had meanwhile become the source of strength, nourished by troop transfers from the heavy and costly battles of the Southwest Front. Here, around mid-May, the pressure against the section that had previously felt it most strongly, against the 3rd Army, which stood below the fortress of Przemysl on the San, seemed to have eased, and it was believed that the German troops were moving more southward. On May 17, the Grand Duke personally wired General Brussilow, the commander of the 8th Army, expressing special confidence in his tactical skill and was convinced that he would not only hold Przemysl, whose possession was particularly important, but also strengthen the overall situation through active combat leadership on his remaining front. He suggested to the Southwest Front to consider forming a new operational army from their reserves in the area north of Lemberg, to which the three divisions strong army reserve and from the Northwest Front a particularly proven army leader, General Plehwe, previously commander of the 12th Army, should be assigned about one and a half corps. However, the commander of the Northwest Front reported that if he made such contributions, he needed to know whether he should continue to hold his current front or return the Grojec position covering the Narew and Warsaw.

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Hope for Relief through Italy's Intervention.

A military convention had already been concluded with it on April 26, through which both powers committed to deploying the maximum of their forces in the direction of Vienna-Budapest for a decisive blow against the Danube Monarchy and to manage with a minimum on the other fronts. Serbia was to participate by seeking contact with the Italian right wing at Laibach in a northwesterly direction. In view of these plans, the start of the retreat from the San was postponed. General Ivanov intended to prepare a larger offensive operation; General Alexeyev now proposed an even larger one, aiming to attack in the West and thus restore the situation in Galicia. The Grand Duke explained to the commanders of the Western powers on May 23 that at least ten newly deployed German divisions were already fighting against Russia; this indeed complicated their task, but "in the context of the overall situation, it was just timely to facilitate the expansion of the successes already achieved in the West"(2). When the state of war was declared on the Italian front on May 24, General Hoffre was to send a telegram of admiration for Russian heroism and expected "the most brilliant results from Italy's entry into the war." The Russian military leadership believed, as on the same day the attack of the Central Powers at the San continued, only in a last effort of the enemy to end the operation by capturing Przemysl and then turn against Italy. They ordered that the fortress should only be evacuated when all means were exhausted, and had the 4th Army of the Southwestern Front move to the Northwestern Front so that General Ivanov could focus all his attention on the defense in Galicia. However, the formation of a new operational army north of Lemberg had meanwhile proven impractical.

It soon became apparent that the new ally, contrary to his initial intentions, was not yet ready for the offensive, and his deployment would extend well into June(3). Similarly, the Serbs were unable to attack because they were hindered by diseases and floods of the border rivers and threatened by Bulgaria and Albania.

1) Tsarist Russia in World War, p. 328 ff.  
2) Walentinow, E. 49. — Cf. p. 73 ff. of this volume.  
3) p. 29.

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The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August.

On the other hand, despite all efforts, the hope of forming an alliance with Romania) or Bulgaria was dwindling.

When the last forts of Przemysl had to be evacuated on the night of June 3, the Galician front began to waver again. But the situation on the N o r t h w e s t e r n f r o n t also began to cause concern. The first overall operation of the German 9th Army) caused fear for Warsaw, while the continuation of the attacks on the Niemen to the north) appeared threatening only for the extreme right wing of the army. On June 5, the Chief of General Staff, General Januschkewitsch, wrote to the Minister of War): "After the Germans have brought about an unprecedented collapse on the Southwestern Front, they will now apparently turn to the Northwestern Front"; the question was only whether against Warsaw or Riga. Reinforcing the Northwestern Front was not easy, because since May 9, against 18 divisions), i.e., about 200 battalions, had been thrown to the Southwestern Front. The result of their intervention was "almost zero," the complete corps and divisions had "melted away like snow."

While Warsaw was somewhat secured by the armies and fortifications standing before it, Riga, which was more important for the supply of the army due to its large industry than Warsaw, was almost unprotected; open to enemy access. A panic broke out in the city; people began to remove money, supplies, and machines, so that the threat alone already hampered the production of army supplies). In Petersburg, there was concern. Since the commander of the Northwestern Front did not yet expect far-reaching German operations north of the Niemen, the Supreme Command retained the leadership of the previous Riga—Schavli—Group, which became the "5th Army," to be transferred to General Plehwe and as the only reinforcement currently available, to move divisions with only 3000 men each in combat strength to Riga until they could be replenished.

1) p. 11.  
2) p. 134.  
3) pp. 124f. and 131 f.  
4) Correspondence Suchomlinow/Januschkewitsch.  
5) From the N o r t h w e s t e r n f r o n t in April III. Reserve Corps (21st and 52nd Div.), 63rd Div., 62nd Div., 13th fid. Div., 62nd Div., XV Corps (8th Div.), 77th Div., 3rd Guard Div., II. Reserve Corps (auf. Gren.- and 51st Div.), VI Corps (4th and 6th Div.), then the two divisions marked with \* and another (12th fid.) from the Southwestern Front returned in early June. From the C a u c a s u s F r o n t: 20th and 3rd Reserve Div. as well as 3rd Fus.-Cossack Brigades. A total of 15 divisions. How the number of 18 divisions is calculated was not clear.  
6) Knox, p. 291 f.

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Evacuation of Przemysl. Situation of the Northwest Front.

"This will calm the public and cool the Emperor," wrote the Chief of the General Staff to the Minister of War²).

The new 5th Army was to protect the route to Petersburg in the future, together with the Baltic Fleet. Admiral Kanin, who had taken over the command from the now deceased Admiral von Essen, relied on the naval ports in the Gulf of Finland; in the open Baltic Sea and in the Gulf of Riga, he had almost only light forces, mainly minelayers and submarines. The 5th Army was detached from the rest of the front due to its special task; its rear connections led northeast to Riga. Thus, the fortress of Kowno gained increased importance as the right wing support point of the main front and was therefore placed directly under the command of the Northwest Front Commander, its garrison reinforced. All troops west of the lower Vistula to the Pilica were combined into the 2nd Army, eliminating the previous 5th Army.

Regarding the overall situation of the Northwest Front, General Alexeyev wrote to the Chief of the General Staff on June 5: The decisive factor was that it was "stretched to a thin thread" without reserves. After twelve divisions had recently been withdrawn for the Southwest Front and seven for the area north of the Njemen³), the front garrison was so weakened that the enemy could penetrate even the strongest fortified positions after thorough artillery preparation. Therefore, the only option was to shorten the front by retreating behind the Narew and into the Grojec position; then up to four corps could be spared as reserves. The aim was to preserve the combat strength of the armies, considerations of the moral impact of retreating had to take a back seat. However, there was no time to lose, so as not to be attacked in the currently extended positions. Once the regrouping was completed, an attack could be considered again. The Commander of the Southwest Front viewed the situation differently. When General Januschkewitsch suggested to him on June 6 to gradually take up rear positions to preserve the Seesaw, in order to fight the great battle at the Gnila Lipa, General Ivanov wanted nothing to do with it. He replied, the task was, despite the most difficult circumstances, to defend every inch of land;

¹) p. 440, note 4.   
²) Correspondence Suchomlinov/Januschkewitsch, June 7.   
³) p. 440, note 4.   
⁴) In May III Corps (56th and 73rd Div.), XIX Corps (17th and 38th Div.), XXXVII Corps (6th, 68th, and 79th Div.); also Inf. Brig. XIII, 1st Caucasian and 3rd Turkish Rifle Brig.

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The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August.

"the Emperor, Russia, and the Grand Duke demand from us stubborn

fight... We have not covered the whole area with

a network of strong positions just to retreat now, only covered by rearguard actions."

On the same day, the Grand Duke reported to the Tsar that the

deficit now amounted to 300,000 men on the Southwestern Front and 100,000 men

on the Northwestern Front, but for the incoming replacements, the weapons

were missing, "thus every strategy ends." The training level of the replacements,

who had barely learned to shoot due to the lack of rifles, was

beyond any criticism; there was a lack of officers. "We cannot

seize the initiative again, but must limit ourselves to repelling the

enemy's blows... Due to the enormous losses, the value

of the troops decreases every day; the units are dwindling."

Although Italy has now entered the war, the Germans have strengthened their

forces against Russia. The French attack also remained

ineffective, despite their deployment of ten corps, superior

in artillery and unlimited ammunition." It is "distressing and

shameful" that Russia "truly more than heroic, brilliant troops

suffer unheard-of losses due to a lack of weapons and ammunition and

are not even rewarded with successes." In such a situation,

negotiations conducted simultaneously with the Western powers

for better cooperation only expressed helplessness, and they remained without influence

on the course of events.

On June 8, General Januschkewitsch replied to General Alexejew

on his proposal to withdraw, that at the Narew and near Grojec

the last positions lay, which could still be considered without giving up the overall situation.

He received four divisions of heavy artillery, which meant

a "significant reinforcement" of the Northwestern Front. The final decision

on what should happen next was left to him. The

Grand Duke agreed to carry out the movement soon; the condition

was only that the construction of a second line of defense behind

Brest and Narew as well as behind the positions of Grojec and Radom

should begin soon. On the Southwestern Front, General Brussilow

was forced on June 15 to retreat to the Grodek position west of Lemberg.

1) Njesnamow, p. 57.  
2) Gajewski, p. 56 ff. and Bonch-Brujewitsch, p. 259.  
3) Staff. The French had a different view of the balance of forces.  
4) A total of 8 batteries of 15 cm howitzers and 4 batteries of 10 cm cannons,  
together 48 guns. — See p. 437.

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Retreat Considerations. Fall of Lemberg.

After the enormous losses, which this front had especially suffered, the total deficit was now already estimated at 500,000 men. The shortage of rifles increased; in the columns of the Southwestern Front, up to 60 percent of the ammunition was missing.

On June 17, in a meeting with the commanders of the army groups in Cholm, defense was established as the task for the near future, to restore the army's striking power and later to resume the offensive. The Northwestern Front was to regard the middle Njemen, the Bobr, the Narew, and the Vistula up to Iwangorod inclusive as the main line of defense. Beyond this line, the front could be shortened if necessary, but Warsaw was to be held "to the utmost." The Southwestern Front, whose right wing (3rd Army) was still north of the lower San, could, in view of the sharp German pressure in the direction of Lemberg to Lublin-Cholm south of it, retreat to the Reich border, but should delay the enemy by exploiting every available terrain feature. To strengthen this front, extreme measures were taken; their infantry was to immediately receive from each cavalry regiment of the entire army 30 men suitable for non-commissioned officers "with rifles," 100,000 replacement troops "with rifles," and the entire remaining rifle stock of 40,000 pieces was to be transferred. A further 150,000 rifles were hoped to be freed in the coming months by equipping the replacement battalions with Japanese weapons; the factories produced about 45,000 pieces monthly. All infantry regiments were to be reduced from four to three battalions as needed.

Based on the Cholm meeting, the Supreme Army Command ordered on June 19 to withdraw the right wing of the 3rd Army to the right bank of the San and to maintain the connection to the 4th Army of the Northwestern Front in the future at the Vistula near Zawichost. When the 8th Army then saw itself forced to evacuate Lemberg itself the following night, the "most thorough evacuation" of the Galician capital and the entire still-occupied part of Galicia was ordered. The loss of Lemberg on June 22 was a particularly severe blow to Russia's prestige. The situation had escalated to such an extent that major decisions had to be made. Within the empire, dissatisfaction was evident, which had led to street riots in Moscow. "From all sides, they cry out," (wrote the Chief of the General Staff to the Minister of War), "and frighten us with the Hydra of Revolution. That has been the last thing we needed."

1) Correspondence Suchomlinow/Samuschkewitsch, June 22 and 23, 1915.

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The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August.

With Romania, the matter is being dragged out, with Sweden¹) we are being intimidated. It gets worse by the hour. — The internal enemy is also beginning to stir. Duma deputies have convened for a congress. Essentially, the Duma has convened on its own without being summoned and wants to exercise power.

On June 25, the Tsar, accompanied by all ministers, came to the Great Headquarters. He had previously dismissed the War Minister General Suchomlinov, who was accused of inadequate supply of the army with weapons and ammunition, and replaced him with General Polivanov. During the consultation in Baranowicze²), the entire situation was thoroughly discussed. Politically, the result was the Imperial Decree of June 27, through which the Duma was convened and the Russian people were urged to endure with the reasoning: "The enemy must be defeated, otherwise peace is impossible." For Poland, the self-government promised shortly after the outbreak of war in 1914 was to be worked out.

General Danilow³) reported on the military resolutions: For the Grand Duke as Supreme Commander, the main goal was to preserve the army. He hoped that the pressure from the allies would eventually bring relief, and that the "regularity" of the approaching Serbian and German advance would set a goal. It was therefore about gaining time, with the "numerical area" of Russia offering great possibilities. And yet, in the future, no step of Russian soil should be surrendered to the enemy without compelling necessity. If it was not possible to remain further west, then the defense in the Njemen-Bug line was the most promising. It had to extend from Riga to the Romanian border, about 1000 kilometers, and had positioned itself behind this railway cross-connection Riga—Wilna—Baranowicze—Rowno—Kameniec Podolski, with numerous branches to the west and east. Those favorable defense lines had almost been reached by the outer army wings, while the center had not yet advanced. It was necessary to lead them out of threatening encirclement. It was therefore desirable to place them under unified command. At the same time, the circumstance had to be taken into account that the armies, in the event of further retreat, would encounter the Rokitno Marshes.

¹) Volume II, p. 33.  
²) Danilow, p. 521, recalls that the consultation had already taken place on June 24. However, according to Paleologue I, p. 358, the Tsar did not leave Tsarskoye Selo until June 25. — ³) Danilow, p. 522 ff.

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Change of the Minister of War. Retreat Preparations.

the armies would, in the event of further retreat, fall back on the Rokitno

swamps1), the large forest and swamp area of the upper Pripet. According to

considerations made in peacetime, in such a case, the focus of warfare should

lie north of the swamp area on the roads to Moscow and Petersburg. Therefore,

the northernmost army of the Southwest Front (3rd Army) and the large Bug

fortress Brest Litovsk were already transferred to the Northwest Front. The

border was now in the line Rawa Ruska—Sokal, so that the entire front in

Poland, the whole "forward theater of war," fell into the area of the Northwest

Front. General Ivanov, with only three armies (8th, 11th, and 3rd Army)

and twelve corps, comprising 36 divisions and thus about one-third of the

entire army, was responsible for covering south of the Rokitno swamps in the

direction of Kiev. Currently, his armies were positioned in a front about

300 kilometers wide along the upper course of the Bug, the Zlota Lipa,

and the Dniester to the Romanian border east of Czernowitz.

"The most responsible part of the general task"2) was to be fulfilled

by General Alexeyev as the commander-in-chief of the Northwest Front.

He commanded eight armies (starting from the right flank: 5th, 10th, 12th, 1st,

2nd, 4th, 3rd, and the newly formed 13th Army) with 37 corps, comprising

80 divisions and thus about two-thirds of the entire army. He was also

responsible for possibly withdrawing the six armies still in Poland through

the area between Ostrowiec and the Rokitno swamps, which, despite a width

of about 200 kilometers, represented a kind of bottleneck due to the small

number of usable roads. The line Lomza—Ostrowiec—forest of Augustow

had to be held at all costs; swamp areas facilitated this. But also the danger

that an attack against the weak northern flank could bring for the overall

situation north of the Rokitno swamps "had to be constantly kept in mind

by the supreme army command." Everything was thought out and prepared

for the event that retreat became unavoidable, which included the evacuation

of all of Poland with Warsaw. Minister Sazonov reassured the French

ambassador on June 26 in Petersburg3): "The Russian army will conduct

its retreat as slowly as possible and exploit every opportunity for counter-

attacks and to unsettle the enemy. If Grand Duke Nicholas should find

that the Germans are withdrawing part of their forces to use them on the

Western Front, he will immediately resume the offensive."

1) Previously called Polesie in earlier volumes.  
2) Danilov, p. 522.  
3) Paléologue I, p. 360.

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The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August.

Meanwhile, the Grand Duke hoped to be able to delay the retreat further. On the Isonzo, the Italian offensive had begun, perhaps the German striking power would still falter. His campaign plan allows him

to hope that our troops can hold Warsaw for at least two more months."

When in the last days of June and the first days of July the new

left wing of the Northwest Front and especially the right of the

Southwest Front had to further yield to the pressure of the Central Powers,

General Alexeyev wanted to continue stubborn resistance south of the line Lublin—Cholm, where the enemy

seemed to be directing the main thrust; he

also prepared for the possibility of a German attack in

the sensitive direction of East Prussia via Ostrowiec. On July 4, he gave

the 2nd Army, most exposed in West Poland, the order

to withdraw the fortress guns deployed on the night of July 7 and

to retreat to the Blonie—Grojec position; also the 4th Army stationed to the south

and the 12th and 1st Armies stationed on the Narew Front

were to join the movement. The execution was then

halted again, the timing left open; however, preparations

for the evacuation of Warsaw began.

At the request of General Alexeyev, the Grand Duke himself came to Siedlce on July 5

and gave him free hand through an instruction, in which it

stated: The enemy, who was obviously only conducting a feint

operation north of the Njemen, threatened the entire situation on the front

battlefield with the attack on Lublin—Cholm. If it is not possible

to stop this attack, General Alexeyev should continue to

evade, "to preserve the living strength of the army for the long-lasting

war." Meanwhile, in the south, the abandonment

of the Bug Line was already envisaged, with the front Lomza—

Malkin—Lutow—Ratno, 75 kilometers southeast of Brest Litovsk

on the upper Pripet, considered as the next line of resistance; the extreme boundary for the retreat should initially be the line Bobr—

upper Narew—Brest Litovsk—Ratno. Thus, the Southwest Front

was assigned the front between the Rokitno Marshes and the Romanian

border. Ivangorod, Warsaw, and Nowo-Georgiewsk were not to be

defended as fortresses, but cleared as parts of the field positions with these.

The Grand Duke could not bring himself to order the same for the large and strong fortress of Nowogeorgiewsk; this

place, which covered Warsaw, was to be held and defended to the utmost;

the impossibility of freeing the already overloaded

Warsaw area to the east in time had decisively

influenced this decision.

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Effect of the German Attacks.

Even in the worst case, he expected to be able to hold Warsaw for at least another month, until early August²). The difficulty and uncertainty of the situation was also expressed at the meeting held at the French Grand Headquarters in Chantilly on July 7³), when the Russian military attaché, Colonel Count Ignatiev, could not give a binding statement on the Grand Duke's next intentions.

Due to the success of the large German attack against the Narew Front on July 13⁴), General Alexeyev was forced to order his 2nd Army to execute the retreat to the Blonie-Grojec position; the movements began on the night of July 17. This meant the decisive turning point. Eager telegrams were sent to the Western powers; they demanded that the Italians act more decisively. The Serbs had already received the news that their advance on Laibach⁵) "in view of the inactivity of the Italians" was no longer in question; instead, they should be ready to invade Syrmia at a given signal. The Russian army command no longer fully trusted them, as they had been conducting a small war since early June to gain control of Albania, where the conflict of interest against Italy played a role, which had already occupied Valona in December 1914. Serbia even wanted, as was heard, to negotiate a separate peace with Vienna⁶).

With the advance of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army to the east bank of the Bug⁷), the holding of this river line by the Southwestern Front was already in question. When on July 19 the Woyrsch Army Detachment also launched an attack⁸) and the Gallwitz Army Group stood before Pultusk and Rozan⁹), the Grand Duke again came to Siedlce and gave General Alexeyev explicit authority to withdraw the armies "as needed" across the Vistula to the east. Warsaw was to be evacuated in the following "very possible" cases: once, if the enemy in the north finally breaks through the front, but also if he advances in the south to Ivangorod—Brest Litowsk.

¹) p. 31.  
²) Radoschew Letters, July 6, 1915.  
³) Details follow in Volume IX.  
⁴) Details of the Russian countermeasures on this front see p. 301 and 370; the Southwestern Front p. 389 f.  
⁵) p. 439.  
⁶) Radoschew Letters, July 18 and 24, 1915. — See also p. 606 and 611.  
⁷) p. 390 ff. ⁸) Gebna. ⁹) p. 304 f.

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The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August.

On the night of July 21, following the retreating 4th Army on the northern flank of the 2nd Army, the Grojec position was abandoned, and on the 22nd, General Alexeyev ordered his southern flank (4th, 3rd, and 13th Army) to gradually retreat to the Ivangorod—Kovel line. The following days brought the fall of the Narew line Pultusk—Lomza. At the same time, the pressure of the new German attacks in Lithuania and Courland²) began to take effect, which now already threatened the road to Vilna. On July 24, Prince Kudashev, the representative of the Foreign Minister at the headquarters, reported to Petersburg that General Janushkevich, "taking a deep breath," declared: "We must drink the cup to the dregs" and, pointing to the Riga—SchauIen front, said: "If the Germans continue to attack there, we must evacuate Warsaw and — retreat."

General Alexeyev, however, did not yet consider the situation on the extreme northern flank to be threatening. As he explained to the Grand Duke during another meeting in Siedlce on July 28, the German forces deployed there were too weak for a major operation, and new decisions were not yet necessary. General Danilov accordingly attached "overriding importance" to the front north of the Njemen, and the Grand Duke ordered the immediate reinforcement of the 5th Army fighting there with two infantry divisions and a cavalry division from the southwestern front. However, he left the timing for the evacuation of the Vistula line to General Alexeyev as before. The events on the Narew front were now considered decisive for the fate of Warsaw, as a German breakthrough towards Wyszkow on the Bug could severely hinder the retreat of the Russian troops still standing on the Vistula. At the Lublin—Cholm front, it was believed that they could hold at this time, and an attack at this point would be considered less threatening.

The surprising Vistula crossing of the Woyrsch Army Division on the night of July 29 between Warsaw and Ivangorod brought new concerns. When the Russian 4th Army failed to repel the enemy here again, General Alexeyev ordered the 2nd Army on August 2 to evacuate the west bank of the river and thus Warsaw; the line of the old outer forts was to remain occupied initially but not defended.

¹) Kudashev letter from July 22, 1915.  
²) p. 460 ff.  
³) 69th and 2nd Finnish Div.

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Orders for the Retreat.

On August 4, the bridgehead on the left of the Vistula at Iwangorod was evacuated; the following night, the last Russian troops left Warsaw and blew up the bridges. On August 5, General Alexeyev ordered the start of the general retreat from the Vistula to the east for the night of the 7th, with the next target being the line Lomza—Malkin—Lukow—Cholm. The parts freed by shortening the front were to reinforce the extreme right wing (5th and 10th Army), for which there was now increasing concern.

Meanwhile, the Grand Duke had already informed the commander-in-chief of the Southwest Front at his new headquarters in Rovno on August 3 of the intention of further retreat to the Niemen—Bug line and explained that this line in the north was already threatened by encirclement. To strengthen the 5th Army in particular, the Southwest Front now had to give up 120 individual companies. Overall, the Northwest Front was already 650,000 men short of full strength. For the gap that had to arise between the two army groups when continuing the retreat in the direction of Pinsk, only two cavalry divisions were now available against the enemy south of Vladimir Volynsk over a width of 30 kilometers. On August 6, the Grand Duke came again to Rovno. The possibilities with which the Supreme Army Command was already calculating on the Southwest Front are shown by the decision made there in the evening to have seven bridges built over the Dnieper near Kiev and below on a 200-kilometer stretch of river. Despite all this, hope for a final victory was held here. When Prince Kudaschow made a report about German peace feelers in these days, General Januschkewitsch was very dismissive. The prince reported to Minister Sasonow: "I believe that here, as everywhere in Russia, it is felt that it is indispensable to end the war with a failure."

In view of the German attacks north of the Niemen and before Kovno, concerns about the right wing of the army had also grown further. Already on July 30, General Alexeyev had serious concerns about the possibility of a German breakthrough between the 5th and 10th Army at Swenzjany, for which the Germans could surprisingly quickly reinforce.

1) Njesnamow, p. 87. — There may be an error in the date, and it may also refer to the journey from August 3.  
2) p. 604 ff.  
3) Kudaschow letter from August 3, 1915.  
4) World War. Volume VIII.

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The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August.

This would force an immediate weakening of the Vistula front, whose evacuation had not yet been ordered. The 5th Army was to shift its focus more to the south, towards the area of Dünaburg. On August 9, the Southwestern Front was again ordered to transfer two divisions to the 5th Army. At the Northwestern Front, the Grand Duke inquired whether it was not "advisable to withdraw the front in Poland further back to strengthen the middle Njemen and the roads to Kowno, the section that was to support the future front." The attacks carried out on this day by the German 12th and 8th Armies south of Lomza against the Russian 12th and by the Mackensen Army Group at Lubartow against the 3rd Army accelerated the execution of the retreat movement. "To prevent the armies from complete dissolution," General Alexejew ordered on August 10 further withdrawal for the 12th, 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 3rd Armies to a line running south past Lubow east of Diswiece. The movement was to be carried out gradually; cavalry and rear guards were to repeatedly hold up the enemy and force development, while entire corps were to be released as reserves. However, this movement also led to further withdrawal of the 13th Army, positioned southwest of Kowel with its right wing on the Bug, which the Supreme Command would have liked to keep standing to protect Brest Litowsk. On the other hand, the southwestern front, weakened by detachments for the north, was already so weakened that it was hardly able to hold its line.

The rapid advance of the German attack against Kowno increased concerns. On August 14, the Supreme Command designated the best and numerically strongest corps of the army, the Guard Corps, from the 3rd Army to Wilna; this army thus shrank from 90,000 to 63,000 rifles, distributed among five remaining corps (ten divisions).

The following days brought a decisive change in the organization of the army. After discussions that dated back to July 28 and after a meeting with General Alexejew on August 16 at his new headquarters in Wolkowysk, on August 17, the division of the oversized Northwestern Front into a Northern Front under General Russki, the recovered former commander of the Northwestern Front, and a Western Front under General Alexejew was ordered. The new division was to take effect on August 31.

1) 65th and 4th Finnish Divisions.  
2) P. 355 and 414.  
3) Two infantry divisions and a rifle brigade.

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Reorganization of the Army.

On August 16, in its new headquarters at Wolkowysk, on August 17, the division of the oversized Northwestern Front into a Northern Front under General Russki, the previously recovered former commander of the Northwestern Front, and into a Western Front under General Alexeyev was ordered. The new division was to take effect on August 31. While the Western Front would cover the roads to Moscow with the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 3rd Armies in the Grodno-Brest line, the Northern Front, with the coastal defense entrusted to the 6th Army, 5th Army, a new 12th Army to be formed at Vilna by dissolving the previous 12th and 13th, and the 10th Army, would cover the routes leading over the sea from East Prussia and Petersburg, to which the Baltic Fleet was also subordinated, and hold the line of the middle Njemen. Above all, Kowno, the strong support of this front, was to be held with all means against the ongoing German attack. The aim was further to gather enough forces to push the enemy on this flank back to the west, "to deprive him of the favorable starting position for an encirclement of the entire front." Therefore, General Alexeyev was to give up the Guard Corps of the 3rd Army and the two most combat-ready corps of the 13th Army to form the new 12th Army at Vilna, but instead, he gave two exhausted corps (II Siberian and II Caucasian).

Moreover, these plans were already changed in the following days by the unexpected fall of Kowno on August 18 and the entry of German fleet parts into the Gulf of Riga, and on the other hand, the issue of a new appointment of the supreme army leadership became noticeable. Since General Suchomlinov was no longer Minister of War, the position of the Chief of the General Staff, General Januschkewitsch, was also considered shaken. When General Alexeyev, who was suspected to be the successor, now proposed forming the 12th Army not at Vilna but at Riga under the changed circumstances, but first to appoint General Russki as the future commander of the Northern Front, the Grand Duke rejected the latter; but he himself also "wished to exercise no compulsion in any instructions." Thus, the new army was formed at Riga according to General Alexeyev's intention. The measures demanded and partially already ordered by General Russki in view of the appearance of German warships off Pernau were prevented by General Alexeyev when the German ships soon left the Gulf of Riga.

1) Volume VII, p. 300. — Meanwhile, temporarily also commander of the 6th Army.  
2) p. 444.

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The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August.

The deployment of two corps for coastal defense to Wolmar and Walk was prevented by General Alexeyev when the German ships soon left the Gulf of Riga again). The mass of the advancing reinforcements continued to flow into the area of Vilna, where a gap in the line had been particularly dangerous since the fall of Kovno. The fall of this fortress also forced the abandonment of the entire line Kovno—Grodno—Brest Litovsk. The front was to be withdrawn, but in such a way that the railway Vilna—Baranovichi—Rovno remained secured as a cross connection behind it.

On August 22, Djovice) was released. After the 4th Army had been shaken by the German Army Detachment Woyrsch) on the 25th and in view of the simultaneous threat from the southeast, the prepared evacuation of the strong modern fortress Brest Litovsk) was also carried out, General Alexeyev ordered the general retreat to the line Grodno—Rovno on the night of August 26.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Command had moved to Mogilev on the Dnieper since August 21. Here, the Minister of War, General Polivanov, brought the news) to the Grand Duke on August 22 of the Tsar's decision to take over the supreme command himself with General Alexeyev as Chief of Staff. The Grand Duke was then to be assigned the Caucasus Front. From then until the Tsar's arrival on September 5, the previous Supreme Command did not intervene decisively in the events, which were hardly sustainable anyway. How the views of its previously influential personalities were at that time is characterized by the report of Prince Kudachev from August 30: The outgoing Quartermaster General, General Danilov, said that lack of ammunition and declining morale left little hope for significant improvement in the situation; nevertheless, "the final victory can remain ours under two conditions: 1. that we do not despair and do not tire despite all trials, 2. that we do not have a revolution." Otherwise, the prevailing view is: The Germans, judging by the tone of their press, have the double solution: 1. Both to the west and to the east, 2. an army must strike. Accordingly, our goal must be: 1. To make a pure peace before the Germans are expelled from Russia, 2. to preserve the ranks of the army.

1) G. 468 ff. — 2) C. 364. — 3) C. 428. — 4) C. 429 f. — 5) Polivanov, G. 208 ff.

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Change in the Supreme Army Command.

The overall course of Russian operations until early September was a stubborn struggle for every inch of ground and protection of the "evacuation" of territories, which ultimately had to be abandoned; nothing was to fall into the enemy's hands that could serve him in any way for warfare.

From an exclusively military point of view, objections can be raised against such a type of warfare, as it exhausted the army's forces in pure defense, although there was room to retreat. With timely withdrawal of the front, the Russian army could have been almost entirely withdrawn from decisive access by the Central Powers. Even a major German operation north of the Njemen would likely have come to a halt soon with the early establishment of a strong Russian right flank, as it would have been at a disadvantage due to poorer rear connections. This would have led to purely frontal attrition in trench warfare, with the Russian army remaining a fully valid power factor in a strong defensive position and in dangerous proximity to the borders of Germany, ready to break through to a major offensive again at the appropriate time. This could have offset any partial success that the Central Powers might have achieved on other fronts in the meantime.

For the decision on the fundamental question of how the war should be conducted on a large scale, however, as already mentioned at the outset, military considerations alone were not decisive, but alongside considerations of the wishes of the Western powers, ultimately external and internal political conditions, and thus the Tsar and his government. It cannot be overlooked that the procedure applied bound very strong German forces throughout the summer, which would have been freed for other fronts with a rapid retreat to the Njemen-Bug line. In fact, the Russian command skillfully traversed the hundreds of kilometers of retreat areas, and indeed systematically in the direction chosen by itself, with the result through the confined space between the Dniester and the Rokitno swamps. However, the resistance power of the troops failed because they lacked officers, trained replacements, weapons, and ammunition, and thus ultimately morale suffered. It is noteworthy that until the final battles against the Central Powers, apart from the aforementioned, around and near Przemysl, Nowogeorgiewsk, and Kowno, almost unhitched, often also immobile and outdated equipment, from mid-May to the end of August, the total number did not exceed 200 pieces, while the loss of prisoners in these 3½ months amounted to around 850,000 (including 90,000 garrison from Nowogeorgiewsk alone).

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The Russian Supreme Command until the End of August.

The losses of artillery had notably decreased since early July, so that perhaps at this time, in connection with the idea of a general retreat, greater restraint in the use of artillery may have been ordered. According to a report made to the French ambassador at the end of August¹) by the Russian General Staff, the total Russian losses from May to July were 350,000 monthly, in August 450,000, totaling 1,500,000 men.

The measures actually taken on the Russian side also raise the question of what prospects a large German offensive on Wilna, initiated early or at the latest after the capture of the Narew line, around the end of July, would have had. It could have been supported by a land and sea attack against Riga, but above all by simultaneous sharp pressure on both sides of the Bug from the south. The forces for this would have been readily available. The Narew thrust had already shown what could be expected from it, and west of the Vistula, any combat-ready unit was dispensable. A strong German offensive suddenly launched against Kowno and on both sides of this fortress would have initially encountered very little Russian resistance even after its capture and could have penetrated deeply in a swift first advance; it would have taken a long time for the Russians to bring up sufficient forces to counter such a thrust. The German success had to be all the greater, the more it succeeded in destroying the Russian forces standing around Kowno in a double encirclement, gaining ground to the south, and thereby blocking the three railway lines leading into the interior of the Reich between Ossowiec and the Rofitno-Gimpsfen. Given the strong Russian countermeasures expected here, such an offensive had to become increasingly difficult with increasing distance from its own power sources and with a simultaneously rising supply demand due to the duration and intensity of the battles. It was therefore crucial to either block the mentioned supply lines early and keep them blocked for the duration of the battles, thereby also making it difficult, if not entirely preventing, the supply of Russian masses flowing back from Poland. That with such conduct of operations a surrender of significant parts of the Russian army could be achieved is possible; certainly, however, a much faster and for the Russians, especially in terms of equipment, more loss-intensive retreat from Poland would have been forced than by the encirclement attempt west of Bug and Njemen.

¹) Paléologue I, p. 400.

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Reflections.

It is possible that a disarmament of significant parts of the Russian army could have been achieved; however, a much quicker and, for the Russians, especially in terms of equipment, more costly retreat from Poland would have been forced than by the encirclement attempt west of Bug and Njemen. In retrospect, it seems that the time required for this was underestimated, which was already necessary at that time due to the defensive strength of the weapons for a predominantly frontal offensive against an approximately equally strong enemy, if this enemy had the will to defend every inch of ground. It was precisely from this will of the opponent that the prospects for success for a far-reaching strong encirclement operation in the Njemen area also arose.

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F. The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Vilna.

I. The Battles in Lithuania and Courland until the End of August.

a) The Battles of the Njemen Army.

(Maps 6 and 7, Sketch 26.)

The July Campaign against Mitau and Schaulen.

From the month of July onwards, the battles of the Njemen Army are no longer to be regarded as independent actions, but as preparations for a future offensive on Vilna, which the Commander-in-Chief East had proposed as an effective support for the offensive in southern Poland on July 2 in Posen, and which had also found the approval of General von Falkenhayn for a later date. The Commander-in-Chief East kept it constantly in view. If this breakthrough operation was to penetrate so deeply into the enemy's position that it had full effect, then on the one hand the large fortress of Kowno, which supported the northern flank of the Russian Njemen front, had to be taken, and on the other hand, securing against the railway lines leading from the interior of the Reich to Dünaburg and Riga was necessary. The last task had to be solved first, with advancing to the lower Dvina and blocking this line being the most effective means and requiring the least forces in the long run. However, since from the beginning of July all the strength of the Commander-in-Chief East had to be directed to the Narew operation, only very modest means were available for the time being; intentions and goals had to adapt to this and change several times in detail.

The 10th Army had received the order on July 2 to cease the preparations already begun for the attack on Kowno, and the next day the order to cover the left flank of the Eastern Army in the previous extended position; the Njemen Army, with the 41st Infantry Division ready to intervene as a new force, was to attack the Russian 5th Army, thereby simultaneously relieving the German 10th Army and diverting the enemy's attention from the Narew operation.

1) Connection to p. 130 ff. — 2) p. 271 ff. — 3) p. 277. — 4) p. 280.

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Task and Organization of the Njemen Army.

The N j e m e n A r m y under General of Infantry O t t o

v o n B e l o w covered at this time with about seven infantry divisions

and five cavalry divisions¹) 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 opposing enemy seemed numerically

somewhat superior²). General von Below wanted to lead the attack, similar to

what the Commander-in-Chief East had ordered at the time in the directive of June 14³),

avoiding the strong enemy positions at Schaulen against the predominantly cavalry-based Russian northern flank,

to then swing against the flank and rear of the Schaulen position. Accordingly, he organized his troops, weakening

the right wing as follows:

S o u t h e r n G r o u p under Lieutenant General Baron von Richthofen

(Higher Cavalry Commander 1 with Detachment Siebed, 36th Reserve

Division, Division Beckmann, 3rd and Bavarian Cavalry Division)

from the Njemen to Lake Rakieten south of Schaulen,

C o r p s M o r g e n (General Command of the I Reserve Corps with

Brigade Horneyer⁴) and 1st Reserve Division) in the positions before

Schaulen,

N o r t h e r n C o r p s under General von Lauenstein (General Command

of the XXXIX Reserve Corps with 6th and 78th Reserve and 41st Infantry

Division) northward behind the course of the Windau to north

of the railway line Libau—Murawjewo,

C a v a l r y C o r p s of Lieutenant General E g o n C o u n t

v o n S c h m e t t o w (6th and 2nd Cavalry Division) northward,

G r o u p of Lieutenant General v o n P a p p r i t z (Governor

of Libau with 8th Cavalry Division and Fortress Troops⁵) at

Hasenpot and east of it.

The adoption of this organization required considerable marches; the

attack could therefore only begin around July 15. The Northern Corps,

accompanied by cavalry on the left flank, was initially to move in

the general direction of Mitau, the left wing of the Pappritz Group to advance against Windau.

¹) I and ½ XXXIX R. K., 41 I. D., 6 R. D., Div. Beckmann, Det. Siebed   
and troops from Libau; 2nd, 3rd, 6th and 8th and Bavarian R. D.   
²) Actually about nine infantry and seven cavalry divisions,   
essentially the same forces as can be seen from G. 469.   
³) See 127.   
⁴) Gren. Regt. 2 from Ers. Regt. Königsberg along with artillery etc.   
⁵) Including 29th Abn. Br. and two brigades of the 4th R. D.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Vilna.

advance against Windau. Since the troops from Libau were to participate

in this, the navy was asked to protect the place against the sea,

but also for immediate support by naval forces in the

advance against Windau. Due to the expected supply difficulties during the advance,

the continuation of the main railway Memel—

Bajohren across the border to connect to the Libau—Schullen railway

was requested from the head of the field railway service, who, however, estimated

six months of construction time; thus, the next operations

were hardly served1). They had to rely on the Libau—Schullen2) railway,

whose eastern half was temporarily in Russian hands, and on a

field railway under construction via Tauraggen to Schullen.

The enemy remained calm; it seemed that he was weakening his northern flank

in favor of the front in Poland. Northwest of Schullen,

it was generally assumed that there were only about two Russian infantry divisions,

against which four German divisions were designated for attack. There were also

long-standing indications that the Russians would evacuate western Courland up to

the Aa in the event of further German attacks3).

Since the attack of the Gallwitz army group against the Narew was

to begin on July 13, the operation in Courland was finally set for

July 14 at the request of the Commander-in-Chief East, to

ensure the desired diversionary effect. On this day, the

northern corps, with the left wing (41st Infantry Division) north of

the Murawjevo—Mitau railway, launched an attack, with three cavalry

divisions to the left. On a front about 30 kilometers wide, the crossing over

the Windau was forced, and the center and left wing advanced against Russian

cavalry and landwehr up to 15 kilometers forward. Flyers

reported continued fires in the north as well as numerous columns of refugees,

making it certain that the

enemy intended to withdraw. On the other hand, on the right wing of the northern

corps, the 6th Reserve Division advanced only slightly against stronger enemy resistance.

On July 15, the spatial successes on the entire attack

front, especially on the northern flank, could be expanded. The attempt

to cut off parts of the enemy was as unsuccessful as the day

before. On July 16, Russian resistance increased. With the

6th Reserve Division, only the left wing advanced. The 78th Reserve and 41st Infantry Division encountered strong enemy forces at Alt Ux, against whom the decision was postponed to the following day.

1) Notes of General Otto von Below. — Construction began in   
the second half of July.  
2) G. 130. — 3) Ibid.

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Njemen Army. The Attack in Courland.

In the meantime, the Schmettow Cavalry Corps was able to disperse strong Russian cavalry

about twelve kilometers northwest of the location in the afternoon and

advance 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 Ux. Several thousand prisoners

and some artillery were the spoils of these first three days of battle. The

attempt to annihilate the enemy at Alt Ux on July 17 through a comprehensive

attack did not succeed, as he had meanwhile pushed strong forces northward.

Serious fighting ensued, forcing him to retreat hastily to the east, losing

another 4000 prisoners and some artillery. By evening, the Mitau railway

was in German hands up to south of Doblen. By evening, they had approached

Mitau itself to within 25 kilometers, while in the north, the troops of

Lieutenant General von Pappritz had come close to Tuckum.

The successes on the northern flank were offset by a setback on the southern

flank, where the attack by the Morgen Corps had begun on July 17. Its

1st Reserve Division made little progress, but to its left, the 6th Reserve

Division was forced by a counterattack of enemy reinforcements to retreat

south of Otmjany with serious losses back towards the Windau1).

In this situation, General von Below maintained the intention to

first continue the attack against the enemy in the north, to, if possible,

push him away from Mitau; only then did he want to turn with full

force south against the Schaulen enemy. Thus, the German troops reached

Russian positions by July 18, which covered Mitau at a distance of about

twelve kilometers to the west. At Tuckum, the western edge of the large

swamp area of the Aa estuary was reached. Windau was occupied on the coast,

whose harbor was blocked by sunken Russian ships. The bite of the

western part of Courland was secured, the first section of the planned

attack was carried out, and the military spoils increased to more than 6000

prisoners and nine artillery pieces.

For the upcoming operation against the Russian

main forces, General von Below gave the first instructions at noon. The

6th Reserve Division was to hold its position, the Morgen Corps was to stand ready for further attack, while south of Lake Rakienow, the southern group was to advance on a front more than 40 kilometers wide with the right wing towards Gudziuny.

1) The Russians reported 500 prisoners and seven machine guns as spoils.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

From the northern corps, the 78th Reserve Division Shagowir and the

cavalry corps Schmettow were to reach Groß Wilzen. The 41st Infantry

Division and the troops previously under Lieutenant General von Pappritz

were to block Mitau and, if possible, take it by storm; the command was given to the commander of the 8th Cavalry

Division, Major General Eberhard Count von Schmettow.

Meanwhile, the Baltic Sea forces, after the battle

at Festernau on July 2, had been temporarily significantly reinforced by the IV Squadron (seven older line

ships) and light forces from the North Sea. The Commander-in-Chief East sent, at the instigation of

Grand Admiral Prince Heinrich, an officer to Kiel, who was there on

July 19 to explain the intentions of the Niemen Army and to point out

that during the upcoming battles, naval operations in the Gulf of Riga were desirable to bind Russian land forces

beyond the Dvina. However, the fairway had to be explored and cleared of mines beforehand, which required some time.

In the Niemen Army, the northern

encirclement troops crossed the Schwede River on July 19 without a fight

and reached their set goals Shagowir and Groß Wilzen;

they were thus deep in the enemy's flank. On the rest of the front,

the day was spent preparing for the attack. When this then

began on July 20 with the southern group under Lieutenant General Freiherr von Richthofen, the enemy retreated eastward over the Dubissa,

but now also began to retreat north of Schaulen before the 1st and 6th Reserve

Divisions. These two divisions were to stay on the blade without pressing, while the encirclement troops were

driven by General von Below with utmost urgency and reached the

enemy's main road Schaulen-Mitau by midnight. The 78th Reserve

Division under Major General von Müller was, after a 30-kilometer march,

in the evening at Meschtkue and thus directly behind the enemy still holding at Schaulen, the cavalry corps Schmettow had reached Janischki.

General von Below could hope, on the following day, July 21,

to capture significant parts of the Russians still standing at Schaulen, also if they — as was now assumed — retreated in a more southeasterly direction, approximately towards Poniewiez.

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The Victory of the Njemen Army at Schaulen.

if these — as was now to be assumed — retreated in a more southeasterly

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 North Corps (6th and 78th Reserve Division) and the

Cavalry Corps Schmettow (Egon) to advance further on Schaulen and

Radziwilischki; everywhere the enemy was to be attacked. The southern group

was to advance towards Radziwilischki to meet the Cavalry Corps,

prevent the night withdrawal of its opponent, and attack again on July 21.

Early that day, however, the Russians, turning back,

advanced sharply eastward against the German 78th Reserve Division, while

delaying the approach of the 6th Reserve Division set against them from the north

until the afternoon. The Corps Morgen then advanced

into Schaulen, evacuated by the enemy at night, but did not get beyond it.

Thus, the 78th Reserve Division had a rather difficult position

and could not prevent strong Russian forces, especially on their

southern flank, from escaping eastward. They had to join the two

cavalry divisions of Lieutenant General Count Schmettow (Egon) blocking

from Roslaini on the Muscha to north of Rozalin in a broad front.

From the southern group, the 36th Reserve Division under

Lieutenant General Kruse reached the railway fighting about halfway between

Kiejdany and Schadow; further north, the Russian resistance was stronger,

so that the Bredemann Division and the Bavarian Cavalry Division fell back

considerably behind the 36th Reserve Division on the left.

The ring around the enemy was not yet closed, on both sides of

Schadow there was still a gap of 45 kilometers. The road to Ponie-

wiez was open to the enemy. But even in the north, it was hardly to be

expected that the fighting strength of the Cavalry Corps Schmettow (Egon) would

be sufficient to stop a determined Russian breakthrough.

Battles and marches with often inadequate supplies and

inferior ammunition, on often bottomless roads, in great

heat and heavy thunderstorms had especially taxed the troops of the

northern group, which had been in continuous movement for a week now.

Nevertheless, the last strength had to and should be used to achieve the

desired great success.

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, for the attack. Both wing groups were to turn towards the

railway and thereby close the ring east of Schadow.

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The Operation of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against Vilna.

Meanwhile, the bulk of the enemy had already escaped eastward the previous evening and night, and now rushed upon the cavalry corps Schmettow (Egon), which was deployed from the north against its rear in an almost 30-kilometer-wide front. In confusing terrain, simultaneously threatened from the rear by Russian cavalry, it was forced, after brave resistance, to retreat northward behind the Muscha in the evening. The majority of the enemy escaped eastward, only smaller parts remained in the area now surrounded by the infantry divisions, whose eastern tip lay only about 15 kilometers east of Schadow.

On July 23, the encirclement movement turned into a purely frontal pursuit, which, held up by Russian rearguards, continued eastward for a distance that day. Although it was not possible to intercept the Russian troops stationed at Schaulen, the total booty, thanks to rapid and purposeful movements, rose in nine days to the considerable number for those combat conditions of around 30,000 prisoners and 23 guns.

