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Vilnius Staging District During the Polish–Soviet War 1919–1920

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Abstract. This paper has been developed based upon archive documents gathered at the *The Central Military Archives* in Warsaw, *The Border Guard Service Archives* in Szczecin, and the from the wider literature. The subject presented herein relates to the organisation of logistical support to the front line during the Polish–Soviet War 1919–1921, which so far has been described by researchers only to a minimal extent. In the first part of the article the author describes the system of the Polish civil administration in the territory of Lithuania. Then the author presents the military structures of the logistic support to the front line, i.e. a staging area. It describes the tasks of the Staging District (Vilnius Staging District Command Headquarters) and the lower levels of organisation to the rear of the front: staging prefectures /*prefecture stagings; in Poland 'a powiat' is an administrative unit lower than a province – translator's note*/ and staging stations.

The author acquaints the reader with the structure of *Staging Field Military Police*, 22nd *Voluntary Legion of Women* and *Vilnius Military Railway Guard Service*. The last segment of this paper describes the stage structures arrangement and functioning during 1920–1922, in the so-called Republic of Central Lithuania, that was created following the staged rebellion under the command of General Żeligowski.

Keywords: Polish–Soviet War, Staging District Command Headquarters / Staging District Command HQ, Vilnius, staging military service, 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women / Lithuania, Organisation of Polish Army, Central Lithuania, Military Police.

Anotacija. Šis straipsnis yra parengtas remiantis Varšuvos centrinio karinio archyvo ir Ščecino valstybės sienos apsaugos tarnybos archyvo dokumentais ir išsamesne literatūra. Jame aptariama tema yra susijusi su fronto logistinės paramos organizavimu Lenkijos–Sovietų Rusijos kare 1919–1921 m. Ši tema iki šiol buvo mažai tyrinėta. Pirmojoje straipsnio dalyje autorius aprašo

Lenkijos civilinės administracijos sistemą Lietuvos teritorijoje. Toliau jis aptaria fronto logistinės paramos karines struktūras, t. y. kariuomenės susitelkimo rajoną, ir aprašo susitelkimo rajono (Vilniaus susitelkimo rajono vadovybės štabo) užduotis ir žemesnes organizavimo grandis fronto užnugaryje: susitelkimo prefektūras (prefektūra (lenk. *powiat*) yra mažesnis Lenkijos administracinis vienetas nei vaivadija – *vert. past.*) ir susitelkimo stotis.

Autorius supažindina skaitytoją su susitelkimo rajono karo policijos, 2-ojo moterų savanorių legiono ir Vilniaus karinio geležinkelio apsaugos tarnybos struktūra. Paskutinėje dalyje jis aprašo kariuomenės susitelkimo struktūrų išdėstymą ir funkcionavimą 1920–1922 m. vadinamojoje Vidurio Lietuvos Respublikoje, kuri buvo įkurta po inscenizuoto generolo L. Želigovskio maišto.

Introduction

During the Polish–Ukrainian War over Eastern Galicia in 1919, and the Polish–Soviet War 1919–1921, the theatre of military operations being carried out at that time was divided into an operational area, and a staging area – that provided direct logistical support for the fighting armies. A staging area consists of Staging Districts, which in a sense were equivalent to military provinces. Civil administrative authority in the Staging District area was, to a large extent, subordinated to military administration. Staging Districts, in the same manner as operational military forces, were subordinated to the General Command Headquarters of the Polish Army. Located in the territory not covered by military operations, the so-called national area was then subordinated to the Ministry of Military Affairs. The restored Polish Army modelled the organisation of its staging system, most of all, on Austrian-Hungarian solutions[1]. General Districts were functioning within territories that were not directly affected by military confrontation. The only role it played was administrative. Its range of competencies did not extend to civil administration as it was to be utilised only within said staged areas. Whereas on a state level, civil authority was exercised by the state goverment and local, self-governing units.

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[1]   SALONI, Roman. *Organizacja służby etapowej w b. wojsku austriacko-węgierskiem*. Bellona, 1925, t. XIX, s. 3, 350. The term army in the field was understood to mean those mobilised and concentrated armies fighting against the enemy, i. e. combat units, units of uniformed services, and those facilities located within the operational and staging theatre – the so-called area of "the army in the field". It was divided into areas of particular armies, and these in turn comprised an operational area, as well as a staging area at the front lines rearguard, which along its rear border adjoined the area of the country known as the "Hinterland". This was, in turn, subordinated (in regards to military issues) to the minister of war and the national defence ministers of both Austria and Hungary, ibidem.

Research objects: The subject of this research is the Vilnius Staging District, that forms one of the elements of the Polish military administrations logistical support to the front line of the Polish-Soviet War in the years 1919–1920. The term "staged district" has its German equivalent: "Etappen gebiet". During the Second World War there was no such similar term in English to describe the rearguard. The British Army used the term Lines of Communication Area – L. of C. A., whereas the United States Army used the term – Communications Zone. The Polish Armed Forces used the term "stages" constantly. In Poland during the defensive war of September 1939, the staging operation had yet to be deployed. However, they functioned within the Middle East, as a part of the Western Polish force – from 1942 to 1947[2].

Chronological limits: The papers chronology is limited to the period within which the Vilnius Staging District Command HQ functioned, i.e. the years 1919–1920. After the retreat of the Polish armies, during the Soviet offensive in the summer of 1920, the Vilnius Staging District Command HQ was evacuated. However in October 1920, whilst the Polish-Soviet War raged on, the result of the so-called rebellion of General Żeligowski in 1922 meant Central Lithuania – with its own military administration – was created.

Historiographical review: The underlying literature on staging military units is found within more general works related to the Polish Army in the period 1918–1921, most of all in Janusz Odziemkowski's works: *Piechota polska w wojnie z Rosją radziecką 1919–1920 [The Polish Infantry in the War Against Soviet Russia]*, Warsaw 2010, *Polskie formacje etapowe na Litwie i Białorusi 1919–1920 [Polish Staging Units in Lithuania and Belarus between 1919 and 1920]*, Cracow 2011 as well as other positions provided in the bibliography.

The aim of the research:

Research objectives: The aim of the research is to present how the Vilnius Staging District functioned as an example of this type of administrative unit during the Polish–Soviet War. The Vilnius Staging District was not a standard unit as, for a certain period of its existence, it had not acquired a substantial administrative level or staging prefectures. The role of the military prefectures was fulfilled by subordinate organisational units known as staging stations.

Research methods: The method of research applied in this article consists of both a critical analysis of sources, and the monographic method.

Review of sources: The underlying source used to conduct ones research on the Staging Districts in the territory of the Polish–Ukrainian War in 1919, and the Polish–Soviet in the years 1919–1920, is the Polish archives: The Central Military Archive in Warsaw, and in part, The Border Guard Service Archives in Szczecin. The archives in Warsaw preserves materials concerning most staging institutions such as the Command HQs

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[2] Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum A XII. 83/389 Ogólna charakterystyka obszaru etapowego. Materiał dydaktyczny Centrum Wyszkolenia Służby Etapowej.

of the Staging Districts, the Command HQs of the Staging Prefectures, and documents concerning the staging and sentry battalions. The archives in Szczecin preserves documents relating, most of all, to said staging battalions. An explanation for the origin of the military stage troops name, that was already in use by both British and American armies during World War II, derives from documents located in the Polish Institute and the Sikorski Museum in London. The subject undertaken in this paper is a relatively poorly researched one within Polish historiography. Of all the materials relating to staging military units in Lithuania, the author has used the archive sources of the Command HQs of these 5 Staging Districts: Vilnius, Volkovysk, Kolomyia, Molodechno and the files of the Lithuanian–Belarusian Front.

Political and military situation in Vilnius

Vilnius was the historic seat of Lithuanian statehood. Even before the rebirth of the Polish state, Vilnius – as well as the Vilnius Region – were both polonised and were the objects of territorial disputes. The Bolsheviks too showed their interest in Vilnius as the potential capital of a Lithuanian–Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. Even during the German occupation, Polish authorities were seeking an agreement with the Germans regarding the safe passage of Polish troops through to Vilnius. After a few days, in which a local self-defence group assumed control in Vilnius, the Bolsheviks had established their own government. For Poland and, most probably, Belarus and Ukraine also, regaining Vilnius was the first step toward realizing the ideal of a political federation of Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia). The main purpose of such a federation was to ensure a mutual defensive stance was adopted against Bolshevik Russia. It also assumed that the federation would partake in a coordinated foreign policy. The Lithuanians did not accept either the Polish federation or its concept of incorporation[3].

