THE ROLE OF PITTSBURGH’S POLISH FALCONS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF THE POLISH ARMY IN FRANCE

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Even though Poland was no longer on the European map following the infamous third partition of October 24, 1795, the Poles, regardless of where they located, lived in the hope of eventual restoration of Poland’s independence. Towards that goal, the Poles started independence movements in Poland proper and notably the revolts against Russian czardom in 1830, 1831, and 1863. They all ended in disastrous failures.¹

The aftermath of the Insurrection of 1863 was the definite threat of the smothering of Polish nationalism, as many of the militant leaders who usually were of the nobility or the intelligentsia were executed, imprisoned, or sent to Siberia.

The situation became all the more alarming in Prussia where Otto von Bismarck’s “Kulturkampf” was introduced in an attempt to obliterate Polish nationalistic spirit by germanizing schools and replacing the Polish landlords with German colonists. The Poles, led by clergy and political leaders, rebelled only to have more stringent laws enacted.²

When Prussian pressure became intolerable and arrests threatened, the Polish leaders had no alternative but to migrate to more hospitable shores. As they sought asylum, there was but one thought among them — to regain the freedom and independence of Poland. It was also realized that only in a land which offered freedom of action and general tolerance could Poles nurture plans that would lead to the liberation of Poland. Only the shores of the United States, where the greater part of the Polish leaders migrated, settling usually in urban

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¹ Sokol Polski (Polish Falcon), (Pittsburgh: Polish Falcons of America, 1916), March 16, 1. Hereafter referred to as Sokol.
² Ibid., 1.
and industrial areas like the city of Pittsburgh, offered such opportunities.  

The Polish émigré was aware of the fact that if Poland was to become an independent and free country again, it would come about only through effective leadership. To develop this type of leadership and to keep the freedom torch glowing, numerous patriotic societies were organized.  

Fortunately for the Polish inhabitants in the United States, there was an organization which was ready to assume that role. The Polish Falcons of America, both the eastern branch located in New York City and the western situated in Chicago, had sponsored military training since their founding. As early as September 1, 1907, Dr. Teofil A. Starzynski of Pittsburgh, then the President of the Fourth District of the Polish Falcons, projected plans of forming rifle teams and field drills among the members located in the Pittsburgh district. On June 25, 1911, a special district meeting was called at Emsworth, where hundreds of Polish Falcons of the Pittsburgh area underwent special field maneuvers. On November 26 a number of qualified leaders were sent to Philadelphia, where the first formal military school was conducted under the auspices of the Polish Falcons with former officers of the Austrian Army instructing.  

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3 Czyn Zbrojny Wychodztwa Polskiego w Ameryce (Polish Army World War I), (New York: The Polish Army Veterans Association of America), 11. Hereafter referred to as Czyn Zbrojny. 
4 Sokol, February 13, 20, 27 and March 6, 1913; April 2, 1914. 
5 Postal Telegraph dated October 15, 1932 to Dr. T. A. Starzynski, President of Polish Falcons Society: "It is with deep feeling and gratitude that I have read your wonderful words. The Great Polonia Deed (organization of recruiting of Polish Army in America) is Polonia's Proud deed, is mainly yours and of the Polish Falcons. Polonia gave us patriotism and invaluable support but you gave the very strength. Without your knightly sacrifice there would not be a Polish Army in France and a place for Poland at the conference Peace Table. It was for sometime that under your foresighted leadership that cadres were being trained for fight for Poland's freedom and with thousands in your ranks also attracted thousands of others to join and form united ranks. I feel rather most fortunate to be given this opportunity to be among living on this particular commemorative occasion and to be of service for our holy cause. And also to be your interpreter of desires and goals. On this occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of Polonia’s Deed to entire Polonia and especially to the Falcons and to those who paid with their lives and to those who are among us, I turn to them most gratefully to the Poles and to you sincere president to accept my sincerest wishes . . . .

Czolem
Paderewski."

The original telegram is in the archives of the Polish Falcons of America, 97 South 18th Street, Pittsburgh. The above is a free translation from Polish by the author.
On January 1, 1911, Dr. Starzynski, then a vice-president of the eastern branch of the Polish Falcons Alliance of America, had written the following letter to Professor Rudolph Tarczynski, Secretary of the Polish Falcons in Paris, France: "... let us construct a solid military foundation by sponsoring and conducting permanent military and gymnastic schools for purposes of training military leaders — the nucleus of officers without which no military action can be taken."