At the same time, the troops of Major General Eberhard Graf von Schmettow (41st Infantry, 8th Cavalry Division, and Libau Detachment) succeeded in advancing further towards Mitau. About 3½ Russian cavalry divisions along with infantry seemed to be positioned here.

The Continuation of the Battles and the Capture of Mitau.

At the High Command of the Njemen Army, the success against the Russian 5th Army on July 23 was initially assessed as greater than it actually was. The army order issued for July 24 began with the announcement: "The Russian 5th Army is completely defeated and largely dispersed." General von Below wanted to grant his troops, exhausted by battles and marches, a short rest. He considered having the cavalry corps Schmettow (Egon) advance towards Bausk into the rear of Mitau, which its leader also declared himself capable of. In this sense, a report was also made to the Eastern Commander-in-Chief. In his war diary, it says under July 23: "The result is the complete dispersal of the Russians, the remnants fleeing in a southeasterly direction. Thus, this operation of the Njemen Army is concluded. In a ten-day uninterrupted march, the Njemen Army has reached the Dvina."

1) The report of the Njemen Army itself cannot be found.

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New Orders for the 10th and Njemen Army.

Accordingly, the Commander-in-Chief East reported to the Supreme War Lord on this day). He himself now assessed the situation as follows: “For the further execution of the operation towards Wilna, which in our opinion is decisive, the Njemen Army is too weak; a reinforcement of forces is currently not possible). However, this operation, which according to our view must follow the completion of the Narew operation, can be prepared. This includes: taking Mitau, because the Russians can bring forces via Riga and threaten movements on the flank, preparation for the capture of Kowno. The possession of this fortress is necessary both for an offensive towards Wilna or southeast to control the main road and ensure supply on the railway, as well as for any other operation elsewhere. Only if we have this fortress and Mitau in possession and the line between both places is secured by a strongly developed line, can stronger forces be withdrawn from here,” which meant: from Courland for deployment against Wilna.

In the afternoon, orders were given for the continuation of operations: “The 10th Army is to close this fortress on the western front as tightly as possible with its left wing on the Njemen below Kowno. — The Njemen Army similarly effects the section between Njemen below and Njemenau and builds a bridge at Wilki4). Furthermore, the Njemen Army positions its main forces at Kiejbany ready to advance on Janow and sends the bulk of its cavalry against the Kowno—Wilna railway and towards Wilna.” With this order, the Commander-in-Chief East was in full agreement with the Supreme Army Command, which the next day, while rejecting reinforcements for the 10th Army, announced that it was of great importance for the overall operations if the Njemen Army and with it the strongest cavalry soon advanced against the Russian connections in the Wilna area. Furthermore, the order of the Commander-in-Chief East stated that the left flank of the advancing Njemen Army should be secured by troops at Poniewiez, and Mitau should be taken. To this end, it was said in expansion of the plan of General von Below, the temporary dispatch of another infantry division from the main forces of the Njemen Army would not be avoidable.

1) G. 319. — 2) Entry in the war diary. — 3) G. 316 ff. — 4) 27 kilometers below (northwest) of Kowno. — 5) G. 320.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

They sharply directed the masses south against the northern front of Kowno, other parts sharply north

towards Mitau, with the cavalry aiming far east, especially towards Wilna. The movements were only feasible

if the recently defeated enemy was not allowed to rest.

The frontal pursuit had to continue despite the fatigue

of the troops. It led to almost uninterrupted fighting

against Russian rearguards and an increase in the number of captives by several

thousand men until July 25 on the right wing to the lower

Njemenaza, with the center about 15 kilometers beyond Poniewiez, which

was taken by the now reunited I Reserve Corps,

and the left wing to Popowl on the Muscha. This essentially reached the boundary

to which the supply for stronger forces

could initially be directed. The enemy also seemed so weakened now

that further pursuit was assigned to smaller units.

General von Below, who moved his headquarters to Schaulen on July 28,

had to reorganize his army for the tasks set by the Commander-in-Chief East.

While the Siebed detachment secured against the northwest

front of Kowno, the I Reserve Corps with the assigned

Brigade Homeyer and the Lauenstein Corps (78th Reserve Division and

Division Bedmann) were to be positioned at Poniewiez to advance against the

northern front of the fortress. The cavalry corps Richthofen

Schmettow (Egon) had gathered south and east of Poniewiez

to advance southeast against Wilna and east against Dünaburg.

Against Mitau, besides the group previously deployed there,

Schmettow (Eberhard), 41st Infantry Division, Libau Detachment, 8th Cavalry

Division, the 6th Reserve Division was also designated.

On July 29, the operation against Mitau began with the advance

of the 6th Reserve Division against Bausk to gain the right Aa bank here.

However, the Russian resistance was so strong that the division

commander, since June Major General Hans von Below, decided to shift the

crossing further downstream. The army command

sent the Homeyer Brigade as reinforcement. On the night of July 31,

the operation succeeded ten kilometers west of Bausk near Mesoten.

The newly arrived Russian 53rd Infantry Division retreated north to Riga.

1) G. 458. The railway from Libau was meanwhile only usable up to east of Prekuln  
and very low in capacity. The field railway over Tauroggen had reached Nelly on July 19.

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Njemen Army. Capture of Mitau.

For August 1, the 6th Reserve Division and

8th Cavalry Division were deployed on both sides of the Aa towards Mitau. The enemy

did not wait for their arrival, but had already begun to evacuate the city during the night,

into which the 41st Infantry Division entered fighting in the afternoon; the factories were set on fire, the

Aa bridge destroyed. In pursuit, General Count Schmettow had his

troops advance to halfway to Riga on August 2; the total booty counted about 2000 prisoners.

Then the army commander, who personally arrived in Mitau,

ordered a transition to defense at the Aa. For this purpose,

the 6th Reserve Division, Brigade Homeyer, and Detachment Libau

were to be prepared for a march south.

With the capture of Mitau, a strong base near the coast was gained for the left wing of the army.

Furthermore, the almost pathless swamp and forest area of the Aa estuary offered secure support. The

extensive coast, which had fallen into German hands with the conquest of the western part of Courland,

lay, however, on the side of the Gulf of Riga under the guns of Russian warships. As soon as

constructions and German troops were shelled from the sea. Landings were also possible, but could not take on a threatening scale

as long as the Russian land forces were tied down by the Central Powers' attack.

Among the main forces of the Njemen Army, the

situation had meanwhile changed differently than expected after the conclusion of the battles on

July 25. The enemy showed surprising activity and

advanced on July 30 at Kupischki into the gap between the two cavalry

corps Richthofen and Schmettow (Egon), which were to begin their

movements against Wilna on one side and Dünaburg on the other the following day.

The proposal of General von Morgen to support the cavalry by

deploying his I. Reserve Corps in the gap initially did not find the approval of General von Below, as the corps was

intended to swing south against Kowno and the enemy in

the north seemed to be weak. But when on August 1 the enemy

pressure in this direction increased, the army commander decided

to make a full deployment to the east. He not only deployed the

I. Reserve Corps, but also the Auenstein Corps, between the two

cavalry corps, for the attack. About 30 kilometers east of Poniewiez

fighting broke out on a broad front on August 2. Despite the strong

German deployment of forces, the enemy only gave up his positions in the night of August 3 and offered further resistance to the pursuit during the course of that day.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

The Commander-in-Chief East had designated the line Druskeny at the Swjenta–Swiekił on the Niemen as the boundary of the pursuit. Moreover, he had transferred the 4th Cavalry Division¹ from the 10th Army to the army (already on July 31), which, crossing the Niemen below Kowno, had now turned together with the Esebeck detachment against the northern front of Kowno. On the left flank, the 41st Infantry and 8th Cavalry Divisions are now advancing from Mitau; however, the division Bœkmann², composed of troops from the 10th Army, was soon to return to this army.

In battles, it was possible to push the Russians back from position to position on August 4 and 5 and reach the line Druskeny–Swiekił. Growing difficulties in supply became apparent; the troops also complained that the success of the attacks was impaired by the inferiority of the transferred ammunition. On the other hand, the enemy seemed to be bringing new forces to the entire front. Reports on August 5 indicated strong Russian troop transports via Grodno to Wilna and even temporarily gave the impression that the enemy was now preparing an encirclement of both flanks of the Niemen Army; in the south of Wilkomierz as well as in the north of Friedrichstadt, Riga was reported to be approached by the Russian enemy. Numerically, the Russians seemed to be quite superior. Thus, the execution of the rapid operations intended for the two cavalry corps against Wilna and Dünaburg was out of the question for the time being, as was the army's participation in the encirclement of Kowno. The Richthofen Cavalry Corps encountered far superior Russian forces at Wilkomierz and had to be withdrawn north to Kowarsk on August 7. General von Below prepared a new counterattack.

It became increasingly apparent how much value the enemy placed on holding his position on the left bank of the lower Dvina. The further his front was pushed back in Poland, the more forces he freed up to reinforce the troops north of the Niemen. Flyers reported a large transport movement from the south to Wilna, where extensive fortifications also arose. At the Commander-in-Chief East, Captain von Waldow wrote down on August 7³): "North of the Niemen, the Russians have, of course, long recognized the danger, and they are sending everything they can to Wilna, Dünaburg, and Riga. Hopefully, we will soon succeed, if Gallwitz advances well, in drawing forces from there."

¹) Parts were already with the Niemen Army before (p. 457).  
²) p. 121.  
³) Communication from Colonel von Waldow from summer 1931 to the Reichsarchiv.

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Defensive Task for the Njemen Army.

In view of these circumstances, the Supreme Commander East decided on the morning of August 8 to reorganize the tasks of the 10th and Njemen Army. The encirclement of Kowno was to fall to the 10th Army in the future. However, instead of the Beckmann Division, only the Schede Detachment transferred from the Njemen Army to it, which previously had to take over the section of the 4th Cavalry Division, so that this was now free for other uses for the N j e m e n - A r m y. This, as stated in the order, "covers the left flank of the army against any possible enemy advance from the lower Dvina. The holding of Mitau and the captured enemy territory is significant in this."

In accordance with the new task, General von Below took the I Reserve Corps along with the 78th Reserve Division back to the area south and north of Kupischki, where a position for sustainable defense was to be built. The extension to the south soon fell to the Richthofen Cavalry Corps, the Beckmann Division, and the 4th Cavalry Division, which joined the left flank of the 10th Army (1st Cavalry Division) north of the Wilia-Knee from Janow. In the north, the 41st Infantry Division pushed in between the I Reserve Corps and the Schmettow (Egon) Cavalry Corps, while the 8th Cavalry Division advanced on its left flank. All these movements, which reached their conclusion by about August 13, took place in constantly changing situations and often under battles against the enemy advancing everywhere.

To at least temporarily relieve the Russian pressure, General von Below ordered the right flank of the I Reserve Corps to attack again on August 14. The 78th and 1st Reserve Divisions pushed northeast into the enemy formation and were fully successful. On August 15, the pursuit was continued as far east as possible in accordance with the instructions of the Supreme Commander East, with the cooperation of the connecting troops on the right and left, but was unable to significantly go beyond the Swienta-Njemen line already reached on August 5. Nevertheless, a total of four German divisions had again pushed the enemy back by 15 kilometers on a front about 60 kilometers wide, capturing over 3000 prisoners in total. The forces were not sufficient to continue the attack. Since their reinforcement was still not in sight, the Supreme Commander East ordered the further expansion of defensive positions.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Riga.

Since mid-August, following earlier positions of the I Reserve Corps on both sides of Kupstich, a series of rear installations were created, extending northwards over the Birshi Lake and lower Niemenetz to the Aa.

To protect the left flank, it would have been desirable to drive away the Russian ships lying in the Gulf of Riga, including the battleship "Slawa" armed with 30.5 cm guns; however, this was not absolutely necessary!). Therefore, and given the difficulty of the task, the leadership on land did not make such a demand on the fleet command. Cooperation with their own naval forces was only considered if the attack on Riga-Dünamünde was to be continued. Although this had occasionally been suggested as possible by the Supreme Army Command2), it was still far off. The Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Sea Forces, Grand Admiral Heinrich Prince of Prussia, had known since July 19 that, according to the Commander-in-Chief East, the capture of Riga and Dünamünde was a matter of opportunity; if necessary, flank protection for the troops advancing along the coast was desired. On the other hand, General von Falkenhayn had pointed out at that time that an operation by the fleet in front of or in the Gulf of Riga would also be very welcome3), so the Grand Admiral had temporarily secured reinforcements from parts of the High Seas Fleet from the North Sea for all cases. When the hope of an early advance of the army against 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 foray into the Gulf of Riga. Even if there was no prospect of holding there without a port and without simultaneous action by the army, he hoped to damage and unsettle the enemy. However, the operation encountered such difficulties on August 8 when crossing the mine barriers in the Irben Strait that the commanding Vice Admiral Schmidt initially gave up. On August 18, it was resumed. After several days of clearing work, the breakthrough was achieved; light forces advanced across the gulf to Pernau on August 20, others against the northern access of the gulf, the Moonsund. Two Russian gunboats fell victim to the German attack. However, laying mines in the Moonsund or otherwise inflicting decisive damage on the Russians did not succeed.

1) G. 465. — 2) G. 130 and Seestrieg, Baltic Sea, Volume II, G. 199. — 3) Gbenab, G. 236.

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Naval Advance in the Gulf of Riga.

Soon after the attacks of General von Below had subsided around mid-June, the Russians began to "evacuate" the area west of Riga and this important city itself. They removed a large part of the numerous Jewish population and took back everything important for warfare, especially the machines of the Riga factories²). At the same time, they were forced by the needs of the main battlefronts to weaken their military forces north of the Njemen again. Three infantry divisions alone³) were relocated by the end of June from there to the Njemen fortresses of Kowno, Olita, and Grodno, with 2½ more transferred to other fronts in the first half of July⁴). Thus, General Plehwe, when the new German attack advanced over the Dünaü towards Mitau on July 14⁵), still had about 7½ infantry and seven cavalry divisions in total. Of these, about three infantry divisions (XIX. and ½ III. Corps) were positioned in the area of Omjam—Ratzienow Lake opposite the German 6th Reserve Division and the 1½ division-strong Corps Morgen, about 2½ infantry divisions (½ III. and XXXVII. Corps) in the south up to the area of Bethgola. On the flanks, four cavalry divisions in the north and three in the south joined. The two infantry divisions of the VII. Siberian Corps, which were available as reserves in Mitau and Riga, had previously suffered so much on the southwest front that they were temporarily unusable.

General Plehwe initially intended to flank the German advance on Mitau from the south but abandoned this plan as it soon proved impossible to gather the necessary forces from the extended front in time. When on July 16, the resistance of the hastily gathered, numerically small, combat-capable parts of the VII. Siberian Corps from Mitau and Riga unexpectedly quickly collapsed due to German encirclement, he could not decide to withdraw the right flank of the XIX. Corps further, which still held northwest of Schaulen; instead, he ordered a counterattack for this flank.

¹) Connection to p. 131 ff. — See also p. 441 ff.  
²) Komaroff-Kurloff, p. 321 ff.  
³) 63rd, 68th, and 7th Siberian Divisions.  
⁴) 6th and 56th Divisions to South Poland, 3rd Turkish Brigade to North Poland.  
⁵) Starting from the right flank: 4th independent R. Br., detachment of General Bammowff (4th R. D. and Landwehr), Cavalry Corps of General Count Grabbe (1st and 2nd Uhlan Divisions, 3rd and 4th Don Cossack Divisions), XIX. Corps (38th and 17th G. Divisions, III. Corps (79th G. Division, ½ 56th Division), XXXVII. Corps (79th G. Division, 32nd G. Division, ½ 56th Division), Reserve of General Sasfantow in 2nd R. S. D. (1st G. R. S. D.); behind the reserve at Mitau—Riga: VII. Siberian Corps (13th and 12th Siberian Divisions and 1st Siberian R. Division).

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The Operation of the Supreme Commander East against Wilna.

... This may have contributed to General Plehwe maintaining his belief in victory even in the most difficult situation.

1) p. 459.  
2) 53rd Infantry Division from the 10th Army and 1st Reserve Division.

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Russian Operations in Courland and Lithuania. Considerations.

It was precisely because of this that the

superior operational skill and higher combat power of the Germans in

these battles could achieve relatively greater successes than everywhere

where the Russians acted with more caution and therefore avoided threatening danger

in time. The German booty from the ten-day battles up to

July 24 alone amounted to 27,000 prisoners, 40 machine guns, and 25

cannons. This was opposed by about 5,000 of their own losses.

According to Russian judgment, the continuation of the German attack in

the days after July 25 would have led to the dissolution of the remaining Russian

forces; its cessation allowed the Russians, who

according to their own estimate had lost at least 35,000 men since July 14,

to recover quickly through the supply of replacements and

then to attack again, although by August 20 they had again lost

more than 6,000 men as prisoners.

Due to the continued failures north of the Njemen, there was

"fear" in Petersburg; the Duma "urgently" requested protection;

the Russian supreme military command became uneasy. The

commander-in-chief of the Northwestern Front, General Alexeyev, had not

previously assessed the danger as high, as the German forces were

only small in number. Gradually, however, a breakthrough north of

the 5th and 10th Army seemed to him also to have become possible. For the

dual task of protecting the road to Petersburg on one hand, and the

right flank of the army on the other, he recommended to the 5th Army — if further

retreat should become necessary — a position in the foreland of the small

fortress of Daugavpils. To replenish the severely weakened units,

120 individual companies were supplied to it, the forces in the area north of

the Njemen were otherwise increased by shifting parts of the 10th Army by

early August to 10½ infantry and 9½ cavalry divisions, so that they now roughly balanced the 7 infantry and 6½ cavalry divisions of General

Below. Shortly after mid-month, it was even deemed necessary to order the formation of a new 12th Army near Riga at the threatened front section. The German

naval operation in the Gulf of Riga had increased the concerns of the Russians about this army flank.

1) Krowlton, Schaulen, p. 69 f.  
2) p. 449.  
3) 5th Army essentially as outlined on p. 469 note 6, reinforced by  
3rd S. G. and 1st R. D. Furthermore, the right wing of the 10th Army was shifted to the northern  
Njemen bank: XXXIV Corps (2nd Finnish Rifle Division and 104th Infantry Division), 1 and  
½ 2nd Rudan-Rol. Division.  
4) p. 451.

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If they considered the retreat of the German ships as their own success and the operation thus remained without direct influence on the situation on land, the concern that it could be repeated led to reinforced defense preparations throughout the entire threatened coastal area.

b) The Attack of the 10th Army on Kowno<sup>2</sup>).

Maps 6 and 7, Sketch 27.

Commander-in-Chief East and the 10th Army had been dealing since June with the question of the attack against the large fortress Kowno, the strong northern cornerstone of the Russian Njemen Front, which also blocked the double-track railway Königsberg—Wilna and thus the only efficient route leading into the Russian northern flank<sup>3</sup>. An early attack was all the more urgent as the most important preparation for a deep thrust over Wilna into the rear of the Russian army fighting in Poland.

In June, the 10th Army<sup>4</sup> had already moved its positions closer to the fortress by pushing forward below and above against the Njemen. On June 20, the Commander-in-Chief East had expected to have the necessary troops and combat resources ready for the attack by early July, when the decision made in Poland on July 2 temporarily led to the suspension of these preparations<sup>5</sup>. At that time, the 10th Army was under Colonel General von Eichhorn<sup>6</sup>, after regrouping the often mixed units from the previous battles, with seven infantry and three cavalry divisions<sup>6</sup> extending 60 kilometers with the right wing southwest of Augustów, with the left on the Njemen below Kowno, where the Njemen Army joined west of the Dubissa estuary.

<sup>1</sup> p. 451.  
<sup>2</sup> Connection to p. 126 ff.  
<sup>3</sup> The railway led within the fortress over the more than 100-meter-wide Njemen and through a 1200-meter-long tunnel; destruction by the Russians was therefore to be expected. Besides this railway, there was also the single-track connection Marggrabowa—Suwalki built by the Russians in the winter of 1914/15, which connected to the Russian railways to Grodno and Wilna. For the connection from Wilna via Bajohren—Prekuln and the routes from Libau to Schaulen and Mitau see p. 130, 458, and 464.  
<sup>4</sup> p. 126 f.  
<sup>5</sup> pp. 277 and 280.  
<sup>6</sup> Generally encompassing the right wing beginning: XXI. A. R. (31st and 42nd I. D.), Group of the Lieutenant General of the Bavarians (77th and 76th R. D.), 9th and 8th R. D., Group Litzmann (Gen. Rdo. XXXX. R. R. with 1st S. R.), 79th R. D., 16th bdw. D. and 4th R. D.).

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Approach to the Fortress of Kowno.

On July 7, the Commander-in-Chief East ordered the resumption of attack preparations against Kowno; the next available unit was considered for the attack. Meanwhile, to divert attention from the offensive of the Gallwitz Army Group beginning on July 13, a series of smaller operations took place on this and the following two days, during which on July 15, a weekly attack led by Major General Broßius of the 77th Reserve Division resulted in 300 prisoners. At this time, Generaloberst von Eichhorn also gained the impression that the enemy was withdrawing forces — the Russian 27th Infantry Division, previously deployed north of Kalwarja, was supposed to have appeared before the Mackensen Army Group in southern Poland — he decided, despite an extremely difficult ammunition situation, to attempt a larger strike already. The operation was also intended to prepare for the future attack against Kowno and to be carried out south of the fortress over the Jelsa, if possible even to the eastern Niemen bank. The Commander-in-Chief East provided 3000 rounds of heavy field howitzer ammunition for this purpose as a special allocation. After thorough preparation led by General Litzmann, the 79th Reserve Division under Major General Boës broke through the Russian positions north of the Jelsa and the southern edge of the Kowno forest early on July 21, capturing 1300 prisoners and reaching the Jelsa bank northwest of Preny in a width of about twelve kilometers. However, given the apparently entrenched river course and the Russian positions on the right bank, the continuation of the attack with the now once again limited means promised no success. Meanwhile, the 16th Landwehr Division and cavalry had swung northward against Kowno and thus achieved an encirclement position in the area between the Jelsa and the Niemen below the fortress, which was only about 16 kilometers from the center of the city.

Following the simultaneous major successes of the Niemen Army, the Commander-in-Chief East ordered on July 23 the closest possible closure of the fortress on the west front by the 10th, on the northwest front by the Niemen Army. As the fall of the Narew positions Pultusk and Rozan also seemed imminent, he considered the time ripe to prepare emphatically for the major offensive over the Niemen towards Wilna.

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On July 24, the First General Staff Officer

of the 10th Army, Major Keller, was informed by Lieutenant General Ludendorff in Lötzen

about the further intentions as follows: As soon as circumstances would allow,

the army should be reinforced by about six infantry

divisions to cross the Njemen south of the fortress and advance southeast

after capturing Kowno. The Njemen Army would accompany and cover this maneuver

in echelon to the left rear. Against Kowno, the infantry should already

advance so far that the heavy field howitzers could take their firing

positions; all other preparations for the siege should now be accelerated.

In the meantime, however, only one single, just transferred brigade\*) was

to be expected as reinforcement. The idea of using those divisions from the Western Front

entirely or partially against Kowno in these days was

decidedly rejected by the Supreme Army Command;

they wanted to deploy strong forces to the Njemen only when

"clear signs of collapse and yielding of the enemy

between Vistula and Bug would be recognizable" would appear\*). Thus, although

a 42 cm battery was promised on July 23, on July 24 it was again

explicitly stated that reinforcement of the 10th Army was unfortunately not

possible at the time, and in the following days also prevented the delivery

of Austro-Hungarian heaviest batteries\*). They intended to release

German heaviest batteries soon, which had shorter ranges,

only small amounts of ammunition, and could not be deployed with motor

transport, but only on rails. For

the artillery deployment, extensive track constructions were necessary.

On July 27, the Commander-in-Chief East had to inform that

the reinforcements expected on the 24th could not be counted on.

Although Generaloberst von Eichhorn then expressed serious concerns

due to the too small attacking forces, he still had to try

to make do with what he had. Meanwhile, five batteries of the heaviest artillery were in prospect.

The fortress Kowno is located at the confluence of the Njemen and

Wilna. It was already protected in peacetime by a city wall and a

fort belt with an average diameter of eight to nine kilometers,

whose works — as far as was known — were modernized and strengthened before the war.

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10th Army. Preparation of the Attack against Kowno.

Another four to five kilometers of advanced outer fort belt was then in the making. Based on these extensive permanent works, the fortress had been further expanded in nearly twelve months of war and reinforced by advanced positions, so that it was considered particularly resistant. The attack plan developed by the Great General Staff in peacetime recommended attacking the southern front, which is divided into two halves by the deeply incised Jesia. For artillery deployment and ammunition supply, only the Königsberg railway was available. Forces alone had already been considered necessary against the earlier English capture of the place, about two corps, around 400 guns, of which about 250 heavy (including two heaviest batteries). What the 10th Army had to deploy against the significantly expanded fortress did not even meet these demands. Above all, however, the attack had to be conducted solely against the western half of the southern front. The forces were not sufficient to first gain a foothold on the eastern Jesia bank, as south of the fortress, on almost 150 kilometers of front width, the numerically superior combat-effective Russian 10th Army was opposed. There, hardly any German forces could be freed up for the attack on the fortress.

When Generaloberst von Eichhorn then had to give up the 4th Cavalry Division on July 31, in view of the progress of the Njemen Army, which was to block the fortress on the northern Njemen bank in the future, he sent his Chief of Staff, Colonel Sell, to Lößen on August 2 to urgently request reinforcements again. "In view of the inferior garrison of the Kowno fortress," Colonel Sell explained, "and its apparently very inadequate artillery equipment, the High Command 10 is convinced that the goal of faster capture of the fortress could be achieved with the provision of even just one more infantry division." The Commander-in-Chief East shared this view entirely, but, "since the Njemen Army is currently in combat and he may not withdraw forces from the Narew front on the hourly order of the Supreme Army Command," he could initially only promise to supply the army with at least one Landwehr Brigade as soon as possible. Colonel Sell wanted to use it to free the 76th Reserve Division, now standing north of Suwalki in the front, for the attack on the fortress. As a result, the army received the 6th Landwehr Brigade from the 8th and a Landsturm Regiment from the 9th Army as well as additional heaviest and heavy artillery; furthermore, the Beckmann Division was to be returned from the Njemen Army soon.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

The Commander-in-Chief East thought he could provide further reinforcements shortly from the 9th Army. He also reiterated to the Supreme Army Command on August 3 the importance of capturing Kowno; the fortress maintained only weak fire, a quick success was still possible here; he would let the corps attack even without further reinforcement. He requested the allocation of the necessary ammunition for the heaviest guns and heavy field howitzers, for which there was particularly great demand²).

The order in the attack section between Jesia and the lower course of the Njemen was assigned to the XXXX Reserve Corps. The enemy had here, as aerial reconnaissance showed, advanced two new lines of defense in front of the permanent works of the older fort belt (Fort III, II, and I with the intervening batteries 3 and 2), the foremost of which lay about twelve kilometers from the city center. The installations immediately on the heights of Gohdewo, built on the Jesia, seemed particularly strong. Lieutenant General Litzmann wanted to first take possession of these and then proceed against Battery 3 and Fort II. For the time being, the Zenter Brigade and the 9th Landwehr Brigade on the right, and the 79th Reserve Division on the left of the railway were at his disposal. Reinforcements of heavy artillery began to arrive; their final number was not yet determined. On July 29, it was possible to take advanced positions of the enemy on both sides of the railway; about 1200 prisoners were captured. On August 6, the 9th Landwehr Brigade and the 79th Reserve Division advanced their troops to the line Dluga–Sapiezyszki and thereby gained the observation posts necessary for artillery fire opening. On August 7, Colonel General von Eichhorn moved with the operations staff to Kozlowa Ruda, immediately behind the attack section. The following day, the artillery was to open fire.

Meanwhile, the Njemen Army was further bound northward³, so that the 10th Army was now also assigned the closure of the fortress north of the Njemen and the security against the Wilija section up to Janow. However, from the Njemen Army, only the approximately one brigade strong Siebeck detachment, not the Beckmann Division and the just recently transferred 4th Cavalry Division, could be assigned to it.

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10th Army. The Attack on Kowno.

The 10th Army itself had to move the 1st Cavalry Division to the northern riverbank to solve the new task, simultaneously as preparation for further operations, for which a significant cavalry force was to be prepared for an advance on Wilna. Also, upon the insistence of the Supreme Army Command¹), instead of the intended transfer of troops from the 9th Army by the Commander-in-Chief East, a division from the west had to be awaited, which could only arrive from August 12. Of the requested heavy field howitzer ammunition, the Supreme Army Command approved only 24,000 instead of 36,000 rounds, that is, only the requirement for about four days of shooting²).

On August 8, the difficult deployment of the heaviest and heavy artillery in the pathless terrain was mostly completed. After an hour and a half of calibration, the effective firing began around noon from about 120 barrels. The Russians responded more vigorously than expected. Under the cover of the destructive fire directed against the enemy artillery positions and works, the 79th Reserve Division of Major General Boësz gradually advanced between the railway and the Niemen, stormed the positions of Godlewo and the northern adjacent strongpoints on the evening of the 9th and in the night to August 10, and held them against soon commencing heavy Russian counterattacks. South of the railway, the 9th Landwehr Brigade covered against the Sesja section. The battles of the three days had brought in over 2000 prisoners, 16 machine guns, and four guns in total.

Colonel General von Eichhorn had already anticipated that the opening of fire against Kowno would also move the enemy south of the fortress³). This indeed happened on August 11, about 40 kilometers southwest of the attack front after thorough artillery preparation east of Marjampol over the Dawina, and repeated this attack, apparently conducted to relieve Kowno, in the following two nights. Each time, he was repelled with heavy losses by the now extended northern wing of the XXI Army Corps, 31st Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Berner. Simultaneously, however, Russian reinforcements seemed to want to move to Kowno, whose garrison had so far consisted only of Landwehr, replacement, and border guard troops, totaling probably 15 to 20 battalions; four new infantry regiments were now supposed to have arrived.

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The enemy also seemed to have very ample

ammunition, while the attacker had to be quite frugal with his.

Colonel General von Eichhorn urged haste on August 12:

"Any delay seems undesirable because the enemy can continuously bring in

personnel and material to reinforce." The fire of the entire artillery, which

was continuously reinforced, had to be opened as quickly as possible. The

76th Reserve Division, which had meanwhile been relieved in the south,

was deployed to the left of the 79th; coming from France, the 115th Infantry

Division began to arrive behind the attacking troops. General Litzmann, who

had meanwhile also taken command of the Siebend detachment north of the

Njemen, considered it important to flank the Russian lines from there. The

deployment of the flat-fire batteries designated for this purpose, however,

depended on the relocation of the bridge previously built at the mouth of the

Dubissa, which could only be used again on August 13 at Altoniki between

the Niewiaza and Dubissa mouths.

Meanwhile, a total of 162 guns (more than a third of which were

heaviest and heavy howitzers) were available against the indicated front

Fort III—Fort II. The enemy had 27 batteries, including some of 30.5 cm

caliber. According to air reports, Forts III and II seemed to be ready for

storming due to the German artillery fire; some of the batteries in the

intermediate space had been knocked out, others were still fully active.

On August 14, the troops themselves were convinced they could take Forts

III and II with reinforcement from two fresh infantry regiments; they were

provided from the 115th Infantry Division.

On August 15, progress was good on the border between the 79th and

76th Reserve Divisions; about 1800 prisoners were taken. However, new

difficulties arose on the right wing of the attack front due to the unexpected

stubbornness of the Russian resistance. Similarly, progress stalled on the

left wing because the Siebend detachment was too weak in artillery to

suppress the Russian defensive fire now flanked from the north across the

Njemen. Colonel General von Eichhorn deployed the newly assigned 3rd

Reserve Division from the Supreme Commander East over the Njemen at

Altoniki against the Wilia north of Kowno.

On August 16, in a telephone conversation between the army command and the Litzmann command, it was determined that a two-hour effective fire should be conducted against Forts III and II, the direction of which was entrusted to Major General Schabel, who had meanwhile arrived at the army.

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10th Army. The Attack on Kowno.

General Litzmann then wanted to order the assault between 11<sup>o</sup> and 12<sup>o</sup> noon, unless the divisions had already begun it on their own. Overwhelming fire from the artillery, which had meanwhile grown to 208 guns, about 80 heavy and 10 heaviest howitzers, well directed by aircraft and balloon observation, completely shattered the garrison of the Russian works. General Litzmann ordered the assault. At 2<sup>o</sup> in the afternoon, troops of the 79th Reserve and 115th Infantry Division broke through the Russian positions between Fort III and II and subsequently took both forts, while the infantry of the 76th Reserve Division stormed Fort I at 6<sup>45</sup> in the evening. On the evening of August 16, the entire line of permanent works between Jesia and Njemen was in German hands; more than 4000 prisoners and 52 guns, 30 of which were captured in action, were reported as booty.

The attack was to be continued on August 17 against the city walls and across the Njemen, with the fire of the heaviest and heavy guns also directed against the rear and flanks of the works on the right Jesia and Njemen banks, Forts IV to IX; the station was kept under harassing fire. For several days, the bridge trains had been brought close. Above all, however, in the north of the fortress, the 3rd Reserve Division along with the subordinate Siebedek detachment was advancing against the Wilia. On the other hand, signs of Russian attack intentions on the Jesia front led to the mass of the 115th Infantry Division being pulled back as a reserve behind the right wing of the attack.

At 10<sup>20</sup> in the evening, a radio message from the commander of Kowno, General Grigoriew, showed the extent of the success so far; it read: "We have retreated behind Njemen. Losses enormous. Telegraphic connection to Wilna lost. Front is open. Awaiting directives." General Litzmann now only gave the brief order: "Get to the Njemen and over!"

On the night of August 17, numerous explosions indicated that the Russians were destroying ammunition, supplies, and transport bridges. Despite the strain of the last few days, the German infantry reached the Njemen at daybreak, reaching its banks by 10<sup>30</sup> in the morning. The enemy had destroyed the bridges but offered no serious resistance anymore. Under the protection of the artillery, which was soon advanced further, the infantry of the 79th and 76th Reserve Divisions managed to gain the right riverbank and penetrate the city itself. By evening, the Petersberg and Fort VII of the northeastern front were reached. South of the Njemen, parts of the 115th Infantry Division had crossed the Jesia and occupied Fort IV.

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Under the protection of the artillery, which was quickly advanced further, the infantry of the 79th and 76th Reserve Divisions managed to gain the right riverbank and penetrate through the city itself. By evening, the Petersberg and Fort VII of the northeastern front were reached. South of the Njemen, parts of the 115th Infantry Division had crossed the Jesia and occupied Fort IV.

On the night of August 18 and on that day, the capture of the fort line was completed; the last to fall was the southeastern Fort V, adjacent to the Njemen, in the evening, while northward, the enemy still held the Jesia section near Godlewo. General Litzmann's troops were positioned along the Fort V—Swierja section, while from the northwest, the foremost parts of the 3rd Reserve Division had crossed the Wilia and reached Kormaldow. The 1st Cavalry Division was positioned before Janow. The enemy had retreated eastward.

With Kowno, the strongest stronghold of the Russian northwest front had fallen. The German heavy artillery had fired 53,000 shots against it, including 1,000 from the heaviest steep-angle guns. More than 20,000 prisoners and over 1,300 guns, including about 350 heavy ones, were counted as total booty, along with 100 machine guns, 20,000 rifles, 810,000 rounds of artillery ammunition, large quantities of military equipment, and supplies. The restoration of bridges and railways was immediately begun.

The Russians had attached special importance to the large and heavily fortified fortress of Kowno. While the 5th Army, positioned further north, had the independent task of covering the routes to Riga and Petersburg, the fortress formed the northern cornerstone of the Russian army. Therefore, after initially being under the 10th Army, it was directly subordinated as an independent part of the Commander-in-Chief of the Northwest Front on June 5. In a directive from August 17, which could no longer influence the events, the Supreme Army Command explicitly stated again that everything must be done to hold Kowno; under no circumstances should it come to the fortress being encircled; in the extreme case, the garrison should be withdrawn in time. Its strength had varied; in the last days before the capture, it was largest with about three divisions, mainly consisting of militia. The mass of these troops, along with their artillery, withdrew in time while fighting.

1) Njesnamow, p. 100; Danilow, p. 542.  
2) 104th and 124th J. D. (Pnd.), "Grenznach" Division and some other parts.

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10th Army. The Capture of Kowno.

Due to the significant delays the German attack suffered from the gradual arrival of the necessary forces, the Russians did not ultimately expect such a swift end. When the German attack began with full force on August 16, it was already too late to save the unlimbered guns. The advancing German troops had the impression of a completely hasty retreat. The railway tunnel was only slightly damaged, and the particularly high radio tower was intact.

For the Russian supreme command, the rapid fall of the fortress came as a complete surprise. According to the chief of staff of the Russian field army, General Januschkewitsch, Kowno should have held out since it was not actually besieged; the early surrender was solely due to the cowardice of the commander, General Grigorjew. He had already left the fortress on August 17 and was sentenced to severe punishment by a military court for his failure. Moreover, according to General Danilow, the fall of the fortress was "one of the most severe blows of the last war period, both in moral terms and regarding its influence on the further situation of our armies."

General Ludendorff judged the great success: "No fortress has ever been attacked with fewer means. But the troops that were to do it were inspired by the fresh spirit of their leaders." — They brilliantly accomplished the difficult task assigned to them.

c) The Advance of the 10th Army until August 31.

Maps 6 and 7, Sketch 28.

With the Commander-in-Chief East, the idea of continuing operations in the Njemen area took on a firmer shape around mid-August. The goal was to break through the northern wing of the Russian front to strike the flank of the masses retreating from Poland in the direction of Wilna and Minsk. To this end, as General Ludendorff later wrote, the enemy, who stood before the 10th and Njemen Armies in a continuous but northeast of Kowno only thinly occupied front, was to be broken through, that is, thrown back over Wilna to the southeast and south, and against the Düna to the northeast and north, to clear the way for the cavalry divisions to Minsk—Polozk.

1) Kudatschew letter from August 26, 1915.  
2) Danilow, p. 554 f. and Knor, p. 325 ff.  
3) Danilow, p. 554.  
4) Ludendorff, Memories, p. 124.  
5) Memories, p. 129, and communication from December 23, 1931, to the Reichsarchiv, in accordance with a communication from the current Chief of Staff von Bockelberg from the summer of 1931 to the Reichsarchiv. — The files contain nothing about these intentions and thoughts.  
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"But the question remained," wrote General Ludendorff further, "whether with the very far eastward retreat of the Russians the operation could still be profitable now. There was no doubt that every day, to even postpone them made them less promising. I considered whether I should be content with a thrust over Olita—Orany to Lida. I rejected this because all similar attempts to achieve a flanking in the past summer campaign had led to no success. Thus I remained with my thought on the great operation, as I could have it before a greater success. But we were here forced to act into the unknown." The breakthrough itself had to fall to the 10th Army. For this, it was necessary that its right flank by further advancing of the 8th and 12th Army against the enemy north of the Roffino swamps, the left against the Russians on the Dvina and secured by further forces, for whose transport the railway conditions there were quite favorable. This securing had to be the task of the Njemen Army, which had to advance against the lower Dvina, while far-reaching cavalry masses had to paralyze the use of the railway as early as possible. They had already been concentrated since the beginning of August on the southern flank of the Njemen Army1). Troops were to be brought primarily to the 10th Army. The Eastern Commander-in-Chief thought of withdrawing parts from the pursuit front in Poland. In view of the differing views of the Supreme Army Command, he could not make any great hopes in this regard for the time being. To successfully carry out the operation, the expected additional demands of the supply had to be taken into account, as the Narew campaign had just clearly shown. These preparations had to go hand in hand with a considerable reinforcement of troops, because the more the forces to be deployed swelled and the deeper and closer the thrust had to be carried out, the more the need for railway lines and transport means for the supply had to increase. However, the rear connections did not yet meet this need in any way2).

1) p. 463 and 477. — 2) p. 472.

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The Commander-in-Chief East reported to the Supreme Army Command on this day that he intended, subject to their agreement, to assign the encirclement troops from Nowogeorgiewsk to the 10th Army to enable their offensive over the Njemen downstream from Grodno. Half of the 85th Landwehr Division would be assigned to the 12th Army. If the Supreme Army Command was able to allocate additional forces for an offensive from Kowno towards Vilna, we would "thereby promise a far-reaching success." The response from General von Falkenhayn, received the same day, stated: "There are no objections to bringing the encirclement troops from Nowogeorgiewsk to the 10th Army after the fortress falls. The planned offensive over the Njemen below Grodno and from Kowno to Vilna fully aligns with the intentions of the Supreme Army Command. Whether a reinforcement of the Kowno group from my resources is possible can only be decided in the coming days. Furthermore, it must be noted that continuing the Eastern campaign into the winter and into the interior of Russia is unfortunately not an option for us. The operations of the strike groups in Poland will not be able to advance significantly beyond the general line Brest Litowsk—Grodno. These groups will likely soon have to release considerable forces for other theaters of war." Although the reinforcement promised by the Supreme Army Command was minimal, and it seemed questionable whether larger reinforcements could be expected later, it was nevertheless a late satisfaction for the Commander-in-Chief East after the previous dispute that the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army had finally agreed to carry out the long-planned and in the meantime as well-prepared as possible offensive operation of the left army wing.

On August 19, the Commander-in-Chief East issued the following attack order: "12th and 8th Armies continue the attack; 10th Army launches a comprehensive attack with its left wing towards Vilna and pushes the Russians back over the Njemen downstream of Druskieniki. The right wing temporarily holds Augustow and later presses along the highway Augustów—Grodno north of the Bobr.

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The 4th Cavalry Division¹) is subordinated to the 10th Army, as well as, after the fall of Nowogeorgiewsk, which is expected today or tomorrow, three Landwehr Divisions²). — Njemen 2nd Army generally has to cover the flank of the army against the line Smenjamy—Riga. It is initially to carry out the intended attack while holding Kowno³. Depending on its outcome, its task will be further determined."

The 10th Army under Generaloberst von Eichhorn previously had nine infantry divisions and one cavalry division⁴), of which almost half were stationed on the northern flank near Kowno, while the rest were distributed in a wide stretch from Rajgrod through Augustów and Kalwaria to south of Kowno. Here the enemy stood on more than 120 kilometers mostly still in their old, for months expanded positions west of the Njemen. They lay in the south in the direction of Grodno about 55, in the north, where they relied on the Jelsia section, about 15 kilometers before the river, which here at the Strawa-Ciminnumündung bends sharply from the north to the west. After Kowno, the solid wing support point of the entire position, had fallen, there was justified hope to quickly gain space from here on the right, in this part of the river's northern bank, to the east and thereby at least force the enemy to evacuate his positions at the Jelsia, in the further course probably also to give up the entire Njemen section running from south to north between the river bend at the Strawa mouth and the fortress Grodno. Generaloberst von Eichhorn therefore, in accordance with the intentions already laid down in the order of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief, had already ordered his assault wing advancing on both sides of the Njemen, immediately after the capture of Kowno, on the evening of August 18, to continue the attack in order to bring down the Russian front still holding further south. Meanwhile, however, the enemy began on the night of August 19 to retreat.

¹) Right wing of the Njemen Army.  
²) 87th, previously Corps Dickhuth, and 89th I.D., previously Abt. Westernhagen (both mainly consisting of Landwehr and replacement troops) and 14th Ldw.D. were transferred on August 20.  
³) This is an operation of the left wing (p. 533 ff.).  
⁴) Starting from the right: 16th Ldw.D.; 77th R.D. with 6th Ldw.D.; XXI. A.K. (General of Infantry v. Hutier) 3rd Group Kleist (Kleist, 115th D.S.; 177th R.D.; previously Ers. Br. Zenker), 9th R.D. and 115th S.(J.)D.; Group Litzmann (Gen. R.d. XXXX. R. with 79th R.D., 76th R.D., Abt. Siebede, 3rd R.D., and 1st R.D.).

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Advance of the 10th Army on Wilna.

Only in front of the southern flank at Rajgrod—Augustow and in the north at the Jesia section did he still stand. Where he had retreated, the German troops followed; here and there they were temporarily held up by rearguards. But already on the evening of August 19, the XXI Army Corps saw new enemy positions west and north of Sejny. Since the pressure from the north was to bring the decision, Generaloberst von Eichhorn ordered to avoid costly attacks here as well as on the rest of the front.

On August 20, the parts of the Litzmann Group advancing north of the Njemen from Kowno encountered more serious resistance; the enemy tried to hold a line running north to the Wilia in the extension of his Jesia front. But the advancing German left wing, the 76th and 3rd Reserve Division, forced him to give way; the 1st Cavalry Division reached Janow on the Wilia, where the 4th Cavalry Division, rejoining the 10th Army, connected. On the night of August 21, the enemy also gave up resistance at the Jesia section, and it soon became apparent that he was in further retreat on the entire front from north of Augustow to Janow.

While the assault group Litzmann (79th, 76th Reserve, 115th Infantry, 3rd Reserve Division) formed on the right, eastern, Njemen bank now received the direction from Janow along the Wilia to the southwest and then to Wilna, the XXI Army Corps on the left of the Njemen gradually moved more northward in its advance against the river section Olita—Preny. Its 31st Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Berner reached the east bank of the river in the Preny bend as early as August 22; the right wing of the Litzmann Group reached the Strawa and eastward on that day. Here, however, the enemy offered stubborn resistance and, with reinforcements brought in, the 56th and 65th Divisions from the south and Galicia, even launched strong counterattacks. On the next two days, the left wing of the Litzmann Group continued the attack tirelessly; the 115th Infantry Division captured more than 1200 prisoners.

Thus, the enemy was forced to evacuate the Strawa section on August 24 and then, in view of the pursuing German pressure, which was now also sharply directed south from east of Kowno, to abandon the river crossings north of the Preny bend. He failed all attempts of the 31st Infantry Division, which this river crossing further advanced, against Russian positions that blocked their eastern flank. To better utilize the striking power of the old XXI Corps, Generaloberst von Eichhorn now set it in motion northward on the western Njemen bank, so that it might gain the east bank north of Preny.

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The Operation of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against Vilna.

Meanwhile, the enemy continued to retreat on this bank before the Litzmann group. On the extreme northern flank, the 4th and 1st Cavalry Divisions, along with the Esebeck detachment, now under the unified command of the newly established Higher Cavalry Commander 6, Lieutenant General von Garnier, crossed the Wilia on August 24 and joined the southern flank of the Njemen Army standing west of Wilkomierz to the north.

On August 25, the Garnier Cavalry Corps was set to advance on the right Wilia bank against Vilna, where the Russian resistance seemed weak for the time being. General Litzmann therefore considered it promising to also lead his three northern divisions across the Wilia, to advance with them from the north comprehensively against Vilna. Generaloberst von Eichhorn, whose headquarters had been moved forward to Kowno since August 23, rejected this plan, as it would have "resulted in a disintegration of the army with too much weakening of the forces fighting south of the Wilia," without offering the assurance of rapid progress north of the Wilia. "Proceeding south past Vilna with concentrated force in the direction of the northern flank north of the Wilia" by the cavalry corps, according to the army high command, had to lead to faster and more secure progress. It was not overlooked that, with the availability of additional forces, an advance north of Vilna would have increased hopes of timely positioning before the retreating enemy main forces. It was ordered: "The encircling wing remains south of the Wilia."