The Polish Army's first move towards regaining control over Lithuanian–belarusian lands in the East, was to reestablish command over the city. Hence, the occupation of Vilnius was a great opportunity to reinstate Polish rule in the Vilnius and Grodno regions. What is more, Piłsudski was particularly sentimental about his native land. The choices that had been made by the Lithuanian nation (the option for a Lithuanian or Polish state) were essentially political, as opposed to cultural. For centuries the cultures of both nations had been shared. Emergent Lithuanian nationalism did, however, choose not to recognise any political compromises for fear of the Polish state's strength and its

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[3]   DZIURAK, Adam; GAŁĘZOWSKI, Marek; KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz; MUSIAŁ, Filip. *Od niepodległości do niepodległości. Historia Polski 1918–1989.* Warszawa, 2010, s. 32.

rights to the disputed territories. Poland was also concerned about the wellbeing of ethnic Poles living within Lithuanian lands[4].

In 1918 German troops left Vilnius. The Lithuanian Council was forced to move to Kaunas as Vilnius had been taken by the Bolsheviks. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania and Belarus had made the decision to take control of Vilnius. On 1st January 1919 Polish defensive forces defeated Red Army units stationed in Vilnius and liquidated the Worker's Council. Soon enough, however, the Bolsheviks had regained the city, when on 5th January 1919, power was seized by the Red Army's Pskov division. On 27th February 1919 the Lithuanian–Belarusian Socialist Republic was proclaimed, with Mickievičius-Kapsukas in charge[5]. The Poles, soonafter, took the decision to regain the Vilnius Region and launched the Vilna offensive - the first campaign of the Polish-Soviet War.

The Polish Army launched an offensive on 16th April 1919. The main aim of which was to recapture Vilnius and its surrounding environs. The main task, that of taking over the city, was to be tackled by a cavalry group under the command of Colonel Władysław Belina-Prażmowski, with infantry under the command of General Śmigły – Rydz. Baranavichy and Vilnius were seized by the Polish Army on 19th April. The military operation, conducted upon the territory of Lithuania, proved the next step in a decades-long process of events, taking place within said ethnic borderlands. The idea driving the Vilna Offensive focussed upon regaining Vilnius through the use of cavalry. During the offensive Polish forces also secured the nearby cities of Lida, Baranovichy and Novogrudok, and this resulted in the rear being secured for the battle. The aforenoted military operations were supported by a division of infantry. Whilst Polish nationals were in support of the Polish Army, the Jewish community remained hostile. Amongst others, the Vilnius railwaymen from "Kaziuki" (St. Kazimierz Association) sided with the Polish forces. The 1st Legion Infantry division and cavalry played a central role in the battles to regain the city. By 21st April the takeover of Vilnius had been completed. In the evening of 21st April, the First Marshal of Poland Józef Piłsudski had visited the city of Vilnius[6].

In the eastern areas of the Polish state being created at that time, apart from military administration, most of all, civil administration functioned. Towns with more than 5,000 inhabitants appointed a mayor. This happened in Bialystok, Grodno, Vilnius, Brest–Litowsk and Kovel, or other locations. The General Commissioner (the Lithuanian–Belarusian Department) appointed a government commissioner supervising municipal administration. In the aforementioned cities and towns, security was provided by a municipal police force. Civil commissioners in respect of military, military procurement

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4   ŁUKOMSKI, Grzegorz; POLAK, Bogusław. *W obronie Wilna, Grodna i Mińska 1918–1920. Front litewsko–białoruski wojny polsko–bolszewickiej 1918–1920*. Koszalin–Warszawa, 1994, s. 14.

5   SZCZEPAŃSKI, Janusz. *Społeczeństwo Polski w walce z najazdem bolszewickim 1920 roku*. Warszawa–Pułtusk, 2000, s. 120

6   ŁUKOMSKI, Grzegorz; POLAK, Bogusław. *W obronie Wilna, Grodna i Mińska 1918–1920. Front litewsko–białoruski wojny polsko–bolszewickiej 1918–1920*. Koszalin–Warszawa, 1994, s. 41, 43, 44. /*Defending Vilnius, Grodno and Minsk 1918–1920. Lithuanian–Belarusian front-line in the Polish–Soviet War*/

or keeping order had an obligation to cooperate directly with the military chief officers of the prefectures (a fortress, a town / city). In operational areas, due to the closeness of the front line and military operations being performed, they could not be included in a standard administration, all administrative regulations were issued by staging commissioners following consultations with the military command. Whereas the matters of railway, post offices and telegraph communications belonged exclusively to the army[7].

The cities of Vilnius and Minsk constituted separate administrative units equal to districts that were governed by civil administration commissioners reporting to district governors. A civil administration commissioner held their office, with office personnel assigned to them, and through the police subordinated to them[8]. A civil commissioner's scope of duties comprised the management of population movement, issuing passports and passes, determining the times of curfews, supervising over the right to bear arms in town, supervising requisitions of living quarters and private property and underground waters and sanitary supervision. The commissioner watched over paying benefits to the families of the soldiers of the Polish Army[9].

In the operational area of the army (but already at the rear of the front line) Staging Districts functioned, whose main task was to support operational and combat capabilities of armies located on the front. Stage Districts were entirely responsible for organising the facilities on the Polish–Russian (previously Polish–Ukranian) front. The staging troops guarded the lines of communication, combated banditry, and also were involved in quartermaster activities. The region of the staging district was run by the army, in cooperation with the civil administration. Staging districts, that were created by the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires during World War I, were in operation right across the territory of Central and Eastern Europe during this period. *Gebiet des Oberbefehlshabers Ost – Ober-Ost* was one of the staging districts that controlled the area that had included Vilnius.

Polish staging soldiers performed specific military services. It was tough and, due to the limited numbers of soldiers available, they often had to be on duty for number of consecutive days. Similarly, there was shortage of experienced officers. Bad road conditions, and the lack of a suitable means of transportation, proved additional obstacles. Staging units had to prevent robbery attempts on the line infantry units, heading to and from the front-line.

Staginge troops were also responsible for requisitioning, as well as confiscating, illegal weaponery from civilians. Cases of brutal requisitioning are known to have taken place

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7   Szemat administracji Zarządu Kresów Wschodnich. Załącznik 1 do Nº dz. Szt. Gen. 1115 IV z 22 lutego 1919. Central Military Archive (next CMA), Oddział IV NDWP, I. 301. 10. 2.

8   Dziennik Urzędowy Zarządu Cywilnego Ziem Wschodnich Rok 2, Nr 1 Warszawa, 3 stycznia 1920. 4 Rozporządzenie Komisarza Generalnego Ziem Wschodnich dotyczące kompetencji komisarzy zarządu cywilnego miast Wilna i Mińska. Art. 1.

9   Ibid., Art. 4.

in Ukraine and Belarus, however the author of this paper hasn't come across the proof of such events in the Vilnius region. Though military and civil authorities had separate competencies, they had regular clashes within the zone of conflict. This was primarily due to the military authorities having no consideration for civil authorities and claiming it as their right to hold power over the entire warzone. Such cooperation is the subject of a book by prof. Joanna Gierowska Kałłaur[10].

Until the summer of 1919, the Command HQs of Staging Districts also served quarter-master functions for operational armies, and then exclusively administrative and military functions. A Staging District Command HQ was subordinated to a commander of an operational army. Staging District Command HQs had their own staff and services. Staging military units were organised into battalions, whereas in the summer and autumn of 1920 they were organised into staging brigades and staging field military police guards[11].

In February 1919, a military area was reduced, and a new division into staging districts was made. In the territory of Lithuania and Belarus, a Staging District Command HQ was relocated from Brest–Litowsk to Minsk, a Staging District Command HQ from Volkovysk to Vilnius and the General District Command HQ was established in Grodno. The whole staging administration, and the administration of the rear facilities that did not belong to units of the military front (divisions), was entrusted entirely to the relevant Command HQs of the Staging Districts[12].