To meet this situation a special convention of both branches of the Polish Falcons was called in Pittsburgh on December 15 and 16, 1912. The convention delegates met at the Adam Mickiewicz Society Hall Nest 8, located at 97 S. 18th Street, South Side. The delegates voted to merge into the present organization and elected the following Pittsburgh residents as officers: Dr. Teofil A. Starzynski, President; B. Mruczek, Vice-President; H. S. Listewska, Vice-President II; Adam Plutnicki, General Secretary; F. Poslusny, Treasurer; Victor L. Alska, F. Machnikowska, K. Olsztynski, and S. Zyglerowicz, as members of the Executive Board of Directors. The city of Pittsburgh was chosen as the official headquarters.\(^6\)

With the Balkan Wars already in full force, the newly elected President, Dr. Starzynski, did not lose much time in realizing that the hour has come," and immediately asked for an approval "to appoint a special training and technical committee whose task was to formulate a training program for field use and was to be military in character."\(^7\)

At the same time that the Polish Falcons were meeting, a special call was issued for the first time in the history of Polish immigration, to all Polish organizations in the United States to meet in Pittsburgh. The convention after being informed of the impending European conflagration, resolved to form a united front. A special committee was named, which became known as "Komitet Obrony Narodowej" (National Defense Committee), whose task it was to collect funds and initiate pertinent action, such as the "promotion and support of military training."

In February 1913, President Starzynski issued a call to all nests of the Polish Falcons of America, "to start training in basic military tactics and physical fitness." Among the first groups to respond in the Pittsburgh area was the Society of Adam Mickiewicz. At a special meeting held on February 18, the members voted to purchase rifles

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6 Sokol, April 2, 1914.  
7 Sokol, February 1, 20 and March 6, 1913.
and essential field equipment. Before the year ended, practically every Falcon nest was sponsoring physical training courses with emphasis on the “Art of handling of manual arms.”

The first formal organized field camp for the Pittsburgh Falcons was opened on February 20 and continued until March 11. The training camp was located on the grounds of the Holy Family Institute, Emsworth. The training program attracted thirty-four men representing twenty-three nests from the Pittsburgh area. Dr. Adam Wolcyrz of Pittsburgh was the Sanitation and First Aid instructor. The purpose of the training program was to develop field leadership among the Falcons. This was followed by leadership training at Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, the site of the Polish National Alliance College. The courses were of two weeks duration and started on May 1 and ended June 30, 1914. These courses cost the Falcons $4,000.

With a strong possibility that there might be a war as a result of border raids and killings by the marauding Mexican bands under Pancho Villa, on March 9, 1914, the Polish Falcons, feeling confident that its trainees were ready for military duties, on behalf of its organized membership offered 10,000 trained recruits as an integral part of the United States Army. Most of these recruits would have been from the Pittsburgh area.

The following telegram was sent:

To Secretary of War Garrison, Washington, D. C.

Your Excellency — The President of Polish Falcons Alliance of America, representing 30,000 military training membership ask for audience to offer volunteers in the Mexican War.

Dr. T. A. Starzynski, President

A set of telegrams was dispatched to Secretary of War Garrison on April 18, 1914.

Secretary of War Garrison in a reply dated April 22, 1914, expressed his sincerest appreciation for the Falcons’ gesture, stating however, “that there was no immediate need.” The reply from H. Stestland, General Adjutant, was as follows: “I am empowered by the War Secretary to confirm the receipt of your telegram dated April 23, in which you offered the Falcons for military service with Mexico. However, I am to inform you that if there is need that the

8 Sokol, February 1; March 20, 27; April 3, 10, 13; May 26, 1913.
9 Ibid., May 19, 1914.
10 Ibid., May 21, 1914.
11 Ibid., April 30, 1914.
12 Ibid., April 30, 1914.
National Guard will receive the first call." 13 By no means was this an empty gesture by the Falcons for on January 6, 1916, the President of the Falcons was instructed to compile a volunteer list which was to be ready when and if needed. The Falcons were still hopeful that the War Department would find need of the volunteers offered by their organization 14