On August 26, the Litzmann group, in pursuit, was already approaching the swamp area of Troki Nowe, where it encountered strong resistance about 30 kilometers west of Vilna. To the left, north of the Wilia, the Garnier Cavalry Corps had advanced to the same level but had to hold back its 4th Cavalry Division significantly, as the open flank extended further northeast had to be secured, with the 3rd Cavalry Division of the Njemen Army only taking Wilkomierz that day. To the right of the Litzmann group, the XXI Army Corps under Lieutenant General von Hutier, with the main force now already on the eastern Njemen bank, had reached the area north of Olita, where works located west of the river, four older forts, had been abandoned by the Russians and were already in German hands.

1) p. 535.  
2) Entry in the war diary of the High Command 10 from August 25, 1915.

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Advance of the 10th Army on Vilna.

Separated from these main forces of the army by a 25-kilometer gap, the southern wing, reinforced by divisions, was also able to gain further ground in the direction of the river bend of Merecz and in the Augustów Forest. All in all, this advance took place along the entire army front under constant fighting, with the enemy showing relatively much artillery, including heavy ones.

The Commander-in-Chief East had already anticipated that the Russians would continue to slowly retreat behind the Njemen and shift as many forces as possible to the north. All the more he admired not being stronger against Vilna; the forces freed at Nowogeorgiewsk were only to be counted on in these days. Meanwhile, on August 26, he was able to order the further reinforcement of the 10th Army's left wing by three divisions of the 12th and 8th Armies, after the prospect of achieving something greater with these armies had sunk so far that even the Supreme Army Command no longer raised any objection to the transfer. He again set the further tasks of the left army wing in an army group order: "10th Army pushes forward under security against Grodno towards the railway line Drusk Vilna. Njemen Army continues to cover the flank of the army. It pushes its outermost right wing over the Swjenta and its left as far as possible to the Dvina."

Meanwhile, the command of the III Reserve Corps, the 87th and 89th Infantry and 14th Landwehr Divisions, as well as some smaller reinforcements, were rolling towards the 10th Army from Nowogeorgiewsk. Generaloberst von Eichhorn entrusted the command of the III Reserve Corps with 2½ divisions of the southern wing (16th Landwehr, 89th Infantry Division, 6th Landwehr Brigade) with the encirclement of the fortress Grodno, against which the left wing of the 8th Army was also advancing south of the Bobr towards Dombrowo. The previously stationed 77th Reserve Division at Merecz and the newly arrived 87th Infantry Division were to be moved north over Preny to the assault troops east of the Njemen.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Vilna.

Here, the reinforced XXI Army Corps (31st, 42nd Infantry Division under Division Zenker¹) and the Litzmann Group (79th, 76th Reserve, 115th Infantry, 3rd Reserve Division) received the line Drany–Vilna as their target. On the left wing of the army, the 14th Landwehr Division was followed by the Cavalry Corps Garnier (1st and 4th Cavalry Division and Esebeck Detachment).

Due to the northward march of the 77th Reserve Division, the group of the III Reserve Corps assigned against Grodno was finally separated from the rest of the army and primarily relied on cooperation with the 9th Army, whose 11th Landwehr Division was to advance from Domnowo over the Bobr to Lipje on August 28. An attack by the 16th Landwehr Division against the Wolftuszél section west of Sopockinie, which was to support this advance and which the General Command of the III Reserve Corps maintained despite the counter-offensive position of the division, failed with a loss of 500 men. Similarly, the 89th Infantry Division failed to carry out the Njemen crossing assigned to it northeast of Sopockinie. The advance of these two divisions remained rather at the Wolftuszél section, at the Augustower Canal, and at the Njemen above Druskieniki in front of superior Russian defenses.

Meanwhile, the XXI Army Corps under Lieutenant General von Hütten continued the advance south on the eastern Njemen bank; its 42nd Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Breddow broke through stubborn Russian resistance east of Olita on August 28 and thereby also opened the river crossing to the 6th Landwehr Brigade and 77th Reserve Division advancing from the west against the location. The 31st Infantry Division was already approaching the Grodno–Vilna railway.

Significantly harder fighting took place during these days for the divisions of the Litzmann Group in the lake and hill-rich terrain that extends from south of Grodno to the Wilia. Here, the Russians covered the access to Vilna in strongly fortified positions, their resistance was therefore particularly stubborn; new formations were constantly being identified in this area and now also north of the Wilia², which were apparently brought in as reinforcements from other fronts.

¹) Formed from 177th J. Br. and 9th Ldw. Br.  
²) In fact, both enemy front sections faced a total of nine divisions, starting with: 1st and 2nd Russian Corps (104th, 4th Finnish Sch. D., II taut. Corps (saut. Gren. D. and 51st S. G. D.); XXXIV Corps (104th, 53rd, 56th S. G. D.), V Corps (10th and 7th S. G. D.), 65th J. D. — Of these, the units marked with \* were withdrawn

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Stalemate at the 10th Army.

Thus, the German assault wing made no decisive progress anymore.

When on August 30, the Supreme Commander East presented different conditions, Generaloberst von Eichhorn decided to direct the operation into new channels. This required larger shifts. However, by the evening of August 31, significant ground was still gained to the south east of the Niemen, reducing the gap to the troops positioned west of the river against Grodno to about 20 kilometers on both sides of Druskieniki. At the same time, the 31st Infantry Division had approached the main railway Grodno—Wilna so closely that train traffic was interrupted. Otherwise, movements and battles gradually came to a standstill during the course of this day.

d) Disputes with the Supreme Army Command¹).

Maps 6 and 7.

On August 27, the Supreme Army Command issued the following fundamental order:

“His Majesty has ordered: The army groups Prince Leopold and Mackensen halt their advance to the east with the main force at the swampy terrain east of the line Ratno (50 kilometers north of Rowel)—Kobryn—Szereszowo, but remain with smaller mixed units on all roads at the enemy. Whether parts of the left wing of the Mackensen group and the right wing of the Prince Leopold group should make an advance against the enemy's rear connections north of Fort Bialowiec over Pruzana—Szereszowo in a northerly direction, will be ordered later. Early grouping for this purpose is to be sought in all cases. The Mackensen army group immediately begins establishing a field position suitable for permanent holding with the least possible forces... The Prince Leopold army group sets up a similar position on the west bank of Fort Bialowiec, from there over the forest, if conditions arise there, to the Narewka estuary into the Narew... The Hindenburg army group²) carries out the operations initiated by it north of the upper Narew and east of the middle Niemen to the greatest possible detriment of the enemy. It should be considered that, as soon as the general situation requires, the permanent assertion of the line from the Narew at the Narewka estuary to the sea will be incumbent upon them.

of each division, only after the fall of Kowno, three from West Poland, two from South Poland, one from Riga, and a little earlier from Galicia  
65. J.D. — ¹) Connection to G. 351. — ²) S. 363.

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The responsibility for holding the line from the Narew at the Narewka estuary to the sea will be assumed. Whether the reliance on the sea occurs in the Gulf of Riga or near Libau is left open. The construction of a corresponding field position is to be initiated, with the expansion of the Njemen fortifications to begin soon... All army groups will be given special instructions regarding which army units they will soon have to release for other uses."

This order, which reached the Eastern Commander-in-Chief on August 28, gave him the long-awaited opportunity to continue the operation against the Russian northern flank with increased forces and utmost emphasis. He was immediately determined to do so. In view of the prospects that still seemed to present themselves, he believed that consideration for a position that should later be held permanently, "as soon as the general situation requires," had to take a back seat. Since the army group Prince Leopold considered it necessary to advance to the eastern edge of the Bialowiec fort and therefore wanted to continue the pursuit to Pruzana-Wolkowysk, an exchange of views took place between the two command authorities via telephone. "There is uncertainty," it says in the war diary of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief, "whether the ordered defensive line should be a rear position or whether it should later be returned to this line. Initially, the Leopold and Hindenburg groups remain in advance. Perhaps the success of the Hindenburg army group will provide new perspectives. Since the right wing of the 12th Army was directed by the Supreme Army Command to Stiemienowka, thus to the northeast," the Eastern Commander-in-Chief now considered a significant reinforcement of the 10th Army possible, and it seemed to him unobjectionable to take it from the 12th Army, as this reported that its advance was "merely held up by supply difficulties; it is therefore impossible to advance further at the moment."

On August 29, the following army group order was issued: "A thrust of German forces east of the Bialowiec fort from Pruzana towards Slonim is being considered by the Supreme Army Command. The 9th Army advances through the mentioned forest. — The 12th and 8th Armies follow the enemy as closely as possible; the 12th Army in the Bormarsch strip Swirlos-Indura, until overcoming their supply difficulties, in any case with advance guards. Preparations are to be made so that the main forces can soon follow in large marches. The 8th Army attacks Grodno; heavy artillery arriving in Augustow is assigned to it.

1) Order from August 25 (p. 367).

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Conflicts with the Supreme Army Command.

Connection

to the right with the 12th Army; to the left, it extends to the Augustow

Canal north of Sopockinie. The 10th Army continues to advance towards

Orany—Wilna, focusing as much as possible on and north of Wilna. —

The Njemen Army attacks in front of Friedrichstadt and continues to cover

against the upper Dvina." Thus, the 10th Army was relieved of the attack

on Grodno, allowing it to concentrate its entire force against Wilna. The

order was supplemented on August 30, stating that the 12th and 8th Armies

were to transfer the command of the I Army Corps along with the 2nd, 58th,

88th Infantry, 10th Landwehr, and 9th Cavalry Divisions to the 10th Army,

thus slightly more than was intended on August 26), "to achieve a unified

approach south of the Seszarra (near Wilkomierz). Enveloping the enemy

flank north of Wilna is of utmost importance. Otherwise, the 10th Army

remains on the offensive, as ordered on August 29, securing upwards along

the Njemen to Druskeniki inclusive." The 16th Landwehr Division,

previously the right wing of the 10th Army, was temporarily subordinated

to the 8th Army, which was to prepare to soon build bridges over the

Njemen on both sides of Grodno.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Army Command became aware of the

intentions of Prince Leopold's army group regarding the different

interpretations of the permanent position and inquired with the

Commander-in-Chief East about the general course of the permanent

position. He replied: "If the Supreme Army Command orders holding

at the Narewta estuary, I have no choice. As a position, only the line

Narewta estuary—Wilna—Niemen—Mitau comes into consideration after

the fall of Grodno and Wilna. However, I cannot recommend this position,

as it would involve a permanent withdrawal of the army at certain points,

if the operation, as envisaged by the Supreme Army Command and as it is

urgently necessary, is continued to finally defeat the Russians. Which line

would then be considered cannot yet be foreseen. For the right wing,

perhaps the Zelwańska—Szczara section would not require more troops

than the previously planned position.

"To finally defeat the Russians" was not envisaged by General von

Faltenhayn. Otherwise, he adhered to the decision once made, but also

wanted the Commander-in-Chief often not to be hindered in the execution of his intentions.

1) p. 367 f.

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He replied to Field Marshal von Hindenburg on August 31: "Although it is not to be assumed that it could be possible for us in any way to decisively defeat an enemy who is determined to retreat without regard to sacrifices of land and people as soon as he is attacked, and who has vast Russia at his disposal, Your Excellency's intention to strike as decisively as possible the part of the Russians in front of the army group fully corresponds to the wishes of the Supreme Army Command. However, as stated in the directive of August 27(1), even with the most favorable course of operations, unfortunately, the absolute necessity will arise in the near future to leave as few troops and ammunition as possible in your current command area, as is already the case with the other army groups on the eastern theater of war, as are indispensable for holding the shortest line in enemy territory... With 'shortest line' is naturally meant the one that can be held with the minimum expenditure of forces. After the decision on where the main operations should be continued has been made against the east, there is no choice. Even the abandonment of occupied land must, if necessary, be accepted." Whether the Eastern Commander-in-Chief actually uses the forces of troops and ammunition to be measured later in the ordered line, which is to be expanded in any case, or chooses a position further forward outside it or allows the troops to conduct a mobile defense forward of the expanded shortest line, is entirely left to him. However, the condition is that under no circumstances should the shortest line be lost and any subsequent demand for troops and ammunition be avoided within the limits of possibility. According to preliminary estimates, it is assumed that later about ten to twelve divisions would have to be given up. In the case of the other two army groups, the terrain and their weakening, which occurs in the shortest time due to transport away, force a restriction from the outset. "At the Narewna estuary as a junction point of the permanent positions of the army groups Hindenburg and Prince Leopold must therefore be adhered to."

Already the next day, on September 1, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief was informed of an instruction given to the army group Prince Leopold, according to which it should also continue the offensive, namely against the road section Slonim—Zelwa, i.e., against the Zelwianta section. Immediate agreement on the demarcation and mutual support is required.

1) p. 489.

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Disputes with the Supreme Army Command.

to make a decision. On September 2, a communication followed from

General von Falkenhayn to Colonel General von Conrad, in which it was

stated at the end: "Only if it should succeed in pushing the enemy back

behind the line Pinsk—Baranowicze—Friedrichstadt—Riga Bay, would a

forward deployment to that location be considered, because holding it

will presumably not require more forces than the rear line." The Supreme

Army Command thus seemed to be aligning with the view of the Eastern

Commander-in-Chief. The question of deployment remained dependent on

the results of further actions.

The Eastern Commander-in-Chief now turned to the

Mackensen Army Group: Since the Supreme Army Command had approved

the continuation of the offensive of the Prince Leopold Army Group on

Slonim—Zelwa, he would "promise great success from the most vigorous

advance of the left wing of the 11th Army towards Slonim." He received

the response that this advance would take place on September 3. Regarding

his own intentions, he reported on September 4, upon inquiry to the

Supreme Army Command: "I intend around September 8 or 9, depending

on the progress of the railway transport movement, to attack with the

reinforced left wing of the 10th Army on and over Wilna—Wilkomierz,

to encircle east of Wilna. The Niemen Army will join the attack, while

the 8th and 12th Armies will continue the attack north of the Niemen,

otherwise continuing against the Szczara section, where cooperation of

the 9th and 11th Armies¹) can still achieve significant successes. The

resistance of the Russians in front of my front is not yet broken; it must

still be pressed."

On the night of September 5, the Supreme Army

Command replied: "The Prince Leopold Army Group and parts of the

Mackensen Army Group will attempt to influence the enemy north of the

swampy terrain by advancing in the general direction over Slonim.

Whether they penetrate is doubtful given the current state of the

connections. If the situation in the West does not require it earlier,

two reserve divisions will initially be withdrawn from that area on

September 15. (It is likely that the withdrawal of the other forces

designated for other theaters of war²) will then have to occur in

approximately three-day intervals.)"

¹) The army groups referred to were Prince Leopold and Mackensen.  
²) Decision from August 31 (p. 492).

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The Operation of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against Vilna.

In reality, however, this was not the case. General von Falkenhayn thought rather, as the Eastern Commander-in-Chief only indicated after the conclusion of the operations in a letter dated October 8 and explained in his works after the war, not of an encirclement north around Vilna, but of a breakthrough attack, perhaps over Dranow to Lida, against the apparently weakest Russian center. He had expected, in cooperation with the army group Prince Leopold, "the compression of the entire left enemy wing on the marshes of Slonim." However, he did not intervene, he wrote to the Eastern Commander-in-Chief, because he "respected the conviction of everyone else, as long as it remains within the given framework, thus not threatening the whole, and because with mathematical certainty the outcome of no operation, which is conducted as energetically as it always happens there, can be foreseen beforehand."

2. The Battle of Vilna.

a) Reorganization and battles up to September 8.

Maps 6 and 7, Sketch 28.

The strength of the Russian resistance in the area of Troki Nowe and the prospect of significant reinforcements, a total of a general command, four infantry divisions, and a cavalry division, had prompted the high command of the 10th Army to revert to the plan of General Litzmann, which had been rejected under other circumstances, who had advocated the attack north of the Wilia. On August 30, Generaloberst von Eichhorn ordered the formation of a strong and powerful encirclement group to "absolutely precede the enemy forces retreating over the Grodno—Wolkowysk line to the northeast." While the rest of the army tied down the enemy south of the Wilia, the encirclement group was to push north past Vilna over the Vilna—Dünaburg railway. In addition to other shifts, the XXI Army Corps was to move as an active troop formation from the area west of Dranow to the southern flank north of the Wilia, as its commanding general had himself proposed. Until these movements were carried out and the reinforcements arrived, about a week had to pass.

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12th, 8th, and 10th Army.

Meanwhile, the enemy, who increasingly recognized the looming danger and had freed up forces through the retreat from Poland, launched heavy but for them extremely costly counterattacks with their Guard Corps on September 1 and 2 in the area of Troki Nowe and north of the Wilia. All these attempts failed against the defense of the Litzmann and Garnier groups. On September 3, the Russian attacks subsided.

In the north, the Njemen Army wanted to extend its pressure, which had previously been successfully directed against the lower Dvina towards Friedrichstadt, gradually further southward. As the outermost right wing of this army, the 3rd Cavalry Division maintained contact with the northern wing of the 10th Army northwest of Schwintin since September 3.

In front of the right wing of the 10th Army and further south, the Russian counteraction had subsided in the last days of August. For the pursuit movements of the 12th and 8th Army, the order of the Supreme Commander East from August 29 served as the basis. While the Chief of Staff of the 12th Army, Colonel Marquard, initially considered a multi-day halt necessary due to supply difficulties for this army, Lieutenant General Ludendorff ordered the immediate continuation of the advance, at least with parts. The pressure was to be on the right wing, the next target was the Swislocz section between the place of the same name and Indura, while the 8th Army received the direction towards the Njemen Fortress Grodno, which it was to attack. Overall, the 12th Army had 10½ divisions on August 30, of which only four were in the front line, the 8th Army had 5½ divisions, of which 4½ were in the front line; for the attack on Grodno, 21 of the heaviest and heavy batteries and siege equipment were brought up. Without encountering much resistance, the pursuit continued with both armies.

1) G. 535. — 2) G. 367 and 490.  
3) Organization starting from the right: reinforced XVII Army Corps (3rd, followed by 35th and 36th Infantry Divisions), Corps Battery (General Command XIII Army Corps with 26th Infantry Division, followed by 1st Guard Reserve Division and 4th Guard Reserve Division), XVII Reserve Corps (½ 85th Landwehr Division, followed by 86th Infantry Division), Corps Pfülfsofer (1st Reserve Division, 1st Landwehr Division, 169th Landwehr Brigade of the 85th Landwehr Division, 11th Landwehr Division).  
4) Organization starting from the right: Corps Sollern (37th, followed by 83rd Guard Reserve Division, 75th Reserve Division, 1st Landwehr Division, 169th Landwehr Brigade of the 85th Landwehr Division, 11th Landwehr Division).

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The Operation of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against Vilna.

The 8th Army, thanks to the excellent performance of its pioneers, was able to cross the Bobr swamps relatively quickly and stood before Grodno on this day.

The fortress of Grodno had been under construction since 1913, with a new line of forts pushed forward, located twelve kilometers west of the city, developing into a strong, modern military site; during the war, the fortification work had continued. To keep the pursuit in motion, the fortress had to be dealt with quickly. The attack was to be directed against the northwest front. Of the siege artillery prepared, which was weak in number anyway, the heaviest batteries had not yet arrived; the bulk of the heavy batteries opened fire on September 1 against Forts III and II. Meanwhile, the 1st Landwehr Division, advancing against the southwest side of the fortress under General of Infantry von Jacobi, had already come close to Fort IV and, after their mortars and heavy field howitzers had been effective, was ready to storm at noon, only to be stopped at the target. In the afternoon, however, a new attempt succeeded with only slight enemy counteraction. The Russians had retreated to an intermediate position; the unexpectedly easily achieved success and withdrawn trains indicated that they no longer considered a serious defense of the place. The next day confirmed this perception. With light fighting against Russian rearguards, the works abandoned by the enemy could be occupied; the crossing over the Njemen began. Although September 3 brought fierce enemy counterattacks against the parts of the 8th Army advanced to the right bank of the river, the enemy then retreated to Stidel and Jeziory. The spoils were limited to 3600 prisoners; six heavy guns, including two Japanese ones, were found buried. The Russians had presumably vacated the areas of the otherwise strong fortress early on, but could no longer fully carry out the evacuation since the operation on the railway to Vilna was blocked by the advance of the German 10th Army. After the Russian front in the south as well as in the north had already moved east of Grodno, the garrison was also withdrawn in view of the German artillery deployment; the experiences from Nowogeorgiewsk and Kowno may have contributed.

1) C. 452. — 2) C. 489.

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8th Army. Capture of Grodno.

On September 3rd and 4th, it encountered new resistance ten kilometers west of Wolkowysk

and east of Indura, against which it gained ground only very slowly in a frontal attack

in simply difficult terrain, while the 8th Army was still held up by the Njemen crossing.

However, intercepted Russian radio messages on the afternoon of September 4th

indicated that the enemy would continue the retreat on the entire front

between the Rokitno Swamps and Grodno, starting from the southern flank,

the following night. Accordingly, on September 5th, the right wing of the 12th Army,

and on the 6th, its left wing, advanced again. However, before the 8th Army, the enemy

had re-established a strong position 20 kilometers east of Grodno in the Njemen bend

from south of Skidel over the lakes of Jeziory to Druskieniki.

Meanwhile, the overall plan for the continuation of the offensive against the northern flank

of the Russian army front had further matured at the Commander-in-Chief East. In view of the

imminent assignments of ten to twelve divisions, which were to begin with two divisions

as early as September 15th, if not even earlier, and also due to the approaching

unfavorable season, haste was increasingly necessary if anything decisive was to be achieved.

The agreement of the Supreme Army Command to the cooperation of the army groups

Mackensen and Prince Leopold) made it possible to continue deploying the 12th and

8th Armies in the general direction of Lida and northwards, i.e.,

to the northeast, to attack and, if possible, to break through in this direction,

to also capture Wilna from the south. Here, the Njemen, flowing from the northeast

about 120 kilometers south of Wilna over a longer stretch, offered a suitable boundary

for the attack objective to the right. The 12th Army was to soon lead its main forces

across the northwestern, right bank of the river, while on the southeastern bank,

weaker parts were to cover the flank in connection with the army group Prince

Leopold. In the north, the security against the Russian 5th Army and against the railways

leading from Smolensk, Petersburg, and Riga to Dünaburg could be most effectively

shaped by the attack of the Njemen Army in this direction. How far the 10th Army then

intended to extend its envelopment to the north and east could be left to its discretion.

1) G. 555. — 2) C. 492 f. — 3) C. Gbenda.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

to extend the envelopment to the north and east, could be left to her¹).

The Commander-in-Chief East summarized his intentions on September 6 in the following army group order²): "I aim to strike the Russians again, and decisively, before they retreat over the western Beresyna and the Wilia." The 12th Army was to push its opponent with a weaker right wing into the swamp area of the Zelwianka and Sczara, but with the main forces to cross to the northern Niemen bank to join the 8th Army. This army was initially to break the Russian resistance at Stödel. Otherwise, the direction of attack of the 12th and 8th Armies was on both sides of the Siedlce-Lida railway to the northeast. The 8th Army had the 75th Reserve Division, the 12th Army was soon to hand over the 4th Guard and the 37th Infantry Division for use with the 10th Army. The order continued: "The 10th Army attacks on September 9 with its left wing. In doing so, Higher Cavalry Commander 6 with the 1st and 9th Cavalry Divisions and Wilkomirs from the area north of Wilkomirs is to be deployed on Rukstijoki-Uzjany, with the main focus on Uzjany. The army must take care to deploy additional forces already under its command on its left wing." The Niemen Army, to which the 88th Infantry Division and two mortar batteries, initially intended for the 10th Army, were now assigned, was to continue the attack southeast of Friedrichstadt with its southern wing, the Beckmann Division, also advancing towards Uzjany.

By September 8, the 12th Army, which continued to be hampered by serious supply difficulties, had reached the Zelwianka section near Zelwa and northwards in connection with the army group Prince Leopold. On its left wing, the Plüskow Corps was crossing the Niemen southwest of Stödel. It joined the 8th Army, which had not yet been able to take this place due to strong Russian counteraction and was still stuck in front of Zejory and Druskeniki.

¹) The basic ideas of the attack plan arise from various orders and other statements as well as from the terrain and the situation. They have been reported to the Reichsarchiv according to communications from General Ludendorff, Lieutenant General von Boehnberg, and Colonel a. D. Keller from the summer and autumn of 1931. In particular, General Ludendorff personally formulated the order to the 12th Army on September 6.  
²) See the orders of August 29 and 30 (p. 490 f.) and the report to the Supreme Army Command of September 4 (p. 493).

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Battle of Wilna. Preparation for Envelopment.

In the 10th Army, the preparation for the envelopment attack was essentially completed. Behind the front of the Litzmann and Garnier groups, eight infantry divisions were ready, with two cavalry divisions forming the extreme left wing, extending north of Wilkomierz. For September 9, Generaloberst von Eichhorn ordered the beginning of the massed attack on Wilna, with a reorganization of the army. He assumed that the enemy was now positioned in front of his line with about eleven divisions to the south and nine divisions to the north of the Wilia¹) for defense. He assumed the northern flank of these approximately 20 enemy divisions at Schirwinta on the Schirwinta, but further north to the Wilkomierz—Dünaburg road, only cavalry seemed to be present at the time. Generaloberst von Eichhorn himself had a total of 17½ infantry and four cavalry divisions for the attack, thus being significantly weaker in numbers than the attacking enemy. He expected the 8th Army to advance with the left wing along the Mereczanka to the northeast. From the 10th Army²), the Carlowitz group with four divisions and Litzmann with 5½ divisions, of which 1½ were north of the Wilia, were to tie down the enemy, while further north the Suter group with five infantry divisions and the Eben group with three infantry divisions and one cavalry division were designated for the thrust. This was to begin with a rightward swing from the most advanced position against the enemy of the 115th Infantry Division as a pivot, so that only the four infantry divisions of the extreme left wing would advance early on September 9, with the others joining gradually. The three-division strong Garnier cavalry corps, in conjunction with the Bedmann division of the Njemen Army³), was to advance on Liziuny and then cover the left flank north of the lake area of Malaty, ready to facilitate the advance of the left wing of the Eben group through flanking action.

¹) p. 488.  
²) Organization from the right wing: Carlowitz Group (Gen. Kdo. III. A. K. with reinforced 6th Ldw. Br., 87th and 89th S. D., and 16th Ldw. D.), Litzmann Group (Gen. Kdo. XXXIX. R. K. with 79th, 76th, 3rd R. D., reinforced Brig. Monteton [of the 80th R. D.], 14th Ldw. D. and Abt. Etschel), Suter Group (XXI. A. K. [31st and 42nd S. D., 115th I. D., 77th R. D., Div. Zenker]), Eben Group (Gen. Kdo. I. A. K. with 2nd Ldw. D., 58th and 4th S. D. and 4th R. D.), Garnier Cavalry Corps (1st and 9th R. D., assigned 3rd R. D. of the Njemen Army). — 6th Ldw. Br. and Brig. Monteton had the strength of a division.  
³) p. 535.

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The Operation of the Supreme Commander East against Wilna.

h) The Attack until September 14.

Map 6, Sketches 28 and 29

They led to battles in terrain that, in a wide area around Wilna, especially near the winding course of the Wilia, features heights and valleys in rich variety, often forested and therefore very confusing.

The assault divisions of the extreme left army wing and the cavalry corps launched an attack, pushing back Russian cavalry north of Schirwinty and gaining up to 20 kilometers of space northward. The northern wing of the German cavalry could approach Uzjany by 15 kilometers, while the Hutier group was still held back. On September 10, the forward movement of the encircling wing continued systematically without major battles. The Eben group reached the area between the lakes of Malaty in the north and the swamp area of the Schirwinta Lake in the south. It had thus maintained its essentially eastern advance direction and was to continue to proceed directly on the railway crossing Lidujna west of Swenziany. South of it, however, the left wing of the Hutier group (77th Reserve and 42nd Infantry Division) was already deployed against the Russian Guard Corps to the southeast on that day, against whose southern wing the 115th Infantry Division under Major General von Kleist was thrown from its position in the evening, followed by up to the Wilia, still in the old line, 1½ divisions (Eßebed detachment and 14th Landwehr Division) of the Litzmann group, so that between Schirwinta Lake and Wilia on a front about 25 kilometers wide, 4½ divisions were in battle. South of the Wilia, three divisions (Zenter Division and 31st Infantry Division of the Hutier group and 76th Reserve Division of the Litzmann group) were still available for deployment, with the 75th Reserve Division on the march to Wilkomierz.

On September 11, two more divisions were deployed for the attack between Wilia and Schirwinta Lake, but no major progress was made in difficult terrain. Here, now, on a width of 27 kilometers, 6½ German divisions were fighting, as was assumed, against at least as many Russian.

1) In fact, only three Russian divisions were in the front line (starting from the Wilia: ½ Border Guard Div., 6th Rifle Brigade, 1st and 2nd G. S. D.) with one division in reserve behind.

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Battle of Wilna. Envelopment Attack of the 10th Army.

Meanwhile, General von Eben reached almost without a fight the lakes east of Dubiniki in his continued march. He thus approached the Schemjana section and the accompanying major rail lines Wilna—Swenzjany—Dünaburg and was intent on taking an ever wider front with his three infantry divisions. On the left, on both sides of the cavalry divisions (4th Division and Cavalry Corps Garnier with 1st, 3rd, and 9th Division) from the Malaty lakes to the Dünaburg road northeast of Uziam, the flank extended about 45 kilometers wide, while against Dünaburg itself the Njemen Army had begun the advance\*).

Meanwhile, at the Eichhorn High Command, the impression was gained that the enemy was withdrawing troops from the front south of Wilna, apparently two corps so far (III Siberian and XXVI?), and shifting them to the northern wing of his Wilna group, approximately to the area west of Swenzjany. The army thus likely still had its hardest task ahead. But it became increasingly clear that it was no longer between Wilia and Schirwinta Lake, where the German troops were densest, but in the area northeast, perhaps even east of Wilna, where only relatively weak German forces were in the rear so far. General von Eben had legitimate concerns about losing connection with the rest of the army during the continued march. However, the army's chief of staff, Colonel Hell, insisted during a telephone conversation on this day on continuing the advance to "extensive envelopment over Lidujna and then only turning over Griby to Lowki," which is about seven kilometers southwest of Lidujna.

These questions also occupied the Eastern Commander-in-Chief. In his war diary, it says on September 11: "The northern wing of the 10th Army is making good progress; its envelopment promises full success. It is essential to bring up as strong reserves as possible behind this wing. Prisoners unanimously confirm for him that the Njemen Army was in the rear against Dünaburg and thus effectively covered the rear. However, on the southern wing of the overall attack, the 12th Army was at the Szelwianka and north, primarily to secure the 8th Army northeast of Grodno, firmly against new enemy resistance for days. In the Städel, since September 9, the Plüskow Corps of the 8th Army has been heavily engaged with varying success, whereby the 37th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Freiherr von Hollen bore the brunt of the fighting.

\* G. 535. — 2) Actually only the III Siberian Corps.   
3) H. R. R. 3 with the troops of the former Hollen Corps (p. 495).

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The Operation of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against Vilna.

The 37th Infantry Division under Lieutenant General Baron von Hollen had to bear the brunt of the battle. Since there was no sign of the Russian resistance weakening in front of the right wing of the 10th Army, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief expected great success from a relentless breakthrough of the left wing of this army in a southeasterly direction. In an effort to make the ongoing operation truly decisive, he turned to the Supreme Army Command and requested the X Army Corps for ten to fourteen days, which, coming from southern Poland, was ready to be transported to the west at Bialystok. As a replacement, he offered one to two divisions of the 12th Army, which could arrive at Bialystok in four days. When, in the evening of the day, the 12th Army reported that it had succeeded in gaining a foothold on the east bank of the Zelwianka, and from air reports and Russian radio messages it was apparent that the enemy now intended to continue the retreat before the 8th Army, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief saw this as the effect of the encirclement movement of the 10th Army and urgently repeated his request to the Supreme Army Command with the reasoning: "I expect great success from throwing the enemy into the swamp and lake terrain east of Vilna. If the Russian wants to save his army, he must try to push the left wing of the 10th Army from Dünaburg in flank and rear. Against this danger, I need a deep echelon of this wing, which would be naturally achieved by the timely arrival of the X Army Corps at Rodnow."

The Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army, however, found himself unable to be influenced so unfavorably by the requested measure that His Majesty could not decide on it. Also, the corps, as it could only be transported from Bialystok with 12 to 14 trains daily, would not be ready in the area southwest of Dünaburg before the end of the month and not available again before mid-October. Meanwhile, "the operations here in the East (with the forces previously used for this) unfortunately cannot be continued at all." Independently of this telegram exchange, the visit of the Supreme War Lord to the 10th Army in Kowno was announced for September 16.

1) For more details see Volume IX. — 2) p. 492.

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Battle of Wilna. Continuation of the Envelopment Movement.

The Commander-in-Chief East remained reliant on his own forces; however, the enemy seemed to have reinforced the extremely weak northern flank of the Njemen Army; a new army command was reportedly set up north of Riga!). This did not promote the initiated major operation. Even if the Njemen Army wanted to remain on the offensive with its right wing as before, the Commander-in-Chief East now considered deploying the 3rd Infantry Division, which had been withdrawn from the 12th Army, with the Njemen Army instead of the 10th Army. This division was instructed to either attack sharply with the strong Hutier group to hold the enemy and prevent them from deploying envelopment forces, or to shift forces to the left to make the pressure of the envelopment more sustainable.

Before the 8th Army, the enemy had already begun the expected retreat during the night, which became noticeable on the extreme southern flank of the 10th Army in the course of September 12. However, the enemy still held on elsewhere. Between Wilia and Schirwinta Lake, the continuation of the costly efforts of the Litzmann and Hutier groups resulted only in a gradual pushing back of the Russians on this day as well. It was possible to advance on both sides around the swamp width of Schirwinta Lake, thus shortening the front accordingly; however, the attack of the Hutier group repeatedly encountered new enemy positions frontally, while the envelopment group Eben continued to advance eastward unhindered. On a 36-kilometer-wide front, three infantry divisions had crossed the Dünaburg railway and were positioned in the evening with the left wing at Swenziany, 65 kilometers east of Schirwinta Lake. North of Swenziany, four cavalry divisions covered the open flank in an increasingly widening area. The enemy seemed to be completely surprised by the appearance of German troops so deep in their rear; nothing indicated preparations for defense here. Airmen reported that troops were unloaded in Beszany, 18 kilometers north of Wilna; it was suspected that they were originally intended for Swenziany but had already found the way blocked. It was also expected that several Russian cavalry divisions would gather from Swenziany, near Wischy.

To fully exploit the current favorable situation, the envelopment wing was too weak. However, the bulk of the army was stuck in a stubborn frontal battle, the end of which was not yet foreseeable. Under such circumstances, the now 25-kilometer-wide gap, only occupied by the Zenker Division, between the Hutier and Eben groups could even give cause for concern over time.

1) p. 451.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

Already, General von Eben had left parts of his 10th Landwehr Division there; the 75th Reserve Division, which had meanwhile arrived at Wilkomierz, was not expected for at least two days.

On September 13, the two right-wing divisions of the Eben Corps turned south against the Wilia east of Wilna, and the frontal attacks of the Hutier and Litzmann groups continued; at the same time, however, forces were withdrawn from these to follow the Eben group. The cavalry corps, with three divisions, took the direction southeast against the Smir and Narocz Lakes, advanced 15 kilometers south of Smorgonie, and sent demolition units to disrupt the railway leading from Smolensk via Polozk to Molodeczno. Meanwhile, the Beckmann Division of the Niemen Army had been moved north to Dünaburg, so the 9th Cavalry Division now had to secure the open northern flank of the 10th Army's encircling wing alone at the Poluschje Lakes.

The continuation of the frontal attacks did not bring any decisive result against the stubbornly holding enemy on this day either. In the south, however, the Russian retreat in front of the 8th Army had meanwhile extended to the right to the front of the 12th Army and to the left almost to the entire front of the Carlowitz group. Since the Bornmarsch, this group had been in pursuit and, using Leipuny as a pivot, made a left turn, which, in conjunction with the Eben group, could lead to a double-sided encirclement of the Russians holding northwest of Wilna.

On September 14, the right wing of the army, fighting against the Russian rearguard, continued its left turn in connection with the movements of the 8th Army so far that by evening it approached the Wersoka section with its front facing northwest. However, the enemy still stood from Leipuny over Troki Nowe to northwest and north of Wilna. Northwest of Wilna, the German attack was now continued by smaller forces, while further parts turned east to strengthen the encircling wing for the decisive battles expected there. The first withdrawn 42nd Infantry Division was reinserted on this day between the Zenter Division and the 10th Landwehr Division of the Eben group, thus on the middle of the northern front, and made progress in the direction of the Wilna bend from Niemenczyn.

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Battle of Wilna. Continuation of the Envelopment Movement.

on the Wilna arc from Niemenczyn. On the outer flank of the

envelopment, the last infantry division of Group Eben,

the 2nd Infantry Division, whose commander, Lieutenant General von Falk,

wanted to continue the advance, remaining on the right bank of the Wilia,

in a new direction towards Smorgon, had already turned towards the river,

which it reached at Michaliszki. From here to the area south

of Lake Schirwinta, almost 70 kilometers wide, including the advancing

75th Reserve Division, but only six German infantry divisions were in the

enemy's flank and rear, from there to Wilia northwest of Wilna on another

30 kilometers wide, still as many divisions, one of which had already been

moved east. The three cavalry divisions

of General von Garnier were able to approach the city of Smorgon to within

15 kilometers without encountering resistance, parts of them

were already south of Lake Narocz. 60 kilometers from them

the 9th Cavalry Division was now at Swenziany, while

90 kilometers further north the Niemen Army had reached close to the

outer defenses of Dünaburg.

Pilots reported larger bivouacs near Smorgon and west

as well as troop transports from Wilna to Molodeczno. Generaloberst

von Eichhorn "had to know that in the Wilna area four Russian general

commands were located, including three corps. The headquarters of the

corps were increasingly concentrated in the smallest space according to

intercepted radio messages. The entire 10th Army hoped for full

success"). They wanted to continue to displace the Russian masses,

probably about 15 divisions in total, by constantly holding and pushing back

the retreat, while the cavalry was to go behind them. At 4:30 p.m.,

Generaloberst von Eichhorn gave the cavalry corps Garnier the order by

radio: "Enemy, in, north and south of Wilna, is encircled. Blocking of

escape routes between Lake Grinze and Berzyana swamps south of

Wiszniewischlagen. Destruction of the railway Wilna-Molodeczno-Polozk

and Wilna-Molodeczno important. Army continuously closes on the left.

2nd Infantry Division tomorrow from Michaliszki to Soly." Corresponding

instructions were given to the other parts of the army.

In this situation, the Commander-in-Chief East intervened. He was   
not at all satisfied with the previous course of the attack"). The   
1) Communication from Colonel a. D. Keller from summer 1931 to the Reichsarchiv.  
2) Hoffmann I, p. 87. — Letter from September 13.

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The Operation of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against Wilna.

The exposure of the area between the 10th and Njemen Army had already prompted him in the morning to order the latter to send the Bavarian Cavalry Division to Duschky, from where the 9th Cavalry Division had moved south; in the afternoon he further demanded the securing of the 10th Army against Russian forces that could advance over Wilny. Regarding the situation with this army, it is stated on September 14 in his war diary: "The Eastern Commander-in-Chief is also intervening with the 10th Army. The right wing has again encountered a prepared enemy position, further north undetected. To throw his strong forces stationed at Wilna to the northeast against the threatening encirclement; "he has the shorter way." Moreover, it was known from intercepted radio messages that a newly assembled Russian 2nd Army (XXVII. IV. Siberian, XIV., XXXVI. Corps and a Cavalry Division) was to be transferred from the center of the enemy's overall front to Molodeczno—Smorgon, and wanted to bring the actual operation, as Lieutenant General Ludendorff explained to the Chief of Staff, Colonel Hell, on the telephone, to a favorable conclusion before the new Russian army could make itself noticeable. Further movement of the 10th Army to the left was therefore inadvisable. "Highest urgency" — as the telephone conversation is further recorded in the war diary of the 10th Army — was required to prevent the danger of enemy forces impacting the eastern flank and rear of the 10th Army. Thus, the immediate withdrawal of all forces of the army from the currently taken open semicircle to a concentrated attack on Wilna was absolutely necessary. The advance of the 2nd Infantry Division from the reached area in a directly western direction was to give the utmost limitation of the attack." In contrast, Colonel Hell held the view that a decisive success could only be achieved if the enemy was deprived of any possibility of escape by the most complete closure of the ring, and that the implementation of further shifting of forces to the left also seemed advisable, as an immediate threat from the east was not present at the time.

1) The assumptions were correct.  
2) Other records on this are missing in the files. However, Lieutenant Colonel Hoffmann on September 13, 14, and 15, 1915, on the differences of opinion discussed here, such (Hoffmann, p. 67 ff.). They culminate in the view of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief, also confirmed by then records of Captain von Waldow and communications from the deserter a. D. Keller (these from the summer of 1931 to the Reichsarchiv): "In a second letter conversation it was not. Then we contented ourselves with a smaller success, a great risk is no longer taken ..."

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Battle of Wilna. Intervention of the Commander-in-Chief East.

There is currently no threat from the east. Furthermore, it is highly likely that the railway lines Molodeczno—Polotsk and Molodeczno—Wilna will be significantly disrupted by the cavalry dispatched for this purpose on September 15. Moreover, the strong army cavalry provides extensive security for the army flank in terrain favorable for the sectional halting of advancing forces. "These objections," the record continues, "were not recognized. Colonel Hell was informed that the Commander-in-Chief East demanded the withdrawal of divisions for concentrated attacks by September 16 at the latest, adding that the telephone order for this would be issued shortly."

This decisive order from the Commander-in-Chief East stated: "I expect the army to attack on its entire front by September 16 at the latest, as any later time can only change the situation to our disadvantage."

The 12th and 8th Armies were to participate. Following the Army Group Prince Leopold, they reached the west bank of the particularly wide and marshy southern part of the Szczara section on September 14, as well as north of the Njemen, a line running generally north-northeast from the Szczara mouth, which connected to the southern flank of the 10th Army west of Radun. The Russians seemed to have set themselves for new resistance. Behind their front, troop movements towards Dünaburg and Molodeczno were observed on the railways; attempts were made to disrupt them with bombing raids by aircraft and airships. The Commander-in-Chief East pointed out to the 12th Army to exert strong pressure on the northern Njemen bank in a northeasterly direction to also "affect the encirclement of the 10th Army." The 8th Army was admonished: "I expect that tomorrow, September 15, Group Plüskow will energetically gain terrain towards Lida." This was intended to encircle the enemy at Wilna from the southwest as well.

c) The concentric attack and pursuit from September 15 to 19.

Maps 6 and 7, sketches 28 and 29.

For the 10th Army, September 15 served to prepare for the general attack now set for the 16th. According to the specific instructions of the Commander-in-Chief East, General Representative von Eichhorn was sufficient to resume the previously issued orders and sharply turn his troops against Wilna.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

For the Cavalry Corps Garnier, the order given by radio before the intervention of the Commander-in-Chief East was not changed. However, during the night, the Commander-in-Chief East ordered that the 9th Cavalry Division, intended by General von Garnier to unite with the 1st and 4th Cavalry Divisions, instead ride north again to join the Bavarian Cavalry Division of the Niemen Army in attacking two Russian Cavalry Divisions that seemed to be gathering at Poluske. Of the remaining three divisions of the Cavalry Corps, the 3rd Cavalry Division reached the area of Krzywice on September 15 and then blocked the Polozk—Molodeczno railway. Only the 1st and 4th Cavalry Divisions remained to proceed against the rear of the Russian Wilna Group. They crossed and interrupted the Molodeczno—Wilna railway at and northwest of Smorgon. In doing so, the 1st Cavalry Division reached the area south of Zuprany without serious combat, while the 4th Cavalry Division under Major General von Hofsmann was forced to turn northwest against the enemy holding the Disnjana section Zuprany—Solly.

In the Eben Group, the left wing, following the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief East, was initially directed from Michaliszki over the Wilia southwest towards Worjnan. The 2nd Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Falk was able to approach this location within about three kilometers by evening, despite some fierce fighting. Subsequently, the left wing of the 58th Infantry Division also crossed the Wilia, and the 10th Landwehr Division and the 42nd Infantry Division, transferred by the Hutier Group, moved across the Scheimjana to the southeast.

Meanwhile, the enemy had retreated west of the Scheimjana mouth during the night on a broad front to the south. The troops of Lieutenant General von Hutier were able to advance without combat over a large kilometer area and stood in the evening from the Scheimjana mouth to the area of Niemenczyn before the Wilia, then the front moved further west. The enemy seemed to have settled in a strong position again. In the Litzmann Group, immediately east of the Wilia below Wilna, the 14th Landwehr Division gained some ground; otherwise, the front stood here; the Carlowitz Group had advanced several kilometers forward to the west bank section held by the enemy. In the 8th and 12th Armies, the attack power was no longer sufficient due to extremely tight supplies to meet the set tasks. They were stuck in front of Russian resistance.

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Battle of Wilna. Concentrated Attack.

In the 10th Army, the order for the general attack

on September 16 initially stated that the 8th Army, adjoining on the right,

would advance with the left wing from Radum to the east, the

9th Army would cover the rear of the attack north of the road

leading from Swenzjany via Postawny to the east. The attack of the

10th Army was set with ten divisions of the army center, seven of them from

the northern Wilia bank, concentrically against an area that finally

narrowed on both sides of Wilna to a total of 20 kilometers, the

flank groups with four divisions each accordingly. Specifically,

the following were to attack: Group Carlowitz with four divisions (reinforced 6th Landwehr

Brigade, 87th and 89th Infantry and 16th Landwehr Division) from

the west, Group Litzmann with five divisions (79th Reserve Division,

reinforced Brigade Monteton, 3rd Reserve, 14th Landwehr and 76th Reserve

Division) from the northwest, Group Sutter with 5½ divisions (115th Infantry

Division, Section Siebed, 77th Reserve Division, Division Zenter,

31st Infantry, 75th Reserve Division) from the north, Group Eben with

four divisions (10th Landwehr, 42nd, 58th and 2nd Infantry Division) from

the northeast. From the cavalry corps Garnier, which had to cover the

southeast flank of the army, two divisions were to block the

Dzmjanka crossings at and east of Dzmjany and interrupt the railway

Molodeczno—Lida; the 3rd Cavalry Division was to turn

against Molodeczno itself, where a Russian army headquarters

was assumed, to interrupt the railway Molodeczno—Minsk and

advance demolition units against the railway Minsk—Smolensk.