Whilst under Polish authority, not always Vilnius region and Vilnius – the main city of Lithuania, were the centre of the military administration. It was incorporated into the Wołkowysk Staging District, the structure of which is presented below:

The structure of Wołkowysk Staging District Command HQ

Wołkowysk Staging District Command HQ	
Wołkowysk Staging District Command HQ	Commander of Staging District
Wołkowysk Staging District Command HQ	Deputy Commander of Staging District Command HQ – Inspector of Staging Military Units
Wołkowysk Staging District Command HQ	Chief of Staff
Vilnius Staging Prefecture Command HQ	Staging Prefecture Commander
Vilnius City Command HQ	City Commander

Organizacja służby etapowej Frontu Wschodniego. In: *The Structure of Staging Service of the Eastern Front*. Source: CMA, NDWP Oddział IV Branch IV, Ref. No I. 301. 10. 49.

[10] *O niepodległą i granice. Raporty Straży Kresowej 1919–1920. Ziem północno-wschodnich opisanie*. Wybór, wstęp i opracowanie Joanna Gierowska-Kałłaur. Warszawa–Pułtusk, 2011.

[11] WYSZCZELSKI, Lech. *Wojsko Polskie w latach 1918–1921*. Bellona, Warszawa, 2006, p. 172.

[12] Naczelne Dowództwo W.P. /Sztab Generalny/ Nr 53300/IV DOE Wilno i Mińsk. Kwat. Frontu Lit. Biał. Reorganizacja Warszawa, 3/II 119. Do Dowództwa frontu Lit. Biał., CMA, Front Lit. – Biał, Ref. no. I. 310. 3.16.

At the beginning of April 1919, the Vilnius Prefecture was subordinated to the Białystok Staging District Command HQ. Apart from Vilnius, the District comprised of the following counties: Białystok, Brest, Grodno, Trakai, Volkovysk, Slonim, Lida, Novogrudok and Oshmyany. Consequently it included Lithuanian as well as Belarussian territories. At that time there was not a clear division of the area adjoining the front and staging area and the division of influence of the headquarters of the Front and Headquarters of the Staging District. The division was based on *the Eastern Borderland Defence Headquarters* / Komenda Obrony Kresów/, a civilian institution, replacing an administration and supply management, and dealing with the provisioning of supplies to the army. The Eastern Borderland Defence Headquarters was still operating after the HQ Staging District Białystok had been established, covering the demand of the local division (since the middle of May 1919 the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front). The Military regiments of the Polish Army advanced and engaged in combat against an enemy that did not deal with a staging area. The Staging District Headquarters for some time did not know how its staging prefectures subordinated to it functioned[13].

In October 1919, for a main staging point for the Operational Group of General Gustaw Zygadłowicz (composed of 6th Infantry Division, 10th Infantry Division and Artillery of 1st and 3rd Corps) Vilnius was established, and Švenčionėliai, for the group of General Edward Śmigły-Rydz (1st and 3rd Divisions of Legions and 1st Cavalry Brigade). Command HQs of Staging Prefectures dealt with renovating buildings for warehouses in Vilnius and Švenčionėliai[14].

From December 1919, instead of the Lithuanian Staging District Command HQ the name Vilnius Staging District Command HQ was used, and instead of the Belarusian Staging District Command HQ the name Minsk Staging District Command HQ was used[15]. In March 1920 a reorganisation of the operational structure of the Polish Army took place. Armies were created and Headquarters of Staging Districts assigned to them. Behind the front line, reserves were concentrated and subordinated to the General Command HQ of the Polish Army. The Headquarters of the Staging Districts were dissolved in: Lvov, Grodno, Lublin and Kovel creating Headquarters of Staging Districts assigning

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[13] Do Nacz. Dow. WP. Główne Kwatermistrzostwo W Warszawie. Na rozkaz Nr .Szt. Gen. 10. 03/IV z 10 maja 1919 / *To the General Command HQ of the Polish Army. The General Quartermastership in Warsaw. Under the order No. of General Staff HQ 10.03/IV of 10th May 1919/*, CMA, Wołkowysk Staging District Command HQ 2, Ref. no. I. 331.23.2./

[14] Lida, dn. 16. 10. 1919 Do Dowództwa Okręgu Etapowego w Wołkowysku. CMA, DOE Mołodeczno 2, Ref. no. I. 331. 13. 2.Lida, on 16. 10. 1919 //*To the Headquarters of the Staging District in Volkovysk./ CMA, Mołodeczno Staging District Command HQ 2, Ref. No. I. 331. 13. 2./*

[15] Command HQ of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division No. 167/23/IV. Ustalenie nazw DOEnów podległych Kwaterm. Fr. Lit. Biał. Poczta Polowa Nr 37. Dn. 29. XII. 19 Norwid Neugebauer płk Szt. Gen. I Kwatermistrz Frontu, /*Determination of the names of Staging District Command HQs subordinated to the Quartermastership of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Field Post Office No. 37. On 29th December 1919 Norwid Neugebauer Staff Colonel General 1st Quartermaster of the Division,/* CMA, the Lithuanian–Belarusian Front I 310. 3. 224.

them names coming from the numbers of the Armies at the section where these Staging Districts were located. The command headquarters of Staging Districts were located in: Headquarters of Staging District of the 1st Army in Molodechno, Headquarters of Staging District of the 2nd Army in Rowne, Headquarters of Staging District of the 4th Army in Minsk, Headquarters of Staging District of the 6th Army in Tarnopol and Staging District Command HQ of 7th Army in Vilnius[16].

There were plans to incorporate Vilnius in the national area, so the staging command unit had to be maintained only in a basic structure without creating staging prefectures within that area. Where possible, HQ Staging Districts were established in the same locations as the Army Headquarters to which they were subordinated, irrespective of their names. The territorial shape of HQ Staging District Vilnius was made dependant on the relations with Lithuania. There were plans to incorporate the entire Headquarters of the Staging District of Vilnius into the Headquarters of the General District of Grodno or the Headquarters of the General District Warsaw (counties of *Suwałki Region*). Vilnius Staging District HQ had at its disposal 4th Lvov, 4th Lublin, 4th Lodz, 1st Kielce, 2nd Kielce, 1st Lithuanian-Belarusian staging battalions. During the liquidation of the border command HQs, a seat of the liquidation commission of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front was located in Vilnius. Apart from liquidation matters, the Liquidation Commission of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front had the task of maintaining communications between the Civil Administration of Eastern Lands and the headquarters of the three armies operating within that area. The Quartermaster of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front was Colonel of the General Headquarters Mieczysław Norwid-Neugebauer (he served in Vilnius). In the Command HQ of 4th Army he was replaced by Head of Branch IV[17].

Pursuant to the order of the General Command HQ No. 8000. IV due to the liquidation of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division and determination of command of armies, and according to an order issued by the General Command HQ 1980. And establishing new positions for the Staging District Command HQ, the Army Command HQ indicated within the boundaries of the Staging District HQ a dividing line in the war area, a staging district from an operational area as a close area of military operations. In the operational area of the army a Staging District HQ did not hold any competences, authority was held by headquarters of divisions, brigades or operational groups. The operational area was to stretch for a days march through the first line of the front (not further than 30 km). The war theatre subordinated to the General Headquarters in the territory of the former

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[16] WYSZCZELSKI, Lech. *Wojsko Polskie w latach 1918–1921*. Bellona, Warszawa, 2006, s. 173.

[17] Naczelne Dowództwo W.P. /Sztab Generalny/ Nr 8.000/IV Warszawa, dnia 13/3. 1920 r. Reorganizacja frontu wschodniego, likwidacja zachodniego, zarządzenia dotyczące organizacji etapów, zaopatrzenia materialnego i uregulowania dopływu oraz związanych z temi spraw ogólnych. CMA, Front Lit. Biał. I. 310. 3, 218. /*General Headquarters of the Polish Army /General Command HQ/ No. 8.000/IV Warsaw, on 13/3. 1920 Reorganisation of the Eastern front, liquidation of the Western front, regulations concerning the organisation of stagings, material supply and governing the influx and other general matters related thereto. CMA, the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division I 310. 3. 218.*/

Lithuanian–Belarusian Front remained unchanged. The division of the war theatre into staging districts was adjusted to the division of the former Lithuanian–Belarusian Front into three armies in such a manner that each army had its staging district having the name of the largest city located within its boundaries. The boundaries of the Vilnius Staging District HQ were as follows: the western border – the border between Augustov county, and Szczuczyn, and further the border of East Prussia. The southern border of the Staging District HQ was formed as follows: the south-eastern boundaries of Augustov county, Sejny county, Trakai county, Vilnius and Švenčionys counties. The eastern border of the Staging District Command HQ were the borders of Švenčionys and Braslav Counties to the Dvina river, and further on a temporary border to be finally determined by the Command HQ of 7th Army in agreement with Latvia, the north-western bank of the Dvina river.