The 9th Cavalry Division, which, without encountering any significant enemy,

had reached the area east of Poluschie and had made contact with the Bavarian

Cavalry Division, could now still be drawn closer again and was to take over the cover to the east between the Molodeczno–Polozk railway and the Swenzjany–Postawy road.

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The Operation of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against Wilna.

The attack movements began according to the army order, but did not lead to the desired result. In the Carlowitz group, all attempts to cross the Wersoka failed. South of the lower Wilia, the left wing of the Litzmann group had to repel Russian counterattacks; north of the river, its left wing and the right of the Hutier group could gain little ground. The enemy seemed to be stronger in artillery than on previous days¹). The left wing of the Hutier group was stuck at the Wilia section Niemenczyn–Szeimiana mouth. East of the Szeimiana, the 10th Landwehr and 42nd Infantry Division of the Eben group fought for the river crossing, but then, like the 58th Infantry Division, did not get much further. Only at the extreme left end could the 2nd Infantry Division push the enemy back a larger piece; it reached its eastern wing Gernyaty, reducing the gap to the Gantier cavalry corps to 15 kilometers. The 4th Cavalry Division took Solly and Zuprany, but did not go beyond that. Subsequently, the 1st Cavalry Division, whose reconnaissance from Diszmjany to the south had identified Russian positions up to Ozany, remained in the line Zuprany–Bornuny, thus facing west. The goal set in the army order was not achieved here. The 3rd Cavalry Division came from Borgen to Molodeczno under fighting in the evening to Wiliesja, the 9th withdrew again more to the south as ordered.

In the afternoon, the Kaiser arrived with General von Falkenhayn at the high command in Rowno. General Ludendorff reports on this²): "Upon his arrival, General von Falkenhayn asked me if a major blow was still to be expected. I denied it. The right time for a major blow was definitely missed; of course, success had to be pursued as long as possible. Everything depended on whether the Russians could send reinforcements from the front to the area northeast of Wilna"³). While General von Falkenhayn soon after Berlin continued, Field Marshal von Hindenburg reported to the Kaiser on the situation and subsequently informed his armies that he had assured the Supreme War Lord that they "would give their utmost to defeat the Russians. I know that I can rely on my armies."

¹) As can be seen from Russian sources, it was only about increased ammunition use.  
²) Communication from December 23, 1931, to the Reichsarchiv.  
³) In a similar sense, Major von Fleischel reported on the evening of September 16: "The Russian army will let the success be avoided by a mixture, or whether it will be possible to take back the right wing from the Molodeczno–Wilna railway when the front...

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The Climax of the Battle of Wilna.

On September 17, the attack was to continue, but it was already recognized that the enemy had begun to retreat in front of the entire front of Group Litzmann and the right wing of Group Hutier, which eventually extended southward to the left wing of Group Carlowitz. This is rightly seen as the effect of the German attack that had been ongoing for a week. The prospect of decisively defeating the enemy had thus diminished, especially since he still held out further south. Here, the reinforced 6th Landwehr Brigade under Major General Simon achieved a local success by capturing 1000 prisoners and five machine guns north of Radun. The 8th and 12th Armies had made little progress since September 14 despite some successes. In the 10th Army, the groups Litzmann and Hutier reached the general line Lejpum-Lamawono-Wilna north of Wilna in pursuit. They were thus about five kilometers from the city. Above Wilna, the enemy held the southern bank of the Wilia. Only in the area of the Schemjanka estuary and upstream to Bystritza did the vigorously advancing 75th Reserve Division under Lieutenant General von Seydewitz, as well as the 10th Landwehr and 42nd Infantry Divisions, manage to gain further ground in the attack across the river. On the extreme left wing, the 2nd Infantry Division could only slightly improve its position.

Thus, a wide gap still yawned towards the Cavalry Corps Garnier, whose situation became quite difficult as a result. The 4th and 1st Cavalry Divisions were attacked by a vastly superior enemy, who broke through their front at Zuprawn, swung with strong forces against the northern flank of the 1st Cavalry Division, and forced them to retreat eastward. Finally, General von Garnier found himself compelled, in view of the simultaneous Russian pressure on the right flank and the newly emerging enemy in the rear at Molodeczno, to withdraw both divisions to the area of Smorgoni.

The attack on Wilna at the time of the activation of the enemy flank from Molodeczno, which was not yet supposed to have broken through, is of course not yet foreseeable.

(Records of the Vienna War Archives.)

1) Records on this are missing.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

That the expected Russian troop transports from Minsk to and over Molodeczno had actually begun around September 13, had already been learned by the Eichhorn High Command in the night of September 16 to 17 through an agent message communicated from Pleß, and the cavalry corps was immediately informed by radio. Still during the night, the 3rd Cavalry Division under Major General von Bünau had set out again from Wiszniew and arrived north of Molodeczno by 9 in the morning. By evening, it succeeded in pushing back Russian security forces over the Usza section and disrupting rail traffic with artillery fire. However, enemy and swamp movement prevented further advance against the extensive railway facilities themselves, from which they were still about three kilometers away. In the evening, the division of Sapieha secured the flank of the cavalry corps up to just north of Molodeczno, while the 9th Cavalry Division, meanwhile, without encountering the enemy, had ridden 20 kilometers beyond Postawy to the east.

To strengthen the left wing of the army, Lieutenant General von Hutier had already, in the morning, as the army center's formations increasingly converged in pursuit of Wilna, in line with the intentions of the army high command, facilitated the withdrawal of both sides' parts. Thus, the 31st Infantry Division and the Zenter Division had already been set in motion eastward during the day; the 115th Infantry Division, which had already advanced very far south in pursuit, was to follow.

In the army order of the afternoon of September 17, it was stated: "The enemy apparently wants to escape encirclement by rapid retreat. Ruthless action of the entire army front with wide outflanking of the eastern wing is required." The command boundaries were advised and narrowed, so that with the leftward shift of the Sütier Group, the encircling wing could advance further. They and the Eben Group, it was said, must constantly, sharply outflank to the east, increasingly blocking the enemy's retreat routes in the narrow area north of the Beresyna swamps. It is to be aimed to maintain connection to the left continuously." The cavalry corps was to remain on the left flank.

The Commander-in-Chief East in Lötzen had only learned of the enemy's retreat to Wilna in the afternoon. He himself then stated: "Decisive successes in the campaign can be achieved. I expect the highest exertion of strength."

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Battle of Wilna. Pursuing the Retreating Enemy.

The armies continue to attack:

12th Army in its previous combat zone, 8th Army with a strong

left wing Woronow, 10th Army with a strong and for pursuit

far forward folded left wing towards north of Smorgon.

10th Army places its cavalry divisions ahead of the enemy retreat,

possibly in line Wilna—Minsk and later on the eastern Berezina1).

The railways leading away from Minsk are to be destroyed. — Niemen—

Army pushes the entire Bavarian cavalry division as soon as possible

towards Krzynica northeast of Wilna and lets its infantry follow."

When it became clear on the morning of September 18 that the enemy

was now also retreating before the 8th and 12th Army, the

Supreme Army Command was urged to "energetically pursue also the

army groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold" and also requested

immediately from both army groups and from Generaloberst von Conrad.

The response from the Supreme Army Command stated that instructions

"for the sharpest pursuit" had already been given).

The right wing and the center of the 10th Army advanced well on September 18,

following the enemy; the strongly fortified but no longer defended city of Wilna was occupied. In the

evening, the German troops were about ten kilometers west of the

railway Lida—Wilna, within a radius of ten kilometers south and southeast

of Wilna and further east to Bystrica on the Wilia, where the

left wing of the Hutier group joined the Eben group. They

of the cavalry corps had fought hard. As the right wing

of the Eben group were the 58th and to the left of it the 2nd Infantry

Division set to attack southwards, to block the enemy's retreat.

However, this did not happen, rather the 58th Infantry Division under

Lieutenant General von Gersdorff had only with difficulty repelled

fierce enemy attacks, and also with the 2nd Infantry

Division only the outermost left wing gained some ground to the south.

Folded behind this wing was the foremost of the reinforcements

the 31st Infantry Division on the eastern Disna river bank

initially reached up to the height of Gerwischat. The Zenter

Division was still 20 kilometers further back northwest of Michalischki,

the 77th Reserve and 115th Infantry Division in the area north of

Bystrica another 12 kilometers further from the wing.

1) 100 kilometers east of Molodeczno flowing from north to south.  
2) C. 556.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

Instead, General von Garnier found himself heavily attacked by a superior enemy near Smorgoni. The 4th Cavalry Division had to retreat behind the Wilija, as the eagerly awaited infantry did not arrive in time, and extend its right flank north to Zodziszki; to its left, the 1st Cavalry Division held Smorgoni as a bridgehead south of the river. The 3rd Cavalry Division, facing increasing enemy resistance, unsuccessfully attempted to capture Molodeczno, against which the enemy was bringing additional troops from Minsk and apparently also from Lida. Although it had only 50 to 100 carbine shooters per brigade besides its infantry battalions, it attempted to block with its front to the south in a width of almost 25 kilometers on both sides of Molodeczno. The 9th Cavalry Division under Major General von Heydebreck was directly tasked by the army command to destroy the Molodeczno-Polotzk railway and advance further towards Minsk against the Russian retreat lines. Swinging sharply east, it reached as far as Glubokoje, where a Russian Cossack division was supposed to be; it was about 100 kilometers away from the battlefield at Molodeczno, and the Bavarian cavalry division led by the Commander-in-Chief East with the Njemen Army was not yet to be expected; it had the enemy in front of it at Wilija, about 120 kilometers north of Molodeczno, but reported the intention to ride further south the next day.

According to the reports available at the Eichhorn headquarters in Kowno, which were mainly obtained from Russian radio messages, the enemy seemed to be in full retreat southeast with four corps. An eastern group of two more corps sought to cover the northeastern flank of this movement against Bystritza—Smorgoni, partly in defense, partly in attack against the German encirclement, while two more newly brought in from the direction of Lida corps attacked towards Smorgon and others rolled towards Molodeczno from Minsk.

1) Actually more than five corps; starting from the Russian left wing: XXVI., XXXIV., II. Caucasian Corps, 65th and 104th Infantry Divisions, V. Caucasian and Guard Corps with a total of 13 to 14 divisions.  
2) Actually only three corps: III. Siberian, II. and V. Corps with a total of 6½ divisions; the additional corps assumed by the Germans (XX.) was still near Lida.

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Battle of Wilna. Further Shift of Forces to the Left.

Overall, it succeeded, despite partially heavy enemy counteraction, to advance about eight kilometers southward west of the Olszjanka, while east of the river, the 31st Infantry Division under Lieutenant General von Berner, after the greatest marching efforts, connected in the evening ten kilometers north of Smorgon with the outermost northern flank of the cavalry corps.

The Commander-in-Chief East as well as the High Command 10, which was almost constantly in telephone communication with its corps, repeatedly pressed with all means to shift to the left to extend and strengthen the encircling wing. On September 18 at 7 p.m., General von Eben received the directive: The enemy in front of the Litzmann and Hutier groups, which was increasing today at Mejdniki, would "according to reliable reports"²) break out tomorrow at 5 a.m. The Litzmann and Hutier groups would continue the pursuit on September 19 at 4 a.m. on both sides of the Wilna—Molodeczno railway. This would likely cause a congestion of the attacking troops unless it was possible to release forces from the Eben group and "bring them to the outer decisive wing through marching; always shifting to the left." The 115th Infantry Division was subordinated to the Eben group with the determination to quickly advance it between the Wilia and the Swir Lake. The cavalry corps retained its blocking task until infantry arrived; the Bavarian cavalry division was instructed again to advance on Krzywicze.

On September 19, the Carlowitz, Litzmann, and Hutier groups followed the retreating enemy frontally and were only occasionally held up by rearguards, bridge destructions, and terrain difficulties. In the evening, however, they faced new enemy resistance in a line running from south to Mejdniki and thus northeastward. Also, in front of the right wing of the Eben group, where the 58th Infantry Division was given the attack direction southwest to Sloboda, on the railway west of Soly, the enemy had vacated its position during the night. The 31st Infantry Division was set as the new left wing of the group on Smorgon.

¹) IV. fib. and XXXVI. Corps. ²) Code designation for intercepted Russian radio messages.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Vilna.

The day was hard for the three cavalry divisions that General von Garnier had at hand. Before the gap between the 4th and 1st Divisions at Smorgon on one side, and the 3rd at Molodeczno on the other, could be closed by shifting this division to the right, the enemy had broken through the Wilia at Jatfienicze and thus reached the flank of the bridgehead-like position held by the 1st Cavalry Division south of the river at Smorgon. Countermeasures were taken, the bridgehead had to be held. The division commander, Colonel von Lenthe, himself reported that he would hold out during the day; but if the 31st Infantry Division did not arrive by night, he could no longer vouch for the outcome due to the exhaustion of his troops and would have to retreat. The infantry division did not come. The enemy advancing on the front was repelled, but remained so close that retreating over the Wilia seemed only feasible with losses. Colonel von Lenthe, who had three infantry battalions and about double the equipment of machine guns and artillery at his division, decided to hold out further. Meanwhile, further east, the 3rd Cavalry Division had already had to give up its position in front of Molodezno due to the constantly strengthening enemy pressure and had retreated up to twelve kilometers north behind the Wilia; its eastern wing held Wilejka.

d) The Defense of the Russian Counterattack and the End of the Battle.

Maps 6 and 7, Sketches 28 and 30.

September 19th, despite all efforts by the leadership and troops of the 10th Army, had not brought a satisfactory result. The encircling wing had been strengthened by the troop movements undertaken, but overall had not gained any ground forward, the cavalry corps had even had to give up ground again. The prospects for a major success had diminished. The pressure from the German 8th and 12th Armies following the enemy from the southwest and west could not be relied upon too much, as they lacked the strength for it.

At the Eichhorn High Command, the reports about the enemy had condensed by noon to the point that the Russian 2nd Army was now assumed to be advancing against the eastern flank of the German 10th Army.

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Battle of Wilna. Difficult Situation of the Eastern Flank.

It was deemed necessary to continue the pursuit pressure swiftly under constant threat to the eastern flank. To reinforce this, additional forces were to be withdrawn from the front. Furthermore, to counter the new enemy, besides the 9th Cavalry Division, which on this day, without encountering the enemy, rode via Glubokoje and reached the Polotsk railway at Popiltsche, 70 kilometers northeast of Molodeczno, infantry forces advancing behind the encircling wing were also considered.

Accordingly, Generaloberst von Eichhorn ordered the continuation of the attack for September 20th. The 115th Infantry and 77th Reserve Divisions, which had reached the area west of the Smiz Lake, were to march southeast towards Iza, with the General Command of the Hutier Group and two additional divisions of the pursuit front to be held ready at Gernyaty and westward.

The attack advanced the Carlowitz Group only about five kilometers, the Litzmann Group even less. The Eben Group, despite successful and partly heavy fighting, was unable to achieve any significant change in the situation. The cavalry corps again faced the toughest situation, which was relieved by the intervention of the 31st Infantry Division, but too late to hold the 1st Cavalry Division, which still held Smorgon on the morning of September 20th. By noon, after three days of heroic resistance, it had to abandon the outpost projecting about three kilometers over the Wilia from the rest of the front under heavy losses. Since then, the front of the Garnier Cavalry Corps left this area about eight kilometers northeast of the Wilia, which it only reached again at the river bend northeast of Zasiewicze. From there to Wiljeta, the 3rd Cavalry Division had been able to hold on the Wilia. Further east, the Bavarian Cavalry Division arrived in the evening after a ride of over 60 kilometers at Krzywicze; the 9th had advanced to Solymino, 15 kilometers southeast of it, so that now a stronger cavalry group was available again on the extreme left flank.

According to the overall course of the last few days, in which the loss of Smorgon and the retreat at Molodeczno represented only a partial phenomenon, the Eichhorn High Command was now of the opinion that the enemy, "relying on the relief that the reinforcements brought against the eastern flank of the German 10th Army, was determined to continue the resistance in the area southwest of Wilna." Therefore, it remained essential to continue the attack with emphasis across the entire front. Influencing the Russian retreat routes continued to be the guiding principle. Additionally, the defense against the new enemy had to be considered. In total, about four Russian corps seemed to be advancing against the line Smorgon—Wilejka and eastward. On this more than 30-kilometer-wide front, however, only three German cavalry divisions, exhausted and severely depleted by the battles of the last few days, had been standing so far. A new Hutier Group (42nd Infantry, 77th Reserve, 115th Infantry Division, with the 75th Reserve Division behind) was now formed from the retreating infantry divisions for deployment in their place, freeing the cavalry for other tasks. When the Supreme Army Command inquired of the Commander-in-Chief East in the evening whether "a greater external success in the area southeast of Wilna could be expected in the near future," the answer was: "Favorable outcome of the battle to be hoped for; no specific time foreseeable; the battle will certainly last several more days."

1) The Russians reported 350 prisoners and nine machine guns as spoils.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Vilna.

Enemy "in trust in the relief that the reinforcements brought against the eastern flank of the German 10th Army had to bring, decided to continue the resistance in the area southwest of Vilna"). All the more, it remained to continue the attack on the entire front with emphasis. Influence on the Russian retreat routes was still the guiding point. In addition, the defense against the new enemy had to be taken into account. In total, about four Russian corps seemed to be advancing against the Smorgon-Wilejka line and eastwards. On this more than 30-kilometer-wide front, however, there were previously only three German cavalry divisions, which were exhausted and severely depleted by the battles of the last few days. To replace them, a new Huiter group (42nd Infantry, 77th Reserve, 115th Infantry Division, behind it 75th Reserve Division) was formed from the retreating infantry divisions, freeing the cavalry for other tasks. When the Supreme Army Command inquired in the evening of the day with the Commander-in-Chief East whether "a greater external success in the area southeast of Vilna was expected" for the near future, the answer was: "Hoping for a favorable outcome of the battle; no time point foreseeable; battle will certainly last several more days."

On September 21, the 12th and 8th Armies were in pursuit up to just before Nowogrodek and, 20 kilometers beyond Lida, reached the lower Schara. The command of the 12th Army, which had been reduced to only four divisions due to transfers, was taken over on this day by the previous High Command 1 from the West, General of Infantry von Fabeck with Lieutenant General von Kuhl as Chief of Staff, after General von Gallwitz had been entrusted with the leadership of a new army formed against Serbia.

In the 10th Army, the enemy cleared his positions in front of the Carlowitz and Litzmann groups. The pursuit, held up by rearguards, soon came to a halt again in front of a new continuous Russian line of resistance. Against the Eben group, fierce attacks were undertaken, which, conducted in dense masses in places, were repelled with heavy losses for the enemy. North of Smorgon and from there east to Wilejka, troops of General von Hutier came into the front of the cavalry corps without a fight.

\*) War Diary of the Army High Command 10.  
2) p. 506. In fact, on September 20, the Russian 2nd Army stood: at Smorgon XXXVI Corps, then southeastward followed by IV Siberian and at Molodeczno XXVII Corps, behind it 1st Cavalry Corps, XIV Corps, and 45th S.D.

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Battle of Wilna. Russian Counterattack.

(1st, 4th, and 3rd Division) to advance, from which large parts were withdrawn.

Extraordinary marching achievements of the advancing divisions were necessary for this.

The 115th Infantry Division, forming the left wing in Wilna, had covered 180 kilometers

in the last five days; due to the exertion and the preceding battles, the battalions'

strengths had dropped to about 300 rifles. Further east, the Bavarian and 9th Cavalry

Division had been directed from Krzywicze and Dolhinow to the south and southwest

to hit the flank and rear of the advancing enemy. Instead, they had to find that the

Russian wing extended with infantry to Lida, with cavalry even further east, thus

still significantly surpassing the front of the 10th Army.

Meanwhile, the particularly difficult deciphering of a Russian radio message intercepted

the day before, which contained an order from the Russian Western Front, had succeeded.

It read in its decisive parts: "The Russian 10th Army strengthens the reserves behind

its extreme right wing, attacks energetically, and seizes the line Sawelzy—Globoda,

where it has to entrench itself as well as on the entire remaining front... from Disjmany

to the Gawia River. The 2nd Army accelerates its attack on the line Sawelzy—Narocz

Lake." It was thus clear that the enemy was holding between the Njemen east of Lida

and the Wilna-Molodeczno railway with the front facing west, but wanted to attack

north and east of the railway against the section of the German 10th Army. In view

of this situation, the encirclement attack could not be continued. Generaloberst von

Eichhorn had to decide to remain in defense against the expected further Russian

attacks; he hoped to be able to extend his own eastern wing so far that he could

still envelop at the appropriate time. To relieve the rest of the front, the Carlowitz

group was to attack sharply to the northeast on September 22.

To give this frontal attack greater striking power, the Commander-in-Chief East

had already brought two divisions, the 4th Guard and 37th Infantry Division, from

the 12th Army north behind the southern wing of the 10th Army. On the other hand,

he had arranged for the Njemen Army to push forces south and for the 3rd Infantry

Division to be assigned to it, as he still considered it quite possible that Russian

forces freed up at this point could also be deployed from the north, via Polozk,

against the German 10th Army. Above all, for this reason, he had considered it a "sensitive impairment" of his operations that the Supreme Army Command withdrew the 26th Infantry Division, which had already been prepared to follow behind the 3rd Infantry Division, on September 19 and had adhered to this decision despite all counteractions.

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The Operation of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief against Vilna.

However, the Eastern Commander-in-Chief could not overlook how urgently the situation on other theaters of war demanded this measure.

On September 22, General von Hutier wanted to leave the strongest part of the defensive front, the Wilija section from north of Smorgon to Wilisza, on the eastern flank of the 10th Army, with only one infantry division and two cavalry divisions, while three infantry divisions, deployed for a comprehensive attack, moved forward to the line Wilisza—Wiazyrn. The Garnier Cavalry Corps, newly formed from the 4th, 9th, and Bavarian Cavalry Divisions, was to act further east against the enemy's flank according to the instructions of the High Command. These intentions were disrupted by Russian attacks, which began early in the morning. The German front, previously advanced to the river in the Wilija bend Smorgon—Wilisza, was pushed back to the straight line; instead of one, General von Hutier had to deploy 1½ infantry divisions alongside the cavalry here. Furthermore, since the 115th Infantry Division was already tied down by Russian attacks at Wilisza and east of it, barely 1½ divisions remained for a thrust of the left wing, which were positioned about twelve kilometers northeast of Wilisza by evening. Meanwhile, the Russian attack had extended so far east that encirclement was no longer possible for these forces. East of the 115th Infantry Division, the enemy had already crossed the Wilija; the three cavalry divisions of General von Garnier had only been able to intercept his advance in a 20-kilometer-wide line, which lay four kilometers north of the river north of Rabum and only rejoined him at the Servecz mouth²). However, the enemy now seemed to be extending further east.

The German attacks assigned to the Carlowitz Group and the 8th Army achieved only purely local successes. The Litzmann and Eben groups held their positions and were able to easily repel individual Russian attacks.

¹) Telegram to the Supreme Army Command from September 19.  
²) Northern tributary of the Wilija, not to be confused with the later mentioned, left tributary of the upper Niemen.

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Battle of Wilna. German Eastern Wing in Defense.

It became increasingly apparent that the forces of the 10th Army were insufficient for an effective strike on the decisive eastern wing. The distance from the railway points¹) precluded rapid reinforcement of this wing. However, the Commander-in-Chief East believed that the offensive could still be brought back into flow by the frontal attack set from the west upon the arrival of the two reinforcement divisions, and had not entirely given up hope by mid-morning. The 8th Army, which was already beyond Lida, had been ordered in the morning to advance with all force towards Bogdanow, while the 10th Army was to "continue the attack" and the Njemen Army²) positioned with the main forces in front of Dünaburg was to "if possible, provide a marching division" behind its right wing. When the attack made little progress during the day, he again pointed out to the 8th Army that now, after the Russians had thrown their entire 2nd Army against the encirclement of the left wing of the German 10th Army and were attacking very sharply, the pressure by the 8th Army towards Bogdanow must lead to success.

For the continuation of the attack on September 23, only the right wing of the 10th Army was considered, where the Carlowitz group could be reinforced by the 4th Guard and the 37th Infantry Division, while General Litzmann also assembled a strike group of about two divisions on his right wing. On the eastern wing of the army, General von Hutier no longer felt strong enough for his own attack; he wanted to wait for the Russian attack behind the Wilia and then counterattack; Generaloberst von Eichhorn agreed with this.

On the morning of September 23, the enemy was again retreating before the 12th and 8th Armies. But also with the 10th Army, he had cleared his entire front west of the Disnaumka; the pursuit reached the line Olany-Supram area west of Soly. The enemy attacked the Wilia front all the more fiercely. Caught from the east in the flank, the 115th Infantry Division was forced to abandon Wiliefka in the afternoon, losing eleven guns; the 75th Reserve Division, expected east of the place since the morning, arrived too late to prevent the mishap. The cavalry corps had to withdraw parts to secure against an expected attack from the east.

¹) See p. 530. — ²) p. 536 f.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

and extend his position behind the Wilia over a width of 40 kilometers, up to Milcza, to the east. However, there was also a report that a demolition unit of the 3rd Cavalry Division had succeeded in destroying the Smolensk—Minsk railway southwest of Borissow).

For September 24, the Commander-in-Chief East had ordered the continuation of the attack, with the 8th Army receiving the thrust direction south of the Berezyn depression, ready to swing north. The 10th Army was to shift more forces to its left wing and keep the bulk of the cavalry in the Dolhinow area ready to advance southeast. The 1st Cavalry Division was to be sent to the northern end of Lake Narocz to reinforce the Njemen Army, so that together with the advancing 3rd Infantry Division from Kowno and a cavalry division of this army, it would block the area between Lake Narocz and Lake Dryswjaty. In execution of these orders, the 8th Army and the western wing of the 10th Army came behind the retreating enemy up to Krewo and beyond Smorgon. However, the entire eastern wing of the 10th Army was so tied down by Russian attacks that shifts to the left were out of the question.

On this day, the Commander-in-Chief East learned from the Prince Leopold Army Group that their main force, by order of the Supreme Army Command, should not initially go beyond the Szcara east of Baranowicze and the Serwetsch. He himself had not received any corresponding order, wanted to try to advance towards Minsk, and requested the cooperation of the neighboring army group.

The next day, September 25, when the French attack broke out in the west, the following fundamental order from the Supreme Army Command was received: "His Majesty has ordered, in expansion and supplement of the directive of August 27: Army Group Mackensen establishes the position already taken by its left wing north of the Pripjet up to and including Telechan on the Oginskit Canal for permanent holding. — Army Group Prince Leopold continues the pursuit only up to the approximate line Oginskit-Canal from Telechany—Upper course of the Szczara—Serwetsch—Mouth of the Beresyna into the Njemen, where they also immediately begin the establishment for the duration."

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The End of the Battle of Wilna.

Since all armies of the Commander-in-Chief East had already given up numerous forces and had more to give up, there was hardly any prospect of getting the movement going again on this eastward-facing section of the front. Army Group Hindenburg thus secures the area between the mouth of the Beresyna into the Njemen and the coast. Besides the already requested units, two general commands and six divisions, this army group will probably have to give up another general command and five divisions later. Two divisions are now to be set in motion to the railway as soon as possible, acceleration is very urgent due to the situation in the west.

On this day, the war diary of the Commander-in-Chief East states: “Thus, the first impetus to stop the operation is given. Only the meeting of the two moments: Order of the Supreme Army Command and their approach of Army Group Leopold and the appearance of strong enemy from the northeast direction (near Dünaburg?) cause the Chief of the General Staff to advocate this. He is strongly supported in this view by the First General Staff Officer (Lieutenant Colonel Hoffmann).” It was ordered: “12th Army and 1st Landwehr Division throw the enemy over the Beresyna and then follow only with bridge troops. 12th Army goes into defense in connection with the 9th Army at the mouth of the Beresyna. — 8th Army remains in attack against line Wolozyn—Dubina. — 10th Army continues attack.” It should generally not go beyond the Serwez, right tributary of the Wilia, with the Hutier group.

Meanwhile, the fight at the 12th, 8th, and 10th Army had continued, but had not brought any significant progress, although there was a firm grip in some places. Thus, the 16th Landwehr Division of Lieutenant General Sommer lost, when it took Krewo on the night of September 24 to 25, 17 officers and 800 men. The eastern wing successfully defended against heavy Russian attacks. The cavalry corps Garnier had to bend its left wing back from the Wilia to Dolhinowo in front of ever more encroaching Russian cavalry.

Also on September 26, only local successes were achieved. On the whole, the 12th and 8th Army lay in the swamp section of the lower Beresyna from the mouth to east of Bogdanow, the right wing of the 10th Army from there to Smorgon in front of strong Russian positions.

¹) Left tributary of the upper Njemen.  
²) Probably meant Mitau (p. 537).

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Vilna.

On the other hand, the left wing of the 10th Army, facing south, was constantly threatened by superior Russian encirclement and by the uncertainty in the direction of Polotsk, so that without reinforcements, holding its current line for a longer period was out of the question. Therefore, Generaloberst von Eichhorn now decided, with the consent of the Commander-in-Chief East, to bend this wing back from the Wilia behind the Serwez to the north.

¹) Deliveries from September 1 to 26.

Inventory at the beginning of September

Given or still to be given \* to:

10. A. Nl. A. D. H. L.

The underlined divisions should remain with the C-in-C East)

12th Army (10½ Div.)

4. G. I. D., 1. G. R. D. 3., 26., 35., 36., 38., 54., 86. I. G. D. 50. R. D. 1/85. Ldw. D.

8th Army (5½ Div.)

37., 83. I. G. D. 75. R. D. 1., 11. Ldw. D. 169. Ldw. Br.

10th Army (17½ Div.)

2., 31., 42., 58., 87., 89., 115. I. D. 3., 76., 77., 79. R. D. 10., 14., 16. Ldw. D., reinforced 6. Ldw. Br. Div. Zenter, reinforced Br. Monteon, Abt. Eschede

Nl. Army (8 Div.)

41., 88. I. G. D. 1., 6., 36., 78. R. D. Div. Beckmann, Br. Homeyer, Abt. Libau

total: 41½ Div. 13 Div.

(The "Infantry Divisions" listed here with numbers from 83 to 89 did not consist of active troops.)

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The End of the Battle of Wilna.

When the army received the order from the Commander-in-Chief East the following day to take up a permanent position, it was a measure fully justified by the combat situation.

e) Operations of the Russians¹) and Considerations.

Maps 6 and 7, Sketches 28, 29, and 30.

When on August 18, Kowno, the northern cornerstone of the Russian northwest front, unexpectedly fell quickly²), a breach had already been made in the entire Russian front, as the 5th Army operating further north in Courland had to cover the routes to Petersburg and their retreat directions were in a northeasterly direction. Thus, the right wing of the main Russian front, the 10th Army, was now threatened with encirclement from the north; its leader, General Radkewitsch, independently ordered a gradual retreat eastward to the right bank of the Njemen, while the 5th Army had already evaded the German pressure northeastward towards the Dünab line. Thus, the German attack had opened a gap about 100 kilometers wide between the two Russian armies in the direction of Wilkomierz—Swenzjany and created the prerequisites for a large encirclement operation against the Russians holding at Wilna and south of it. However, a strong assault group to exploit this favorable opportunity was lacking.

When the German 10th Army then advanced from the west towards Wilna, General Alexejew, the Commander-in-Chief of the Northwest Front, instructed his 10th Army on August 20 and again on August 26 to cover Wilna and the route to Minsk and thus protect the flank and rear of the four armies (1st, 2nd, 4th, and 3rd) adjoining to the south. General Radkewitsch extended his right wing against the threatening encirclement over the Wilia to the north and was able to draw strong and wing-structured reserves from the units supplied to him from the retreating front in Poland. However, the forces intended to close the gap at Swenzjany were consumed by simultaneous demands from the front in Courland. Before the German 12th and 8th Armies now stood the Russian 2nd and 1st Armies with a total of 32 divisions, and before the German 10th, the Russian 10th Army with about 18½ divisions. Of these, on August 25, when General Litzmann proposed to lead his three northern divisions to the right bank of the Wilna and advance on Wilna from the north, eleven divisions were deployed in the front line from Druskeniki to the Wilia, but apart from cavalry, which formed the extreme northern flank, also already three infantry divisions north of the Wilia. Furthermore, closely south of the river near Wilna, 4½ divisions were deployed in reserve, so that it should not have been difficult for the Russians at that time to halt the German thrust north of the Wilia.

¹) See overall operations p. 451 ff.  
²) See p. 481.

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The Operation of the Commander-in-Chief East against Wilna.

To achieve both, it would have been necessary to have another army, which was initially positioned behind the enveloping wing and, with the start of the attack northwest of Wilna, began the advance over Swenzjany to Wilejka. Litzmann proposed to lead his three northern divisions to the right bank of the Wilna and, encompassing from the north, to advance on Wilna, deploying eleven divisions from Druskeniki to the Wilia in the front line, but besides cavalry, which formed the outermost northern wing, also already three infantry divisions north of the Wilia. Furthermore, 4½ divisions were positioned as reserves just south of the river near Wilna, so it should not have been difficult for the Russians at that time to halt the German thrust north of the Wilia.

The following days brought the division of the Russian Northwest Front into North Front and West Front, with the gap from Swenziany falling to the North Front. Its left wing, the 5th Army, was to support the right of the West Front, the 10th Army, at Wilna as much as possible. Forces becoming available in Poland were to be directed to the North Front as a new 2nd Army in the Swenziany area. However, this measure had not yet been implemented, with only a single division having arrived at the 10th Army. On the other hand, the German attacks south of the Wilia in the last days of August had prompted the Russians to shift their focus northward to the same extent as the German 10th Army had done through its regrouping. Thus, on September 8, the eve of its new attack, this army faced 15 Russian divisions south of the Wilia on a front almost 100 kilometers wide, with the 1st and 12th opposing the 10th Army, while it itself had only seven divisions in this section (excluding the 76th Reserve Division moving to the northern Wilia bank), of which four were of low offensive strength. North of the Wilia, 4½, including reserves deployed east of Wilna, 8½ Russian divisions were now ready to repel the attack, intended for the 10½ German divisions. That was not a large numerical superiority. The German command also had to anticipate that the enemy would bring in further reinforcements, while it could hardly expect such reinforcements itself in any significant measure, rather it had to be prepared for the withdrawal of forces. Reinforcement of the 10th Army at the expense of the Njemen Army, which faced two Russian armies, was not considered feasible by the Commander-in-Chief East. It was all the more urgent to become completely clear about the goal and nature of the attack. Here, the idea of an immediate tactical victory over the enemies northwest of Wilna on the one hand, and the desire for deeper operational encirclement on the other, were in conflict.

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Battle of Wilna. Russian Measures. Considerations.

Since it was missing, there were concerns about pursuing both objectives simultaneously. If one wanted to advance operationally into the depth of the Russian flank with the limited available forces, encircle the enemy through wide-ranging maneuvers and then crush them, one also had to take the risk of further weakening the attack front west and northwest of Wilna early on and carrying out the thrust into the depth with a group of at least six, preferably eight infantry divisions. However, whether the enemy, who had shorter routes and good rail connections, would not then be able to counter the southern encircling wing with troops he also withdrew from the front west of Wilna, depended primarily on the degree of surprise achieved. It was also questionable to what extent a powerful, numerically strong encircling wing could be adequately supplied for a prolonged battle as it moved further from the railway. Thus, it seemed prudent to initially focus on the tactical victory north of Wilna. It was also considered to turn the encircling forces, which would be heavily used in this case, against the enemy's flank and rear as soon as possible. How far such a victory could then be exploited operationally had to be seen.

In fact, the attack begun on September 9 on the approximately 25-kilometer front between Wilia and Schirwinta Lake involved 6½ German divisions against 4½ Russian ones, while three German divisions undertook a wide encircling march. Gradually, other forces followed them. By September 14, on the front now extending far east of Schirwinta Lake from Wilia to the lake, 5½ German divisions faced five Russian ones, from the lake to Scheimjana three German against 2½ Russian divisions, similarly east of Scheimjana two against two divisions. Nowhere was there a German superiority that could bring a decision; still, between Wilia and Schirwinta Lake, where it was least achievable, numerous German forces were on the more than twice as long front east of the lake. Regarding the question of why more than half of the seven divisions originally assembled on the German northern wing for encirclement were used for the frontal attack and why, once that had happened, the Eben group was not immediately turned sharply southwest to participate in the battle, the then First General Staff officer of the 10th Army, Major Keller1): "The deployment was necessary to relieve the army units engaged in heavy frontal battles. The idea of encirclement was continuously kept in mind and addressed by withdrawing parts that became available at the front and shifting them eastward to maintain the connection and reinforce the encircling wing."

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The Russians had to gradually withdraw from position to position, but it is quite doubtful whether this was due more to the overall situation than to local frontal pressure. How unfavorable the conditions developed was recognized by the Eichhorn High Command after the first days of attack, and since then, all efforts were made to strengthen and extend the encircling wing by bringing up units withdrawn from the front. Whether such a procedure would have ultimately led to a significant result cannot be proven, as the Commander-in-Chief East prevented the attempt. In any case, the task had become much more difficult than it would have been with the immediate deployment of a strong flanking wing.

On the Russian side, the advance of the Germans over Swenzjany prompted them to instruct the 5th Army again on September 12 to support the 10th, to immediately deploy the first parts of the 2nd Army intended for the gap of Swenzjany over the right wing of the 10th Army around Molodeczno, and finally to deploy the entire army there under assignment to the Western Front. The news of the imminent appearance of these new Russian forces prompted the intervention of the Commander-in-Chief East on the German side on September 14. Whether the actual danger was overestimated remains to be seen; the memory of the first days of Brezezny certainly played a role. But even the now sought tactical victory at Wilna was not achieved to the extent hoped for, and the direction of the attack was also not as successful as hoped. The main reason is that the attacking power of the German troops was no longer sufficiently superior to the enemy's defensive effect. Above all, the forces of the southern wing of the 10th Army, as well as those of the 12th and 8th Armies, were so weakened by previous battles, losses, supply difficulties, and the gradual depletion of entire units that these parts of the German front were no longer able to break the enemy's serious resistance.

1) Communication from summer 1931 to the Reich Archive.

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Battle of Vilna. Russian Operations. Considerations.

In any case, they were able to withdraw entire units from the front and reinforce the threatened flank by rail and foot march. Thus, everything still depended on the rapid success and decisive outcome of the attack north of Vilna.

When the Russians then, instead of being encircled, also withdrew at Vilna, the German leadership's idea of the enveloping maneuver regained its validity. However, the prospects had further diminished after additional losses in combat strength and time.

Already on September 16, the Russian Supreme Command intervened by ordering the front of the 10th Army to be shortened further and its right flank to be strengthened. On the 17th, they were reassured that only cavalry, but no infantry, had been detected in the German "envelopment group" east of Smenziany. General Ewert, since September 2 the commander-in-chief of the Western Front, now considered further withdrawal of his armies to the line Michaliszki—Dzisna—Nowogrodek—Baranowicze necessary, and the Supreme Command retained the execution. When further parts of the 2nd Army entered the area of Molodeczno, General Ewert issued the already mentioned attack order for this and the 10th Army on September 20, which became known to the German leadership through a radio message. The goal, the line Narocz Lake—Sloboda—Gawia River, was not achieved in any way. The Russian Supreme Command therefore suggested on September 22 to withdraw the right flank of the 10th Army to Smorgon. The mission of the newly deployed 2nd Army remained to close the gap from Smenziany and to attack.

In view of this development, the German leadership and their troops tried to extract as much as possible from the situation. In the effort to intercept parts of the enemy, the utmost was achieved under the strain of all forces. Meanwhile, so much time had passed that the pressure of the Russian 2nd Army forced the left flank of the German 10th Army into defense. When Colonel General von Eichhorn ordered the cessation of the encircling attack on September 26, his 18½ infantry and five cavalry divisions faced 34 Russian infantry and six cavalry divisions on a 120-kilometer-wide front from the Beresina bend east of Bogdanowo to Dolhinow, almost double the superiority.

¹) p. 519.

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The major attack of the

10th Army did not achieve a fully satisfactory result, bringing in 16 days of fighting

and marches only about 25,000 prisoners as booty, with

more than twice as many total losses on their own side.

At the same time, however, the 8th and 12th Armies gained about 150 kilometers of ground

forward due to the successes of the 10th Army.

That the enemy, from the 32 divisions that had stood opposite at the end of August,

gradually withdrew 15½ and mostly threw them back into battle at Wilna

and to the north, could not be prevented,

especially since at the same time the number of divisions of the two

German armies was reduced from 16 to nine due to detachments.

The left wing of the German 10th Army had swung far beyond Wilna

to the east. Although the tireless work

of the railway troops succeeded in restoring continuous railway operations

after the restoration of the bridge and tunnel in Kowno as early as September 22

to the thoroughly destroyed tunnel of Landwarowo, 15 kilometers

west of Wilna), the distances

to Wilna alone were already 120, to Dolhinow more than 150 kilometers, which had to be covered

on poor country roads. Movements and battles took place

here in an area that, completely untouched by the war,

immediately after the harvest, held abundant supplies. The rapid incursion

over Swenzjany came so unexpectedly to the Russians that they had no

time to remove supplies and burn down villages as they had on previous fronts.

It was also the case that on the

outer wing of the German attack over a wide area only relatively weak forces were deployed,

which were able to solve their task more through marching

performances than through prolonged battles,

so that the ammunition requirement was temporarily kept within tolerable limits.

These circumstances explain why the troops here "never suffered from

a lack of supplies. The enormous marching performances could only

be achieved because the troops were given ample provisions.

The companies of 50 to 70 men ate their field kitchens daily (sometimes empty once in the evening").

A part of the transport columns,

which would otherwise have been necessary for supply replenishment,

could be used for ammunition transport. Thus,

complaints about supply difficulties in the 10th Army were heard late and first

from the army center and the right wing, where they soon took on a similar scale as with the 8th and 12th Armies.

1) p. 548.  
2) Notes of Lieutenant General a. D. von Cochenhausen, then  
General Staff Officer of the 115th I. D.

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Battle of Wilna. Reflections.

The justification of such complaints was acknowledged by the army command.

The railways ended for the time being about 150 kilometers behind the front at the destroyed Njemen bridges of Olita and Grodno1). In addition, the constant leftward shifting necessitated assigning filled columns of the original flank divisions to the further extended ones, so that along the length of the route, additional frictions arose, which became greater the more divisions had to be relocated along the entire front on the same approach route. Thus, it could eventually happen that, for example, a regiment of the army center reported it was combat ineffective due to a complete lack of supplies. A train collision further exacerbated the difficulties by interrupting operations to Wilna for a day.

As the battles continued in the same area, the conditions had to become increasingly difficult. On the right flank of the 10th as well as with the 8th and 12th Army, where the enemy had systematically destroyed numerous bridges during the retreat, the difficulties of warfare far from the railways became all too evident despite the still small number of deployed divisions. Similar complaints repeated as with the Gallwitz Army already in August. A picture of the conditions is given by a record in the war diary of the Plüskow Corps (General Command of the XI Army Corps), in which it states on September 5: "The 54th Infantry Division submitted a report on the worst condition of the troops due to excessive exertions and the completely inadequate supply. The mail, replacement of clothing items are missing. The wet weather is particularly noticeable due to the lack of any accommodation, as all villages are burned. The General Command is well aware of these entirely justified representations, and the General Command has repeatedly made the army aware that the troops suffer greatly in combat effectiveness due to the failure of supplies; the undernourishment of the horses appears quite worrying. It is added that apart from livestock and potatoes from the land, which is systematically devastated, nothing can be taken. The demands on the corps columns are hardly manageable, and yet the urgent needs of the troops are not fully met. The army was once again emphatically pointed out these difficulties and the harmful influence they exert on the combat effectiveness of the troops."

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The command was also fully recognized. However, effective assistance was only possible if the forward movement was halted. But that could not be considered as long as the 10th Army still hoped for success. When the Wilna operation was abandoned, the limit of what was possible in terms of supplies was reached, as well as in terms of the troops' strength: "They must also first come to rest," wrote a General Staff officer of the Commander-in-Chief East at the time¹), "receive shirts and boots; everything is torn. Then the railways must catch up with the troops..."

The German troops and their leadership had once again accomplished "superhuman" feats, according to the unanimous judgment of all those involved at key positions. "The advance and combat terrain constantly placed the highest demands on man and horse due to its partly swampy, partly deep sandy and densely wooded ground conditions, which made oversight and the cooperation of the weapons extraordinarily difficult. In doing so, the divisions had to fight in widths that exceeded the normal ones of an army corps — against an enemy who defended himself in prepared positions"²). A special task corresponding to its nature was assigned to the cavalry, which, in far-reaching movements and multiple back-and-forth marches, covered hundreds of kilometers ahead of the infantry and easily pushed back the numerically hardly inferior Russian cavalry everywhere. To break stronger resistance or to prevent the connection of Russian infantry divisions for a longer time, their strength had to be exceeded. But they also achieved what was possible with the armament and equipment of the time. "Our cavalry must take the vigor, courage, and unlimited drive of the German cavalry as a model," it was said in an instruction from the Russian Northwest Front from that time³).

All in all, the last major offensive of the Commander-in-Chief East, in addition to the possession of the large city of Wilna, had the result that the enemy's entire front north of the Rokitno swamps was pushed back another 80 kilometers and thus behind the important railway connection Lida—Dünaburg. The combat strength of the Russian troops was, although they had suffered no losses in artillery, once again decisively weakened. Especially but had, despite all the skill that the Russian leadership had shown in the execution of the operations in detail, their reputation suffered a new blow due to the retreat, which was all the more sensitive as it occurred precisely at the time when the Tsar himself had taken over the leadership of the operations, with the decision to put an end to the previous retreat.

¹) Record of Colonel von Waldow.  
²) From a communication from General von Hutier to the Reich Archive from the summer of 1931.  
³) Knox, p. 340.

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Battle of Wilna. Reflections.

3. The Battles of the Njemen Army¹) from mid-August to the end of September.

Maps 6 and 7, Sketches 26 and 28.

The N j e m e n A r m y under General O t t o v o n B e l o w had around mid-August a strength of about seven infantry and six cavalry divisions²). It stood in a line that, starting north of Janow, ran to Ssjenta, over the Birshi Lake to the Njemen, then following its course, over Mitau to the Gulf of Riga. On this approximately 300-kilometer-long front, about nine Russian infantry and eight cavalry divisions³) seemed to be facing them. General von Below had, as before, to cover the northern flank of the Eastern Army and sought to solve this task as offensively as possible. His inquiry as to whether the army was later to be primarily directed towards Wilna or Riga was answered by the Eastern Commander-in-Chief on August 15, stating that the army should be prepared to advance "on Wilkomierz," thus towards Wilna. When General von Below then gained the impression that the enemy, who had just harassed his left flank south of the Friedrichstadt—Mitau section, was weakening there and consisted only of a few combat-effective troops, parts of the XXXVII Corps and cavalry, he believed he had the opportunity for tactical success by quickly seizing this position and decided to advance suddenly from the area of Bausk to the north. The Eastern Commander-in-Chief gave his consent in the order of August 19⁴).