Vilnius Staging District HQ did not have staging counties. Particular staging stations and Town Headquarters were directly subordinated to the Staging District HQ. In the territory of the Vilnius Staging District HQ there were staging stations: Braslav, Švenčionys, Vilnius, Trakai, Suwalki (the area of former Sejny, Suwalki and Augustov staging prefectures). Vilnius Staging District HQ received staging battalions that were required to carry out military activities: 3rd Cracow, 1st Lithuanian–Belarusian, 4th Lithuanian–Belarusian, 4th Lublin, 4th Lodz Battalions. The names of the battalions are derived from the names of the Staging Districts – where the military districts are located, the so-called national area situated outside of the area of operations; (with the exception of the Lithuanian–belarusian battalions whose names derive from the geographical region in which they were formed). Staging battalions were formed in the General Districts and then sent to the Staging Districts. Railway lines were guarded by the railway guard service in terms of discipline, judicial and military issues dependant on the Staging District HQ. The Commander of the Vilnius Staging District HQ was Lieutenant–Colonel Tadeusz Rychliński, and the Chief of the Staff was Captain Juliusz Merak [18].

Within the Polish staging system, apart from the Command HQs of the Staging Districts and the Command HQs of the Staging Prefectures, also in the city the command HQs and the square command operated. The Municipal Headquarters were located in the largest military garrisons, whereas in smaller locations, in which the military units were stationed, a square headquarters and a square officer were located. The Municipal Headquarters was located in Vilnius. One of the main tasks of the Municipal Headquarters of the city of Vilnius was to keep order in town and prevent events that could create chaos within the rearguard. Keeping order in Vilnius was a function exercised by the following authorities: the Municipal Police, a Branch of the Field Military Police, a Branch of the Field Military Police of the 2nd Infantry Division of Legions, a Division of

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[18] Dow. Fr. Lit. Biał. L. dz. 2127. IV. Adj Poczta polowa 37, dn. 25 marca 1920 r, CMA, Front Lit. Biał. Ref. no. I 310. 3. 216. */Command HQ of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front Ref. No. 2127. IV. Adj Field Post Office 37, on 25th March 1920, CMA, the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front I 310. 3. 216.*

Military Counter-Intelligence, and military guards and patrols. The Municipal Police's task was to protect town inhabitants and was directly subordinated to a mayor. A Branch of Military Police was subordinated in respect of police and military matters to the City of Vilnius Headquarters, and in respect of political and civil matters to the Commissioner of the City of Vilnius. A Branch of the Field Military Police of the 2nd Infantry Division of Legions was directly subordinated to an HQ of its own division, and the Military Counter-Intelligence Branch to the Command HQ of the front[19].

The Vilnius Staging District Command HQ and the Vilnius City Command HQ, along with Minsk Staging District Command HQ, were subordinated to the Command HQ of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front, whose Quartermaster was the Colonel of the General Staff HQ – Mieczysław Norwid Neugebauer[20].

In Vilnius itself there were the following institutions and military units: the Staging District HQ, the Staging Prefecture HQ, the City Headquarters, the Railway Station Headquarters, a Branch of the Field Court, a Branch of Military Police of the Staging District, a Branch of Military Police of Vilnius County, the Commissioner of the Staging District, the Commissioner of the Staging Prefecture, the Field Post Office IV, the Field Post Office No. 37, a Housing Administration, Housing and a Construction Office, a command of a staging battalion, a command of a county company, an infirmary, a flea disinfection room, a bath, a field dean's office, a slaughterhouse, a court martial, warehouses, military barracks, a prisoner-of-war camp, a labour unit for prisoners-of-war, a front collection station, a soldier's shop, a soldier's inn, a construction material warehouse and a collection point for prisoners-of-war, refugees and detainees. In the town of Nova Vileyka there was a staging station, an infirmary, a town headquarters, a railway station headquarters, a military barracks, a soldier's inn, a batch and a flea disinfection room. Soldiers' inns were located in Moletai, Maisiagala, Sirvintos, Giedraičiai and Musninkai[21]. The duties of the Vilnius City Commander were performed by Colonel Andrzej Tupalski, whereas Square Commander's duties at Vilnius City Command HQ were performed by Lieutenant Czesław Stypulski[22]. In Vilnius, in Snipiskes, in Wielkomierska street, in barracks at St

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19   Dowództwo Miasta Wilna Nr. 415 Wilno, dnia 20 maja 1919 Do Dowództwa Frontu Litewsko-Białoruskiego CMA, Front Lit. Biał. Ref. no. I. 310. 3. 15. /*The City of Vilnius Command HQ No. 415 Vilnius, On 20th May 1919 To the Command Headquarters of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division CMA, the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division, Ref. no. I. 310. 3. 15./*

20   Organizacja Kwatermistrzostwa Frontu Litewsko-Białoruskiego. Zał. do Rozkazu nr 16607/IV CMA, DOE Wilno 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 16. /*Structure of Quartermaster Service of the Lithuanian-Belarussian Division. Annex to the Order No. 16607/IV CMA, HQ Staging District Vilnius 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 16./*

21   Spis oddziałów i urządzeń etapowych znajdujących się na terenie powiatu wileńskiego: CMA, DOE Wilno 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 22. 3. /*The list of staging regiments and facilities located in the territory of Vilnius County: CMA, Vilnius Staging District Command HQ, Ref. No. I. 331. 22. 3./*

22   CMA, DOE Wilno 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 16. /*CMA, The Headquarters of Staging District Vilnius 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 16./*

Rafael's Church the Staging Army Non-Commissioners Academy at Command HQ of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division. On 10th January 1920 its first course was completed[23].

The Military administration units beneath those of the Staging District Command HQ were the staging prefectures. The Vilnius Staging District Headquarters initially had staging prefectures in its structure. When there were plans to exclude the District from the war theatre, staging prefectures were transformed into staging stations. In a political prefecture of war area, staging service and military territorial authority was performed by the Staging Prefecture Command HQ, whose scope of operations covered the protection of the area and order maintenance at the rear of the operating army with staging military units or combat units temporarily subordinated to them[24]. As a result of inspections performed in the command HQs of Oshmyany, Vileyka and Molodechno staging prefectures, the Commander of the Vilnius Staging District came to the conclusion that the poor conditions of these prefectures resulted from improperly performed service. From four subordinated prefectures, only in one instance had the situation proved satisfactory to the commander (Oshmyany Prefecture). In the remaining counties commanders fulfilled their duties in an improper manner[25].

An organisational level of the staging area lower than staging counties were staging stations subordinated to a staging command or to a staging county command, and indirectly to Branch III. Staging stations appointed command headquarters having consulted the process with the HQ Staging District in more relevant places within its own area. Staging stations were created by commanders of staging prefectures at the main communication lines. The staff of a staging station could not be made up of more than 3 officers, 4 non-commissioned officers, 5 rank-and-file soldiers and a staging company platoon. In practice, it was not fully staffed due to a painful lack of staging soldiers and officers as well as non-commissioned officers able to perform administrative service[26]. A staging station was assigned, if it was necessary, a properly strong military unit for

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[23] Kwatermistrzostwo Fr. L. Biał. Nr 167/24/IV I. W.E. Poczta polowa 37. Dn. 30. 12 1919 Rozkaz CMA, DOE Wilno 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 22. 6. /*Quartermastership of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division No. 167/24/IV I. W.E. Field Post Office 37. On 30.12.1919 Order of CMA, Vilnius Staging District Command HQ 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 22. 6./*

[24] *The authority of a prefecture commander or a combat unit commander was decided based on the seniority of a staging prefecture commander or a commander of a given unit*, CMA, Staging Prefecture Command HQ Kołomyja 1 Ref.No. I. 332. 60.1.