¹) Connection to p. 468 ff.  
²) From the right flank: Cav. Corps Richthofen (S.R.R. 1 with 4th, 3rd, and Bavarian S.R.D.) and Group Lauenstein (Gen. Rdo. XXXIX. R. with Div. Bötmann 78. Q.R.D.), I. G.R.R. (1st and 36th R.D.), Group Schmettow (S.R. 5 newly formed with 2nd, 6th, 12th, and 8th R.R.D.), 3rd Homeyer, 6th R.D. with Det. Dänau on p. 483.  
³) In fact, there were ten infantry and 9½ cavalry divisions.  
⁴) p. 483.

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However, the main thrust expected from the first day's attack did not materialize. The intended surprise was not successful; the enemy had found time to evade the decisive thrust of the 41st Infantry Division, initially unnoticed, by retreating to a rear position and thus escaping the encirclement intended for him. In battles where the extensive and unprotected right flank occasionally caused concern, the advance approached the Dvina west of Friedrichstadt in the following days. When the Commander-in-Chief East then ordered on August 26 to "continue to cover the flank of the army," and to push the left wing of the army as far as possible to the Dvina, the right in view of the advances of the 10th Army over the Swienta, Friedrichstadt became the target of the Schmettow Group. In response to the repeated inquiry from General von Below, whether after the capture of this city the operation against Riga should continue or a strike against the enemy in front of the southern wing of the army should be conducted, the Commander-in-Chief East decided on August 28, considering the operations of the 10th Army, for the latter direction.

After the enemy had meanwhile also been driven out of the Niemen bend southwest of Friedrichstadt, the storm on Friedrichstadt was to begin on August 29 after four days of artillery preparation, but it had to be abandoned because the effect against the strongly fortified positions was insufficient. They wanted to wait for the return of the mortars temporarily assigned to the attack on Kowno. The command in this part of the front was transferred on August 31 to the Higher Cavalry Commander 1, Lieutenant General Baron von Richthofen, with the task of pushing the Russians back over the Dvina section Friedrichstadt—Lennewaden and thoroughly destroying the railway running beyond the river Dünaburg—Riga. After preparations and battles, the 8th Cavalry Division under Major General Count Schmettow (Eberhard) captured the Russian bridgehead at Lennewaden on September 2, and the 41st Infantry Division under Major General Schmidt von Knobelsdorf captured Friedrichstadt on September 3. Thus, the Dvina was reached. However, the destruction of the railway beyond the river could only be assigned to the artillery, which primarily targeted the section at Lennewaden so effectively that the Russians had to reroute traffic via Plestlau.

1) p. 487.

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In addition, the eleven-day operation captured around 5000 prisoners, almost

half of them on September 2 and 3, and two guns as spoils.

Meanwhile, on the right wing of the army, the Lauenstein group had already

been able to advance their lines over the Swjenta at various points by the end

of August. Here, the 3rd Cavalry Division, after the 4th had withdrawn to the

10th Army\*), formed the right wing and had advanced by September 3 in

connection with the advance of the Cavalry Corps Garnier of this army to the

area south of Wilkomierz.

The army group order of August 29\*) had not changed the task. General von

Below wanted to attack the enemy, who was standing in front of the center of

his army, the I Reserve Corps, on both sides of the railway to Dünaburg. He

thought to bring him to retreat by advancing the Lauenstein group on Uxjany

in the south and encircling by the Richthofen group from the north and to

throw him back on Dünaburg. The Commander-in-Chief East assigned the

88th Infantry Division, initially intended for the 10th Army, to the right wing

of the Njemen Army\*).

The execution of the operation was delayed. The Richthofen group, in its

attempt to gain space for the later encirclement initially along the Düna to the

east, against Taborkraft, encountered a strong enemy counterattack and

therefore advanced only slowly. The High Command had reports by

September 9 that north of the previously opposing Russian 5th Army, a new

Russian 12th Army was being formed from parts of the 5th and newly

brought-in troops\*). The Richthofen group, meanwhile reinforced by the 78th

Reserve Division, initially held firm opposite it at the Pißtern section.

Moreover, the further operations of the army were under the guiding

principles of covering the left flank of the German attack deployed against

Wilna on that day. To this end, on September 9, the Lauenstein group (now

3rd Cavalry Division, Division Bettmann, and following 88th Infantry

Division) on the southern flank, in direct connection with the advance of the

cavalry 10th Army, launched an attack on Uxjany. However, it seemed

urgent to push the Russians back across the entire front and also to break the

resistance in the north. General von Below sought success also further on the flanks, especially since Lieutenant General von Morgen was of the opinion that the forces of his I Reserve Corps were no longer sufficient for an attack on the strong enemy front after multiple detachments.

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also continued on the flanks, especially since Lieutenant General von Morgen was of the opinion that the forces of his I Reserve Corps were no longer sufficient for the attack on the strong enemy front after multiple detachments.

While on the right the Lauenstein group, especially the Bockmann division, continued to advance against Dünaburg and reached the height of Lake Mownisch on September 11, the right wing of the Schmettow group was to break through the Niemen into the northern flank of the enemy held by the I Reserve Corps on that day. These decisions remained even when a strong Russian attack from Jakobstadt hit the northern flank of the encirclement on the same day. "The continuation of the offensive of the right wing on Dünaburg was daring under these circumstances," it says in the war diary of the Eastern Commander-in-Chief. However, the success was not lacking; on the night of September 12, the enemy retreated.

The pursuit, taken up with emphasis on the entire army front on September 13, led the right wing of the Niemen Army against the positions in front of the small fortress of Dünaburg, which had already been thoroughly explored by aircraft in the extended bridgehead — stretching from Nowo Alexandrowo to Illurt about 15 kilometers in front of the Düna. The idea of simultaneously penetrating with the retreating enemy proved impracticable; the Russians halted the German advance at the fortified lake narrows west of Nowo Alexandrowo. Further north, German cavalry reached the western edge of the Düna lowlands. Here too, the enemy held a larger bridgehead in front of Jakobstadt, which had a depth of about seven kilometers in difficult-to-access lowland terrain.

The main efforts continued to focus primarily on the capture of Dünaburg. The Eastern Commander-in-Chief also placed decisive importance on expelling the Russians from this bridgehead, which posed a constant threat to the German northern wing due to its railway connections. Furthermore, he was concerned with the idea of gradually gaining control of the entire left bank of the Düna, initially the bridgehead from Jakobstadt to Dünaburg, but above all the extremely important large commercial and industrial city of Riga for Russian army supply. However, a lack of forces eventually forced him to abandon the final goal.

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The Battles of the Njemen Army.

Before Dünaburg, the Russian position, interrupted by lakes over long stretches, extended from the Wilna railway in the south to the connection with the river in the north, covering a distance of over 60 kilometers. Five German infantry divisions were deployed against this; approximately equal forces stood opposite, as was correctly assumed. After the arrival of heavy batteries, the northwest section of the enemy lines was subjected to two hours of effective fire on September 17. However, the subsequent assault only allowed the Bredmann Division to advance a larger section, where a particularly effective artillery flanking was possible across the lakes; the division captured 11,000 prisoners. The enemy then completely abandoned the lake positions on the night of September 20 in the face of a threatening new attack. The German encirclement line could be pushed forward beyond Nowo Alexandrowk to the east and thus significantly shortened. The attack undertaken on September 21 against the northwest section brought only local successes, while losses increased. Thus, in the 88th Infantry Division, consisting of older cohorts, more than half of the infantry regiment and battalion commanders had fallen or were wounded since the beginning of the attack. The striking power of the troops eventually diminished.

Meanwhile, since September 14, the Bavarian cavalry division had already been sent south to take over the immediate rear protection for the 10th Army and then join it. On September 22, the 2nd Cavalry Division, deployed north of Dünaburg, followed, which the next day, under the command of General von Richthofen, together with the newly arrived 3rd Infantry Division and the 1st Cavalry Division sent by the 10th Army, was to take over the security between the Narocz and Dryswjaty lakes. Before Dünaburg, the Russians were gradually pushed back further by the I Reserve Corps in tough fighting. On the other hand, an attack against the German positions at Mitau now seemed to be preparing, where under General von Pappritz only troops with the strength of 1½ infantry divisions and ½ cavalry division were stationed.

1) From the right: Group Lauenstein (Gen. Kdo. XXXIX. R. R. with 88. I. D. and Div. Bredmann), reinforced I. R. R. (36., 1. and 78 R. R. D.)  
2) C. 508.  
3) S. 519.  
4) 6. R. D., Abtlg. Libau, 18 R. Br.

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The Njemen Army had initially faced the Russian 5th Army1) under General Plehwe in the summer, with a strength of more than ten infantry and 9½ cavalry divisions2), tasked with holding the Dvina line, and so far especially Riga with the naval fortification of Dünamünde, and the fortress of Dünaburg. At the end of August, the right wing of the army below Jakobstadt was detached from the 12th Army under General Gorbatowski, but the number of troops deployed was only increased by two divisions (II Siberian Corps) and was not further increased during the immediate formation of the "Northern Front" under General Russki3). Rather, the new Northern Front had to give up two divisions again soon for the battle at Vilna4). Even the reinforcements intended for it (several corps and the newly formed 2nd Army) were not provided to it except for four infantry5) and some cavalry divisions. But even these reinforcements arrived at the Dvina only gradually with great delays, the last only towards the end of September. As an emergency measure, a number of individual replacement battalions were transferred from the interior of the Reich.

Thus, the Russian Northern Front was able to hold its ground on the Dvina and in the bridgeheads of Riga, Jakobstadt, and Dünaburg against the repeated and skillfully conducted attacks of the numerically inferior German army, but was in no way able to carry out the repeatedly ordered offensive since September 12 to relieve the neighboring armies6) struggling heavily northeast of Vilna. The fact that the railway along the Dvina was under German fire made the rapid shift of forces required for this from the right to the left wing of the army group more difficult. General Russki complained that his troops were insufficient to solve the tasks assigned to him; the reinforcements were delayed in number and quality, leaving much to be desired; it seemed that his front section was only given "third-rate importance."

1) p. 448 ff. and 469 ff.  
2) Starting from the Russian left wing: 2nd Finnish Div.; 3½ Cav. Div.; III Corps with 1½ Inf. Div., XIX Corps with 2½ Inf. Div., 4½ Cav. Div.; XXXVII Corps with 1½ Inf. and 1 Cav. Div.; VII Siberian Corps with 3 Inf. Div., ½ Cav. Div. and some Adv. Brig.  
3) p. 451.  
4) p. 448.  
5) ½ XXIII, XXVIII, and ½ XXIX Corps.  
6) p. 528.

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The Battles of the Njemen Army.

The official Russian account¹) considers these complaints of the commander-in-chief of the Northern Front to be exaggerated and points out that his chief of staff, Major General Bončich-Brujewitsch, reported on September 27 that the opposing German troops received mostly untrained 45-year-old reservists and only a few young soldiers as replacements; their total strength had not changed. The account concludes that the Russian troops on this front showed insufficient resistance, as the Germans were weak in number, and their artillery played no decisive role, as they lacked large calibers.

Over a wide area and with limited forces, only eight divisions of infantry on a 250-kilometer front, German leadership and troops also gave their best here, thereby covering the rear of the 10th Army's encirclement operation in an exemplary manner. This also raises the question of whether it would have been possible to instead deploy parts of the Njemen Army for an encirclement attack, thus taking forces away from the already extremely weak front against the Dvina. Given the two Russian armies facing the Dvina and the possibility of their rapid significant reinforcement due to favorable rail connections, such an attempt would have been a gamble²), which was hardly justified by the overall situation.

¹) Njesnamow, p. 114 and 123 f. ²) p. 506, 510 note 3, and 543 note 1.

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G. The Capture of the Permanent Position and the Events up to the End of the Year with the Commander-in-Chief East¹).

According to the order of the Supreme Army Command of September 25, the permanent position in the section of the Commander-in-Chief East was to run from the mouth of the Beresyna into the Njemen to the Baltic Sea coast. The connection at the Gulf of Riga resulted in by far the shortest line. It also measured almost 400 kilometers in the air. However, the troops had already advanced almost 100 kilometers beyond this shortest line to the east on a broad front and were engaged in fierce battles against attacking enemies east of Wilna, but also near Dünaburg. Overall, the Commander-in-Chief East currently had 37½ infantry divisions and nine cavalry divisions, but could only count on about 28 divisions of infantry in the long run²).

Under these circumstances, all previous far-reaching plans, such as advancing to Minsk and capturing Riga, had to be finally abandoned³). But even the battle east of Wilna, which no longer promised any major territorial gains, had to be abandoned if further execution of the attack against Dünaburg became questionable. A line as short as possible and favorable for defense had to be chosen, and the front at Wilna even had to be moved back. That the enemy could count such a retreat as a victory had to be accepted.

On September 27, the Commander-in-Chief East presented a report on the situation and intentions, requested by the Supreme Army Command, stating that it would probably not be possible to repel the enemy before the right wing of the 10th Army. He was continuously strengthening and extending his wing east of Wilna and apparently bringing forces into the area east of the Narocz-See-Dünaburg line. An imminent offensive against this line had to be expected. The offensive of the 8th and 10th Army is therefore suspended. The 10th Army initially bends its left wing back to the Narocz-See and moves forces from its center to the area north of the Narocz-See. A reinforcement of the left wing of the Njemen Army is also necessary. The army group occupies its permanent position in the line Berezyna-Mündung—Narocz-See—area west of Dünaburg—Mitau—Schloß. As soon as possible, further forces would be released for the Supreme Army Command, with a general command and three divisions ready to be handed over in the coming days. However, it was not yet clear how many divisions could then still be handed over and in what time frames.

¹) p. 522 ff. and 537 f. ²) p. 524. ³) p. 521 ff. and 536.

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Line Guidance of the Permanent Position.

As soon as possible, further forces would be released for the Supreme Army Command, a general command and three divisions prepared for transfer in the coming days. How many divisions could then still be transferred and in what time frames, however, could not yet be foreseen.

After the armies had already been informed about the intentions in general and had been instructed about the manner of execution, the Commander-in-Chief East firmly set the line guidance for the permanent position on September 28. It was to run from the Njemen to the Lida—Molodeczno railway along the Berezyna, thus in the previous front, then over the Narocz Lake to the Dryswjaty Lake and further along the Düna following the current position of the Njemen Army. Although it was the very last line, it offered such great advantages over this one by exploiting natural obstacles that it was expected to be held with the least forces. The position was to gain a certain depth by laying several lines and behind it, at a short distance, a second position was to be explored and prepared. At the same time, efforts began to reorganize the units, which had been mixed up due to the battles, and to restructure the entire front. The previous 8th Army was dissolved and had to transfer its troops to the 12th Army; its deputy commander, General von Scholz, with Lieutenant Colonel Count von Schwerin as Chief of Staff, was soon to take over a newly forming army group between the 10th and the Njemen Army, which would then be assigned the area from the Düna to halfway Dünaburg—Jakobstadt. Hand in hand with these changes went the redistribution of forces to the individual armies.

The occupation of the permanent position proceeded generally according to plan, but still under numerous local battles. They were most intense with the 10th and the Njemen Army, in the area east of Wilna and at Dünaburg.

For the 10th Army, it was important to shorten the front in the area west of Molodeczno by removing the protruding Russian position arc from Smorgon. In doing so, the right wing of the Litzmann group made good progress south of the city on September 27. On September 28, the extreme left wing of the old 8th Army, General von Frommel with the 83rd Infantry and 11th Landwehr Division, gained ground at the Berezyna bend northeast of Wiszniew and captured more than 3,000 prisoners and nine machine guns.

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The Events Until the End of the Year at the Commander-in-Chief East.

However, the battle for the city of Smorgon itself was particularly stubborn. Here, the left wing of Group Litzmann from the west and the right of Group Eben from the northeast worked together, but only the attack of the latter (3rd Reserve and 31st Infantry Division) on the eastern bank of the Wilia from the north advanced, capturing 400 prisoners and six guns on September 29 and advancing deep into the northwest of Smorgon on September 30. The further advance of the left wing of Group Litzmann, however, stalled due to a lack of ammunition. Surrounded in a bow of only four kilometers in diameter from the west, north, and east, the Russians managed to hold the city of Smorgon. Meanwhile, the left wing of the German 10th Army had disengaged from the enemy, after the latter had dealt a serious blow to the 77th Reserve Division east of Wilejka on September 27. Otherwise, the retreat proceeded according to plan and largely undisturbed to a line running from the Wilia east of Smorgon over the Wiszniew Lake to the Narocz Lake. The Russians followed and captured, according to their own account¹), abandoned vehicles and ammunition, while "only very few prisoners" fell into their hands. The idea of inflicting further damage on them through a counterattack was abandoned by the German 10th Army Command when reports arrived on the night of September 30, including a Russian order captured by the 9th Cavalry Division, which still expected a deep advance by the approximately four-division strong cavalry corps Kasnakow from the east into the gap north of the Narocz Lake for that day.

The wide area between the Narocz Lake and Dünaburg, reliably blocking the border area of the 10th and Njemen Army, had not yet been sufficient for the German forces. Again and again, smaller Russian detachments had penetrated here from the east. Thus, on September 28, the cavalry of the Njemen Army under General von Richthofen had to clear Postawy, Kosjany on the Disna, and Dutschi of the enemy. By September 30, four German cavalry divisions were available between the Narocz and Driswiaty Lakes and expected Russian advances, but they only came on October 1 and were without difficulty repelled at Kosjany and south on this and the next day.

¹) Njesnamow, p. 122.

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Battle for Smorgon. Capture of the Permanent Position.

Meanwhile, it had also been possible to close the gap that still existed from the northern end of Lake Dryswjaty to the German positions in front of Dünaburg, so that by early October a continuous, albeit still quite thin, defensive line had been established on both sides of the Dvina on the entire front of the Commander-in-Chief East.

Precisely here, in the area of Krosjany and north to Lake Dryswjaty, the enemy continued his efforts against the weak German forces stationed here in the following days with great superiority, with his entire IV Corps²⁵) being identified in addition to strong cavalry. Meanwhile, German infantry had also arrived, so that the stubborn attempts of the enemy, repeatedly made on October 3 and the following days, finally encountered the resistance of five German infantry and 5½ cavalry divisions and could since then be more easily repelled everywhere.

Now the Supreme Army Command, as it had long anticipated²⁶), demanded further contributions, which it urgently needed in view of the difficult situation in the West and the Serbian campaign²⁷). These could only be provided without endangering the defense in the extended lines of the Commander-in-Chief East, after these had been further consolidated and the position construction had made some progress. The 10th Army estimated the enemy at their front at the time to be 38 divisions; this was more than the total forces of the Commander-in-Chief East²⁸). In an assessment of the situation demanded by the Supreme Army Command, it was explained to them on October 6: "Russians are attacking the 10th Army and the right wing of the Niemen Army with all their might with the intention of breaking through to the Dünaburg—Wilna road or at least making it impossible to withdraw further forces of the Eastern Army to the West through their attack. I expect that it will be possible to prevent the enemy from breaking off." A contribution of further forces, it was then said, was impossible and could only occur, if the attack was repelled, after a shortening of the front had been achieved by taking Smorgon and the bridgehead of Dünaburg.

²⁵) In fact, between Postawy and Lake Dryswjaty from the south, the Russian I, IV, XIV Corps with a total of 6½ infantry divisions and 8 cavalry divisions were stationed.  
²⁶) See pages 483 and 492.  
²⁷) See page 502.  
²⁸) In fact, the 10th Army faced only about 30 Russian infantry and 9½ cavalry divisions, in addition to 11½ infantry and 3 cavalry divisions north of Lake Narocz.

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The Events Until the End of the Year at the Supreme Commander East.

The shortening of the front was all the more necessary as the Supreme Commander also had to withdraw reserves from the center for his own needs to lead the left wing, as any potential breach of the front at Mitau "would have serious consequences."

General von Falkenhayn immediately responded: "Undoubtedly, it would be advantageous if the current position of the army group could be permanently held and additionally a push towards Dünaburg could be exerted." However, if the question arises whether the retention of forces is permissible, whose absence on the Western Front could endanger the German position, it must be absolutely denied. He suggested shortening the front if necessary by retreating to the line Smorgoń—Dünaburg—Bausk or even to one that runs straight from Smorgoń to Bausk. However, the allocations must be adhered to; the heaviest guns could only be transferred once they were freed from the Serbian front after the Danube crossing. In contrast, the Supreme Commander East emphasized on October 7 that the position currently occupied, with or without shortening at Smorgoń and Dünaburg, was by far the most favorable that could be taken. It should be held with a minimum of forces. Any rearward position that dispensed with the protection of the Düna would require more, but at least the same forces as the position without shortening the front. He therefore left it at the line previously ordered for the permanent position. On the other hand, General von Falkenhayn did not insist on the release of all units requested in September; instead of 13, only nine infantry divisions were eventually dispatched).

Meanwhile, the 10th Army repelled all attacks directed against its left wing. However, their forces were so engaged that the idea of taking Smorgoń had to be finally abandoned on October 11. Also, on both sides of the Düna, where the Russian pressure persisted, the thinly manned front was withdrawn on October 19 from Kossjany by about 15 kilometers to Widzy, where the defensive conditions were considered more favorable by the troops than in the previously held forward line.

With the Njemen Army, the attack on Dünaburg was continued as far as the forces allowed. On October 6, 7, and 8, the I. Reserve Corps under General von Morgen (36th, 1st, and 78th Reserve Division) made progress against the northwest front of the bridgehead and captured 1350 prisoners.

1) G. 524 Amm. 1. — 31., 42., 115. I. D. and 6. R. D. remained with the Supreme Commander East.

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Battles of the Njemen Army.

However, on October 9, fierce Russian counterattacks began, which were repeated on October 11, 14, and 17, and also extended further south. They were unsuccessful everywhere. On the German side, it was necessary to hold back for the time being, as heavy artillery and ammunition were scarce, and the unfavorable railway conditions excluded rapid and regular supply. Thus, the attack against the northwest front could only be resumed on October 23 after the artillery was reinforced. 14 batteries of heavy and heaviest artillery prepared the assault of the 2nd Infantry, 78th, and 1st Reserve Division, which then broke into the enemy positions over a width of ten kilometers. They reached Illuxt, captured 3700 prisoners and 12 machine guns, and inflicted extraordinarily heavy bloody losses on the Russian masses retreating against the Düna bridges. But then the attack came to a halt. A further success achieved on October 26 had only local significance.

Overall, despite the use of stronger artillery and all the efforts of the troops, the goal of reaching the Düna line was not decisively closer; this would have required significantly stronger attacking forces than the railway situation allowed to bring in and equip with war supplies. Since October 1, two months earlier than originally proposed, the Bajohren—Prekuln¹) connecting railway had been put into operation, and thus a line independent of the sea connection to Schwallen—Poniewiez and Mitau was opened, the situation was initially only slightly eased, as the performance of the new route was still very low. The enemy still held a bridgehead on the west bank of the Düna, which extended about 20 kilometers north from the fortress of Dünaburg and had a depth of about ten kilometers. The Commander-in-Chief East found the progress made unsatisfactory in the overall situation. He feared the onset of frost before the troops could expand the permanent position and therefore suggested on October 27 to stop the attack. General von Below, however, like General von Morgen and their subordinates, saw a decisive improvement in the positions from gaining the Düna bank and also believed that stopping the attack, before the goal was reached, would negatively affect the troops. They wanted to try to continue it. However, when this attempt had to be postponed on October 30 due to the ammunition situation, they were also in favor of stopping the attack. The order for this was given on November 1 by the Commander-in-Chief East.

1) p. 458 and 548.  
\*) World War. Volume VIII.

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The Events Until the End of the Year with the Commander-in-Chief East.

They wanted to try to continue it. However, when this attempt had to be postponed on October 30 due to the ammunition situation, they were also in favor of stopping the attack. The order for this was given on November 1 by the Commander-in-Chief East.

General Otto von Below had also been eager to simultaneously advance the positions at Mitau further against the Düna with the attack on Dünaburg and thereby shorten the overall line. This goal was achieved on October 15 through a surprise attack led by Lieutenant General Hans von Below, launched in a wide front by the 6th Reserve Division, 6th Landwehr, and 174th Infantry Brigade1), which brought in 1000 prisoners. The German position then ran along the Düna to Kirchholm and then at the southern edge of the Riga protruding Tirul-Gumpf westward to the coast at Schloss. Thus, the enemy also held here, as well as at Dünaburg and Jakobstadt, an extensive bridgehead on the left bank of the Düna.

All in all, the October battles of the Njemen Army once again brought in 12,000 prisoners and 37 machine guns as booty. However, they also faced about 15,000 of their own losses.

The situation on the sea flank2), which was now stretched from the Reich border to 360 kilometers, remained constantly uncertain. English submarines that had penetrated the Baltic Sea and Russian mines not only hindered trade traffic to Finland, the only one still open to the German hand, but also caused losses to the German Baltic Sea forces, which from July to the end of the year included an armored cruiser, two small cruisers, and about twelve other vehicles, while corresponding losses of the more restrained Russian fleet were not opposed. Instead, it had gained a significant increase through four new battleships. If it did not exploit its great superiority in any way, but continued to limit itself to covering the way to Petersburg in the Finnish Gulf as before, this was mainly due to the presence of this hostile force together with the English submarines and the ever-newly emerging mine barriers on the overall situation in the Baltic Sea. The sea route to Libau was constantly endangered, its harbor defenseless against long-range fire from ship guns. The Gulf of Riga was still a dominion of the Russian fleet secured by mine barriers against German ships, whose forces repeatedly disturbed the German coastal surveillance with artillery fire and small landing operations.

1) Previously Brig. Sommever.  
2) See p. 468. For more details, see "War at Sea," Baltic Sea II, p. 268 ff.

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Situation at Sea. New 8th Army and Army Group Scholz.

The Commander-in-Chief East felt compelled to reinforce the coastal section with a cavalry division. However, the bombardments were found to be so unpleasant as securing against them was hardly possible. Long-range guns requested for defense could not be provided by the Supreme Army Command for the time being, and the fleet was not in a position to help unless at least the island of Ösel was taken, thereby providing the necessary support for a permanent establishment in the Gulf of Riga. Such a far-reaching enterprise was not feasible for the time being due to a lack of forces. Only when the sea bay froze over could peace from the sea be hoped for.

At the entire land front of the Commander-in-Chief East, combat activity decreased as the construction of positions progressed and the situation stabilized, while at the same time fatigue from the enormous exertions of the long summer campaign, lack of ammunition, and the onset of winter imposed restrictions on both sides. Between the 10th and 19th, the November Army, now designated as the "8th Army," was formed on October 28 from contributions from both Army Group Scholz, whose front, starting at Widsh, was extended northward to below Dünaburg in the first days of November. Here, the Russians had made a strong advance shortly before, on November 6, using very explosive Japanese ammunition, which inflicted serious losses on the German 36th Reserve Division. After continuous attack battles, this unit had to be withdrawn in peace because the "supply was inadequate, bringing in winter items was not possible due to urgent ammunition transports"; the men of the division were "partly only dressed in rags."

Overall, the land front measured 590 kilometers after the conclusion of the battles, secured by 33 infantry, 7½ cavalry divisions, and 52 Landsturm battalions; the enemy seemed to be facing six infantry divisions and 1½ cavalry divisions. 1⅓ German cavalry divisions and two Landsturm battalions were deployed on the coast.

1) C. 468. — 2) C. 541.  
3) War diary of Army Group Scholz.  
4) C. 524 and 540. — 5) See 80th R. D. (Brig. Monteon), 108th J. D. (Div. Beckmann), 109th J. D. (174th J. Br. [Sommer]) and 17th Ldw. D. (Abt. Eisebed) were unnamed or newly formed.

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The Events up to the End of the Year at the Supreme Commander East.

The number of troops and combat activity had decreased, but the supply needs had not, as construction and winter preparations prompted extensive new demands. Far-sighted, strenuous work by the railway authorities and troops was necessary to bridge transport facilities in the held border areas with limited resources away from the Russians. East of the Vistula, at the beginning of the war, only three railway lines led into Russia via Mlava, Ostrolenka, and Kowno, with only the last being double-tracked. In the winter of 1914/15, the connection Marggrabowa-Gumbinnen, established by the Russians, was added, then, built by German railway troops, in August the Willenberg-Ostrolenka railway and since October 1st the Bajohren-Prekuln line, while at the same time the partially sustained destructions on the conquered Russian lines were repaired. During the Narew operation, railway constructions and restorations in northern Poland had priority, with the aim of gaining connection to the eastward leading Russian main lines east of the likely destroyed Vistula Bridge from Warsaw and the Bug Bridge from Malkin. Later, the restoration of the double-tracked railway over Kowno to Wilna became particularly important. West of Wilna, the tunnel from Landwarowo could only be made passable by October 10th. The Njemen Bridge at Olita was not completed until November 25th, and the Njemen Bridge in Grodno not until December 5th, and accordingly, traffic was resumed forward of these points. Meanwhile, the railway network still showed very large deficiencies; above all, it was unable to handle more than the most urgent supplies north of the Njemen. Since the completion of the railway bridges from Olita and Grodno, the conditions improved somewhat by relieving the Kowno route. The deficiencies of the very low-capacity Lithuanian railway network could not be remedied in the foreseeable future. Here, troops and replacement transports remained dependent on sleds or even on foot marches from Tilsit, easily exceeding the railway's capacity for the most urgent supply demands of the troops, leading to traffic disruptions until conditions stabilized. Thus, a general traveling on behalf of the Supreme Army Command needed 29 hours for the journey from the Supreme Command 10 in Wilna to Schallen (200 kilometers), and from there to the Supreme Command 8 in Poniewiez (80 kilometers) another 24 hours.

1) p. 530.

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Railway Installation and Permanent Position.

The activity of the Commander-in-Chief East, who had moved his headquarters from Libau to Kowno since October 21, was dedicated, in addition to purely military tasks, to the administration of the occupied Russian territory, which also included the area behind the army group Prince Leopold and thus, despite the separation of the General Government Warsaw, still covered around 220,000 square kilometers. From this area, which in size corresponded to about two-fifths of the then German Empire, it was necessary not only to supply one's own troops with provisions and horses but also to send them to the homeland and the Western Army as much as possible.

When the Emperor visited the area of the Commander-in-Chief East with General von Falkenhayn at the end of the year, Field Marshal von Hindenburg reported to him on December 12 in Vilna about the situation. He considered the right wing and the center of his front to be secured; the construction of positions had already made good progress here. As reserves, the 12th and 10th Armies and the Army Detachment Scholtz could only pull out one mixed brigade each. The situation appeared more endangered with the new 8th Army. Here one had to be prepared for Russian attacks, especially as soon as, after the onset of frost, the Dvina, the lakes, and swampy areas would no longer pose an obstacle. However, only two infantry divisions stood as reserves behind this front; reinforcement was desired here. The Commander-in-Chief East did not expect larger landings on the coast, but rather annoying bombardments from the sea and the threat from agents and spies who were deployed behind the own line. So far, as he further explained, it had been possible to compensate for the lack of troops through mobility; however, this assistance failed in the interior of Russia. The railway conditions did not allow for rapid shifts; where a troop stood, it generally had to be used.

1) p. 351.

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H. The Pursuit of the Army Groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold after the Fall of Brest Litovsk

The German Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army had in August given his approval to the proposals of the Commander-in-Chief East and Generaloberst von Conrad to shift the focus of the offensive from the center of the allied army front to the flanks, with the condition that the planned, spatially widely separated special operations against parts of the Russian army should not result in a continuation of the offensive along the entire line for an indefinite period. For weeks, his primary concern as the leader of overall operations was to make sufficient forces available as soon as possible for the campaign against Serbia, deemed absolutely necessary. Additionally, the possibility had to be considered that the Western opponents would deploy their reserves, which had grown to nearly 50 infantry divisions, against this offensive. It was also necessary to strengthen the Eastern forces. This was most feasible from the center of the front in Russia. For these purposes, General von Falkenhayn withdrew strong troops from the Mackensen army group from August 25 onwards in rapid succession.

On August 27, Generaloberst von Conrad agreed to the proposal that in the future, instructions to the Mackensen army group should come solely from the German supreme army command. As a result, the rest of the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army and the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps were also withdrawn from this army group. However, Generaloberst von Conrad did not immediately relinquish all influence on the progress of operations on the German front. Understandably, it was important to him that during the partial operation he planned in Eastern Galicia, the Russian army would be occupied on its other fronts.

1) Connection to C. 435. — 2) C. 614.  
3) From August 26, the 101st Infantry Division, on August 28 and 29 the Guard Corps, on September 1 the 11th Bavarian Infantry Division, on September 2 the 4th Infantry Division, on September 3 the 103rd and 105th Infantry Divisions, on September 4 the XXII Reserve Corps and the 25th Reserve Division of the Beskiden Corps, on September 7 the 20th Infantry Division, on September 9 the General Command X Reserve and the 19th Infantry Division.

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The Pursuit Continues East of Brest Litowsk.

Thus, he not only returned to his earlier proposal, expressed in the spirit of Field Marshal von Hindenburg, to reinforce his army group for the upcoming offensive on Vilna, but he also suggested simultaneous actions by the army groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold up to the area of Pinsk and to the Jasiolda. General von Falkenhayn remained steadfast against these proposals, maintaining the position he had already justified in a letter to Colonel General von Conrad on August 26: "Certainly, strengthening the Kronow Group is desirable, but it is far more important that the Dardanelles are closed, and that the iron in Bulgaria is forged while it is hot. Consequently, the forces we can withdraw from the Brest Litowsk area, without initially loosening the grip on the enemy's throat, must be sent to the Danube."

The initial impetus for the operations of the army groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold not coming to a halt after the capture of Brest Litowsk, contrary to the intentions of General von Falkenhayn, came from the High Command of the Mackensen Army Group. Already on the evening of August 26, Major General von Seeckt had expressed in a report to the Supreme Army Command the view that stubborn enemy resistance on this side of the large Jasiolda swamps was not to be expected, and that apparently "there was still the prospect of a generous encirclement of the Russian army," provided that the advance of the Hindenburg Army Group on and over Vilna was considered promising. The cooperation of the Mackensen and Prince Leopold army groups in this regard manifested in an advance over the line Kobryn—Kamieniec Litowsk in the direction of Pruzana under cover against the east and closure of the southern edge of the Bialoviez forest. Field Marshal von Mackensen therefore also continued the pursuit of the Bug Army and the 11th Army eastward on August 27. Also, with the Prince Leopold Army Group, the Woyrsch Army Detachment forced the crossing over the Lesna Prawa under combat, while the 9th Army continued the blockade of the Bialoviez forest.

The confidence expressed by Major General von Seeckt in assessing the overall situation did not leave an impression on General von Falkenhayn. Although he adhered to fundamental instructions for the operations of the coming period¹), which were issued on the night of August 28, that the army groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold should halt their advance eastward at the swampy terrain east of the line Ratno—Kobryn—Szereszów and only remain with smaller mixed units on all roads at the enemy.

¹) p. 489.

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The Pursuit of the Army Groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold.

Both army groups were also tasked with the immediate construction of field positions along the general line Bug—Brest Litowsk—extent of the Bialowiez forest—mouth of the Narewta into the Narew, which should be suitable for holding with as few forces as possible. At the same time, however, General von Falkenhayn pointed to early grouping for an advance of the inner flanks of both army groups, which would be directed against the enemy's rear connections north of the Bialowiez forest.

As a result, Field Marshal von Mackensen ordered on August 28 that the Bug Army should continue its assigned pursuit over Andropol—Kobryn only as far as there was still hope of impacting the southern flank of the Russian forces retreating eastward. The 11th Army was also to pursue only with its right wing up to the Muchawiec section. However, its left wing (the corps Kosch\* reinforced by four infantry divisions) was to advance to Pruzana in conjunction with the action ordered by Field Marshal Prince Leopold of the army detachment Woyrsch on Szereszów to create the conditions for a continuation of the offensive northward. The desired flank pressure of the Bug Army did not materialize. The enemy was pushed back purely frontally in fierce and for him costly battles until August 29 over the line Kobryn—Szczereszów. This resulted in a strong destruction and weakening of his units. The 11th Army alone captured 3700 prisoners on August 29. The army detachment Woyrsch encountered strong resistance on both sides of Szereszów. Aerial reconnaissance reported the departure of endless columns up to and beyond the Szcara, extensive troop gatherings near Pruzana, and heavy column traffic from there to Glonim and from Rozana northward. At the Kosów station, on the Brest Litowsk—Baranowicze railway, large supplies were stored.

General von Falkenhayn believed, based on the booty numbers and reconnaissance results transmitted to him on the evening of August 29, that there was still the possibility of inflicting heavy damage on the enemy by further sharp pursuit of the Mackensen army group in a northeasterly direction up to the Jasiolda section.

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General von Falkenhayn wants to continue the pursuit.

He informed the high commands of both army groups during the night that he had no objections to such an operation with a simultaneous advance of the army group Prince Leopold over Pruzana. However, since only slow frontal pushing back of the Russians remained possible on August 30, and moreover, the own troops had already suffered greatly from supply and replenishment difficulties, Field Marshal von Hindenburg saw no prospect of a major success. He decided to halt the advance after the capture of Pruzana and ordered for August 31, besides a short advance on the main Kobryn road over the Muchawiec section, only the reinforced Corps Koch on the left wing of the 11th Army to continue the pursuit up to the road Dranczye—Pruzana in connection with the Army Detachment Woyrsch. In response to a request from the Supreme Army Command, he reported on the morning of August 31: "Hope to intercept significant parts of the enemy between Jasjolda and Muchawiec section no longer exists. The main reason is that the Bug Army has not succeeded in swinging in with the right wing, nor with the cavalry corps, in time against the southern flank. Frontal pursuit of the right wing and middle 11th Army over swamp terrain promised no significant success, as the withdrawal of the Russians was initiated in time and changing rearguards were carried out systematically ... Heavy rains will halt troop movements in the swamp terrain everywhere. Condition of the troops good, although probably partially fatigued. Performance of the horses, especially with heavy artillery and columns, particularly in places, is strongly declining. Losses are worrying."

Nevertheless, General von Falkenhayn urgently recommended that at least on the passable roads along the entire front, a sharp pursuit up to the Jasjolda section should be made. This is also necessary to facilitate the advance of the Army Detachment Woyrsch and simultaneously to gain advantage from it. In the subsequently ordered continuation of the pursuit up to Jasjolda, the Bug Army was instructed to foresee the direction for its left wing along the road over Kobryń to Bereza Kartuska. While in the evening its right wing was stuck in front of the Sniper-Bug Canal, secured to the south by the divisions of the now established cavalry corps, its left wing gained more space in conjunction with the 11th Army on the main road. The Guard Cavalry Division under Lieutenant General von Storch reached Luft. On the northern wing of the 11th Army, Corps Koch advanced into the area north of Malecz. The Army Detachment Woyrsch reached the Jasjolda with advance troops after the capture of Pruzana. Arrival of her crossing the 9th Army on groundless paths through the Białowież Forest.

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The Pursuit of the Army Groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold.

On September 1, Field Marshal von Mackensen urged his two armies once again to advance rapidly on both sides of the main road Kobryn—Bereza Kartuska up to the Jasiołda. At the same time, the Bug Army was now also to advance towards Pinsk to prevent the enemy from transporting away by rail. They then shifted their focus to the right in this direction. Again, the day brought heavy fighting along the entire line against the Russian rearguards, who were firmly entrenched behind canal and swamp lines and determined to offer stubborn resistance. No significant successes were achieved.

However, in the early morning of September 2, when the 82nd Reserve Division under General Fabarius broke into the hotly contested position at the Dniepr—Bug Canal at Horodce, the enemy soon retreated on the rest of the front as well. Both armies pressed forward. General von Linsingen still hoped to encircle the parts retreating to Pinsk on both sides. In the evening, he subordinated his right wing (5th Cavalry Division, XXXXI Reserve Corps, and 107th Infantry Division) to General von Gerok for an attack along the railway to Pinsk, while the Beskiden Corps was to pursue along the main road to Bereza Kartuska, but with the bulk advancing southeast south of the Jasiołda. The 9th Army reached the Jasiołda with the Kosch Corps at Sielec. Since the command of the X Reserve Corps with the 103rd and 105th Infantry Divisions was now to be transferred, it was replaced by the X Army Corps (19th Infantry and 47th Reserve Division, with the 20th Infantry Division in reserve).

The Prince Leopold Army Group gained little ground on September 1 and 2. The enemy offered stubborn resistance both to the Woyrsch Army Detachment at the few crossings of the wide swampy lowlands of the Jasiołda and to the 9th Army at Horodyszcze and northwest of it. Already in the early morning of September 2, an order from the Supreme Army Command had arrived, according to which the Prince Leopold Army Group was to continue the offensive over the road section Slonim—Zelwa. In the evening, the Mackensen Army Group also received orders to participate in this attack with its left wing in the direction of Slonim. Its high command then ordered the commanding general of the Beskiden Corps, General of Cavalry von Marwitz, to carry out this advance with the 4th Infantry, 35th, and 47th Reserve Divisions, as well as the Guard Cavalry Division.

1) G. 550. — 2) G. 492.

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Cooperation with Army Group Hindenburg is sought.

Here, according to the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief East from August 29th1), the 12th Army was in rapid pursuit eastward over the Swislocz section, while to its left the 8th Army captured the fortress of Grodno on September 2nd. The Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army wanted to exploit this situation to attempt to push the still retreating enemy northeastward through cooperation between Army Group Prince Leopold and the right wing of Army Group Hindenburg. He envisioned simultaneously exerting corresponding pressure from the 10th Army from the northwest towards Lida to draw large masses of the enemy onto the swamp islands of Slonim2).

The advance of Army Group Prince Leopold3) towards Slonim—Selwa encountered, however, on September 3rd and 4th, torrential rain at the flooded Jasiolda section and northwest of it still stubborn resistance. The Marwitz Group of the 11th Army was also stuck at Bereza Kartuska. Only on September 5th did the pursuit on the left wing of Army Group Prince Leopold resume, almost along its entire front the following day. By September 8th, it had approached with its right wing, meanwhile reinforced by the 119th Infantry Division from Army Group Mackensen, north of the Brest Litowsk—Baranowicze railway to the Sczara by about 35 kilometers. The next day, the Marwitz Group also overcame the Jasiolda section. It now came under the command of Army Detachment Woyrsch. Once again, Army Group Prince Leopold was held up by enemy resistance west of the upper Grinda and at the Zelwianka until September 12th.

Serious supply difficulties also arose. Already on September 9th, General von Scheffer reported: "For serious continuation of operations, regular ammunition supply is absolutely necessary. The General Command is not in a position today, on the one hand, to supply the divisions with provisions, and on the other hand, only with great difficulty. Column horses exhausted and unable to reach the given objectives on the groundless roads." The land offered nothing for provisions and no accommodations. It was thoroughly depleted.

1) G. 490. — 2) G. 494.  
9. R. O. and Commander-in-Chief East and to the front of the ally on the same day the eastern and lower 7th R. D., early Sept. the eastern and lower 2nd and 9th R. D. turned off. The H. K. K. 3 (Gen. von Frommel) then joined the 8th Army. G. 501.

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The Pursuit of the Army Groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold.

The water supply also encountered difficulties in some places. Only on the night of September 13 did the enemy retreat before the army group Prince Leopold as well as before the 12th Army. However, the pursuit that immediately began already encountered the wide swamp section of the Sczara on the evening of September 14. Russian landwehr corps, attempting to force the crossing at Slonim in the following days, initially achieved only minor local successes. On the night of September 18, the enemy continued the retreat along the entire front. The Supreme Army Command considered it urgently necessary to press forward sharply with the army group Prince Leopold, in view of the advancing operations of the army group Hindenburg in the area of Vilna, and on September 19 directed its left wing, which had already reached the railway northwest of Molczadz, to take the direction almost pointing north towards Nowogrodek. However, stubborn resistance from enemy rearguards and impassable roads further hindered the advance. By September 21, the pursuit reached close to Baranowicze and the area south of Nowogrodek. At the Myszanka, strong resistance appeared anew. Only on the night of September 23 did the opponent vacate their positions. The army group advanced to the upper course of the Sczara on both sides of the Baranowicze–Minsk railway and up to the Serwetsch. Thus, the important railway junction Baranowicze came into German hands. The right wing of the 12th Army gained space beyond Nowogrodek to the east.

General Field Marshal Leopold Prince of Bavaria still believed that by continuing the offensive together with the army group Hindenburg towards Minsk, the success could be further expanded. However, General von Falkenhayn had decided to finally put a stop to the purely frontal pursuit, as the desired operational result had completely failed to materialize. On the night of September 24, the army group Prince Leopold received orders not to cross the Sczara section above the Oginski Canal as well as the Serwetsch and Niemen. On September 25, the Supreme Army Command ordered the army group Prince Leopold to take up a permanent position along the line Oginski Canal (from Telechany)–Upper course of the Sczara–Serwetsch–mouth of the Berezyna into the Niemen.

How much the internal condition and the combat strength of the troops, greatly reduced by continuous fighting and marches, required the cessation of offensive operations is best illustrated by a report submitted unsolicited by the commander of the 119th Infantry Division, Major General von Behr, on September 21.

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Condition of the Pursuing Troops.

The 119th Infantry Division has been in constant forward movement since May 2. This has resulted in conditions that urgently need remedy if the division is not to completely lose its combat effectiveness one day.

In the infantry, the number of departures due to illness from overexertion increases daily. The influx of replacement troops cannot keep pace. In the relentless advance, it is impossible for the replacement troops to reach the division. Transport times of six weeks since the start of the march are now the norm. Instead of fresh, combat-ready troops, exhausted, footsore men arrive, a high percentage of whom have already fallen ill along the way. It hardly needs mentioning that the weeks-long marches of the replacement transports with at most two officers, without properly organized units, without corporal leaders, etc., are not conducive to maintaining discipline. All troops urgently need replacement clothing and equipment. The infantry particularly lacks boots; if the men do not help themselves by taking boots from captured or fallen Russians, many would have to go barefoot.

Mounted units suffer from constant horse losses. The artillery and columns, which have long been advancing only at a walking pace due to poor roads, lose several horses daily, which collapse from exhaustion and have to be shot. The increased demands on the horses are not nearly matched by their nutrition. Oats are supplied irregularly and in insufficient quantities by the supply columns, and in the country, the systematic utilization and preparation of known suitable potatoes, beets, and other grains are only rarely possible during the daily long marches. Most of the horses are constantly outdoors, often in cold rain without shelter. Apart from combat losses, the daily loss of horses can be estimated at at least 25. How this loss is to be compensated is currently an unsolvable puzzle. The horse staging post is exhausted, and it can occasionally procure small, poorly nourished horses, unsuitable for riding. Replacements from home also arrive weeks too late and are already impaired in their performance by the time they catch up due to the march and the lack of feed along the way.

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The Pursuit of the Army Groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold.