[25] Dowództwo Okręgu Etapowego Wilno. Rozkaz tajny nr 4 Wilno, d. 8 marca 1920, CMA, DOE Wilno 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 22. 1. /*The Headquarters of Vilnius Staging District. Secret Order No.4 Vilnius, on 8th March 1920, CMA, the Headquarters of Staging District Vilnius 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 22. 1.*

[26] General Command HQ. Gł. Roz (?) pal. IV of dn. 10 (?) XI 1920. Staging Districts. L. 5500/I pf. Staging Service Manual. Na podst. Rozk. Nacz. Dow. Kwaterm. Nr dz. Szt. Gen. 1769/IV z roku 1919. /*Under the order of the General Command HQ of Quartermastership Ref.. No. of the General Staff Command HQ 1769/IV from 1919/.* Rozdział V. Stacje etapowe, ch. 3. /*Chapter V. Staging Stations, chapter 3.*/ The Archives of Border Guard Service in Szczecin (next ABG), Baony Etapowe IV Lubelski Baon Etapowy Ref. no. 48/7. /*Staging Battalions. 4th Lublin Staging Battalion Ref. no. 48/7/.*

keeping order or special formations /technical, labour etc., or for transportation means[27]. The territory of operations of a staging station stretched as far as the half length of the nearest neighbouring station. In directions where such stations did not exist, it stretched as far as the command HQs of a staging station could exercise its authority[28]. The distance between staging stations and the scope of their competences was dependent upon local conditions. On more important staging roads and lines the distance between staging stations could not exceed a one-day march. If commands of railway stations were located at a staging station, they in all staging matters were subordinated to the Headquarters of the staging station. A staging station had to be located in a building easy to find with a sign lit at night, and a white and red flag[29].

An example of the functioning of a Staging Station in Lithuanian territories might be the Vilnius Staging Station. Staging Stations in the area of the Vilnius Staging District Command HQ formed as a result of new organisation of Vilnius Staging District Command HQ governed by means of an order of the General Command HQ No. 1980/I of 20th March 1920. They were created from former staging counties. They were granted the same rights and competences that had Headquarters of Prefectures. In Vilnius a city command and a square command was created. There were plans to establish a Square Command in Suwałki, whereas in Švenčionėliai, Novo Vileyka, Augustov and Sejny they intended to appoint only square officers[30].

The Vilnius Staging Station HQ, up until 12th June 1920, was limited to providing food supplies to the military units stationed within the area of a station operation, and to paying the soldier's pay. Its Headquarters was made up of 4 officers and 38 rank-and file soldiers fulfilling the functions of writers, warehouse keepers, couriers, orderlies, carriage drivers etc. These soldiers were not stationed in military barracks and lived in private living quarters. No-one kept any registers of these soldiers. Guard services in Vilnius were performed initially by 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women,, and then 4th Company of 4th Lodz Staging Battalion. The Novo Vileyka Square Headquarters was

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[27]   Ibid.

[28]   Ibid., p. 4.

[29]   Instrukcya dla stacyi etapowych Nakładem Dowództwa W.P. na Gal. Wschod. Kwatermistrzostwo. Oddział XI Etapowy, Lwów, Luty 1919, CMA, Regulaminy i instrukcje, s. 4. /*A Manual for Staging Stations issued by Command HQ of the Polish Army for Eastern Galicia. Quartermastership. 9th Staging Division, Lviv, February 1919, CMA, Regulations and Manuals, p. 4.*/

[30]   Dowództwo Okręgu Etapowego Wilno L. dz. /640 Gł Poczta pol. VII dn 9 VI 20 r. Do Naczelnego Dowództwa Oddział IV przez Dowództwo 7-ej Armji. CMA, DOE Wilno 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 22.3. /*Vilnius Staging District HQ Ref. no. /640 Main Field Post Office VII on 9th June 1920. To the General Command HQ Branch IV through the Command HQ of 7th Army. CMA, Vilnius Staging District Command HQ 1, Ref. no. I. 331.22.3/*

subordinated to the Headquarters of the Staging Station Vilnius. Apart from that, no other units belonged to a staging station[31].

Staging districts were assigned military regiments in the form of staging battalions. They assumed their names from the General Districts where they were formed and were assigned a subsequent order number. They had the same number of soldiers as an infantry battalion without a company of machine guns. Soldiers with poorer health, those older and unable to serve on the front, and the more poorly armed served in these military regiments. As a rule, staging battalions were not allowed to be sent to serve at the front. However, they took part in fighting in the Ukrainian campaign during the retreat and in fights at the turn of July and August in 1920, in the so-called Battle of Warsaw and the Battle on the Bug. Their combat value was different. It depended on the fighting capacity of soldiers themselves, but most of all, on how the battalions were used. If they were performing their tasks independently against strong enemy units, they were quickly destroyed, very often entering into panic that also overcame other soldiers. If they were fighting next to strong line units and achieved successes, their value was not very often lower than other front-line combat units.

The Staging Regiments of the Vilnius Staging District were dislocated as follows: 4th Lodz Staging Battalion (command HQ in Vilnius), 4th Lublin Staging Battalion (command HQ in Olkienniki) 1st Lithuanian-Belarusian Staging Battalion in Novo Trakai, 3rd Cracow Railway Battalion Command HQ in Švenčionys. Railway guard service watched over the railway track from Kalkune station (*Kalkūni)* to Grodno issuing 45 guard posts[32]. Among such staging battalions, the vast majority were those possessed low staff numbers.

Under the order of the General Command HQ No.2.900/IV of 30th January 1920 – concerning the allocation of staging battalions to particular armies or Staging District Command HQ – the Staging District Command HQ of 7th Army / Vilnius / had at its disposal the following staging battalions: 4th Lublin Battalion, 3rd Cracow Battalion, 1st Lithuanian-Belarusian Battalion and 4th Lodz Battalion. On 6th April 1920 the Staging District Command HQ of 7th Army comprised 4th Lithuanian-Belarusian Staging Battalion, 4th Warsaw Staging Battalion, 5th and 6th Lublin Battalions and 6th Kielce Staging Battalion[33].

Three weeks before Tuchaczewski's offensive, the staging battalions serving at the Vilnius Staging District were comprised the following number of soldiers: 3rd Cracow Staging

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[31] Dowództwo Stacji Etapowej Wilno, L. dz. 243 pf, Działalność Stacji Etapowej, Wilno, dn. 12 czerwca 1920 r. Ibid. */Vilnius Staging Station Command HQ, Ref. no. 243 pf, The Operation of the Staging Station, Vilnius, on 12th June 1920, Ibid./*

[32] Wykaz dyslokacyjny Oddziałów Etapowych OE Wilno. Ibid. */The list of dislocations of Staging Military Units of Vilnius Staging District. Ibid./*

[33] Naczelne Dowództwo WP /Sztab Generalny / nr 13.000. Przydział i uzupełnienia Warszawa, dnia 26 marca 1920, CMA Front Lit. Biał. I. 310. 3, 218. */General Command HQ of the Polish Army /General Staff HQ/ No.13.000. Allocations and Supplementations Warsaw, on 26th March 1920, CMA, the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division I 310. 3. 218./*

Battalion – 20 officers, 777 deputy officers and rank-and-file soldiers, 4th Lodz Staging Battalion – 9 officers, 357 deputy officers and rank-and-file officers, 1st Lithuanian-Belarusian Staging Battalion – 7 officers and 274 deputy officers and rank-and-file soldiers, 2nd Lublin Staging Battalion – 5 officers and 324 deputy officers and rank-and-files. Thus, they did not achieve full staffing[34]. In June 1920 i.e. Already during the offensive of the Bolshevik Western Front, 3rd Cracow Staging Battalion comprised 19 officers and 598 rank-and-file soldiers, whereas 1st Lithuanian–Belarusian Staging Battalion comprised only 6 officers and 196 rank-and-file soldiers. The staffing level of this battalion was the poorest since almost half of its soldiers were volunteers not of conscription age - being either too young or far too old. 4th Lithuanian–Belarusian Staging Battalion existed almost exclusively in theory. The commander of this battalion, apart from their own division, also worked in the Commissariat of 7th Army[35].

A vast majority of soldiers of the 2nd Lithuanian–Belarusian Staging Battalion on the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front were volunteers aged between 18 and 30. At that time a 30-year-old man was considered a person in his prime. Persons aged about 30 were probably unemployed who, by doing so, wanted to support themselves and their families. Most volunteers were inhabitants of Vilnius. The main recruitment point was located in that time. Volunteers from neighbouring counties incorporated the local county companies or other sub-units serving there[36].

The Staging battalions subordinated to the Vilnius Staging District HQ but, due to large deficiencies in supply and equipment, could not perform tasks they had been assigned. The most important facilities in the HQ Staging District Vilnius were not properly guarded. The Military Police posts were located as far as 30 km from each other, which was a huge distance due to the poor condition of the local transport routes[37].

The army and civilians were subject to the Military Police that came under the competence of military authorities, and were given specific security duties within the warzone. It cooperated with the civil authorities in regard to the civilian populace. All local civil organisations that existed under security forces within the war area, were subordinated to the Military Police, as the assisting authorities. The exception was the „municipal police" in poviat towns (land counties). Every frontline Headquarter or operational group had its own front Branch of Military Police established. In the staging area of each district there was a branch of Military Police that a Staging District had set up. The Military

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[34] ODZIEMKOWSKI, Janusz. *Piechota polska w wojnie z Rosją radziecką 1919–1920*. Warsaw, 2010, s. 346.

[35] Dowództwo Okręgu Etapowego Wilno L. dz. 2530/665/I org. Gł. Poczta pol. VII dn. 11/VI 20 r. CAW. / *The Headquarters of Vilnius Staging District Ref. no. 2530/665/I org. Main Field Post Office VII on 11th June 20 CAW./*

[36] Idem. *Polskie formacje etapowe na Litwie i Białorusi 1919–1920*. Cracow, 2011, s. 79.

[37] Dowództwo Okręgu Etapowego Wilno L. dz. 2530/665/I org. Gł. Poczta pol. VII dn 11/VI 20 r. CAW. / *The Headquarters of Vilnius Staging District Ref. no. 2530/665/I org. Main Field Post Office VII on 11th June 20 CAW./*

police were divided into: a front-line and field staging force. The latter functioned as if it were border control, by separating the country from the war zones using cordons[38].

In the Vilnius Staging District at the end of 1919, the security service was fulfilled by the Staging Field Military Police. Its headquarters were located in Vilnius. In this town there was also the Staging Field Military Police Academy, the Staging Field Military Police Round-Up Company and a county unit of the Staging Military Police in Vilnius. The county unit was divided into 3 platoons - Širvintos, Nemenčinė and Jašiūnai[39]. General supervision over the activity of Military Police was conducted by Major Stanisław Krzaczyński, a commander of the Field Military Police at the Ministry of Military Affairs in Warsaw. The Staff Command HQ of Military Police was the General Quartermastership of the General Command HQ of the Polish Army. On 1st January 1920 the Field Military Police in the Staging District Vilnius was led by Cavalry Captain Bronisław Batsch[40].

The Command HQ of the Field Military Police at the Vilnius Staging District exercised its authority over branches of field military police in Vilnius, Trakai, Švenčionys, Braslav, a Round-Up Company (dealing with running round-ups on deserting soldiers and enemy agents at the rear) and the Field Military Police Academy. The Regional Division of Vilnius comprised of four platoons: in Širvintos, Niemeczyn, Turagiele and Vilnius. The Troki Branch had platoons in Szumieliszki, Lentvaris, Aukštadvaris and in Varėna. The Švenčionys Branch had platoons in Wojtyniany, 2nd Platoon in Kamai, 3rd Platoon in Švenčionys and 4th Platoon in Świdry. Braslav Branch had platoons in Braslav, Borówka and Dūkštas. According to the organisational chart, the Field Military Police Command HQ at the Vilnius Staging District also supervised the Field Military Police of the Molodechno Staging District with its subordinated branches: Glubokoye (1st Platoon in Glubokoye, 2nd Platoon in Łużki, 3rd Platoon in Jody), Vileyka (1st Platoon in Vileyka, 2nd Platoon in Ikwynia, Flej, 3rd Platoon in Krzywicze, 4th Platoon in Wołkołata and Oshmyany (comprising 1st Platoon in Oshmyan, 2nd Platoon in Iwie, 3rd Platoon in Wołożyn). The Platoons of the Staging Field Military Police sent its posts in particular places located within the Branch. The number of these posts differed, with 2 from the Trakai Branch (it posted a platoon in Szumieliszki) and up to 10 from the Vilnius Branch

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[38] Dow. Frontu Lit. Biał Nr 503/1 Przeprowadzenie Organizacji Żandarmerii Polowej, CMA, Front Lit. Biał. Ref. no. I. 310. 3. 15; GŁOGOWSKI, Aleksander. *Policja Państwowa i inne instytucje bezpieczeństwa na Wileńszczyźnie w latach 1918–1939.* Kraków, 2015, s. 44.

[39] Vilnius, 30th December 1920. Raport sytuacyjny za II połowę grudnia 1919 roku */A Report on Situation for the Second Half of December 1919/*, CMA, DOE Wilno 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 22.3. /*CMA, Vilnius Staging District HQ 1, Ref. no. I. 331. 22.3./*

[40] ŚLESZYŃSKI, Wojciech. *Bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne w polityce państwa polskiego na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej.* Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN „Rytm" / the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences „Rytm" / Białystok Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku. Warsaw, 2007, s. 37. In the inter-war period the Polish Military Police had the same military ranks as in the cavalry (Rafał Roguski's note).

(Vilnius Platoon)[41]. As of 31st March 1920 the Headquarters of the Unit of the Staging Military Police in Vilnius was made up of 11 officers and 48 rank-and-file soldiers. The Military Police Academy of the Staging District in Vilnius had 1 officer and 231 rank-and-file soldiers. The Round-Up Company of the Military Police Academy of the Staging District in Vilnius had 1 officer and 54 rank-and-file soldiers[42].

The opinions on staging military police guards radically differed; though they were mostly negative unfortunately. Particularly negative opinions were issued about the military police of Vilnius and the county of Vilnius. There were complaints about the guards' brutality, arbitrary detentions, the stealing of items from detained persons, or indeed beatings. In autumn 1919 investigations were conducted, and as a result of which most of the charges were confirmed[43]. A problem with the operation of the Vilnius military police appeared already during the recruitment process, since local criminals involved in muggings and thefts were conscripted, and those people – knowing that it was possible to continue their criminal actions – recommend their companions to serve in the police[44].

Specific units, military in nature, operating in the logistic support area of the front were: The Railway Guard Service and the Voluntary Legion of Women. The Railway Guard Service dealt with watching over railway facilities and railway lines adequately to their numbers and means. In the middle of October 1919 the manpower of the Lithuanian-Belarusian battalion of the Railway Guard Service comprised 603 guards divided into 5 companies. The battalion's commander was Major Korwin-Kamieński, and the battalion was located in Vilnius at Kazimierz corner in the house of 'The League of Workers'. The Railway guards were equipped and had uniforms not suitable for the duties they performed. Their equipment, apart from shoes and foot-clouts, were made from nettles and cellulose and were not fit for use. Uniforms made from nettle fibres broke apart in a very short time. Carrying out their service, at railway lines so important for the army, they had different kinds of weapons, which could have lead to tragic

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[41] Dowództwo Żandarmerii Polowej Okręgu Etapowego w Wilnie L. dz. Res. 641/20. Tajne. Szemat D-twa Oddz. Żand. Pol. O. E. Wilno. CMA, Naczelne Dowództwo WP, OdeB Ref. no. I. 301. 30. 46. /*Command HQ of the Staging District Field Military Police in Vilnius Ref. No. Res. 641/20. Secret. Diagram of Command HQ of the Branch of the Staging District Field Military Police Vilnius. CMA, General Command HQ of the Polish Army, OdeB Ref. no. I. 301. 30. 46./*

[42] Legenda do Szemat D-twa Oddz. Żand. Pol. O. E. Wilno. Wilno, dnia 9 kwietnia 1920 r. W dokumencie tym znajduje się dokładny spis wszystkich posterunków żandarmerii wystawiany przez Żandarmerię Polową Okręgu Etapowego Wilno. Ibid. /*Key to a Diagram of Command HQ of the Branch of the Staging District Field Military Police Vilnius. Vilnius, on 9th April 1920. This contains a precise description of all military police posts established by the Field Military Police of the Staging District Vilnius. Ibid./*

[43] ODZIEMKOWSKI, Janusz. *Polskie formacje etapowe na Litwie i Białorusi 1919–1920*. Cracow, 2011, s. 63.