With the downright miserable condition of the horses, which are the only reliable means of transport on the bad roads, further deficiencies are explained that urgently need remedy. The artillery necessarily needs material for the repair and maintenance of the guns. The heavy battery 119 has been firing with only two guns for a long time because the long-requested replacement material has not arrived. The same applies to the horseshoe material. It must now be feared that the division will not be supplied with cleats when frost sets in, because the possibility of procuring the material is lacking.

The division is currently particularly unfavorably positioned with artillery ammunition. Before September 24, the ammunition column department is unable to issue ammunition to the light columns. If the division continues to march, the distance to be covered by the light columns increases, and thus the difficulty of timely supply of the artillery with ammunition. If one disregards the demands that the constant battles place on the nerve strength of the fighting troops and only considers the supply of the sick and wounded, it becomes apparent that the point in time when the division is also at the end of its performance capability here is not far off. The evacuation of wounded from the field hospitals to the rear is becoming increasingly difficult because the rear cannot advance at the pace of the front troops. Therefore, the division is forced to leave the field hospitals in place for a long time and, on the other hand, faces increasing difficulties regarding their follow-up and usability in the event of major losses. — The fact that communication with home via field post has almost completely ceased is only mentioned in passing.

From the above, it follows that the division urgently needs to come to rest for some time; otherwise, the day can already be predetermined when the division will consist only of staffs, regiments of 600 men, and guns without harness and ammunition."

When passing on this report to the Supreme Army Command, Generaloberst von Woyrsch remarked on September 23: "Given the overriding importance of rapid progress in the current pursuit, I have so far paid no attention to such anxious concerns as expressed in the report, especially since the morale of the troops has remained outstandingly good despite all hardships, and the troops themselves have proven themselves excellently in the battles."

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The Permanent Position of the Army Group Prince Leopold.

However, I feel obliged to submit the attached, unsolicited report in the original, as the conditions are gradually taking a similar shape in other parts of the army division and especially in the 23rd Corps. The main reason for this lies essentially in the insufficient and particularly irregular supply by the railway, which the army division has unsuccessfully tried to improve. For weeks, only half rations and the necessary ammunition could be supplied to the troops, making the fullest use of the available horse and wagon columns.

For the permanent position assigned to the Army Group Prince Leopold1) with a width of about 160 kilometers, a total of eleven infantry divisions and initially also a cavalry division2) were available. The course of the future position was clearly outlined by the Oginski Canal, Szara, and Serveitsch. Construction could begin immediately. The double-track main railway Warsaw—Brest Litowsk—Minsk—Moscow, which became passable to Koslow (single-track from Brest Litowsk) on October 4, met the middle of the front at Baranowicze and ensured adequate supplies. Opposite the army group stood the center and right wing of the Russian 3rd and the Russian 4th Army with a total of 23½ infantry and 2½ cavalry divisions3).

The combat operations in the area of the Commander-in-Chief East subsided faster than in the area of Army Group Prince Leopold. The calm was only interrupted on October 20 and 21 by an attack that the Russians launched against the 5th and XII Corps. This corps, which had to cover the important railway junction Baranowicze in the south and also significantly block the major highway Bobruisk—Brest Litowsk, one of the few continuous solid roads in the interior of Russia, suffered a loss due to the Russian breakthrough into its position of 7700 men, of whom nearly 6000, mostly of Romanian nationality, were taken prisoner.

1) See page 556.  
2) From south to north at the beginning of October: Army Detachment Woyrsch: Guard K. D. (transferred to Army Group Linsingen at the beginning of October), Beskiden Corps (35th and 47th R. D.), 4th and XII Corps (east and west of the 35th S. D.), Landwehr Corps (4th Landwehr D.), Landwehr D. "Bredow"; 9th Army: XXV R. K. (49th I. S. D. and 84th J. D.); army group reserve: 119th J. D.  
3) From the Russian 3rd Army (from south to north): III Caucasian, XXIV, X, and IX Corps with 3rd and 11th Rad. Div., Russian 4th Army: (General Corps, XV, XVI, XXXV, from ibid. I. Turk. and XXV Corps (Army Reserve) with 15½ Inf. and 1½ Cav. Div.

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The Pursuit of the Army Groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold.

After the situation was restored by the deployment of German reserves, Generaloberst von Boeyrich assigned the 8th Corps a section more to the north, less exposed to enemy operations. On November 10, the right wing of the army group was extended another twelve kilometers to the south.

A week before the pursuit operation of the army group Prince Leopold came to a halt, the Bug Army of the Mackensen army group had successfully carried out the special mission assigned to it, the thrust on Pinsk. On September 3, the enemy had evaded their comprehensively planned attack north of the Dnieper-Bug Canal in an easterly direction. In two groups under the command of Generals von Gerok and von Conta, the army reached the line Zarzeczka-Chomsk and further northwest the Jasiolda. On September 6, the eastward-directed combat front was carried forward by the assault of the 107th Infantry Division on Drohiczyn to the line Disvoce-Bezdziez. Due to the great distances from the railway points Wlodawa and Biala, the supply service began to fail here as well. The troops were no longer able to bring sufficient ammunition and supplies with their weakened columns on the destroyed roads and impassable paths. Thus, the Bug Army could initially only send mixed detachments to the enemy. Already on September 5, the chief of staff of the Mackensen army group saw it necessary to report in detail to the Supreme Army Command about the condition of the troops. They had fully met the high demands on their physical and moral strength during the long period of fighting and had remained consistently confident and aggressive. However, they wished at least the opportunity for a short training of their replacements, better yet a rest, as the months-long, costly battles and marches in the most difficult terrain and with the greatest deprivations of all kinds had significantly exhausted their strength. The guns were heavily worn out, but particularly concerning was the recent condition of the horses both in the troops and in the columns, especially due to the ongoing shortage of fodder.

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Advance of the Bug Army on Pinsk.

Meanwhile, the transfer

of the X Army Corps¹) was also ordered. The Hungarian

11th Cavalry Division marched south to the Austro-Hungarian army. Since

Field Marshal von Mackensen had been selected to lead operations against

Serbia, his army group was dissolved on September 8²), but the designation

"Army Group Mackensen" was retained for camouflage.

General von Linsingen, who was entrusted with the high command in place

of the Field Marshal, reported to the army command on the evening of

September 8 that the pursuit with the bulk of the Bug Army had been

halted for two days due to a lack of ammunition and supplies. The next

operations of the army group were merely a question of supply. The railway

would be operational to Terespol west of Brest Litowsk by September 10

and to Kobryn by September 20. Accordingly, the Bug Army would not be

able to resume the offensive on Pinsk until September 14, unless the

advance weak detachments succeeded in forcing the enemy to retreat earlier.

From advances made by the Russians at several points on the night of

September 11, and from reports of strong transports eastward by rail over

Pinsk, General von Linsingen concluded that the enemy was preparing to

withdraw soon and ordered a surprise attack along the entire front on

September 12. The breakthrough was completely successful. The Gerok

Group advanced with its main effort on its right wing between the Dnieper-Bug

Canal and the railway to Kliman-Worozewicze. In the Conta Group, the

1st and 22nd Infantry Divisions overcame the enemy and advanced beyond

Zawierze. On the night of September 13, the 107th Infantry Division

succeeded in rolling up the enemy from the north in front of the Gerok

Group. Now the entire front moved forward. General von Linsingen urged

a vigorous pursuit to prevent the Russians from reestablishing themselves

in front of Pinsk. On September 14, the XXXXI Reserve Corps³)

advanced against stubbornly holding parts south of Ogowa, and the 107th

Infantry Division advanced on Obrow. Despite counterattacks, the Conta

Group reached Molodowo. The next day, the enemy was driven back to

his deeply echeloned bridgehead position at Kolodziejewicze west of Pinsk.

¹) See p. 554.  
²) The high command of the 11th Army was not reassigned until September 16.  
³) The previous leader of the XXXXI Reserve Corps, Gen. von Winkler, took over   
the IV Reserve Corps. Until the arrival of his successor, Gen. of Artillery von Braun,   
the commander of the 82nd Reserve Division, Major General Fabarius, assumed   
command of the corps.

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The Pursuit of the Army Groups Mackensen and Prince Leopold.

Behind it, strong masses marched north over Logitzin. After the front lines of the bridgehead were stormed during the night, the troops of General von Conta broke through the Russian position in a final assault in the early morning hours of September 16. The enemy also retreated fighting in front of the Gerok group. By 6 a.m., their foremost parts had already entered the city of Pinsk, finding almost no resistance. The entire peninsula between Pina and Jasjolda was in German possession.

This pursuit operation also demanded enormous achievements from the troops. The pursuit columns, significantly weakened in their combat strength, had fought hard against stubborn resistance in mostly difficult, confusing terrain cut through by lakes and swampy watercourses. The deprivations of all kinds were no less great, as it was not possible for the numerically small supply formations to adequately supply the troops on the increasingly deteriorating roads during the rapid advance. Although the enemy suffered no significant losses in prisoners during this frontal pursuit, the energetic and quickly executed thrust of the troops, despite exhaustion, found its reward in that the Russians were not given time to devastate the last strip of land west of Pinsk and this city with its rich supplies as they had done with the retreat area further west.

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J. The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year¹).

1. The Austro-Hungarian Offensive in Eastern Galicia and Volhynia.

According to the agreements made on July 11 by the allied army commands²), during the offensive operation of the Mackensen Army Group, the German Southern Army³) and the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army⁴) were to remain defensive in Eastern Galicia at the Zlota Lipa and the Bug for the time being. Only the Austro-Hungarian 7th Army⁵), which had meanwhile grown to about ten infantry and five cavalry divisions, was assigned a spatially limited partial attack east of the Strypa in the direction of Czortkow—Buczacz. It began on the night of July 14, but brought only a greater success on the eastern flank. There, the Benigni Group managed to establish itself in the Dniester loop north of Doroschouts. Within a few days, the offensive had to be considered failed. The only gain achieved at the cost of heavy losses seemed to be the Russians' abandonment of the apparently intended withdrawal of divisions of the 9th Army. In the last third of July, the fighting at the breakthrough points subsided; towards the middle of the month, the enemy continued to launch fierce attacks against the Korda Corps on the extreme right flank, which, however, invariably collapsed in the defensive fire of the defender. At the same time, the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army, which had meanwhile extended north to Dab, in cooperation with the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army, cleared the left bank of the Bug between Kamionka Strumilowa and the Rata estuary and secured a bridgehead at Kamionka Strumilowa.

¹) Continuation from G. 385. — ²) G. 387.  
³) The German Southern Army consisted of: Hofmann Corps (Austro-Hungarian 55th I. D., Hungarian 37th Honved, Austro-Hungarian 1st I. R. D.), 48th R. D., Marschall Corps (3rd G. S. D., Austro-Hungarian 19th G. S. D.).  
⁴) The Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army consisted of: V Corps (Austro-Hungarian 14th and 33rd I. D.), XVIII Corps (Austro-Hungarian 9th G. S. D., Austrian 1st Ldst. Br.), XIX Corps (Austro-Hungarian 29th and 34th I. D., Austrian 45th I. D.), Szurmay Corps (Austrian 1st Ldst. Suf. Br.), Czbullka Corps (Austro-Hungarian 31st, Austrian 43rd G. S. D.), Army Reserve: Hungarian 51st G. D.  
⁵) The Austro-Hungarian 7th Army consisted of: Korda Corps (Hungarian 42nd G. S. D., Hungarian 202nd S. Br.), Benigni Corps (Austro-Hungarian 6th and 22nd Polish Legion), Benigni Group (Austro-Hungarian 4th I. D., Austro-Hungarian 30th S. D.), Benigni Corps (Austro-Hungarian 5th, 15th and 36th G. S. D.) Army Reserve: Hungarian 5th R. D., Hungarian 28th.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

August was calm on the front of all three armies of the right wing. Only with the 7th Army did a successful attack develop from a violent reconnaissance in the area of the Krautwald group, which led to the capture of the enemy bridgehead at Czernelecia on August 9. Further-reaching offensive plans of the cavalry general Baron von Pflanzer-Baltin, which aimed at an attack by the Benigni group north of Doroschoutz and the Benigni corps at Kosmierzyn, had to be temporarily denied approval by Colonel General von Conrad, as he was forced to withdraw some forces from the 7th Army to reinforce the Italian front. On August 12, he ordered the removal of the III Corps (22nd and 28th Infantry Divisions). This section was taken over by the 5th Infantry Division, under the command of Field Marshal Lieutenant Ritter von Henriquez.

The 2nd Army, on orders from Teschen on August 5, extended its left wing on the Bug to the Rata estuary and reinforced the Czbullka group with the 1st Cavalry Division withdrawn from the Southern Army. On August 6, the army commander, Cavalry General von Böhm-Ermolli, reported to the army command that his army, after receiving new replacements in mid-August, would count on 100,000 rifles and would then be able to unite four divisions and the bulk of the heavy artillery on the southern flank for a breakthrough at Brody, in which the Southern Army would have to participate. This intention coincided with the plan of Colonel General von Conrad to clear Eastern Galicia of the enemy through a major offensive operation. The Austro-Hungarian Chief of Staff declared his agreement on August 11 and ordered the 2nd and Southern Armies to prepare the attack. However, this was not to take place until after the 18th, as the 1st Army, also intended to participate, was not yet operationally ready. On August 16, Colonel General von Conrad informed both army high commands that the "preparatory operation on the inner flanks of the 2nd and Southern Armies would only be carried out within the framework of a general attack, with the participation of the 4th Army, planned against the armies of the Russian Southwestern Front."

The resulting postponement of the start of the offensive led the Southern Army Command to fear that the armies of the Russian Southwestern Front, under the impression of the advance of the Allies in Poland, might evade the planned blow by prematurely evacuating their positions, for which there were already certain indications.

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The Instructions of the Austro-Hungarian Army Command for the Offensive.

The Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant Colonel von Hemmer, therefore approached the Austro-Hungarian Army Command on August 19 to have the 7th, Southern, and 2nd Armies attack simultaneously in the very next days without regard to the cooperation of the 1st and 4th Armies. The three armies, having significantly improved their combat strength during the operational pause, would most likely be able to defeat the opposing enemy alone, or at least bind him and deprive him of the freedom to act.

The Austro-Hungarian Army Command responded the next day that it had already been prompted by the same considerations to order the deployment of the 1st Army, reinforced by parts of the 4th Army, for a comprehensive attack against the right wing of the Russian Southwestern Front on August 19. For this purpose, an advance on Kovel was already underway, and the assembly of strong forces between Vladimir Volynsk and Kovel was in progress. In connection with this, orders for the attack of the 2nd and Southern Armies were also expected in the coming days, to which the 7th Army would also join.

At the same time, the 1st Army received instructions to group itself so that the attack could begin immediately, but in any case after the arrival of the XIV Corps in the area around Kovel (August 24). "To protect the main thrust initially directed from the line Vladimir Volynsk—Kovel towards Luzk," Kovel was to be firmly occupied by the Cavalry Corps Heydebreck (5th Cavalry Division, Austro-Hungarian 4th Cavalry Division, Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division) and an infantry division of the X Corps. For the attack on Luzk, this corps was to be positioned at Vladimir Volynsk, the IX south of Turnjsk, and the XIV, brought up via Dubno, at Kovel. The group Smekal (Austro-Hungarian 4th and Austrian 45th Infantry Division) advancing from the 4th Army was to be used as an army reserve as needed.

On August 21, general guidelines for the offensive of the right wing of the army were issued. The 2nd and Southern Armies were to attack on their inner flanks simultaneously with the 1st, with the 7th Army joining the advance of the Southern Army from the left flank. All armies were to be ready to immediately pursue in the event of a premature retreat by the enemy.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

On August 23, Generaloberst von Conrad assigned the task to the 1st Army, which had been detached from the Mackensen Army Group the day before, "to push back the Russian XXXI Corps to Zbąszyn, to strike the area around Kowel through an offensive, general direction Luck, to defeat the right wing of the Russian Southwestern Front, to finally separate the Russian armies, and to drive the enemy out of Olyka." For this, the left wing of the 1st Army was to be strengthened as much as possible, with the Smetau Group and the 7th Cavalry Division, commanded by the Army Detachment Boorisch, to be moved over Kowel. An advance of strong forces in a northerly or northeasterly direction was not in the intentions of the army command; the pursuit of the Russian XXXI Corps retreating northwards over Kowel was to be carried out only as far as the security of their own offensive against the right wing of the Russian Southwestern Front required. However, the area around Kowel had to be firmly taken into hand.

The leader of the 1st Army, Feldzeugmeister von Puhallo, reported that he would be ready to attack on the afternoon of August 26 with the II and I Corps and the Szurmay Group on the Bug and Lug, with the X and IX Corps on the Zimno-Makovicze line, and with the XIV Corps and the 4th Cavalry Division on both sides of the railway leading from Kowel to Rowno at Holoby2). The 2nd Infantry Division was designated to occupy Kowel, the pursuit of the Russian XXXI Corps and the securing of the northern flank was assigned to the Heydebreck Cavalry Corps with the German 5th, the Hungarian 11th, and the Austro-Hungarian 7th Cavalry Division arriving on the 27th at Luboml. The Smetau Group was to be moved over Kowel or south of it depending on the situation.

The Heydebreck Cavalry Corps occupied Kowel on the 24th and immediately followed the Russian XXXI Corps retreating to Ratno3); the next day, the 5th and Hungarian 11th Cavalry Divisions were subordinated to the Bug Army and thus withdrew from the framework of the planned operation4). Since the enemy facing the left wing of the 1st Army, estimated to be the 2nd Infantry Division and four cavalry divisions, was in the course of August 26 retreating southeastwards, the X and IX Corps already advanced beyond the reported line of readiness to Chorostow and Kisielin on that day.

1) G. 427. — 2) G. 555 Note 3.  
3) Grouping of the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army on August 26: II Corps (Austro-Hungarian 25th Infantry Division).  
I Corps (Austro-Hungarian 46th Infantry Division), Szurmay Group (Austro-Hungarian 7th, Hungarian 40th Infantry Division),  
X Corps (Austro-Hungarian 24th and 26th Infantry Division), IX Corps (Austro-Hungarian 10th, Austrian 36th Infantry Division),  
XIV Corps (Austro-Hungarian 3rd, Austrian 4th Infantry Division and 2nd Austrian Division), Army Reserve: Austro-Hungarian 13th Infantry Division.  
4) G. 427.

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The Beginning of the Offensive.

The XIV Corps was stationed in the evening at Dubitow,

the 4th Cavalry Division ready at Holoby.

On August 27, the right wing of the army launched an attack.

On the left wing of the 7th Army, the assault group of

Corps Rhemen (k.u.k. 36th and ½ 5th Infantry Division) broke through the Russian

positions at the lower Zlota Lipa and advanced west of Korsciatyn.

In the South Army, the left wing of Corps Hofmann and half of the German 48th Reserve Division took the heights west of

Ulybrynok; the battle group of Corps

Marschall, formed from the 3rd Guard Infantry Division, the 95th Reserve

Infantry Brigade (48th Reserve Division), and parts of the k.u.k. 19th and

Hungarian 38th Infantry Division, stormed the strong, stubbornly defended Russian positions west

and southwest of Urman. The assault wing of the 2nd Army1) seized

the heights on the far bank between Ciemierzynce and Goloczyn.

The center of the 1st Army finally reached the line Steniatyn—Chorochoryn, the XIV Corps reached Prespa, the

reinforced 4th Cavalry Division the Styr near and northeast of Sohlul.

In the early morning of August 28, the enemy began a retreat on the entire

front north of the Dniester. The left wing of the 7th, the

South and 2nd Army pressed sharply forward under partially heavy fighting with enemy

rear guards and reached on the 29th the western bank

heights of the Strypa and in the line Zloczow—Sofolowka—Radzichow on

newly prepared and heavily occupied positions. In the 1st Army, the

X2) and IX Corps were already on the evening of the 28th, the right wing (II,

I Corps, Group Szurmay) on the 29th before a continuous line of resistance,

which extended from Stojanow over Sadowno to Giernit. The

XIV Corps repelled stronger enemy forces at Rozyszcze over the Styr on the 28th,

advanced the next day between the Styr and the railway to Rowno into the

area northwest of Riwnezy. The 2nd Infantry Division, brought from Kowel,

which had left only a reinforced regiment there, followed echeloned to the left rear north of the railway.

1) Grouping of the k.u.k. 2nd Army on August 27: V Corps (k.u.k. 14th, 33rd and  
34th I.D., Austrian 43rd I.D.), XIX Corps (Austro-Hungarian 29th I.D.), IV Corps (Austro-Hungarian 27th S.G.,  
Hungarian 51st S.G.), XVIII Corps (Austro-Hungarian 32nd S.G.), Corps Szibulka (Austro-Hungarian 31st S.G., Austrian  
1st Lst. Brg., k.u.k. 1st I.D., Hungarian 1st Lst. Brg.).  
2) In the front of the X Corps, the army reserve (Austro-Hungarian  
13th I.D.) was inserted on August 28.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

had followed left backward staggered north of the railway, the 4th Cavalry Division, which had already crossed the Styr on the 28th, advanced southwards over Troscianiec.

Generaloberst von Conrad had already repeatedly pointed out to Field Marshal von Puhallo during the course of August 28 that it was particularly important for the rapid capture of Luck and extensive encirclement to cross the Styr with a strong left wing downstream from Rozyszcze, where full freedom of action existed. Against the intention of the army commander to advance the XIV Corps on Luck on the 29th, but to let the X and IX Corps attack the Russian positions on the Styrna frontally only the next day, the Austro-Hungarian Chief of General Staff again raised objections, because this would lead to a very advantageous entrenchment for the enemy. Also, by wide encirclement around the enemy's northern wing, the Styrna and Styr line on the Dubno—Luck stretch would be made untenable. Therefore, strong forces should immediately advance eastwards over the Styr downstream from Luck.

Field Marshal von Puhallo then positioned the XIV Corps against the area east of Luck and directed the 4th Cavalry Division to Rowno. The X Corps was withdrawn from the front on the night of the 30th; it was to cross the Styr point on the 31st near and north of Rozyszcze and advance southwards on September 1. By this time, the Smefalu group and the 7th Cavalry Division could also appear on the designated bank, so that seven infantry and two cavalry divisions were ready for use on the east bank of the Styr. The frontal attack of the remaining corps was postponed until the encirclement became effective.

Thus, the XIV Corps advanced on August 30 against the road Luck—Rowno, the 4th Cavalry Division moved eastwards on both sides of the Rowno railway. Apparently under the pressure of these movements, the enemy vacated his positions in front of the center and the right wing of the 1st Army during the following night and retreated over the Styr. The II and I Corps, as well as the Garnum group, followed on the 31st to the Styr Dubno—Montonowka line, the XIV took the northern wing of the 2nd Army, while the troops of the Field Marshal's staff (von Zibulka) reached the Russian positions west of Radziechow during the night of the 31st, following the retreating enemy on foot, still reaching the Styr on that day. On the southward adjoining front, only the corps was able to achieve a greater territorial gain by taking Zborow and advancing north of it to the Bzoczow—Tarnopol railway.

1) Without the 13th I.D., which joined the Surman group.  
2) On August 29, XVIII Corps with Austro-Hungarian 31st and 32nd I.D., Eastern 1st Ldst. Br., Austro-Hungarian 1st R.D. and 1st Eastern Hus. Br.

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The Austro-Hungarian 1st Army Takes Lucz.

However, the center of the Southern Army, held weakly in favor of the strike wing, suffered a significant setback on August 30; a sharp Russian counterattack pushed it back with heavy losses in men and material to the area east of Rozwadow. The Rhemen Corps of the 7th Army also had to fend off heavy attacks from the enemy on the 31st.

On the night of September 1, a reorganization of forces took place on the left wing of the army. The IX, X, and XIV Corps, the group Smetal that arrived in Holoby, as well as the 4th and the newly arrived 7th Cavalry Division, formed a new 4th Army under the command of Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, to whose orders the 1st Army was also bound during the ongoing operation. Already on the previous afternoon, Colonel General von Conrad had pointed out to all armies again that the offensive was not only aimed at clearing Eastern Galicia but also at achieving a decisive blow. While the 7th, Southern, and 2nd Armies were essentially forced into frontal attacks, the 1st and 4th Armies, by concentrating strong forces on the northern flank, were in a position to attack the right wing of the Russian Southwestern Front and effectively threaten the enemy forces to the south. Since the enemy could most easily assemble strong forces around Rowno by using his railways, rapid advancement in this direction was advised. The 1st Army was tasked with immediately taking Dubno; the position on the upper Styr was not to be attacked frontally but bypassed via Krzemieniec and to the south.

Accordingly, the 1st and 4th Armies continued their advance on Dubno and Rowno on September 1. The next day, the enemy positioned himself along the line Kozin—Murawica—Olka and behind Putilowka; on the 3rd, he launched heavy counterattacks, which forced the right wing of the 1st Army to retreat significantly. During these and the following two days, a portion of the lost ground could be regained, and the northern adjoining corps (I., Szurmay, IX., XIV.) struggled in vain to dislodge the enemy from his positions, while the X Corps deployed on the northern flank of the 4th Army reached the area southwest of Derazno by September 5 and crossed with parts west of Cuman the Putilowka.

1) II Corps (Austro-Hungarian 25th, Austrian 46th Infantry Division), I Corps (Austro-Hungarian 9th, Hungarian 40th Infantry Division), Group Szurmay (Austro-Hungarian 7th, Austrian 13th Infantry Division).

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It was supposed to advance south after repelling the enemy over the Goryn in the angle between Stubla and Uscie, to roll up the enemy and take the fortifications of Rowno in the sand ridge. However, as the Putilowka lowlands downstream of Cuman had become almost impassable due to continuous rain, Archduke Joseph Ferdinand abandoned the encirclement and set the reinforced X Corps through the Smetal group southwest of Cuman to break through to Klewan.

Meanwhile, the 4th and 7th Cavalry Divisions, combined into the Berndt Cavalry Corps, had to turn north against strong Russian cavalry, which had already been advancing south of the Sarny-Kowel railway against the flank and rear of the 4th Army since September 2. Against this new enemy, the 1st Cavalry Division provided by the 2nd Army and the Polish Legion (1st and 3rd Brigade) which had just arrived west of Kowel, were also set in motion. Furthermore, Generaloberst von Conrad had agreed with General von Falkenhayn on the evening of September 2 to send the 5th, 2nd, and 9th Cavalry Divisions, which were part of the German 9th Army, via Brest Litowsk to Kowel, and ordered the 7th Army to transport the 10th Cavalry Division there as well. On the night of the 6th, General von Falkenhayn finally agreed to the transfer of the Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division from the Bug Army to the area around Kamien Koszyrski. The Berndt Cavalry Corps occupied the Nomin crossings at Berezstyna and Garajmonka on September 5 after fighting, threw back stronger enemy forces at Kolki over the Styr on the 7th, and advanced in the Korumin-Styr angle to Kultowicze in the following days. The 1st Cavalry Division pushed the enemy north of the Styr back to Zartorysk and Olesnic, and the Polish Legion forced the Russian cavalry, which had advanced to Kowel, to retreat behind the Stochod. Thus, the dangerous threat to the rear seemed to be successfully eliminated.

The northern wing of the 4th Army could only resume the attack on September 8 due to the severe fatigue of the troops. The reinforced X Corps broke through the enemy positions southwest of Cuman. At night, the enemy also evacuated the front adjoining to the south. In pursuit, the 4th Army reached the Stubla on the 9th, behind which the enemy had reestablished itself, and the left wing of the 1st Army came to a halt in the line Iwanie-Moszkow. South of Murawica, the enemy had already begun retreating behind the Stwa on the 7th. The II Corps followed closely here, occupied the western riverbank heights the next day, and advanced into Dubno.

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The Offensive of the Austro-Hungarian 1st and 4th Army Comes to a Halt.

At the instigation of Generaloberst von Conrad, who hoped that the vigorous continuation of the offensive on Rowno would relieve the armies in distress in Eastern Galicia, Archduke Joseph Ferdinand attempted to bring down the new Russian front again by encircling it from the north. He left only the 24th Infantry Division at the Stublä downwards Klewan and had the remaining four divisions of the X Corps advance from the northern bank of the Putilowka against the Goryn. They took Derzno on the 10th and established a foothold south of the Goryn bend, but then encountered the fiercest resistance. The left wing of the 1st Army (I Corps and Group Szurmay) advancing southwards also made only slow progress. The Archduke weakened the Stublä front by three more divisions, one of which he made available to the 1st Army, the other two to the X Corps. However, they were no longer deployed in the two assault groups, as an order arriving from Teschen on the evening of September 12 required two divisions to be immediately marched via Rozin to the 2nd Army.

The offensive of the 2nd Army initially progressed well. Its right wing broke through the strong Russian positions between Olozow and Bialkamin on the night of September 1. Consequently, the enemy withdrew from the entire army front as well as from the left wing of the Southern Army (Corps Marschall). The following night, they evacuated the Strypa position in its entirety and retreated to the Sereth and the line Jalocze–Radzimiwillow–Rozin. The left wing of the 7th, the Southern and the 2nd Army followed under engagements with enemy rearguards and pushed forward to the new Russian positions in the following days.

In the Southern Army, the attack on the apparently very strongly fortified bridgehead of Strusjow–Tarnopol required such thorough preparations that it could only be scheduled for the morning of September 7.

1) The 62nd, 45th, 4th, and the 13th Infantry Division, which was meanwhile withdrawn from Group Szurmay.  
2) The 26th Infantry Division of the IX and the 2nd and 21st Infantry Divisions of the XIV Corps; the 21st Infantry Division had been stationed as army reserve at Olfta since September 9. Thus, only the 10th Infantry Division of the IX, the 3rd of the XIV, and the 24th of the X Corps remained at the Stublä.  
3) The Rhemen Corps and the group Henriques, which is now also turning south over the Dniester.

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The 2nd Army, however, attacked as early as September 6; it was fully successful. The enemy was thrown from his strong, stubbornly defended positions along the entire front and quickly retreated behind the Strypa. Pressing sharply, the Austro-Hungarian corps reached the line Gontowa—Rydoml—Rudnia on the 7th; on the left wing of the Southern Army, half of the Hungarian 38th Infantry Division advanced through Jalowce to Majance.

Meanwhile, the situation with the Southern Army had fundamentally changed. On the afternoon of September 6, the center of Hofmann's corps north of Darachow was pushed in by unexpectedly advancing superior Russian forces. Nevertheless, General Count von Bothmer still hoped to carry out his attack on the bridgehead of Tarnopol the next morning, from which a relief of Hofmann's corps was expected. But when its left wing (the Austro-Hungarian combined Brigade Bolzano) was attacked again and completely broken through in the early morning of September 7, and the adjoining fronts saw themselves seriously threatened on their flanks, the planned operation had to be postponed in favor of the more urgent task of stemming the enemy breakthrough. General Freiherr Marschall had parts of the 3rd Guard Infantry and the 48th Reserve Division advance southeast from Chodaczow Wielki for this purpose; they drove the enemy back to Nastaszow during the day and were able to recapture six German and Austro-Hungarian batteries lost in the morning. However, the Hofmann corps, severely weakened in its combat strength, could not withstand the continuous strong pressure of the Russians and retreated with heavy losses to the Strypa and Dobropole. Consequently, the left wing of the 7th Army (Austro-Hungarian 36th Infantry Division) also had to retreat to the area south of Laskowce—Koslow.

To relieve the beleaguered neighbor, the commander of the 2nd Army, General von Böhm-Ermolli, had the right wing of the V Corps attack southward on Zbaraz on September 8, further strengthening it with a division withdrawn from the IV Corps and placing it under the command of the XIX Corps the following day. But already on September 10, the attack of the XIX Corps stalled at strong enemy positions along the line Chronowica—Gniesdziczno. Also, the V Corps did not advance north of the upper Goryn.

1) Reorganization of the Austro-Hungarian 2nd Army on September 9: XIX Corps (½ Hungarian 38th, Austro-Hungarian 14th and 34th, Hungarian 51st Infantry Division), V Corps (Austro-Hungarian 43rd, Austro-Hungarian 33rd Infantry Division), followed by the 8th Reserve Division; on September 8, the Austro-Hungarian 36th Infantry Division was withdrawn from the XVIII Corps. IV Corps (Austro-Hungarian 29th and 27th Infantry Division), XVIII Corps (Austro-Hungarian 31st Infantry Division), eastern 1st, eastern 2nd, eastern 3rd.

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Severe Setbacks for the Southern and Austro-Hungarian 7th Army.

The left wing of the army stood just like the 1st Army

since the 8th at the Styr, whose eastern bank was occupied by the enemy.

The incomplete result of the relief attack by the 2nd Army

was all the more unfortunate as the situation on the front adjoining it to the south

had meanwhile become even more critical. On September 8, the

right wing of General Freiherr Marschall had indeed advanced beyond Nastafow

and the Hofmann Corps had been able to stop the enemy before their positions.

The next day, however, the left wing of the

7th Army was pushed back by strong Russian forces to the Strypa and into the line

Tlustc—Jazlowiec; on September 10, the Henriques group even had to retreat

behind the Dniester and to the Wysch Heights north of

Jaleszczyki. General Freiherr von Pflanzer-Baltin, who had already

reinforced the Rhemen Corps on the two previous days with one and a half

cavalry divisions from the Henriques and Benigni groups,

also had the Hungarian 37th Infantry Division, assigned to him by the army

command and in the process of unloading at Nizinow, brought forward to Buczacz by motor vehicles from the morning of the 10th; parts of the

division had to be moved to the bridgehead of Jaleszczyki to

the Henriques group in the evening. To ensure the defense against the enemy

incursion and to regain the Sereth line, from

September 11 onwards, the Austro-Hungarian VI Corps, originally intended for transport to southern Hungary,

was to be taken over from Rawa Ruska to Nizinow and Halicz.

The 7th Army thus had sufficient forces to prevent a new

setback. However, the Southern Army, against which the Russian counteroffensive was primarily directed,

lacked any reserves. Its left wing had been engaged in the fiercest

defensive battle on September 10. It had still managed to hold the positions

overall. Whether this would continue to be possible with the continuation of the enemy attack

remained questionable, especially in view of the heavily battered

Austro-Hungarian 19th Infantry Division. General Count

v. Bothmer was forced to return half of his Hungarian 38th Infantry Division to the western Sereth

bank to have at least a weak reserve behind his

northern flank. Since it was not immediately possible to release them from the battlefront of the

2nd Army, General von Böhm-Ermolli initially provided the

Marschall Corps with a regiment of the Hungarian 51st Infantry

Division. It arrived just in time on September 11, to join forces with parts of the heavily attacked 3rd Guard Infantry and 48th Reserve Division to launch a counterattack against the enemy, who had broken through in a broad front at Dolzanka in the morning.

1) Austro-Hungarian ½ 8th and 6th R. D. — 2) Austro-Hungarian 12th and Hungarian 39th I. D. See C. 550.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

Although the previous positions of the Austro-Hungarian 19th Infantry Division were retaken in the evening, the High Command of the Southern Army believed that the breakthrough apparently sought by the Russians, especially near Tarnopol¹), could only be permanently thwarted by bringing in sufficient reinforcements. The Austro-Hungarian Army Command referred to support from the 2nd Army, which could also provide it with two divisions under Field Marshal Lieutenant Cibulka²), as the relief thrust of its right wing had meanwhile come to a halt.

New powerful attacks by the enemy on September 12, which were mainly directed against the bent-back right wing of the Marschall Corps, raised fears that the proven German divisions of General Freiherr Marschall might also be in serious distress if they remained in their positions, especially since the enemy was not seriously engaged anywhere on the southern adjoining front. General Count von Bothmer therefore decided, with the approval of General of the Marschall Corps, to withdraw to the heights east of the Wosuszka on the night of September 13 and to designate a reinforced brigade of the 48th Reserve Division as army reserve. To support the Hofmann Corps, Generaloberst von Conrad transferred the Hungarian 39th Infantry Division to the Southern Army, from whose position the Hungarian 37th Infantry Division joined the VI Corps.

The severe setback suffered by the 7th and Southern Army in recent days, the stalling of the offensive on the rest of the right wing's front, and the heavy attacks that the enemy had been directing against the southern wing of the 2nd Army since the afternoon of September 11, created a completely changed situation for the Austro-Hungarian Army Command. Generaloberst von Conrad could not ignore the representations made by General von Falkenhayn on the afternoon of September 12, that a further unfavorable development of the fighting in Eastern Galicia would adversely affect the overall situation and that relief could only be hoped for by abandoning the continuation of the offensive and resolutely transitioning to defense. He therefore ordered Archduke Joseph Ferdinand on the late evening of September 12, only to carry out the partial attack planned on the northern flank of the 4th Army, but otherwise to cease the offensive and immediately march the 2nd and 26th Infantry Divisions to the 2nd Army.

¹) According to situation reports, which later proved to be false, no more Russian divisions were supposed to have been unloaded at Tarnopol.  
²) The Austro-Hungarian 32nd I.D. and a division combined from the regiments of the Austro-Hungarian IV Corps under Major General Kroupa.

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The Cessation of the Offensive.

These, the Southern

and the 7th Army were to limit themselves to expanding and

holding the lines reached until reinforcements and new replacements arrived.

However, this did not succeed fully. In the 7th Army,

the Henriques group had to be withdrawn to the old bridgehead

positions of Alekszyń on September 13, while in the 2nd, the southern flank,

which had been breached in a broad front in the morning, had to retreat to the line Zarudzie—Lopuszno.

The combined Kroupa Division from the Southern

Army was immediately reassigned to this; the 32nd Infantry Division, which remained alone with the Czbulla group,

had to close the gap that had arisen between the inner

flank of the Southern and 2nd Army due to the withdrawal of the Marschall Corps.

The next day, after prolonged artillery preparation, which

increased to drumfire in places, the enemy launched a strong attack

against the entire front of the Southern Army. While he was repelled by the Marschall Corps

with heavy losses and could only temporarily penetrate the trenches of the Czbulla group

at Worobijowka, he succeeded in the afternoon in breaking through the bridgehead positions of the Hofmann Corps

at Burlanow and gaining a foothold on the western bank of the Strypa. This also resulted in the evacuation of the northern and southern

adjacent bridgeheads. Since the Southern Army again did not have

sufficient reserves to support the Hofmann Corps, which now consisted only of remnants, and to regain the bridgeheads,

and a relief offensive of its left wing was not possible at the moment,

General Freiherr von Pflanzer-Baltin, on the orders of the army command, deployed parts of the VI Corps, which had meanwhile arrived at Buczacz,

on September 15 on both sides of the Strypa for a flank attack to the north.

The attack of the Hungarian 37th Infantry Division advancing east of the river on Dobropole, although initially gaining ground,

came to a halt before overwhelming enemy positions, but nevertheless provided the Hofmann Corps with noticeable relief, as the enemy shifted his

focus to the left wing of the 7th Army. On

September 16, the parts that had reached west of the Strypa to Kotuzow were to advance to Dobropolie with the 12th Infantry Division to get the attack flowing again.

1) p. 571.  
2) The Hungarian 39th S. I. D., which was in the process of unloading west of Pobahce, was not yet ready for use.

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However, they had to be deployed with the 37th Infantry Division, which was in severe distress due to strong Russian counterattacks.

The failure of the relief attack by the 7th Army made General Count von Bothmer fear another breakthrough by the enemy at the Hofmann Corps. On the morning of September 17, it surprisingly turned out that the enemy had retreated during the night in front of the entire front of the 7th and Southern Army to the Sereth. This finally allowed the severe crisis into which both armies had fallen to be considered overcome. During the day, the Strypa bridgeheads were reoccupied by the Hofmann Corps, and the Wischä Heights north of Zaleszczyki by the Henriques Group. Otherwise, however, only weak detachments followed the enemy on the orders of the army command. Generaloberst von Conrad did not intend to resume the offensive in Eastern Galicia in view of the overall situation. The current positions were therefore to be expanded instead. The 39th Infantry Division was reassigned to the 7th Army, which had to extend its left wing to the south of Burkanow. The Southern Army detached the 3rd Guards Infantry Division as an army reserve from the Marschall Corps, which had also been under the command of the Austro-Hungarian 32nd Infantry Division¹) since September 14. The Czbullka Group Command returned to the 2nd Army, which in recent days had not only repelled all enemy assaults but, with the help of the 26th Infantry Division²) that had meanwhile arrived, had even regained part of the lost ground east of Lopuszno.

Meanwhile, a fundamental change in the situation had also occurred on the northern flank of the Austro-Hungarian front. The left wing of the 4th Army (the X Corps) had, according to the orders of the army command from the evening of September 12, initially continued the attack and on the 13th was able to advance north of the Goryn beyond Posjolno; however, it was then pushed into defense and on the 15th was attacked by superior Russian forces in the front and left flank. As a result, the X Corps had to be bent back into the Klewan—Karpilowka line at night.

¹) The Austro-Hungarian 32nd and the Hungarian 38th Infantry Division, reunited since September 13, were able to advance their positions on the 15th through a surprise attack on both sides of the railway to Tarnopol.  
²) See p. 575.

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This resulted in the withdrawal of the entire army to the line Jarczow — Netrelnno and behind the Putilowka. Northward, up to Kosti on the Styr, the cavalry corps Berndt, whose command was transferred to Major General Count Herberstein, took up a new position. In the area between Styr and Stochod, the 1st Cavalry Division retreated to the line Raznicze-Kaiszowka.

However, even in the new position, the X Corps and the Herberstein Cavalry Corps were unable to withstand the continuous heavy attacks of the enemy on September 17; repeatedly breached, they had to retreat to a rear line. Since holding this line until reinforcements arrived seemed uncertain due to the exhaustion of the troops, Archduke Joseph Ferdinand ordered the retreat of the 1st and 4th Armies behind Styr and Stochod for the coming night. This could be carried out in complete order, as the enemy did not pursue anywhere. On the evening of September 18, the center and left wing of the 1st Army stood ready to defend behind the Styr downwards Dubno, the 4th Army behind the Styr up to north of Rozyszcze — with the XIV Corps in a bridgehead position east of Lucz —, followed by the Herberstein Cavalry Corps (Austro-Hungarian ½ 2nd, 4th, 7th Cavalry Division, a regiment of the Polish Legion) up to Sobul; the newly formed corps of the General of Cavalry Baron von Hauer, consisting of the Austro-Hungarian 1st, ½ 2nd, 9th, Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division and the bulk of the Polish Legion (1st and 3rd Brigade), secured the land bridge at Nawoz and on the Stochod up to Lubieszow.

2. The Offensive of the Linsingen Army Group against Rowno.  
Map 6, Sketch 32.

The German Chief of General Staff had followed the unfavorable development of the battles of the Austro-Hungarian Northern Army with growing concern. As early as September 14, he had approached Generaloberst von Conrad with the proposal to withdraw the Austro-Hungarian front in Galicia behind the Alota Lipa to increase its resistance strength and to reinforce it with the Austro-Hungarian XVII Corps, ready for transport to southern Hungary at Cholm and Dubno. However, the connecting army commands had agreed to hold the current front due to the unfavorable moral effects of a retreat. The XVII Corps was to be moved behind the 2nd Army to Krasne for the time being, even at the risk of arriving too late for the campaign against Serbia.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

In the afternoon of September 17, before the withdrawal of the northern wing of the Austro-Hungarian front behind Styr and Styr, Generaloberst von Conrad approached the German High Command with the request to direct all forces freed after gaining the area around Pinsk "via Lubiaz—Kosti into the flank of the enemy attacking the 4th Army." Consequently, General von Falkenhayn instructed the leader of the Bug Army, General von Linsingen, to move two divisions in time to the area around Brodnica so that they could, if necessary, begin the march south together with the 5th Cavalry Division on September 19. With Generaloberst von Conrad, the consolidation of these forces, the cavalry corps Hauer and Herberstein, as well as the 4th Army into Army Group Linsingen was agreed upon, which was to be bound by the instructions of the Austro-Hungarian High Command. General von Linsingen designated the 1st and 22nd Infantry Divisions under the command of the XXIV Reserve Corps (General of Infantry von Gerok) for the new operation. However, their deployment in the area around Brodnica was delayed by one day because the supply of the troops with provisions and ammunition for the near future could not be accomplished sooner. From the XXXXI Reserve Corps, whose leadership was taken over by General of Artillery von Gronau, the 82nd Reserve Division occupied the entire security line of the Bug Army, which had meanwhile advanced beyond the Styr to the Wisłiza, while the 81st Reserve Division was withdrawn as a reserve to the area west of Pinsk. The corps remained under General von Linsingen as the "Bug Army" and was also referred to in official army reports as "Army Group Mackensen" for deception purposes.

General von Linsingen, in agreement with Generaloberst von Conrad, saw it as his task not to begin the further retreat of the 4th Army unconditionally, but to deliver a decisive blow to the northern wing of the Russian Southwestern Front. Given the precarious condition of Archduke Joseph Ferdinand's troops, he believed that a significant reinforcement by German forces was necessary for this. However, given the overall situation, this was out of the question. General von Linsingen therefore received only the order to "prevent the further advance of the northern wing of the Russian forces south of the Pripjet."

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The Formation of the Linsingen Army Group.

He was given full freedom of action for the execution.

The command takeover of the new army group took place on the night of September 20. From the available reports, General von Linsingen gained the impression that the enemy attacks against the northern wing of the allies, in which only the Russian XII, XXXIX, and the repeatedly defeated XXX Corps as well as two cavalry corps seemed to be involved, were by no means a far-reaching offensive, but rather one of the usual Russian advances to disguise defensive intentions. He therefore decided to carry out his task offensively without further reinforcement through the IX and 3/2 of the Gerok Corps and a division to be withdrawn from the front of the 4th Army against the enemy's right flank. For this purpose, the two Austro-Hungarian cavalry corps and the German 5th Cavalry Division were to clear the area between Stochod and Styr of the enemy and block the Styr crossings, the Gerok Corps was to arrive at Liszniowka on September 22, the 4th Army was to prepare three divisions behind its left wing and otherwise hold its positions against "an enemy inferior in number and intrinsic value" under all circumstances. Since Archduke Joseph Ferdinand did not have sufficient reserves to form the assault group, Generaloberst von Conrad subordinated to him from September 21 the Austro-Hungarian 11th Infantry Division along with the corps command of the XVII Corps.

On September 20, the Gerok Corps began the advance south. The 5th Cavalry Division had already crossed the Stochod at Lubieszow the day before and driven enemy outposts from Jeleznica and Suczze. Now the Hauer Cavalry Corps also advanced eastward. The 4th and 1st Armies initially followed the enemy only hesitantly, but from the afternoon of September 19, they had attacked the bridgehead of Lucz with strong forces. In the following two nights, all enemy assaults could be repelled, but in the early morning of September 23, they succeeded in breaking through the northern front, seizing a Styr bridge, and gaining a foothold on the west bank.

1) The Austro-Hungarian 4th Army on September 20: IX Corps (Austro-Hungarian 10th and 1/2 2nd G. D.), XVII Corps (Austro-Hungarian 3rd, Austrian 14th and 45th, Austro-Hungarian 1/2 and 24th Austrian S. D.), X Corps (Austro-Hungarian 41st, Austrian 3rd G. D.); Army reserves: Austrian 1/2 21st G. S. D., Austro-Hungarian 10th Austrian S. D.; Total strength: about 60,000 rifles.  
2) The XVII Corps, when the crisis with the 2nd and Southern Army was considered overcome, was relocated to Krasne on September 20, together with the Hungarian 41st G. D., behind the Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, to be used within the framework of the Woyrsch Corps command in Volhynia. It was thus finally excluded from the planned participation in the campaign against Serbia, as was previously the VI Corps.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

Consequently, Luz had to be abandoned, and the XIV Corps had to be withdrawn to the Polama Gorta—Stiernit line. Archduke Joseph Ferdinand considered the situation so serious that he ordered the departure of the divisions designated for the planned flank attack (Austrian 13th and 21st Infantry Division, and the 11th Infantry Division of the XVII Corps) to the north and further requested the assignment of the Hungarian 41st Infantry Division, which had meanwhile advanced to Gorochow, from the army command, which was immediately granted. He assigned the 21st Infantry Division to the XIV Corps, intending to use the other three for a concentric counterattack the next day, which would have made their simultaneous deployment behind the Herberstein Cavalry Corps impossible.

General von Linsingen received detailed reports on the events at Luz only on the night of September 24, when he returned to his headquarters in Tablon (60 kilometers southwest of Brest Litowsk) from a trip to Kovel. At the same time, he learned more about a setback at the German XXXXI Reserve Corps; its left wing had to defend itself against heavy attacks by superior forces east of Logiszin since September 21 and finally, on the 23rd, retreated with considerable losses behind the Jasiolda and Dsjinski Canal. Also, southwest of Pinsk, near Nemez, the German defenses had been pushed back northward. Despite these unfavorable reports, General von Linsingen saw no cause for serious concern. He did not believe in a superior Russian attack on the Pinsk peninsula and trusted that it should be possible for the weak, over 60 kilometers apart forces of the XXXXI Reserve Corps in the impassable, water-rich terrain to prevent further enemy advances. But even if this did not succeed, he did not consider the overall situation to be immediately endangered. He also did not share Archduke Joseph Ferdinand's concerns about the situation at Luz. Incidentally, the 4th Army's high command had meanwhile received a calm clarification, as the enemy had not advanced further from the western Styr bank. General von Linsingen therefore insisted that the 11th and 41st Infantry Divisions continue their march northward; only the 13th Infantry Division should halt and remain behind the left wing of the XIV Corps, but only be deployed there in an emergency.

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The Envelopment Attack of Group Gerok.

Behind it, the Gerok Corps had reached the railway south of Maniewicze with great effort on partly marshy, partly deep sandy paths. Only the 5th Cavalry Division encountered strong resistance; it had been in heavy combat on the western Wiesielucha bank since September 20 and had not been able to defeat the enemy despite support from parts of the 22nd Infantry Division.

In the following days, it became clear that General von Linsingen had assessed the situation quite accurately. Neither at Luck nor at Pinsk did the Russians continue their attacks. The cavalry corps Hauer pushed the enemy further eastward, with its left wing the 11th Cavalry Division advanced to Bielskowola on September 24, the main force moved north the next day to support the 5th Cavalry Division, which had withdrawn to Seleznica. The Gerok Corps, whose command was taken over by General von Conta, reached the Russian bridgehead Racznieze under combat on the 25th. In the evening of this day, General von Linsingen issued the fundamental order for the envelopment attack. The 4th Army was to hold its positions and immediately pursue the enemy in case of retreating movements, with the left wing on the Rowne—Kowelno railway. The group Gerok, composed of the XVII Corps, the 13th Infantry Division from the Conta Corps, was to cross the Styr at Kolki with the German divisions on the 26th and attack the enemy's northern flank with all forces from the Sofiul—Kolki line the next day. The cavalry corps Herberstein and Hauer were tasked with advancing between Kolki and Malczyce over the Styr eastwards towards the Rowne—Sarny railway, and the cavalry corps Heydebreck (Hungarian 11th, German 5th Cavalry Division) with clearing the Pripjet—Styr corner.

As so often, however, the enemy also this time evaded the blow intended for him under strong flank protection. On the morning of September 26, he began the retreat eastward on the left wing of the 2nd and 3rd Army. Since he had destroyed the Styr crossings everywhere, the pursuit was delayed. Also, the hope of General Linsingen that the striking wing would reach the Lyszcze—Garajmowka line on this day was not fulfilled; the Conta Corps encountered such strong resistance at Kolki that by evening only one brigade could establish a foothold on the southern bank of the Styr. The next day, however, the enemy also retreated here. The allies pressed sharply forward, having however on the 28th encountered new enemy positions in the line Mlynow–Dyka, behind the Putilowka and in the swamp area on both sides of Berestiany.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

The Herberstein Cavalry Corps advanced over Rolki towards Kormin, the Hauer Cavalry Corps captured the line Nowosiolki–Kolodzieje, and the two divisions of General von Heydebreck were attacking Kuchecka Wola.

With the retreat of the Russians behind the Putilowka and to the Kormin, the task assigned to the army group was essentially accomplished. However, General von Linsingen did not yet consider his task fulfilled. The objective of the operation was now the capture of Kowno. To this end, he initially wanted to push the enemy back over the Stubla and Goryn. Immediate action against this section, however, seemed inappropriate in view of newly discovered Russian troop concentrations in front of the northern wing of the Gerok group, which suggested a flank attack. General von Falkenhayn had also pointed out that the Austro-Hungarian troops, in their current condition, probably did not possess the necessary striking power for such a far-reaching offensive, and that the military-political situation urgently demanded that no operations be initiated where new setbacks were more likely than the opposite. General von Linsingen therefore ordered that the 4th Army should not initially advance over Berestiany–Czernysz for a grand defense and should move strong forces behind its left wing, while General von Gerok had to prepare the 11th Infantry Division of the XVII Corps and the 4th Cavalry Division of the now also subordinate Herberstein Corps as a reserve at Rolki. Only after carrying out this regrouping and clarifying the situation with the enemy did he want to continue the attack on the northern wing.

However, the left wing of the 1st and 4th Army made hardly any progress on September 29; the southern wing of the Gerok group reached the Putilowka after repelling Russian counterattacks and captured Karpilowka, the Conta Corps stormed enemy positions south of Czernysz, and the Herberstein Cavalry Corps repelled strong attacks. The Hauer Cavalry Corps completely pushed the enemy south of the Kowel–Sarny railway over the Styr, on whose west bank they were now only moved downwards from Sarny.

1) According to the available reports, the general command of the Russian XXX Corps and the 77th R.D. were moved northwards to the upper Melnica on September 27, and the 77th J.D. was moved from the area around Pinsk to the area west of Sarny.

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The Offensive of Army Group Linsingen Comes to a Halt.

Generaloberst von Conrad no longer expected any significant operational and tactical results from a continuation of the 4th Army's attack alone, especially since participation of the southward adjoining front could not be considered due to a lack of forces, and the cessation of the German offensive north of the Pripjet gave the enemy free hand for troop movements towards Rowno. General von Linsingen also decided to refrain from advancing over Putilowka, Kormin, and Styr and to expand the reached lines as a permanent position; the cavalry corps Heydebreck was to limit itself to clearing the left bank of Wiszniewlucha. However, the army command and army group were united in the desire to resume the offensive against Rowno around the railway junction Sarny, whose possession they considered important for the permanent control of the area gained in the southeast, after replenishing the troops and forming a strong strike group on the northern wing of General von Gerok. Generaloberst von Conrad hoped to involve the East Galician front in this offensive. The German Chief of General Staff also considered it very desirable for the general situation in the East to keep the Russians under pressure, which was probably only possible south of the Pripjet. However, he pointed out that an offensive starting only in the second half of October would likely encounter equally strong forces that had been brought up in the meantime, and doubted whether the advanced season would allow for larger operations in the Rowno—Sarny area. He therefore suggested refraining from further attacks and requested, pointing to the strong German commitment against Serbia, to release the German forces provided for the operation in Volhynia or equivalent Austro-Hungarian forces for the front north of the Pripjet as well as the German Alpine Corps in Tyrol for the Western Front. The question of whether Army Group Linsingen would attack again or not was to be decided by Generaloberst von Conrad in mid-October. At this point, he also hoped to make up for the losses on the German Eastern Front. However, he immediately initiated the replacement of the Alpine Corps.

At the front of Army Group Linsingen, there had still been various battles on September 30 and October 1. The 4th Army had occupied Zornitza, the Conta Corps had been able to take all enemy positions at Czernysz, and the cavalry corps Heydebreck had repelled Russian attacks. The enemy retreated behind the Kormin in front of both corps.

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However, on the afternoon of October 2, he advanced with strong cavalry and parts of the 77th Infantry Division over the Stryr against the left wing of the Hauer Cavalry Corps and pushed it back over the following two days to beyond the Nowo-Wolyniewice road and onto Karasin. General von Linsingen formed a new assault group north of Kolki from the Austro-Hungarian 11th and the German 1st Infantry Division under General von Conta1) and launched it on October 5 for a counterattack in a northeasterly direction. According to their progress, the Hauer Cavalry Corps was to concentrate strong forces on its left wing and advance on Holuzka. However, the Conta group initially made slow progress in the impassable swamp and forest terrain; it was not until October 8 that the enemy was pushed back over the Stryr between Czartorysk and Kolodziesje. General Freiherr von Hauer had meanwhile had to swing north, as parts of the Russian Cavalry Corps Belaschtschew had broken through at Jeziere on the 6th and advanced to Rudka Czerwiszcze the following day. On October 9, they were even able to advance southwards to Karasin. However, when half of the Austro-Hungarian 11th Infantry Division captured Rudka the next day and the Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division2) approached Jeziere from the north to within close range, the enemy avoided the impending encirclement by hastily retreating to the northeast. On October 10, the 5th Cavalry Division finally succeeded in driving the enemy out of Kuchecka Wola and from its Wiesluchau-Läf. This success was probably only due to the fact that parts of the XXXI Reserve Corps, which had been relieved in the front on both sides of Pinsk by the Guard Cavalry Division transferred by the Army Detachment Woyrsch at the beginning of October, had meanwhile thrown back the enemy standing at Newel over Sinczyce.

Meanwhile, fighting had resumed south of the Stryr. Here, the enemy had sharply engaged the Kritel group, the 4th Army, and the northern wing of the 1st Army from October 7 to 9, but ultimately could only establish themselves in Karpilowka.

At the same time, he advanced with strong forces against the front of the allies in the Olyka lines. The 2nd Army, which had already had to fend off heavy Russian attacks in the last third of September and had finally had to give up Nowe-Alexiniec, now went to Spanow Kritel on the left bank of the Ikwu.

1) The 1st G.D. was relieved by the Austro-Hungarian 13th G.D., whose section was taken over by the 4th Army; the Rad.-Corps Serbernik, the 22nd, Austro-Hungarian 11th, and Hungarian 41st I.G.D. came under the command of the leader of the Austro-Hungarian XVII Corps, General of Infantry Kritef. — 2) p. 581.

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Russian Counterattacks are Repelled.

The Southern Army was able to maintain its bridgehead positions at Burkanow, against which the enemy assault was primarily directed, and repelled the enemy who had penetrated north of Nordwiwoka on the extreme left flank using parts of the 3rd Guards Infantry Division back to the Sereth. However, on October 11, the Russians succeeded in capturing the bridgehead of Wisniowczy from the northern flank of the 7th Army and established a foothold on the right bank of the Strypa. The Austro-Hungarian VI Corps struggled in vain to restore the situation. Only a determined counterattack by three battalions of the 3rd Guards Infantry Division — the last reserve of General Count von Bothmer — drove the enemy back across the river on October 13. A reoccupation of the lost bridgehead positions was abandoned. By mid-month, calm returned to the Eastern Galician front.

3. The Russian Southwestern Front from the End of August to Mid-October.

Sketches 31 and 32.

At the beginning of the Austro-Hungarian offensive on August 27, the Russian Southwestern Front (8th, 11th, and 9th Army), after having transferred ten infantry divisions to the Northwestern Front in July and August, had a total of 29 infantry and 11 cavalry divisions1). On the northern flank of the 8th Army, against which the main thrust was directed, only the Rerberg Cavalry Corps with 3½ cavalry divisions and parts of the XII Corps were positioned. They had to relinquish the major road Wladimir Wolynsk—Luzk to the far superior Austro-Hungarian forces on August 27, creating an extremely threatening situation for the 8th Army. As the southward adjoining front was also breached in several places, the commander-in-chief of the Southwestern Front, General Ivanov, decided to withdraw his three original divisions on the 28th to the line Siernitza (northwest of Luzk)—Radziechow—Uscilug around the Strypa. To the particularly endangered right wing of the army, he quickly assigned two divisions, withdrawn from the 11th and 9th Army and consolidated into the XXXIX Corps. But even with their help, the 8th Army could not withstand the encirclement; on the night of August 31, it had to retreat behind the Styr.

1) 8th Army: Rad. Corps Rerberg, XII., VIII., XVII., VII. Corps (9 Inf., 3½ Cav. Div.), 11th Army: VI., XVIII., XVII. Corps (7 Inf., ½ Rad. Div.), 9th Army: XXIII., XXII. Corps, 2nd and 3rd Guards Corps (13 Inf., 7 Cav. Div.). Transferred to the Northwestern Front were: 58, 78. S. D., XXI. Corps, 69. S. D., 2 Finnish Rifle Div., 65. S. D., 4 Finnish Rifle Div., XXVIII. Corps.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

When the pivotal point Luck was lost on that day, the Styr section could no longer be held. General Brussilow therefore withdrew his army behind the Putilowka and into the line Olyka—Murawica—Radzivilow, united his 3½ cavalry divisions to protect the right flank in the area of Derazno, and had the important railway junction Sarny occupied by a reinforced brigade of the XXXIX Corps. Through brief counterattacks, the Austrians and Hungarians could be brought to a halt in front of the new front; in the army width north of Kozin, the VIII Corps even managed to deal them a sensitive blow on September 3. The Russian 11th Army, which was adjacent to the south, had to retreat further after being broken through on the night of September 1 at Zloczow, as did its left neighboring army, the 9th. Under the protection of powerful rearguards, they took up a new prepared line of resistance on both banks of the Sereth. General Iwanow then weakened the right wing of the 9th Army by one corps — the XXX —, which he quickly sent to Rowno. However, before it could be used here to encircle the Austro-Hungarian northern wing, the 8th and the right wing of the 11th Army were again defeated and pushed back behind the Stublia and Ikwa and into the line Rydoml—Chyrowica. The advance of strong cavalry1) from Kormin, Styr, and Stochod against the flank and rear of the Austrians and Hungarians undertaken in the first days of September brought no relief to the heavily pressured Brussilow army and finally ended with the retreat behind the mentioned rivers. On the other hand, a relief attack begun on September 6 from the bridgeheads of Tarnopol and Strusow developed into an unexpectedly successful offensive by the 11th Army and the right wing of the 9th, through which the allies were thrown back with heavy losses by September 13 to Nowe Alekfnince and to the Wosuszka and Strypa, which resulted in the weakening of the Austro-Hungarian northern wing in favor of the attacked front. The next day, the inner wings of the 11th and 9th Army even managed to gain a foothold on the western bank of the Strypa. Now the 8th Army could launch the long-intended counterattack. General Brussilow had his entire cavalry advance southwest from Kormin on September 15, breaking through and deploying the XXX Corps to encircle from the north, the XXXIX and parts of the XII Corps from the east on Derazno.

1) The cavalry corps formed from two cavalry divisions of the 8th Army Welaschen and 1½ cavalry divisions of the 3rd Army sent to help the 4th Cavalry Corps.

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Countermeasures of the Russians.

The attacks of all three armies of the Russian southwestern front led only to minor local successes; the right wing of the 9th Army succeeded again, albeit only temporarily, in gaining a foothold south of Burkanow on the western bank of the Strypa. At the end of September, the Russian military leadership no longer considered the situation on the southwestern front as threatened. The Chief of General Staff, General Alexeyev, pointed out that the right wing of the 8th Army could be strengthened by contributions from the 9th Army and by bringing in the 125th Infantry Division from the area of Starokonstantinov—Proskurov, so that it could openly confront any enemy encirclement attempt. Consequently, General Ivanov moved a division of the 9th Army to the area northwest of Rovno and ordered his armies to weaken the enemy further through short advances before he could organize and replenish his taken units. As an introduction to this, the 4th Cavalry Corps, reinforced by an infantry division of the 3rd Army1), together with the two cavalry divisions of General Welsaschew, which had been moved north, to which a regiment of the 4th Rifle Division was attached, crossed the Styr on both sides of the Sarny—Rovno railway on October 4 and pushed the Austro-Hungarian cavalry back to and over the Nowosilki—Rudka Czerniewicze road. However, it had to give up the gained ground after only a few days. The attacks of all three armies of the Russian southwestern front, which began on October 7, also led only to

1) In this area (Map 7), besides the 125th Infantry Division, the "Black Sea" Brigade of the 100th Guards Division was also stationed as an army reserve.   
2) The 77th Rifle Division of the XXXI Corps stationed in front of the Pinsk peninsula (left flank corps of the 3rd Army).

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

The right wing of the 9th Army succeeded again, albeit only temporarily, in gaining a foothold south of Burkanow on the western Strypa bank. By mid-October, the Russians as well as the Allies had taken up permanent positions.

4. Reflections.

Generaloberst von Conrad had pursued the goal with the autumn offensive of the Austro-Hungarian army in Galicia and Volhynia to decisively defeat the Russian southwestern front, capture the fortress of Rowno, and clear the remaining Galician territory still in enemy hands. This goal was not only not achieved, the offensive ended after promising beginnings with a severe setback and extraordinarily large losses of men¹), in some places also of material²). From the beginning, the attacker was numerically far superior on the decisive northern wing — the Russian 8th Army with 9 infantry and 3½ cavalry divisions faced at the end of August the Austro-Hungarian 1st and 2nd Army with 24½ infantry and 3½ cavalry divisions. Even in overall strength, the Allies had a considerable superiority with 38 Austro-Hungarian and German infantry divisions and 8½ cavalry divisions, which was further increased during the operation by the deployment of five more divisions (Hungarian 37th, 39th, and 41st, Austro-Hungarian 11th and 12th Infantry Division³).

If the offensive nevertheless ended in failure, the reasons may lie partly in the force deployment, which was not sufficiently aimed at encircling the enemy's northern wing. On the other hand, the impassable, water-rich forest and swamp terrain of Volhynia, especially in unfavorable weather conditions — from September 3rd, continuous rain — posed particular difficulties for the movements of large troop formations and supply.

¹) According to "Austria-Hungary's Last War 1914—1918", Vol. III, p. 163, the Austro-Hungarian Northern Army (7th, Austro-Hungarian 2nd, 1st, and 4th Army), whose combat strength was about 480,000 men on September 1st, suffered a loss of around 230,000 men by the end of the month (including 40,000 sick), including 109,000 missing, who according to Russian reports were almost entirely captured. Of these, 17,800 dead and wounded, 3,900 sick, and 13,300 missing were attributed to the Southern Army. The 3rd Austro-Hungarian Army lost approximately 11,600 prisoners and 17 machine guns from the beginning of the offensive until the end of September.  
²) According to Russian reports, the Austro-Hungarian 9th Army lost 34 guns and 11,000 men in the first half of September.  
³) Not considered here are the Polish Legion (1st and 3rd Brigade) and the German 1st and 22nd Infantry Division.

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The Reasons for the Failure of the Austro-Hungarian Offensive.

More significant is the fact that the divisions deployed for the decisive blow on the northern flank had participated in the advance of the allies from West Galicia to Brest Litowsk since early May and had covered many hundreds of kilometers on mostly poor roads while constantly fighting. Instead of being exhausted and burned out, they had stepped up to the new offensive with combat strength, where they were once again expected to perform at their highest. The Austro-Hungarian units in East Galicia also found themselves, after the hardships of the Carpathian winter and the months of strenuous and costly battles that had led them to the Zlota Lipa, no longer sufficiently aggressive to finally drive the tenacious enemy, skilled in conducting a retreat, from Galician soil, where the terrain with its numerous tributaries of the Dniester running parallel to the south offered favorable defensive possibilities.

After the retreat of the Austro-Hungarian left wing behind the Etwa and the Styr in mid-September, General von Linsingen, with relatively small, also very strained, but advancing forces from the most favorable direction, was able to quickly restore the balance, but he too was denied a decisive blow against the northern flank of the Russian Southwestern Front, as it again managed to evade the threatening encirclement in time and then extend its front northwards.

The failure of the offensive had an unfavorable effect on the overall situation of the allies, as the Austro-Hungarian Northern Army emerged from it severely weakened, and the German Supreme Army Command was forced to bring additional German forces from the eastern and western fronts to the campaign against Serbia instead of the Austro-Hungarian VI and XVII Corps, which had to be deployed in the course of operations in East Galicia and Volhynia and were tied down there.

5. The Capture of the Permanent Position.

Map 7, Sketch 32.

When the battles in East Galicia and Volhynia concluded with the expulsion of the enemy from the western Styrpa and Styr banks, Generaloberst von Conrad on the evening of October 13 directed the Austro-Hungarian 7th and the Southern Army as well as the Böhm-Ermolli army groups (Austro-Hungarian 2nd and 1st Army) and Linsingen (Austro-Hungarian 4th Army, Groups Gerok and Gronau) that the overall situation, "especially the still unclear development of events on the Balkan Peninsula and at the Romanian border," required the secure holding of the permanent position to be expanded by all means.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

After incorporating new replacements, strong army reserves should be set aside to repel possible Russian attacks or for use on other fronts.

Before the Linsingen Army Group could begin expanding the achieved line, it was hit by a new attack. On October 16, strong forces — a total of 5½ infantry and 4½ cavalry divisions of the inner flanks of the Russian 8th and 3rd Army — advanced against the positions of the Gerok Group between Karpilowka and Jezierzce to achieve a shortening of the front by taking the Styr bend from Czartorysk and Kolki. The next day, due to the failure of the 22nd Brigade of the Austro-Hungarian 11th Infantry Division, composed of unreliable Ruthenians, the enemy was able to seize the well-fortified bridgehead of Kullikowicze and gain the left bank of the Styr at Rafalowka. The 1st Infantry Division, thus encircled on both sides, had to be withdrawn from the Styr bend on October 18 with significant losses in men and material and on the 19th even had to bend its right flank back to Olyka. From here to the Styr at Kolki, a 16-kilometer-wide gap opened, into which the particularly proven rifle divisions of the Russian XXXX Corps pushed. North of the Conta Corps, the Sauer Cavalry Corps retreated to the Holusz-Jezierzce line before a superior enemy.

General von Linsingen had already taken care on October 18 to stem the enemy breakthrough by bringing up available reserves. On the 20th, parts of the German 22nd Infantry Division and the Austrian 21st Infantry Division, rushed from the left flank of the 4th Army, advanced from Kolki, the Austro-Hungarian 10th Cavalry Division from the area east of Nawoz, the Polish Legion (1st and 3rd Brigade) from the west and the 1st Infantry Division from the north for a concentric counterattack, which pushed back the tip of the Russian wedge over ten kilometers, but then stalled.

1) The designation "Mackensen Army Group" for the Gronau Group (XXXXI. R. R., G.R.D.) was dropped with October 12 — already in the army report from the 7th; the group has since belonged to the Linsingen Army Group.  
2) See p. 576, 583.  
3) From the 8th Army the XXX and the newly formed XXXX Corps as well as the Cavalry Corps Weishäupen; from the 3rd Army the reinforced 4th Rad. Corps.  
4) I. XVII Corps (Hungarian 41st, 51st I.D., German 22nd I.D.), Austro-Hungarian Cavalry Corps Severin (Austro-Hungarian 1st and 3rd Polish Br. D., Austro-Hungarian 1st and 9th and 11th R. D.).  
5) Brusilov, My Memories, p. 155.

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New Russian Attacks Collapse.

By mid-November, a longer pause finally set in on the Eastern Galician and Volhynian fronts. Only then could the Austro-Hungarian Northern Army and the Linsingen Army Group begin to organize the extremely fragmented units and prepare for new military requirements. The Austro-Hungarian 7th Army received after the transfer of 1½ infantry divisions each to the southwestern front and the Linsingen Army Group for its approximately 150-kilometer-wide section at the beginning of December still over 7½ infantry and 4 cavalry divisions, the Southern Army with a front width of about 60 kilometers over 5½ infantry divisions.

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The Right Wing of the Army from Mid-July to the End of the Year.

The Böhm-Ermolli Army Group held a front of about 140 kilometers with 10½ infantry divisions and 1 cavalry brigade, behind which were 1½ infantry divisions and 1 cavalry brigade as army group reserve, and 1¾ infantry divisions as army reserve. It had transferred one division to the Italian theater of war, and a second to the Linsingen Army Group. In its 250-kilometer-wide section, the front line was occupied by 14 infantry and 6 cavalry divisions, which had moved their valuable horse material to the rear to increase their combat strength as foot troops; behind them were half a division as reserve of the 4th Army, two infantry divisions as army group reserve at Kolki and Maniewicze; finally, around Luck, an army reserve of one infantry and three cavalry divisions was assembled. In total, there were thus 41¼ infantry and 11 cavalry divisions along the approximately 600-kilometer-wide front from the Romanian border to north of Pinsk; the Austro-Hungarian army command had 2¾ infantry and 3 cavalry divisions as reserves on this theater of war. Also on the Russian side, after the conclusion of the fighting, a regrouping of forces was carried out for a new offensive planned towards the end of the year on the southern flank.

1) 7th Army: XI Corps (Austro-Hungarian combined Brigade Papp, Hungarian 42nd Infantry Division), Benigni Group (Austro-Hungarian ½ 5th Cavalry Division, 3rd and 36th Rifle Divisions), Schütz Group (Austro-Hungarian 30th Cavalry Division, Brunk 6th Rifle Division, XIII Corps (Austro-Hungarian 15th and 36th Infantry Divisions), VI Corps (Austro-Hungarian 12th, Hungarian 39th Infantry Division); Army reserve: Hungarian 202nd Infantry Brigade and German 5th Cavalry Division. — Southern Army: Hofmann Corps (Austro-Hungarian 130th, 131st and 132nd Infantry Brigades), Marischal Corps (48th Rifle Division, Austro-Hungarian 19th Cavalry Division, ⅔ 3rd Infantry Division), Gerok Group (Austro-Hungarian 3rd Guard Cavalry Division, 9th Guard Cavalry Division, 32nd Infantry Division). — Böhm-Ermolli Army Group: 2nd Army: IV Corps (Austro-Hungarian 14th and 33rd Infantry Divisions), V Corps (Austro-Hungarian 64th Infantry Brigade and 34th Infantry Division), Hofal Group (Austro-Hungarian 27th and 29th Infantry Divisions), XVIII Corps (Austrian 1st Landsturm Brigade, Austro-Hungarian 31st Infantry Division, Hungarian 1st Hussar Brigade); 1st Army: I Corps (Austro-Hungarian 25th, Austrian 51st Infantry Division), Kestranek Group (Austrian 2nd Guard Cavalry Division); Army group reserve: Austro-Hungarian 110th and 51st Cavalry Divisions, 1 attached Radetzky Brigade. Army reserve: Austro-Hungarian 34th and 42nd, Austrian 43rd Infantry Division. — Linsingen Army Group: IX Corps (Austro-Hungarian 10th and 24th Infantry Divisions), X Corps (Austro-Hungarian 3rd and ½ 24th, Hungarian 37th Cavalry Division), Kritek Group (XVII Command, Hungarian 41st Infantry Division), II Corps (Austrian 13th, 15th and 26th Infantry Divisions); Army reserve: Austro-Hungarian ½ 24th Cavalry Division, Austrian 10th Rifle Division. — Southern Army: Hofmann Corps (Austro-Hungarian 130th, 131st and 132nd Infantry Brigades), Fath Corps (Austrian 45th and ½ 10th Rifle Division, reinforced 1st Infantry Division (with 2 Hungarian and 2 Polish Brigades), Cavalry Corps Hauke (Hungarian 11th, Austro-Hungarian 1st and 9th Infantry Cavalry Divisions, 1 Polish Brigade); Grona Group (Gentdo. XXXXI Rifle Division, Austro-Hungarian 3rd Guard Cavalry Division). — Army group reserve: Austrian 21st Guard Cavalry Division, Army reserve: 22nd Guard Cavalry Division, Austro-Hungarian 11th Cavalry Division. — Southern Army: Lehmann Corps (formerly Herberstein, Austro-Hungarian 2nd, 4th and 7th Rifle Divisions).

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Transition to Trench Warfare.

The boundary between the Western and Southwestern Fronts, previously formed by the Sarny-Kovel railway, was moved about 40 kilometers northward at the beginning of December. The troops of the 3rd Army stationed in this area — the 4th Cavalry Corps and the XXIV Corps, deployed here in early November — were transferred to the 8th Army. This army now consisted of 15½ infantry and 5 cavalry divisions. South of Krzemieniec, it was joined by the 11th Army with 6½ infantry divisions and 1 cavalry division. Finally, from Strusow to the Romanian border, the 9th Army stood with 12 infantry and 7 cavalry divisions1). Including the two infantry and three cavalry divisions of the left wing of the Russian Western Front (3rd Army) facing the Gronau Group, the Linsingen Army Group and the Austro-Hungarian Northern Army thus faced a total of 36 infantry and 16 cavalry divisions, approximately equal forces.

1) 8th Army: 4th Cav. Corps, XXIV Corps, 5th Cav. Corps (Weislaffew), XXXX., XXX., XXXIX., VIII., and XVII. Corps; 11th Army: VII., VI., and XVIII. Corps; 9th Army: XXII., XXXIII., XXXI., XI., XII., and XXXII. Corps, 2nd and 3rd Cav. Corps.  
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K. The Russian Supreme Command from September to December 1915 1).

On September 5, the Tsar arrived at the Grand Headquarters in Mogilev and, with General Alexeyev as Chief of Staff, took command of all land and naval forces at the front. The announcement stated: "With unwavering faith in ultimate victory, we will fulfill our sacred duty to defend the homeland to the utmost." In view of the disintegration that the previous Supreme Commander, Grand Duke Nicholas, enjoyed in the widest circles, the people, army, and allies did not welcome this change with unreserved joy and increased confidence 2). All attempts to dissuade the Tsar from his plan had failed. On the other hand, General Alexeyev, corresponding to his military past 3), enjoyed particularly high esteem.

The army group of the Northern Front under General Russki, which also included the Baltic Fleet, held the Dvina line with strong bridgeheads on the western bank at the beginning of September with the 6th, 12th, and 5th Armies; the 10th Army had already been withdrawn to the rear front by the end of August under the "compulsion" of the German advance between Dvinsk and Vilna. The Western Front under General Ewergt, the previous commander of the 4th Army, stood with the 10th, 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 3rd Armies in a line that ran south from west of Vilna east past Grodno. Its left wing, the 3rd Army, had particularly felt the pressure of the German Army Detachment Woyrsch and the Mackensen Army Group in the last days of August, which had pushed them back to Pruzana and Pinsk. After Grodno was evacuated on September 2 before the attack of the German 8th Army 4), stubborn battles developed east of it. The main concern, however, was directed at the northern flank threatened by encirclement near Vilna; the reserves that had previously encircled were soon to be consolidated into a new 2nd Army to close the gap at Swenzjany. The Southwestern Front under General Ivanov (8th, 11th, and 9th Armies) was forced to retreat before the advancing enemy into a line running east of the Styr and then along the Sereth to the south, thus still occupying Austrian territory with its southern flank.

1) Connection p. 452 ff. — 2) See, among others, Poincaré, VII, pp. 70 and 80 f. — 3) Volume VII, p. 300. — 4) p. 496.

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Retreat Battles.

However, the Russian Supreme Command had already assigned only local significance to the battles on this theater of war for some time. The armies of the Southwestern Front served primarily as a source for strengthening the northern fronts, to which they had already transferred 13½ divisions from June to the end of August and were to transfer four more; thus, they had been weakened by 40 percent of their strength since mid-July.

The new Supreme Command could not change the overall situation; initially, it could only try to slow down the pace of the retreat. In its first directive, issued on September 8, it stated that the strength of the enemy attacks had decreased across the entire front; the enemy was following with partly strong advance guards mainly along the roads; this had to be taken into account in the defense. Rapid evasion had to be avoided to secure the return of supplies and refugees.

When the German attack, which began on September 9 northwest of Vilna, grew into an extremely threatening encirclement of the northern wing of the Western Front1), the Supreme Command had to order the retreat of this front to the line Michaliszki—Nowogrodek—Baranowicze—Dsjunkf Canal on September 17. It also hoped for a restoration, but not a decisive change in the situation, from the new 2nd Army, which was meanwhile gathering west of Molodeczno. Thus, the further retreat to the line Narocz Lake—Smorgon and south was ordered on September 22, so that the front finally ran just east of Baranowicze and Pinsk.

The Southwestern Front2) had meanwhile been deliberately left to itself, despite warnings from General Ivanov, who was particularly concerned about his right wing, which covered the direction to Kiev, in view of the Austro-Hungarian offensive against Rovno. However, when the Western powers launched a major relief attack in France at the end of September, the Russians also attacked again, hoping to win Romania for themselves and help Serbia, which the Tsar's government had advised to be unyielding against Austria-Hungary in the decisive days of July 1914.

Since no German troops seemed to be facing the attack site anymore, "confidence in one's own ability and the belief in success led troops and leaders to entirely different actions."

1) See p. 525 ff. — 2) See p. 585 ff.

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The Russian Supreme Command from September to December 1915.

That their attack brought a considerable booty of more than 70,000 prisoners and 37 guns and in October also achieved success at Baranowicze, despite the defeat in the north and later setback at Luck, boosted the confidence of the Supreme Command. It gradually became clear that the German command had begun to transfer numerous units that had previously fought against Russia to other fronts. By October, seven divisions had been counted that had gone west, nine that had been sent to the Balkans. It was also observed since mid-October that less effective ammunition was being fired on the enemy side3). With the decline in combat activity, the construction of strong positions and preparations for winter began on the entire Russian front, as well as on the Austro-Hungarian and German fronts. The decisive role continued to be a concern for Serbia. To help this country as much as possible, from mid-November, the 7th Army4) located in the wide area around Odessa was transformed into a fully-fledged and particularly powerful military body through contributions from the front.

Moreover, the Russian army urgently needed rest and found it. How severely it had suffered is shown by the total losses, which according to official Russian compilations5) had grown to more than 2.2 million by the end of the year, including more than 1 million missing. The field army (excluding the approximately six-division-strong Caucasus Army) had been reinforced to 126 divisions by consolidating independent militia formations. In December, it counted 1,360,000 infantrymen and 4,650 guns (including 650 heavy ones)6), which resulted in an average division strength of almost 11,000 infantrymen and 37 guns.

1) Riesnamow, p. 127.  
2) p. 559 ff.  
3) Diary entries of an officer from the Russian Great Headquarters from December 15, 1915: “It has now been two months since it has been proven everywhere on our front that the German artillery shells do not explode” (from December 17: “The majority of the German heavy artillery shells do not explode”) (Lemke, pp. 277 and 296).  
4) E. 436 f. — Further details on this, as well as other military and political measures of the Russian Supreme Command, will be included in Volume IX.  
5) Russia in World War in Figures p. 30.  
6) Figures according to a report made to the French ambassador in Petrograd (Paleologue I, p. 460) on December 11, 1915. The Russian army had 1,360,000 infantrymen and 4,650 guns (including 650 heavy ones) in November 1915. A figure for the Caucasus Army of 10 cm, indirect fire from 15 cm upwards) (I, p. 31) for the month of November with 532 barrels, also given lower.

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Losses. Strength of the Army.

an average strength of the divisions of almost 11,000 infantrymen and 37 guns. The rifle equipment had already improved to the extent that only about twelve percent of the field army's infantry were unarmed. The continuously growing performance of the Russian arms industry gave hope for further improvement¹). Nevertheless, they remained dependent on foreign assistance for arms and ammunition production and sought it wherever it could be found, not only from the Western powers and America but also in Italy and Japan. However, when the French Minister Doumer demanded in December, in exchange for rifles, a monthly supply of 40,000 Russian replacements for the French army, this degrading proposal was rejected²).

The goal of all efforts was to restore the army's combat strength in order to be able to attack again as soon as possible.

¹) The production of ammunition for the artillery increased from 14,000 rounds daily in May to 59,000 in December and was expected to reach 122,000 rounds by March 1916. The insurmountable concerns rose from 45,000 to 67,000 rounds per month in May (Communications to the French Ambassador; Paléologue I, G. 324 and 460).  
²) Kudatschen letters from December 14 and 23, 1915.

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V. The Multi-Front War in Summer 1915.

I. The Situation until Early August.

General von Falkenhayn adhered unwaveringly to this decision in the following months, despite Italy's entry into the war and the temporarily crisis-like tense situation at the Dardanelles and especially on the Western Front.

With the growing successes on the eastern theater, the operational goal here was increasingly expanded. During the Galician operation, the initial limited task was to relieve the Austro-Hungarian Carpathian Front from Russian pressure, but after reaching the Wisłok, the pursuit continued to the San, to "deny the enemy a compensating victory"; thereafter, operations against the enemy east of the San were to be conducted "until a decision sufficient for our purposes"2), i.e., until the final defeat of the Russian offensive power in Galicia. Finally, in unified cooperation between the Austro-Hungarian and German Eastern Fronts, the defeat of the main enemy forces in Poland and thus the "campaign decision" against Russia was sought. Under these circumstances, it was clear that the East gradually demanded all available forces from the other theaters of war. With the increasing troop requirements of the Eastern Front, both General Staffs did not shy away from the risk of stripping the German Western Army and the Serbian Front to the limit of what was possible. From mid-April to the first half of August, no fewer than 14½ infantry and reserve divisions from the West and the German divisions from the Serbian Front, a total of 17½ divisions, were moved to the eastern theater; specifically from the Western Front: 2½ on April 14, eight divisions, on May 3 one division, on June 2, 2½, on July 19 two divisions, and on August 8 one division. Of these, only two were transported back to the western theater.

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The Military and Political Situation of the Central Powers Spring 1915.

Corresponding to the gradually expanding operational goals on the Russian front, the deployment of these forces did not occur uniformly, but gradually. A result of decisive importance for the campaign was not achieved.

All demands exceeding a minimum from the other theaters of war had to be temporarily postponed due to the growing need for forces in the East. The start of the campaign against Serbia, which was urgently demanded and repeatedly considered due to the difficult situation of the Ottoman Empire, had to be postponed again and again. Thus, the path to the Orient to support Turkey, which was engaged in heavy attrition battles at Gallipoli, remained blocked.

However, with even greater emphasis, after Italy's entry into the war, the diplomatic struggle was continued to prepare a final solution to the extremely difficult and significant Balkan problem for the overall war effort; for there was a danger that after Italy, the neutral Balkan states would also turn to the enemy camp. The accession of the last European great power to the enemy alliance, the difficult situation at the Dardanelles, and the tension between the United States of America and Germany caused by the sinking of the "Lusitania" meant a considerable burden on the Central Powers from the standpoint of the Balkan states, despite all the successes of the allies on the Galician theater of war. The sharp contrasts that arose in the recently resumed negotiations between Bulgaria and Turkey due to excessive Bulgarian demands could also be seen as a worrying sign of an unfavorable development of affairs. Similarly, the increased resistance to continuing neutrality, which was asserted by the Romanian government, could be interpreted. This renewed suspicion that Romania was bound by contractual agreements to follow Italy's actions was therefore aroused.

Above all, it was the uncertainty of the Balkan situation that brought the leading statesmen and chiefs of staff of the Central Powers together for a meeting at the German Great Headquarters in Pleß on May 25. The focus was on the exchange of views regarding Romania's stance. According to the General's view, the efforts of the allies had to be incessantly directed towards winning Romania by assuring military and economic guarantees.

1) p. 12. — 2) p. 17. — 3) p. 11.

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The Multi-Front War in Summer 1915.

It was unanimously agreed that it was necessary to bridge the differences between Bulgaria and Turkey. The hope for an agreement between these two states seemed present, as the High Porte, according to recently received news, did not reject a territorial concession to Bulgaria up to the Maritza line and only demanded the conclusion of an alliance with Bulgaria in return. If it was possible to reach an agreement on these issues, the first condition for the creation of a "Balkan League" was fulfilled, whose establishment General von Falkenhayn suggested anew during the discussions; as a further prerequisite, he strongly advocated for an understanding between Austria-Hungary and Serbia.

The uncertainty of the political situation was further heightened by alarm reports from the Dardanelles. On June 9, the German ambassador, Baron von Wangenheim, reported from Constantinople that the recent land attacks by Anglo-French forces on Gallipoli had extraordinarily shaken the Turkish resistance. The enemy artillery had gained considerable superiority, and Turkish ammunition production could no longer keep pace with consumption. "Under all these circumstances, the fall of the Dardanelles must be expected unless it is possible to quickly reach an understanding with Romania that ensures the passage of ammunition... In my opinion, the Dardanelles cannot hold out for more than a month."

Immediately thereafter — mid-June — the successful operation of the Allies on the Galician front began to exert its moral impact on the Balkans to such an extent that the transfer of the larger part of the Russian forces stationed in southern Hungary to the Galician front seemed possible¹). This improvement in the situation was mainly due to the fact that the Entente did not succeed at that time in bringing Romania and Bulgaria to their side. Although a shift to the enemy camp was avoided, the Romanian government remained firm in its refusal to allow the passage of urgently needed munitions shipments for Turkey.

¹) p. 242. The same idea is also expressed in the letter from General von Falkenhayn to General Enver Pasha on June 14.

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The Unresolved Situation in the Balkans.

This had an even more unfavorable effect as the Dardanelles crisis apparently reached its peak at the end of June. On June 30, the German ambassador described the situation based on reports from the army commander, Marshal Liman von Sanders, in the darkest terms: Although the conduct of the Turkish troops on the Gallipoli Peninsula was beyond all praise, "the enemy is bringing more and more heavy artillery into position and bombarding us day and night with heavy shells. Although the number of our guns is completely sufficient, the shortage of ammunition has now become so considerable that the moment is foreseeable when we will no longer be able to withstand the enemy's artillery attack... It must be expected that the resistance of the Turkish army will be broken in the very near future. Once the land armies are defeated, the fortress, according to Admiral Usedom, can only hold out for another three days. Marshal Liman von Sanders1) therefore asks me to inform higher authorities that if a sufficient quantity of ammunition is not immediately procured, the Dardanelles are lost..."

Despite this report, it was only understandable that the demand was now emphatically raised again to save Turkey by attacking Serbia. In a report dated July 2, the German military attaché in Sofia, Major Freiherr von der Goltz, stated: There can hardly be any doubt that Bulgaria, although it ostensibly treats Germany in a friendly manner, is fundamentally not willing to support us in the matter of supplying Turkey with war material. A change could only occur with a break between Bulgaria and Russia; to bring it about, there is only one means: the attack on Serbia.

A telegram from the Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg on July 4 came to the same conclusion as this report. He asked General von Falkenhayn for a response to a request from the German ambassador in Constantinople regarding what measures should be taken if the enemy's breakthrough through the Dardanelles should succeed. The question was whether Turkey should continue fighting in Thrace after the fall of the Dardanelles, withdraw to Asia Minor, or make peace. From a political standpoint, the Chancellor explained, the decisive factor was that Germany could likely persuade Turkey to continue holding out in Thrace even after the Dardanelles were captured by the Western powers, keep Romania calm, and bring Bulgaria over to our side.

1) Later statements by the army commander, Marshal Liman von Sanders, regarding this telegram indicate that the military authorities did not take the situation as seriously as the ambassador had described it.

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The Multi-Front War in Summer 1915.

However, the political leadership expected no far-reaching impact from military victories over Russia and took a detailed position on the letter from General von Falkenhayn dated July 6.

1) from Bethmann Hollweg, Vol. II, p. 13. — 2) p. 264 ff. — 3) p. 315. 4) Political Archive of the Foreign Office.

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The Difficult Situation of Turkey at the Dardanelles.

The Russian Empire, replied the State Secretary of the Foreign Office, von Jagow, could only be made ready for peace if it became convinced that the efforts of the Western powers would not succeed in overcoming the Dardanelles. To hold the straits, however, the subjugation of Serbia was necessary. General von Falkenhayn apparently expected a tangible conclusion to the operations against Russia in five to six weeks. By that time, it should be possible to deploy the necessary forces against Serbia, amounting to 250,000 men. For the defense of the Dardanelles, this might already be too late; but even in this unfavorable case, the subjugation of Serbia remained necessary to win over Bulgaria, extend a hand to the Turks beleaguered in Thrace, and, if possible, liberate Constantinople again.

However, before an agreement on the various views of the military and political leadership was reached, the German ambassador in Constantinople had come to a confident assessment of the ammunition and thus the entire combat situation at the Dardanelles. By shifting ammunition from the fortified positions of Tschataldschi(1) to the front line at the Dardanelles, the situation there had temporarily improved, he reported on July 5; it was by no means excluded that the main danger would be eliminated by the end of the month through the successfully pursued own ammunition production(2). Further reassurance was provided by a letter from Field Marshal Freiherr von der Goltz dated July 8. The ammunition shortage continued, and "everything must be done," he emphasized, "that is compatible with the general interests of the alliance to provide us with supplies... But if I am to answer the question of whether it would be necessary to accept particularly burdensome conditions from the Balkan states or to forgo other decisive undertakings to save Turkey, i.e., to make its further resistance possible, then I must decisively deny this question... If it depends only on us here, we will manage, even without foreign help..."

1) Fortification line west of Constantinople, where the Bulgarian attack came to a halt in the Balkan War of 1912/13.  
2) The management of ammunition production in Constantinople had been entrusted to a German naval officer, Captain z. S. Pieper. Further details on the ammunition situation at the Dardanelles will be contained in Volume IX.

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The Multi-Front War in Summer 1915.

The defeat of Russia not only meant the best solution to the Balkan problem but also effectively banished all dangers on the Italian front!). If the Tsarist Empire withdrew from the ranks of the opponents of the Central Powers in time, the outcome of the multi-front war could be viewed with confidence.

2. Peace Initiatives of the German Supreme Army Command.

Recognizing the significance of a peace agreement with Russia for the outcome of the war, General von Falkenhayn left no stone unturned in the spring and summer of 1915 to reach an understanding with Russia by exploiting the favorable military situation on the eastern theater of war. When Przemysl fell on June 3 and the San line was taken, he therefore asked the Chancellor, through the mediation of the representative of the Foreign Office at the Great Headquarters, the envoy von Treutler, to "take advantage of the currently favorable situation of the campaign against Russia and make a serious attempt to reach a cessation of hostilities between us and Russia..." He proposed to present the Tsar, through a neutral power, with the following: "Przemysl is in our hands, the troops thus freed are moving on Lemberg, which must be taken in the foreseeable future. A new army will soon be deployed against the eastern front"). This military situation will not be changed by the possible, but in view of our successes unlikely, entry of Romania and Bulgaria) into the war against us any more than the already accomplished entry of Italy has... We therefore propose that between Russia and us the hostilities be ceased.