[44] Ibid., p. 64.

consequences in confrontation with saboteurs, or in instances where very large groups of criminals possessed military weapons[45].

In May 1919 in Vilnius Region a woman's military unit was formed known as 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women, operating independent of the Lvov Voluntary Legion of Women created in Eastern Malopolska. It was a formation military in nature, but not being part of the Polish Army[46]. Second Lieutenant Wanda Gertz became its commander. Initially both these units: Vilnius and Lviv operated independently of each other. Only as a result of the approaching Polish-Bolshevik War and the necessity to keep a large number of operational units on the front related to it, the General Command of the Polish Army made a decision to reorganise OLK. In April 1920 a Division of the Voluntary Legion of Women at 1st Division of the Ministry of Military Affairs, which was headed by Major Aleksandra Zagórska, and on 18th May an order of this ministry was published that concerned a new organisation of this formation[47]. 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women on the Lithuanian-Belarusian front was an auxiliary military formation for the period of war. Its headquarters located in Vilnius and was directly subordinated to the Headquarters of the Town of Vilnius. A commander of 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women was appointed by a commander of a Staging District on request by City Commander who granted functional ranks to women legionnaires. Granting military ranks was prohibited. Female Legionnaires wore Polish military uniforms without any distinctions. Outside service they did not carry weapons. Units of 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women comprising platoons were treated as units of the Polish Army made up of soldiers unable to perform service on the military front[48]. The creation of 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women supplemented deficiencies in administrative corps. Moreover, female legionnaires performed guard service at military transports[49]. They ran laundries, military sewing rooms; they

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[45] Dowództwo Lit. Biał. Baonu Straży Kolejowej L. dz. 2803 Wilno, dn. 15. X. 1919. CAW, Front Lit. – Biał. I 310. 3. 222. /*Command HQ of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Railway Guard Service Battalion Ref. No. 2803 Vilnius, on 15. October 1919. CAW, the Lithuanian-Belarusian Front I 310. 3. 222./*

[46] MARCINKIEWICZ-KACZMARCZYK, Anna. *Kobiety w obronie Warszawy. Ochotnicza Legia Kobiet (1918–1922) i Wojskowa Służba Kobiet ZWZ – AK (1939–1945).* Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Warsaw, 2016, s. 41.

[47] MARCINKIEWICZ–KACZMARCZYK, Anna. *Zasady rekrutacji i socjologiczna charakterystyka kobiet służących w OLK i WSK AK.* Journal XLVII, 2015, No. 3, p. 5.

[48] Rozkaz L. 23. Wilno, dnia 10. Marca 1920 r. Organizacja II-giej Ochotniczej Legii Kobiet /*The Structure of 2nd Legion of Women*/ No. 3266/240/Ż, p. 1, CMA, Nr. 3266/240/Ż, p. 1, CMA, DOE Wilno 3. Ref. no. I. 331.22.3. /*CMA, No. 3266/240/Ż, p.1, CMA, Vilnius Staging District Command HQ Ref. No. I. 331.22. 3./*

[49] Dow. Fr. Lit. Biał. Nr. 13556/IV. Wilno, dnia 10. 11. 1919 . Przeprowadzenie werbunku do 2. O.L.K. przez biura zaciągowe. Do Dowództwa 2. Ochotniczej Legii Kobiet. Ibid. /*Command HQ of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division No. 13556/IV. Vilnius, on 10.11.1919. Conducting recruitment to 2nd Voluntary League of Women by recruitment offices. To Command HQ of 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women. Ibid./*

worked in kitchens, military bakeries, intelligence and communications units[50]. The largest number of women legionnaires was performed in Vilnius, although sometimes it happened that they were sent to other locations, for example to Minsk, Trakai, Volkovysk, Vileyka and Lida[51].

On 10th March 1920 female legionnaires made an oath in St Casimirus Garrison Church in Vilnius, and when 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women was sworn, a canteen for the legionnaires ran by Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was solemnly opened. According to the registers as at 15th May 1920, the Voluntary Legion of Women in Vilnius had at its disposal: a guard unit comprising 149 female legionnaires, a sewing room in which 131 female legionnaires worked, a laundry with 10 legionnaires, a utility division – 25 legionnaires, an office division with 20 legionnaires and a sanitary unit with three legionnaires. Apart from that 207 volunteering women performed service in other garrisons as couriers, officer workers and telephone operators. In total 2nd Voluntary Legion of Women comprised 1 officer (lt. Olejniczakowski) and 555 legionnaires. This number with small changes remained until the moment it left Vilnius in July 1920[52].

On 7th July 1920 Staging Districts during the Russian offensive received an order to evacuate. The battles to regain Vilnius had began. The Lithuanians joined the offensive, attacking the 2 Infantry Division Legions near Vievis and Dūkštas. The Red Army had easy access to the territory of Lithuania in the region surrounding Kaunas[53]. The 7th Army within the Vilnius Region was formed from just one division that possessed only 2700 bayonets, far too small number to protect Vilnius. The 1st Vilnius Army headquarter's unfortunate decisions resulted in only two – the weakest – divisions defending the city. These were: 2nd Lithuanian-Belarusian Division and 8th Infantry Division. Particularly fierce fight took place within the suburbs and nearby areas of Vilnius. By the morning of 14th July 1920 the city lost the battle and military operatons had moved on to the nearby areas of Vilnius. Lithuanian units fought here for the first time. The Polish Council of National Defence took the decision to hand Vilnius over to Lithuania. This loss had paralysed the Polish defence along the old German front-line, and left the Polish front-line in danger of collapse. After regaining Vilnius, the Bolsheviks marched along the

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[50] Dowództwo Frontu Litewsko–Białoruskiego. Numer pisma zniszczony – oderwany P Kwatermistrzo-stwo. Nr 46/IV. Pf Lida, d. 17. 7. 19 Statut Legii Kobiet Ibid. */Command HQ of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division. /the issue of the journal damaged – torn off P Quartermasterhisp. No. 46/IV. Pf Lida, d. 17. 7. 19 Articles of Associations of the League of Women Ibid./*

[51] MARCINKIEWICZ-KACZMARCZYK, Anna. *Kobiety w obronie Warszawy. Ochotnicza Legia Kobiet (1918–1922) i Wojskowa Służba Kobiet ZWZ – AK (1939–1945).* Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Warsaw, 2016, s. 42.

[52] ODZIEMKOWSKI, Janusz. *Polskie formacje etapowe na Litwie i Białorusi 1919–1920.* Cracow, 2011, s. 62.

[53] ŁUKOMSKI, Grzegorz; POLAK, Bogusław. *W obronie Wilna, Grodna i Mińska 1918–1920. Front litew-sko–białoruski wojny polsko–bolszewickiej 1918–1920.* Koszalin–Warszawa, 1994, s. 73. */Defending Vilnius, Grodno and Minsk 1918-1920. Lithuanian-Belarusian front-line in the Polish-Soviet War/*

Lithuanian boarder towards Grodno, which was soon taken over by the cavalry corps under the command of Gai[54].

The HQ Staging District Vilnius was incorporated into the 1st Army. Regulations concerning retreat of staging battalions subordinated to them were issued. Evacuation, despite its hastiness, was organised quite efficiently that most of equipment and furnishings was taken. All staging formations got out of the danger zone. Retreating staging military units were accompanied by families of soldiers, policemen, officials, landed gentry members and other people fearing the Red Army[55].

During the retreat of the Polish Armies an infantry brigade staffed with 2,500 soldiers was formed from battalions of the HQ Staging District Vilnius and the HQ Staging District Molodechno[56]. The Brigade having left Bialystok was subordinated to 10th Infantry Division of General Lucjan Żeligowski and for a few days fought defending the line of the Narew River where it sustained heavy losses. On 29th July 1920 it amounted to no more than 43 officers and 1707 soldiers [57].