1) p. 29.  
2) Here, General von Falkenhayn presumably had in mind the new deployment of the four and a half divisions in Galicia, to which he finally committed himself on June 2. See p. 202.  
3) During the difficult Bulgarian-Turkish negotiations, the Tsar repeatedly admitted that "it does not seem certain whether the Bulgarians will not move against Turkey today or tomorrow." Report of the German ambassador, Baron von Wangenheim, from June 16 to the Foreign Office.

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The Peace Initiatives of the German O. H. L. in Winter 1914 and Spring 1915.

We do not demand a breach of faith if Russia feels bound to the Allies. Peace needs to be concluded only when our other opponents also want peace, or when the agreement of September 4¹) becomes void by the withdrawal of one of the Allies."

With this letter, the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army had revived peace efforts that had been ongoing for months and had only temporarily stalled. As early as September 1914, neutral European states had offered to mediate peace, but were rejected in Paris and London. In January 1915, American Colonel House was prompted by President Wilson to make contact with the English and German governments to explore peace possibilities. He hoped to achieve that both parties would initially be willing to engage in mutual discussions. However, an essential prerequisite for this was that Germany agreed to evacuate Belgium and to the plan of general disarmament of the powers. Colonel House arrived in Berlin at the end of March and held discussions with the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. However, without addressing the Belgian question, only issues directly concerning the United States were touched upon, such as American munitions deliveries to the Entente and the blockade imposed by England over Germany. The question posed by Colonel House, whether the German government would be willing to join a new convention for securing the seas, was fundamentally agreed to by the Chancellor. However, following the sinking of the "Lusitania"²) by a German submarine on May 7, these discussions came to a temporary end.

In addition to Colonel House's peace efforts, in the early months of 1915, a neutral European state attempted to establish contact between the warring powers to facilitate peace. Influential English circles were not entirely opposed to this idea. In Russia, too, the efforts seemed to be temporarily favorable.

¹) Through the London Agreement of September 4, 1914, the governments of England, France, and Russia mutually committed not to conclude separate peace during the war and to accept peace proposals only with the consent of the Allies. See Volume VI, p. 405.  
²) p. 17.

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The Multi-Front War in Summer 1915.

The Tsar indeed rejected the idea of a separate peace, but was otherwise not averse to entering into an exchange of ideas with Germany regarding peace through neutral mediation. However, the prospects for this discussion began to appear increasingly unfavorable during the month of April, apparently due to the expected entry of Italy into the war by the Entente. News from England cast doubt on the possibility of achieving peace; at the same time, Russia also showed a dismissive attitude.

On the other hand, given the impending breakdown of relations between Vienna and Rome, as well as the various conflicts that existed in the coastal area of the Adriatic between Italy and Serbia, the time seemed to have come in May 1915 to reach an understanding between the Danube Monarchy and Serbia. Therefore, in mid-May, it was suggested by the Germans to the Austro-Hungarian government to conclude a separate peace with Serbia on the basis that the Negotin district would be ceded to Austria-Hungary, thereby securing an immediate connection with Bulgaria. In return, Serbia would be granted Northern Albania and the merger with Montenegro. The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, Baron Burian, was not opposed to this endeavor but considered it desirable that the initiative should come from the Serbian government. However, this was not achievable, as indicated by a letter from the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to General von Conrad dated May 30: "Burian wants to build golden bridges for them — the Serbs — but they do not come." Nevertheless, the idea of an approach by Austria-Hungary to Serbia from the German side was pursued further in the following weeks.

1) "I advocate ... for peace with Serbia," as stated in the records of the Minister of War, General von Wild, from June 16 — "Serbia: Turkey to the Adriatic; Bulgaria: Macedonia; Greece: Epirus; Romania: Bessarabia and Bukovina". Although these plans apparently did not go beyond considerations, they are indicative of how much the creation of a Balkan federation allied with the Central Powers was hoped for from the military side at that time to bring about peace. See p. 600.  
2) Regarding the peace efforts of the Central Powers to reach an understanding with Serbia, the Serbian Chief of General Staff writes (Volume VIII, p. 171): On June 21, Bulgaria declared itself ready for negotiations on the condition that the demanded part of Serbian-Macedonia

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The Peace Initiatives of the German Supreme Army Command in Summer 1915.

This was the situation when, on June 3, the peace proposal from General von Falkenhayn reached Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg. On the same day, he replied, pointing out the failure of his previous peace efforts, that based on the experiences gained, there was the greatest likelihood that the Tsar would decisively reject the proposed cessation of hostilities. Should this not be the case, contrary to expectations, the Tsar would condition the acceptance of the proposal on either us ceasing hostilities against all our opponents or not using the forces on any other theater of war. Furthermore, the Tsar would give the German government any response to a clearly defined proposal only after consulting with his allies. "Any proposal from us," emphasized the Chancellor, "presupposes that we are ready to make peace with all our enemies based on the current war situation. Whether our opponents are inclined to do so seems doubtful to me after Italy's entry into the war. In any case, peace would at best only be achievable on the basis of the status quo ante. Whether this path must be taken is subject solely to military assessment..." The Chancellor concluded by expressing the thought that Germany was hardly in a position to offer the Russians significantly more than the Tsar hoped to achieve by remaining with the Entente. Moreover, Germany's peace proposals to Russia could be interpreted by Romania and Bulgaria as a sign of weakness; there was a danger that these states might switch to the camp of our opponents for fear of being too late in the distribution of the spoils.

doniens immediately and not only after the war. The demands of Sofia greatly unsettled Serbia, where the Bulgarian mentality was all too well known. Germany and Austria-Hungary used this circumstance for a peace offer. "The Serbian government rejected this proposal with respect, as the Austro-Hungarian maneuver was too transparent. It was intended to be directed at Bulgaria so that it would join the Central Powers; it was said, I connect myself with Serbia to understand, to make Bulgaria lose Macedonia." According to the findings made in the Political Archive of the Foreign Office, a genuine peace offer to Serbia was not made, but inquiries were made to the Serbian government by a neutral power about the conditions under which they would be inclined to conclude peace with the Central Powers.

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The Multi-Front War in Summer 1915.

Despite this decision by the responsible leader of German overall policy, General von Falkenhayn continued to seize every opportunity to resolve the peace issue. A new occasion for this was provided by a letter from Generaloberst von Conrad dated July 21 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna. The current impressive military maneuver, it stated, which would likely soon lead to the capture of Lublin, Cholm, Iwangorod, and perhaps even Warsaw, should be used to break the enemy's bloc through an agreement with Russia and to neutralize Romania and Bulgaria. Golden bridges should be built for Russia for a separate peace.

General von Falkenhayn forwarded the copy of this letter sent to him on July 22 to Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg, adding that his view coincided with that of Generaloberst von Conrad. The right time to approach Russia should not be missed.

In his reply on July 30, the Chancellor pointed out that he had been thoroughly examining for months whether Russia was inclined towards a separate peace with Germany, but that the Russian government had so far consistently responded negatively. Although a shift in sentiment in favor of Germany was noticeable, there was no inclination towards a separate peace; rather, the old standpoint was maintained that Russia, bound by the word of the Tsar, could only make peace jointly with its allies. The severe defeats in Poland and Russia were not considered decisive for the final outcome of the war in Petersburg and were only regarded as temporary setbacks. With the deployment of British forces still in training, the great offensive of the Western powers would begin in autumn on the French front. Despite the undoubtedly noticeable shift in sentiment, the assumption did not seem justified that Russia would decide on a separate peace even with favorable progress of our military operations in Poland. The possibility for this would, if at all, only arise when Russia had to finally give up its hope for the fall of the Dardanelles and the acquisition of Bulgaria.

1) If the Chancellor linked Russia's willingness for peace in this way with the success of the Gallipoli campaign, it should be remembered that Russia had no interest in conquering the straits without Russian involvement. Under certain circumstances, they were even prepared, ...

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The Supreme Army Command Plans the Cleansing of Upper Alsace from the Enemy.

“Herein I see, as Your Excellency knows, still the crucial point. It is known in Petersburg that we would settle for reasonable terms in the event of an early separate peace. I also have it pointed out there that the establishment of a prolonged German-Austrian administration in Congress Poland would so strengthen the Polish freedom and independence movement that Poland would then have to be considered lost to Russia in one form or another.” The Chancellor concluded with the remark that the Entente would view a German-Austrian peace offer, despite our victories in Poland, as a sign of weakness and treat it accordingly, as long as hopes of subduing Turkey, annexing the Balkan states, and a breakthrough in the West existed. “Only when these prospects are eliminated will we be strong enough to extend our hand for peace if our opponents do not come.”

General von Falkenhayn's pursuit of an early peace also makes his plan for the cleansing of Upper Alsace, first expressed in mid-June, understandable, for which purely military reasons could hardly be asserted. General von Conrad had made similar considerations when he described in his letter of May 14 to General von Falkenhayn the minimum goal of the Eastern operation as: “Reclaiming the territory of the monarchy and the territory of Russian Poland on the left bank of the Vistula, to be ceded to us as compensation for territorial concessions to Italy.” General von Conrad had come close to this goal in mid-June when the capture of the capital of Galicia was not imminent. It is therefore probably no coincidence that at this time the German Chief of Staff also sought the reconquest of the last part of German soil in Upper Alsace still occupied by the enemy, so that in any peace negotiations there would be no more bargaining chips in enemy hands.

How much General von Falkenhayn at that time counted on the possibility of peace is also evident from the fact that he sent a memorandum prepared by the Supreme Army Command on "the economic and military situation of France" to both the Chancellor and the Foreign Office in early June, which concluded: "France's sacrifices in this war are so colossal that the government will neither be able to bear the responsibility before the people nor before history, and will soon be faced with the question of whether abandoning resistance will serve the nation's future better than continuing the war, which is hopeless for France despite all external aid."

See “Constantinople and the Straits.” According to Russian secret reports of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moscow 1925/26.  
1) p. 614. — 2) p. 139/140.

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The Multi-Front War in Summer 1915.

If the thoughts of this memorandum were correct, it could indeed be questionable whether the enemy alliance was willing to endure another war winter.

In this context, the explanation is probably also found that General von Falkenhayn on June 20 gave the General of Engineers at Army High Command 10, Major General von Mertens, the secret order to "militarily explore positions" on the western theater of war in the general line Nieuport, Lille, Douai, Hirson, Stenay, Metz — thus roughly parallel to the Belgian border. This was the shortest possible line behind the Western Front, where the possession of Belgium, access to the sea, and the possibility of launching a new major offensive against the Western powers remained secured. According to a statement by Major General von Mertens, it was apparently a "demarcation line" that could be taken in the event of an armistice with subsequent peace negotiations.

3. The Shift of the Focus of Warfare.

Not without reason did Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg in his response to General von Falkenhayn on July 30 point out the great importance of gaining Bulgaria for the Un­

1) See Kronprinz Rupprecht of Bavaria "My War Diary" p. 368. On June 24, 1915, it is noted: "At noon I spoke with General of the Engineer Corps Mertens, who was traveling on behalf of the Supreme Army Command to the Western Front to find out in what way a demarcation line should be drawn in the event of an armistice." — In contrast, the former bureaucrat of the Operations Department at the German Great Headquarters, Major a. D. Dr. Mertens, reports that General von Falkenhayn did not express to the Operations Department that the mentioned position was considered as a possible demarcation line. (Letter to the Reich Archive from August 15, 1931.)

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The Accession of Bulgaria to the Alliance of the Central Powers.

General von Falkenhayn had also recognized this to a full extent. Both had therefore already been striving in recent weeks to leave no stone unturned to promote the stalled negotiations on Bulgaria's accession to the Central Powers. In the second half of July, their efforts—supported by the widely visible successes of the allied arms—finally seemed to be crowned with success. King Ferdinand of Bulgaria and Prime Minister Radoslavov declared themselves ready to send an authorized officer to the German-Austrian headquarters to negotiate Bulgaria's participation in a campaign against Serbia1).

General von Falkenhayn received this news on July 24, at a time when he was still hoping for a major operational success against Russia. Consequently, he believed, even if only temporarily, that the Serbian campaign was no longer necessary2), and that with the defeat of Russia, the Balkan problem would also find its successful solution. The Bulgarian offer to participate in the military action against Serbia therefore seemed to him, although he had previously eagerly sought it, not particularly urgent at the moment3). However, a few days later—at the beginning of August—reports from the battlefronts about the systematic retreat of the Russians on the entire front in Poland raised doubts in him as to whether the desired success of great operational impact would still be achievable, he welcomed the prospect of soon reaching a conclusion with Bulgaria. Generaloberst von Conrad had from the outset viewed this plan, whose emergence was primarily due to German efforts4), with reservation. Not entirely without reason, he feared it would damage the prestige of the Danube Monarchy in the Balkans. He would have preferred to deploy all forces until the complete defeat of Russia in the East, thereby drawing Serbia over to Austria-Hungary while simultaneously gaining a free hand for an offensive against Italy. On the other hand, he did not entirely close himself off to the realization that the war situation on the Russian front at this time offered little hope for the realization of his far-reaching plans, and any increase in strength for the Central Powers was to be welcomed from the standpoint of overall war strategy.

1) A detailed account of the negotiations leading to the conclusion of the military convention with Bulgaria will be given in Volume IX.  
2) See p. 602.  
3) According to a telegram from the envoy von Treutler on July 27 to the Foreign Office. Political Archive of the Foreign Office.  
4) See p. 602 ff.

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The Multi-Front War in Summer 1915.

Therefore, he agreed with the start of negotiations on Bulgaria's participation in the campaign against Serbia.

These began on August 3 at the Great Headquarters in Plesk with the plenipotentiary sent by the Bulgarian government, Lieutenant Colonel Gantchew. However, the course of the negotiations experienced a not insignificant delay due to the tense situation at the Dardanelles, but especially due to the sinking of the American steamer "Arabic" by a German submarine on August 19. The resulting new serious diplomatic disputes between Germany and the United States also had their psychological impact on Bulgaria's stance. Only after the situation eased did the negotiations lead to the conclusion of a military convention between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Bulgaria on September 5. It is by no means excluded that the concern about a separate peace between Serbia and the Central Powers decisively influenced the Bulgarian government's final decisions. On September 15, Turkey joined the military convention.

Bulgaria's accession to the alliance of the Central Powers was a success of great political and military significance, which would probably not remain without repercussions on the other Balkan states. If it was now possible to overthrow Serbia — and there could hardly be any doubt about that — then for Austria-Hungary the threat of flank encirclement that had existed since the beginning of the war was eliminated and the worst crisis at the Dardanelles was also overcome. The establishment of secure connections with the Orient opened up new possibilities for Turkey's warfare in Asia, united the Ottoman Empire with the Central Powers and Bulgaria into a fighting alliance, and above all, finally blocked the shortest line of communication between Russia and the allied Western powers.

1) For more details see Volume IX.  
2) p. 17.  
3) According to a communication from the former German military attaché in Constantinople, Lieutenant General a. D. von Lossow, dated January 25, 1932, to the Reichsarchiv. See also p. 606 note 2.

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Last Possibility of Bringing About a Decision in the East.

Besides the successful resolution of the Bulgarian question, the further

development of the military situation on the eastern theater of war itself

was of decisive importance for bringing about a separate peace with Russia.

However, the hopes held by the Supreme Army Command in July for

the defeat of the main Russian forces in Poland were not fully realized.

Already at the beginning of August, as mentioned¹), it had to be seriously

considered that the Russians would succeed in escaping their fate intended

for them in the area between the Bug, Vistula, and Narew through a

skillfully and vigorously conducted retreat. The last possibility of achieving

the hoped-for campaign-deciding success through a new operation presented

itself, according to the Commander-in-Chief East, around the end of July/August.

General von Falkenhayn, upon his return from Metz (discussion in Pleß per

request²), proposed shifting the focus from the Narew to the Niemen front.

If the operation proposed by the Commander-in-Chief East on June 2 in

Posen was still to be successfully carried out, there was no time to lose

according to Field Marshal von Hindenburg. However, General von Falkenhayn's

agreement to this plan would not only have required the cessation of the

pursuit operation in Poland, which was no longer operationally decisive but

still considered very promising, but also the deployment of all available

reinforcements, including significant parts of the army reserve from the

Western Front, on the left wing of the German Eastern Army — possibly

even postponing the Serbian campaign to an as yet undetermined time.

The Field Marshal no longer considered a campaign decision achievable

by this means based on past experiences. On the other hand, he feared

that the substantial forces to be deployed for such an offensive would be

unavailable for use on other fronts for the foreseeable future. However,

he considered the partial execution of the Serbian campaign more necessary

given the overall war situation than even the most noteworthy further

successes on the Eastern Front. Accordingly, he believed he had to limit

the objectives in the East. Here, a "decisive victory corresponding to the

purposes of the Supreme Army Command" sufficed for him. He hoped to

achieve such a victory most quickly through the vigorous continuation of

the ongoing operations, during which the enemy should continue to be weakened as much as possible in its combat strength.

¹) p. 611. — ²) p. 341.

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The Multi-Front War in Summer 1915.

The decision to carry out the Serbian campaign was facilitated not only by the successful course of negotiations with Bulgaria but also by the seemingly secure situation on the Italian and Western theaters of war.

The second Isonzo Offensive by the Italians completely failed at the beginning of August. Again, the superiority of the Austro-Hungarian army over the new opponent was clearly demonstrated. It was hoped that the ally would continue to master the threat here on his own.

Above all, the Metz meeting at the end of July had already strengthened General von Falkenhayn's conviction that the German Western Front, like an "iron wall," stood unshakably firm and was able to withstand all storms despite the great numerical superiority of the enemy. The victorious defense against the previous heavy enemy attacks had created a confident mood throughout the German front. Thus, the essential backing for operations on other theaters of war seemed to be secured here as well.

As an army reserve, 8½ infantry divisions were available behind the Western Front. At the end of July, General von Falkenhayn considered using this reserve mostly for an operation in Upper Alsace to clear German soil of the enemy, a thought that had occupied him, albeit temporarily, since June. During the Metz meeting, the Chief of Staff of the 5th Army, Lieutenant General Schmidt von Knobelsdorf, was instructed to carry out the necessary reconnaissance in Upper Alsace; for the execution of the operation, General von Falkenhayn considered the deployment of six divisions sufficient.

The result of the reconnaissance was discussed on August 28 in a meeting between Generals von Falkenhayn and Schmidt von Knobelsdorf in Berlin and presented by the former to the Supreme War Lord on August 30. On this day, the diary of Colonel General von Plessen records: "Our supreme army command is considering an advance in Upper Alsace to drive the enemy out of the last piece of Germany." Simultaneously, however, towards the end of August, the calculations of the intelligence department of the Supreme Army Command showed that the Western powers had approximately 50 infantry divisions behind the front. This increased the possibility that the opponents, as long as the main forces of the Germans were tied up in the East, would launch a significant offensive.

1) G. 31/32. — 2) G. 100/101. — 3) G. 102. — 4) G. 609. — 5) More details in Volume IX.

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Shift of the Focus of Warfare to the Southeastern Theater of War.

However, towards the end of August, calculations by the intelligence

department of the Supreme Army Command showed that the Western powers

had approximately 50 infantry divisions stationed behind the front. This

increased the possibility that the opponents, as long as the main forces of the

Germans were tied up in the East, would launch a major offensive.

Under these circumstances, the German Chief of General Staff deemed it

necessary to withdraw stronger forces from the Eastern Front, not only for

the Serbian campaign but also to secure the Western Front, which now

required increased attention.

Already on August 27, the day before his meeting with General

Schmidt von Knobelsdorf, General von Falkenhayn had issued the first

orders from Berlin for the establishment of a permanent position on

the Eastern Front for the army groups of Prince Leopold and Mackensen.

Although these measures were initially not implemented, they initiated

the conclusion of the Eastern operations.

Since the beginning of September, when Bulgaria was won over for

participation in the Serbian campaign, all other attack plans were

finally put on the back burner. The focus of warfare began to shift

from the eastern to the southeastern theater of war.

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VI. Review of General von Falkenhayn's Conduct of War against Russia.

The question of how Germany should defend itself in the event of a multi-front war against its opponents in the West and East had been decided by the long-serving Chief of the Prussian General Staff, Count Schlieffen, to immediately throw the main mass of the German army against the French and English, while initially conducting the fight against Russia with a minimum of forces in strategic defense without direct connection with the Austro-Hungarian ally. His successor, General von Moltke, had maintained the basic idea of this planned solution, but had made a promise to the Chief of Staff of the allied army to support the offensive intended from Galicia into Poland by launching his own attack from East Prussia against the Narew, in order to bind the Russian forces facing the German Eastern Front and prevent them from intervening against the allied forces. At the outbreak of war, the attack against the Narew had not taken place because the German 8th Army in East Prussia initially had to defend itself against the concentric pressure of the Russian 1st and 2nd Armies advancing against it from two sides. By destroying one of these armies at Tannenberg and severely shaking the other in the Battle of the Masurian Lakes, the front of the ally had been relieved to a much greater extent than the Chiefs of Staff had anticipated in their peacetime agreements. Nevertheless, the failures in Galicia had significantly increased the difficulties of the task of maintaining the balance against the superior Russian forces, especially since the hoped-for quick decision by arms in the West had not materialized.

When General von Falkenhayn took over the leadership of the overall operations of the German army in mid-September 1914, he adhered to the basic idea that the final decision in the world war had to and would fall on French soil against the Western powers. While he agreed with both the Austro-Hungarian Chief of Staff and the Commander-in-Chief East on this point, he differed in the question of how this final settlement should be pursued, and what significance the fight against Russia now had, the views of the responsible personalities already diverged significantly in the autumn of 1914.

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While General von Conrad and soon thereafter also the Commander-in-Chief East, after the failure of the Ypres offensive, were of the opinion that the military defeat of Russia must precede the decisive battle against the Western powers, the German General Staff saw the uninterrupted continuation of the attempt to subdue the French and English as the all-important task. He wanted to continue the fight against Russia only as a holding action, to gain time, as a backing for the German Western Front. While offensive strikes were certainly to be sought, the German deployment in the East should remain within the narrowest possible limits.

This viewpoint remained decisive for General von Falkenhayn even after he could no longer ignore the realization, following the final failure of the German attacks in Flanders in mid-November, that the time at which the decisive battle in the West could be fought with prospects of success had been postponed. His guiding thought remained the earliest possible resumption. Although by the end of November, given the plight into which the conduct of war in the East had fallen due to the superiority of the Russians, a significant reinforcement of the Eastern Army could no longer be avoided. Nevertheless, General von Falkenhayn still saw its task at the end of 1914 merely as "pushing the Russians back to the Vistula or into their bridgeheads, otherwise clearing up the Russian parts standing opposite West Prussia and in East Prussia as quickly as possible, but then restricting himself to a more holding conduct of war." A similar task, in his view, fell to the leadership of the Austro-Hungarian army in Galicia and Serbia, "with whose solution they have enough to do for the winter months."

However, it would be wrong to see the restraint of the German Chief of Staff against the proposals of the leaders on the Eastern Front aimed at decisive warfare against Russia as an expression of rigid adherence to his once chosen solution, according to which the Western decision was to be pursued directly. His restraint corresponded much more to fundamental considerations about the peculiarities of the theater of war and the relative strengths, resulting in the possibilities of success and prospects of the war against Russia.

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Review of General von Falkenhayn's Warfare Against Russia.

When in those days General Wild von Hohenborn proposed in a memorandum to shift the main focus of German warfare from the Western theater of war to the Eastern front and to seek a decision there first, General von Falkenhayn noted in the margin of this memorandum that "a complete military defeat of Russia would never be achievable¹)". One can hardly assume that he drew such far-reaching conclusions merely based on the previous results of operations on the Eastern Front, which, despite brilliant battle successes of the Commander-in-Chief East, had remained without decisive effect overall. Undoubtedly, even then, the question of force requirements and consideration of the immeasurably vast operational space of the Russian Empire had played a decisive role in this judgment, aspects that General von Falkenhayn would continue to emphasize throughout the further course of the campaign in the East. He was convinced that the decisive offensive in the East would require a commitment of forces far beyond what he could manage while maintaining the security of the Western Front. A shortening of this front through straightening or moving back the existing positions and the associated large-scale saving of forces was not an option for him, given the paramount importance he attached to holding every foot of ground in France and Belgium²). But even if a significant increase in forces for the East could be made possible, any attempt to "even strive for the desired final decision against the eastern colossus" seemed doomed to failure due to the enormous difficulty of preventing the Russians from retreating into the interior of their empire. "Napoleon's experiences did not invite imitation of his example³)."

Given this fundamental position, it was not difficult for the director of German overall operations at the beginning of 1915 to reject a proposal from the allied Chief of General Staff, which aimed to force a breakthrough through the Russian front in Western Poland between Nida and Pilica in the direction of Radom through "the fastest possible deployment of new German forces from the West or from new formations" and thereby achieve "a complete, decisive success". Also regarding the intention expressed shortly thereafter by General von Conrad to deliver a decisive blow with a major offensive from the Carpathian Front, whose effect he estimated far higher than mere territorial gain up to the San-Dniester line, General von Falkenhayn was from the outset strongly opposed.

¹) Volume VII, p. 5. — ²) Volume V, p. 585. — ³) von Falkenhayn, p. 48.

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That he did not oppose the implementation of this plan can only be explained by the fact that the Commander-in-Chief East also strongly supported it and had already independently provided the German forces needed to form the Southern Army. The very soon visible failure of the Carpathian Offensive justified the concerns of the German Chief of Staff.

He simultaneously found himself in a particularly difficult situation due to the request of Field Marshal von Hindenburg to transfer the newly formed corps in the homeland for deployment on the left wing of his front in East Prussia. General von Falkenhayn planned their use on the western theater of war, although initially unable to envisage a far-reaching offensive. When he finally “with a heavy heart” acceded to the request of the Commander-in-Chief East, it was partly in view of the ally's situation, whose growing difficulties he could not ignore. Certainly, other considerations and motives also played a role, as the question of deploying the new corps in connection with the prior transfer of General Ludendorff to the Southern Army had created an extremely serious crisis on a personal level, concerning the position of the Chief of Staff. However, he was by no means able to indulge in the hopes that the Field Marshal attached to an offensive planned by him. This was not only linked to a “decisive, probably devastating defeat” of the Russian northern wing facing East Prussia, but he also believed that by continuing the offensive “with full force on Bialystok” and simultaneously pressing from the Carpathians, he could foresee the “final defeat of Russia” and thus an outcome that he considered “decisive for the outcome of the entire war.” In contrast, General von Falkenhayn expected only “greater local successes” with the effect of putting the Russians “in such a position that they would not be able to become dangerous to us in the foreseeable future.” The actual course of operations did not show the decisive results hoped for by the Commander-in-Chief East and thus proved General von Falkenhayn's view to be correct. He saw in this a new confirmation of his fundamental view that, given the relatively modest means available to Germany for offensive undertakings, the continued application of operations against the flank or wing of the Russian front could not be granted prospects for significant success.

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Until now, the German Chief of General Staff had been content to ensure that the conduct of war in the East was subject to restrictions in terms of objectives and resource consumption by allocating the reinforcements he provided and by occasional, mostly general, indications. However, in the spring of 1915, before the start of the Galician offensive, he secured a direct and specific influence on the planning and direction of operations along with the provision of new forces. The breakthrough at Gorlice in early May was entirely in line with the fundamental view he had previously held for the fight against Russia. A spatially and temporally limited powerful offensive thrust was intended to finally free the Allies from the heavy pressure of the Russians on their Carpathian front. Certainly, the decision, even in this limited objective, was not lacking in grandeur, as it was associated with the risk of significant force depletion on the Western Front, but it maintained room for maneuver in all directions. The subsequent phases over the San and Przemysl up to the capture of Lemberg continued to align with this fundamental view, which always considered the overall strategic situation of the Allies. Thanks to the impact of the brilliant military successes, the operational goal could gradually be expanded with the bold and responsible introduction of fresh forces. However, even in the last phase of this campaign, the task was explicitly limited to conducting operations against the enemy east of the San until a decision sufficient for our purposes was achieved<sup>2)</sup>. With the severe disruption of the Russian offensive power in Galicia, achieved in the seven-week battles, General von Falkenhayn saw his objectives fulfilled. The "dissolving" enemy was to be pursued only under a significant reduction of the previous German force deployment.

At the turn of June/July, a change occurred in this stance of the German Chief of General Staff. It found its expression in the decisive and consequential decision to extend the offensive operations in the East beyond Galicia to the north into Poland and to effectively involve the front of the Commander-in-Chief East in them.

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The genesis of this decision shows that suggestions from the circle of trusted advisors of General von Falkenhayn, especially from the Army High Command Mackensen and the Austro-Hungarian military leadership, played a decisive role. However, the German Chief of General Staff was able to process these suggestions into a plan, rejecting those that seemed too far-reaching or inappropriate, in which his own unchanged fundamental attitude towards the question of the fight against Russia was decisive. He certainly recognized that a turning point in the conduct of the war in the East had been reached, where it was urgently desirable and also appropriate, considering the general war situation, to make a unified strike by making powerful use of the partial successes achieved so far, extending the operational goals spatially and temporally. However, he was not prepared for a further increase in the deployment of forces by further utilizing the resources of the western theater of war; on the contrary, he had two divisions sent back there. Anxiously avoiding falling into "boundless plans," he set himself, in full agreement with Generaloberst von Conrad, a task that seemed certainly achievable with the available forces, taking into account the overall situation of the Central Powers. Again, he wanted to bring the Russians into a situation by weakening and paralyzing their offensive power "where they would not be able to become dangerous to us in the foreseeable future." The long-held and reluctantly postponed intention to assist the Turkish ally by subduing Serbia also made a solution desirable that promised the early conclusion of offensive operations in Russia. On this basis, the idea of the closest possible concentric cooperation of the army group Mackensen and the Commander-in-Chief East in the area between Bug, Vistula, and lower Narew presented itself almost naturally. A setback seemed almost excluded here, even if the offensive should not penetrate or get stuck halfway in the worst case. However, General von Falkenhayn believed in the success of the operation and hoped for a great, also operationally significant success, "the cutting off of the enemy masses standing at the Vistula and in front of Mackensen." In this, he saw a "decisive victory corresponding to the purposes of the Supreme Army Command." The then Prussian Minister of War, General Wild von Hohenborn, has, in retrospect, expressed himself in a note dated August 27, 1915, as follows: "Falkenhayn initially only wanted to go as far as the San, then he was driven to Lemberg, then came the thrust along the Bug. Everything developed historically, as if by itself, one thing from another. At first, no one here thought of a final major operation. Only later will the matter be presented in history as a brilliant plan. But those who were involved know that strategy is a simple thing, where one limited goal follows another, to then give a proud overall picture, where the layman imagines God knows what. Incidentally, Falkenhayn merely followed his own operational thinking when he acted differently than Hindenburg suggested."

1) von Falkenhayn, p. 98.

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One may ponder the much-debated question of whether in the summer of 1915 an operation aimed at encirclement from both sides in this sense was laid out for the destruction of large parts of the Russian army and thereby could have brought the campaign decision hoped for by the Commander-in-Chief East, think as one might, that one thing should be beyond question, that already the eastern threat in the thrust directions over Wilna and east of the Bug must have had a momentous effect on the behavior of the main mass of Russians standing in Poland.

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To counter the danger of an unprecedented disarmament, the strongest regrouping of forces on a grand scale from the area between the Narew, Vistula, and Bug to the Niemen front and the area east of Brest Litovsk would have been necessary. The inevitable hasty retreat from Poland could easily have turned into a catastrophe under the pressure from all sides of the pursuers, surely it would have severely and lastingly shaken the fighting strength and morale of the troops. All these were reasons, within the realm of possibility, that the responsible leader of operations could also give space to the standpoint of warfare with limited objectives in his considerations. Retrospective consideration cannot escape the impression that General von Falkenhayn faced the proposals and requests of the Commander-in-Chief East both at the decisive meeting in Posen on July 2 and in the following weeks, when these requests took on a storm-ready form, with a certain inner prejudice that made it difficult, if not impossible, for him to objectively examine the pros and cons. In his well-founded advice and objections of others, this is strikingly not inaccessible in nature. The explanation is to be sought in the psychological field. The widespread assumption of personal rivalry is indeed more serious. Examination hardly stood. It suffices in this regard to refer to the letter of August 24 to Field Marshal von Hindenburg, in which the Chief of Staff lays down a charmingly open and beautiful confession of the high regard for his position and sense of responsibility that animates him. The interpretation that General von Falkenhayn, based on the experiences of earlier times, did not trust the responsible personalities of the Commander-in-Chief East with the same degree of judgment about the prospects of success in the fight against Russia as he did himself seems more accurate. In a letter dated October 8, 1915, to Field Marshal von Hindenburg, he himself expressed with the words: "I cannot rely on the feelings of others in my proposals based on the rich experiences of last winter, but solely on my own conviction."

1) p. 350.

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Retrospective on the Warfare of General von Falkenhayn against Russia.

It seems as if the self-assured adherence to principles and convictions once deemed correct, demonstrated here by General von Falkenhayn, made him captive to the thoughts of the Commander-in-Chief East at the decisive moment of July 1915.

In the first days after the start of the new offensive, he saw no reason to subject his own plan regarding the prospects of success to a review or change. All indications seemed to suggest that a major military success with considerable operational impact was imminent. On July 20, he considered it "highly probable that the decision in the fight against Russia would fall in the area south of the Narew"1). He decided to bring back the two divisions that had been withdrawn a few weeks earlier to the western theater of war. Soon, however, disillusionment followed. The offensive stalled both with the Mackensen Army Group and the Gallwitz Army Group. The Commander-in-Chief East repeatedly and increasingly insisted on the operation of his left wing against the Russian connections. The Minister of War, General Wild von Hohenborn, and the Chief of the Field Railway Service, Major General Groener, advised in the same direction2). However, the Chief of the General Staff summarily rejected the idea even now, as "committing all our forces currently deployed here until winter would be a certain consequence." With tenacity, he stuck to his own plan despite the disappointing results that the course of the operation had brought so far. He did not believe that the enemy, as Field Marshal von Hindenburg rightly feared, would evade the battle decision in Poland by a quick retreat to the Brest-Litovsk—Bialystok line. "The Russians must be defeated before they decide to do so"2). On July 30, he hoped for "the defeat of the enemy through the vigorous continuation of the ongoing operations"2). A few days later, there was no longer any doubt that the Russians had systematically initiated the retreat on the entire front in Poland. Instead of the desired battle decision, the task of pursuit arose. Here too, as he emphasized on August 6, the Chief of the General Staff aimed at defeating the enemy in Poland by attacking from all sides3). A week later, he still hoped that with all-around sharp pressure, it would be possible to capture large parts of the retreating enemy on this side of the forest of Bialowies, to at least significantly disrupt their retreat.

1) G. 315. — 2) C. 342. — 3) C. 346.

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However, these wishes and hopes were not fulfilled. Despite all efforts and exertions of the pursuers, the enemy always and everywhere evaded capture. By mid-August, General von Falkenhayn could no longer deny the truth of the Eastern Commander's statement: “The operation in the East has ... not led to the destruction of the enemy. The Russian has, as expected, evaded and allows himself to be pushed back frontally in the direction he desires”2). The German Chief of Staff, however, easily reconciled himself to this operationally unsatisfactory result as a natural process, which one had to try to disturb and hinder, but could not prevent. His rapid change of mood becomes understandable when one considers the basic idea that had always dominated him, that a “complete military overthrow of Russia would never be achieved.” With this consistently held basic idea, it was not difficult for him to see the recent events in a favorable light. Not disappointment over a minor operational result took place, but satisfaction with a performance fully meeting the purposes of the Supreme Army Command. Thus, General von Falkenhayn perceived the somewhat critical statements of the Eastern Commander as unjustified criticism and saw in them only new evidence that the command authority harbored completely false ideas about the success limits imposed on any offensive operation in Russia. In his response, he stated3):

“A destruction of the enemy has never been hoped for from the ongoing operations in the East, but merely a decisive victory corresponding to the purposes of the Supreme Army Command ...” For a complete destruction, “the basic conditions are simply lacking. For one cannot strive to destroy an enemy who is numerically far superior and facing frontally, who has excellent connections, unlimited time, and unrestricted space, while one is forced to operate in railway-less, path-poor terrain with limited time and very limited, sometimes even non-resistant, troops.” Following this, General von Falkenhayn strongly emphasized the positive achievements of his operation and claimed credit for them, stating that the enemy “is already decisively defeated for our purposes,” as the Russians, apart from their enormous loss of prisoners and material, had lost Galicia, Poland, and Courland and were no longer in a position to seriously threaten Austria-Hungary “at any foreseeable time.”

1) G. 421. — 2) G. 347. — 3) G. 348.

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Review of General von Falkenhayn's Conduct of War against Russia.

General von Falkenhayn consistently adhered to this view until the conclusion of the war of movement in the East in the autumn of 1915. In his decisive approval for the late execution of the operation of the Commander-in-Chief East on Vilna, he expressly opposed the idea that it could be possible in any way for us to truly defeat an enemy who was determined to retreat without regard to sacrifices of land and people as soon as he was attacked, and who had vast Russia at his disposal1). Even after the unsatisfactory outcome of the Vilna offensive, he emphasized once again in retrospect in a letter to the Commander-in-Chief East2) that one could not hope to decisively encircle a numerically superior enemy on a large scale, who would not stand without regard to sacrifices of land and people, with vast Russia and good railways behind him. However, one could harm such an enemy in a manner completely sufficient for our purposes by staying firmly on the blade everywhere, thus binding him to the shift and relatively weakening him, but then with concentrated forces suddenly pushing far into his lines at a well-chosen spot. As successful examples of this method, he cited the "campaigns of Mackensen, Boryslav, and Gallwitz."

And yet, the last phase of the war of movement in 1915 in Russia shows that the repeatedly stated commitment to warfare with limited objectives did not spare the German Chief of General Staff from dealing with the conflicting desires and interests of his own strategy in practical action. From the end of August, he found himself in internal conflict. On one hand, he wanted to harm and weaken the enemy in every possible way so that he would not be able to strengthen for an offensive in the foreseeable future; on the other hand, the consideration of the overall situation of the Central Powers urged the quick conclusion of the offensive in Russia to gain sufficiently strong forces for the execution of the Serbian campaign and for securing the Western Front. The attempt to simultaneously and equally account for both viewpoints proved to be unmanageable. Despite internal resistance, General von Falkenhayn was compelled to initially only support and relieve the offensive operations of the two army wings, which were initially intended as special undertakings with limited objectives, with the forces of the army center to an extent that went far beyond his original intentions.

1) p. 492. — 2) Letter from October 8, 1915.

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And yet, as the events at the front of the ally proved,

the enemy was not "damaged in a way completely sufficient for our purposes."

On the other hand, the prolonged expenditure of strong forces at unwanted locations

impaired the decision-making and freedom of action for the task of the other theaters of war.

It would have been more in line with General von Falkenhayn's intentions if he had

stuck to the decision to break off operations in the East at the end of August and consequently

also prevented the special operations of the two army wings.

It would then have been possible to launch the offensive against Serbia

at an earlier time with the forces intended for both allies, thus without the highly undesirable increase

of the German contingent, and also to make strong reserves available in time for use on the western theater of war.

Thus, the war of movement of 1915 in the East ended with

significant territorial gains, as well as the German front was concerned,

also with a severe shock to the combat strength of the Russians. But they still

held the field. The success was bought with all the disadvantages

that lay in the commitment of significant forces and combat resources in extended positions

deep in enemy territory for the Central Powers fighting on the inner line.

Whether this result, achieved with conscious renunciation of decisive warfare, was sufficient

in terms of strategic rear security to now resume the decisive battle against the

French and English with a prospect of success,

was the fateful question that the German Supreme Army Command faced at

the turn of the year 1915/1916.

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Appendix 1 on loose sheet with "Maps and Sketches". Appendix 2.

The Mutual Force Ratio of Infantry on the Western Front around Mid-June 1915.

Even on the enemy's side, there was an awareness of a very significant superiority at this time.

1. The German Calculation.

The total number of battalions of the German Western Army was 1156. Since the troop overviews of the German Western armies taken in advance by the Reichsarchiv only cover the key dates between April 5 and June 30, 1915 — almost a quarter of a year apart — errors in today's calculation are unavoidable. 91 battalions that were missing in the overviews are included. Landsturm battalions are only counted as far as they were actually at the front, and only the garrison troops from Metz (excluding Landsturm) are considered. Recruit depots are disregarded.

Based on the information provided by the Intelligence Department at the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army up to June 11, the following emerges:

The number of French battalions in France was 1326. This includes all known Territorial Divisions — also those suspected to be in Paris at the time — as well as the divisions 151, 152, 155, which are considered questionable.

The British Army in France comprised 399 battalions. This includes seven English active battalions, 46 Territorial battalions, and 46 Indian battalions outside the divisional association, as well as 72 battalions of divisions 9 and 10, which were suspected to be in France. The presence of these 166 battalions was partly only assumed (agent reports); partly their usability as front troops was questionable.

The number of Belgian battalions was 61.

Thus, the total of 1156 battalions should face a total of 1786 enemy battalions, resulting in a superiority of the opponents by 630 battalions. However, the documents for assessing the British troops were very uncertain.

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Mutual Force Ratio of Infantry on the Western Front.

2. Official French Information.

The French official work¹) estimates the total strength of the allied troops opposing the Germans on the Western Front in mid-June 1915 at

1360 French battalions (including about 280 territorial battalions),

318 British battalions,

76 Belgian battalions,

thus a total of 1754 battalions and estimates, presumably based on calculations from June 1915, the number of German battalions at 1128.

According to this calculation, the superiority of the allied French, British, and Belgians would have been 626 battalions.

3. The Actual Ratio.

If one takes the numbers calculated under number 1 for the German side and the numbers contained in the French official work for the opponents, it results that by mid-June 1915

1156 German battalions

1754 French-British-Belgian

faced each other, so the superiority of the opponents was 598 battalions.

¹) French official work, III, p. 161.

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Appendix 3.

Some Information on the Deployment, Training, and Use of the British "Kitchener" Troops.

At the outbreak of war, Great Britain had 450,000 regular troops2), about 300,000 Territorial troops, and about 350,000 National Reserve. Of the regular troops, 118,000 men were stationed outside the homeland. For use in the expeditionary corps to be sent to France, initially only the regular troops stationed at home (332,000 men) and those Territorial troops who had declared their willingness to serve outside the country in case of danger (17,621 men) were considered, totaling about 350,000 men.

On August 5, 1914, the House of Commons approved an increase in the regular army by 500,000 men. Lord Kitchener, appointed Secretary of State for War on August 6, considered this measure insufficient and further reinforcement necessary. He planned to establish a whole series of new, so-called "Kitchener" divisions in addition to the existing units. The training of these formations could only be carried out through recruitment at that moment. On August 7, 1914, the government issued a call through posters and the press for the voluntary enlistment of 100,000 recruits. The number had not yet been reached when a new call was issued on August 28, continuing the influx. By mid-September 1914, 500,000 volunteers had already been enlisted. Now restrictive measures had to be issued because the existing military facilities could not cope with such an expansion of the army. Accommodation and procurement of the necessary clothing and equipment posed difficulties. The needs could largely only be met through agreements with foreign countries. A significant issue was the lack of training personnel. On August 17, a law was passed allowing the reinstatement of discharged non-commissioned officers. In addition to the return of 500 officers just sent to India on Lord Kitchener's orders, the recruitment of all available active officers, reserve officers, Territorial officers of the training corps, unassigned and re-enlisted officers, especially non-commissioned officers promoted to officers, served to create the lower leadership personnel.

The lack of sufficient weapons severely hampered training. On October 11, the government was forced to lift some of the restrictive measures issued in mid-September due to a sharp decline in volunteer enlistments. At the same time, a Parliamentary Recruitment Committee was established to organize recruitment activities uniformly. While the other arms continued to be supplemented from existing depots, the entire country was divided into districts for the infantry volunteer replacement, generally corresponding to the landscapes, with larger cities forming their own districts. Each of these districts was to supply recruits for a specific regiment. Recruitment for the Territorial troops continued alongside.

1) According to the information from the British official source.  
2) Active troops, reserve, special reserve.

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Information on the Formation, Training, and Use of the "Kitchener" Troops.

On May 19, 1915, Lord Kitchener issued a new call for an additional 300,000 recruits. This time, the effect fell short of previous results, with only 115,000 men enlisting in June.

Meanwhile, the disadvantages for the war-essential industries of the country had become apparent, as they lost part of their workforce, such as the mines, due to the unconditional release of their workers. To remedy this, the government was forced to introduce the "National Registration Act" on July 15, 1915, i.e., the compulsory registration of all male and female residents aged 65 years by age, gender, residence, occupation, and fitness. After the completion of these lists on September 15, certain industries were restricted from releasing volunteers. The lists of men aged between 18 and 41 were handed over to the recruitment authorities so that they could initiate increased recruitment activities for those not belonging to restricted professions.

On October 11, 1915, Lord Derby was appointed as the chief director of recruitment (Director-General of Recruiting). He already presented a bill (Derby Scheme) on October 16, representing the last attempt to adhere to the volunteer system. It was still allowed to register at a specific time with a group section. Those who did not want this were to enroll in special lists with the obligation to follow the government's call to arms at hour X of danger. Upon the adoption of the law, Prime Minister Asquith assured that in case of need, unmarried men would be called upon first. By December 15, 1915, 2,184,979 men had enrolled in these Derby lists, while 215,431 men registered for immediate service during the same period. The total number of volunteers enlisted in 1915 was 1,280,362.

The volunteer units were trained in Kitchener divisions, which were grouped into Kitchener armies, each consisting of six divisions. The following were formed: the 1st Kitchener Army on August 21, 1914, the 2nd on September 9, 1914, the 3rd on September 13, 1914. The 4th and 5th Armies were also partly formed in 1914, but were reorganized and only received their final form on April 27, 1915.

Of the Kitchener divisions, which were numbered from 9 to 26 and from 30 to 41, the following were deployed: 26 in France, 3 at the Dardanelles, 2 initially in Egypt, later in France). By the end of 1915, 21 divisions had arrived in France, one of which was transferred back to Malta in November 1915. Deployment to the front took place, unless events forced other conditions, only after training behind the front for at least three months.

The combat value of the Kitchener divisions, according to English judgment, never reached that of the old regular divisions. The goodwill of leaders and troops, their intellectual abilities, and their zeal could not compensate for the incomplete training and lack of experience.

1) With the moment of landing, the concept of the "Kitchener" army disappeared, and the troops were assigned to the existing armies there.

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Army 2.

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Comparison of German and Enemy Artillery in the Spring Battle in Artois 1915.

[Detailed tabular data showing artillery comparison]

Note: 1. Ring guns (Special) of the same are not included in the count. — 2. For the German guns 15 — l. F. K. (98 ob. 13) had to be through own ammunition due to excessive wear of the barrels. The equipment could be used twice. — 3. The French gun numbers are calculated according to: French official work Vol. III, p. 27 (Vol. III Annex p. 34).