The organisation of the staging administration functioned within Central Lithuania (with its capital in Vilnius), and had been established after Żeligovski's mutiny. In October 1920, gen. Lucjan Żeligowski took over Vilnius and the nearby area, after having simulated an uprising against the Polish statesman Józef Piłsudski, and proclaimed the creation of Central Lithuania. This action was directed under the command of Piłsudski. Żeligowski's military units started their advance towards Vilnius on 8th October 1920, before coming across the Lithuanian forces. The Polish units had a camparative advantage over their opponents. The Lithuanians, following the commands of the government in Kaunas, made a decision to pass the city over to its Entente representatives. A delegate of the Lithuanian government in Vilnius, Ignacy Jonynas passed control over the city to the Entente resident colonel, Constantin Reboul. Such a movement was supposed to enable the Polish forces to retake power within Vilnius without the apparent action against Entente. The Lithuanians struggled to acknowledge Polish authority in Vilnius. Initially they attempted direct armed action in response to Żeligowski's mutiny. At the end of October 1920 they moved on to offensive manouveurs. The battle near Giedraičiai was stopped as a result of an intervention by the League of Nations. However, the fighting over the Vilnius region did not stop there, and on 21st November 1920 the League of Nations ordered an end to hostility, and a truce was created between all the involved parties[58].

[54] ŁUKOMSKI, Grzegorz; POLAK, Bogusław; WRZOSEK, Mieczysław. *Wojna polsk–bolszewicka 1919–1920. Działania bojowe. Kalendarium T. II (marzec–październik 1920 r.)*. Koszalin, 1990, s. 72, 78.

[55] ODZIEMKOWSKI, Janusz. *Organizacja i ochrona zaplecza wojsk polskich na Litwie i Białorusi (luty 1919–lipiec 1920). /*The Organisation and Protection of Logistic Support for the Polish Military Units in Lithuania and Belarus (February 1919 – July 1920) „Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy", nr 4/2013, s. 41.

[56] Idem, *Piechota polska w wojnie z Rosją radziecką 1919–1920*. Warsaw, 2010, s. 350.

[57] Ibid., p. 351.

[58] OCHMAŃSKI, Jerzy. *Historia Litwy*. Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, 1990, s. 286–287.

Central Lithuania was proclaimed after the Vilniuregion was taken over by Polish forces. The organisation of its Armed forces was based on territorial system. The central area of the Vilnius region was divided into two military districts: I the Vilnius Region District and the II Grodno District. Each of them provided one corps, which consisted of two infantry brigades, a cavalry unit, as well as sufficient quantity of artillery and auxiliary units. The Vilnius Region was divided into several areas: Vilnius, Trakai, Švenčionys and Braslav, whereas Grodno District encompassed Grodno, Lida, Ashmyany and Varėna areas[59].

A Command Headquarters and an Inspectorate were established. The territory of Central Lithuania was divided into 5 staging districts: Rzesza (Didžioji Riešė), Bieniakony, Švenčionys, Oshmyany and Trakai. The western border of the Trakai district ran along the front-line, whereas eastern border of Švenčionys and Ashmyany districts was described by Soviet–Lithuanian treaty. Suchh staging districts were to secure to the territory, provide protection to important communication points such as bridges, cross-roads. Also in its competence was to secure ralway tracks, roads maintanance so that any military machinery and equipment required by the army could be easily supplied. The Headquarters of the staging districts also dealt with civilians complaints in regards to any military requisitions. They also helped the civil authorities quash banditry by providing military units when needed[60]. On 20th February 1922, the Vilnius Sejm voted to incorporate the Republic of Poland.

Conclusion

Headquarters of Staging Districts formed a relevant component of military administration during the Polish–Bolshevik War. They were an intermediate area between the operational area, where combat operations were being performed, and the national area i.e. General Districts subordinated already to the authority of the Ministry of Military Affairs. They functioned only during a war time. During a peace time, after the completion of the Polish–Bolshevik War Staging Districts were liquidated, and staging military units demobilised. Staging Districts subordinated to the General Headquarters and General Districts subjected to the Ministry of Military Affairs were replaced during the organisation of the Polish Army during a peace time by Headquarters of Army Corps District. Efficient operation of the front was dependant on the operation of the staging area i.e. immediate logistic support of the front. Vilnius Staging District Command HQ was a special administrative entity. Initially Vilnius and its neighbourhoods formed part of Staging Districts Bialystok and Volkovysk, and only later on became its headquarters. The most important staging institutions were located in Vilnius. Whereas staging services in

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59   KRAJEWSKI, Zenon. *Geneza i dzieje wewnętrzne Litwy Środkowej (1920–1922)*. Lublin, 1996, s. 79.
60   Ibid., p. 80.

the field was very difficult due to a communication situation in the territory of Lithuania. The lack of roads and staging units small in numbers could not fulfil their duties in a proper manner. It especially related to military guard units whose outposts were apart from each other for as much as 30 km. Staging plants comprised warehouses, sanitary and health care units, prisoners-of-war's units, i.e. everything that had to function at the rear so that operational armies maintain its combat capacity.

Operational armies did not pay attention to stagings. During fighting and manoeuvring the role of logistic support was neglected. In staging battalions soldiers served who were unable to perform service on the front. Staging battalions were banned to take part in fighting on the front, not only due to a poor quality of a recruit and poor training of soldiers, but also due to the lack of proper armaments. The Vilnius Staging District was located in the territory of Lithuania, yet the Vilnius region had been largely polonised. Despite being in the state of war with Lithuania, no major political or social disturbances took place. That proved quite the opposite to the situation unfolding upon Ukrainian and Belarusian lands, where the anxieties behind the front-line almost culminated in an uprising. Part of the eastern regions Staging Districts Command HQ remained under the influence of the Bolsheviks. Also banditry proved increasingly prescient. The situation within Vilnius Region was much calmer.

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Vilniaus susitelkimo rajonas Lenkijos–Sovietų Rusijos karo metu (1919–1920 m.)

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Santrauka

Susitelkimo rajonai – tai karinės administracijos vienetai, funkcionavę tik klasikinio karo metu, kai operacinės pajėgos nuolatinėmis tiekimo linijomis buvo sujungtos su sandėliais ir karinių pajėgų papildymo centrais. Vilniaus susitelkimo rajonas funkcionavo Lenkijos–Sovietų Rusijos karo metu iki to laiko, kai Lenkijos kariuomenė perėjo prie taikos meto organizacijos. Tai turėjo būti grandis, jungianti frontą ir valstybinę teritoriją. Taigi, kurį laiką žemesniosios grandies struktūros (susitelkimo apygardos) čia neveikė. Vilniaus susitelkimo rajonas vis dar veikė kaip vadinamosios Vidurio Lietuvos dalis iki 1922 m.

Dinamiškos karinės operacijos ir vadovavimo sistemos žlugimas lėmė, kad, 1939 m. rugsėjo mėn. Lenkijoje prasidėjus Antrajam pasauliniam karui, jokia kariuomenės sutelkimo vietų struktūra nebuvo sukurta. Karininkai, atsakingi už kariuomenės sutelkimą, netgi neatsiskaitydavo savo vadui. Dėl Vokietijos „žaibo karo" strategijos Lenkijos kariuomenė negalėjo suorganizuoti vietovės, kur karinės pajėgos galėtų susitelkti, nes frontas buvo be galo dinamiškas, o Lenkijos kariuomenė turėjo nuolat keisti kryptį.

Antrojo pasaulinio karo metu Lenkijos kariuomenės susitelkimo struktūros buvo kuriamos kaip sąjungininkų pajėgų dalis. Vis dėlto jų funkcija buvo kitokia, nei anksčiau aprašyta. Veikdami kaip Didžiosios Britanijos įkurtos Persijos ir Irako vadovybės (angl. *Paiforce*) dalis, jie turėjo užtikrinti sąjungininkų karinių pajėgų saugumą Viduriniuose Rytuose. Jie saugojo Irako naftos telkinių teritorijas nuo tikėtinos vokiečių invazijos ir vietinių gyventojų, daugiausia kurdų, riaušių. Jie taip pat teikė pagalbą Lenkijos karinėms pajėgoms Vakaruose, tapusioms antruoju korpusu, kuris vėliau kovojo Italijoje, taip pat ir Monte Kasino mūšyje.

Istorikas, tiriantis lenkų kariuomenės susitelkimo rajonuose veikusias pajėgas, susiduria

su šaltinių problema. Kariuomenės susitelkimo vietų dokumentuose yra aprašomi bendrieji organizaciniai reikalai, o didelė dalis kasdienio gyvenimo dokumentų turi mažą istorinę vertę. Labai trūksta atsiminimų ir dienoraščių, aprašančių tarnybos sąlygas ir kariuomenės susitelkimo vietų funkcionavimą. Šioms pajėgoms trūko vieningumo dvasios – *esprit de corps*, kurią turėjo fronto linijoje kovojantys kariai.