Anxious more than ever to convince diplomatic sources that Poles all over the world were ready for the independence of their country and receiving little or no definite satisfaction from Allied diplomatic sources, particularly France and England, a delegation of Polish Falcons of America, headed by Dr. Starzynski, had visited President Woodrow Wilson on February 10, 1915, to ascertain his views as to the future of the independence of Poland. The President without hesitation informed the delegation that "when United States shall sit at the Peace Conference all efforts shall be made to see that Poland is free again." It was the first official utterance on behalf of Polish independence by a world power since the partition of 1795. 15

On January 6, 1916, in a special appeal he continued to urge the members to intensify their military drilling and establish such groups on a permanent basis. He further asked the leaders to organize rifle clubs, sponsor field training, and conduct first aid courses. All this was but a preliminary introduction to things to come. 16

At a special plenary Board Meeting of the Polish Falcons held in Pittsburgh from September 30 to October 1, 1916, the Falcons Technical Commission recommended the establishment of a training school for all potential officers and non-commissioned officers. 17 Their proposal met with unanimous approval, and the Executive Board recommended a budget of $10,000. 18 Among the contributors to the Military Training Course were Ignace Jan Paderewski and his wife, Helen.

Following the plenary sessions, a call was made to all Physical Instructors to meet in Pittsburgh from November 28 to December 6. 19 Under the guise of Leadership Training, the trainees were given general training and instructions on military tactics. Fortified with this basic knowledge, they carried it to their respective areas for the
promulgation of the indoctrination of all Falcon membership.\textsuperscript{20} Because the United States was still a neutral nation, all such training was described as "Physical Development Courses." As a result of this training the Polish Falcons of America were able to send the twenty most promising cadre candidates to the Officers Training School at the University of Toronto, Canada, in January of 1917.

In the meantime, the training among the Falcon Nests was intensified to such a degree that there was a general clamor for a local training school. To meet the demand, the Polish Falcons of America formally opened a cadre training quarters at the Polish National Alliance College, on March 19, 1917; when the United States finally declared war on Imperial Germany, April 6, 1917, the Polish Falcons of America were fully prepared both in manpower and spirit. The Executive Board of the Polish Falcons, headed by President Starzynski, had called a special convention which convened on April 1, 1917, at the Adam Mickiewicz Society.\textsuperscript{21} There was a general enthusiastic response and 120 nests were officially accredited, represented by 187 delegates. The opening session was called to order on Sunday, April 1 at 10:00 a.m. by the President who outlined the purpose of the meeting — to decide what definite actions the Falcons should take whenever the United States should declare war upon Germany.\textsuperscript{22}

After completing the usual convention formalities of speechmaking by Mayor Joseph Armstrong and Dr. Kerr of the City Council, the delegates discussed ways and means of initiating the formal recruiting of a Polish army. Hesitancy appeared on the part of many delegates and questions were raised as to the feasibility of such a plan.\textsuperscript{23}

Delegate Henryk Lokanski moved to invite Maestro Ignace Jan Paderewski to address the delegates and advise on the practicability of recruiting a Polish army in America. Dr. Starzynski was instructed to contact Maestro Paderewski, which he did by telephone. Subsequently, the delegates were informed that the great Paderewski would be in Pittsburgh on April 2.\textsuperscript{24}

Promptly at 9:00 a.m., Maestro Paderewski and his wife arrived at the Pennsylvania Railroad Station, Eleventh Street, where he was met by the Pittsburgh delegation headed by Attorney Frank A. Piekarski and escorted to the Hotel William Penn. The news of

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., November 2, 1916.
\textsuperscript{21} The Pittsburgh Press, April 2, 1917.
\textsuperscript{22} The Pittsburgh Daily Dispatch, April 2, 1917.
\textsuperscript{23} The Pittsburgh Gazette, April 2, 1917.
\textsuperscript{24} Dispatch, April 2, 1917.
DR. T. A. STARZYNSKI
Maestro Paderewski's visit electrified Pittsburgh's Polish colony. From all the areas around the city, people flocked to see and hear the great Polish patriot. Hours before his appearance, the Falcon hall was jammed. Punctually at 7:30 p.m., the time for the evening session, Maestro Paderewski, accompanied by his wife, arrived at the convention hall where throngs spontaneously greeted him with the Polish "Niech Zyje Nam" (Long Live). At the doorsteps of the convention hall, he was welcomed in the traditional Polish manner of "bread and salt" by a Falcon member of Nest 8 — Druh J. Pozych. Unprecedented enthusiasm broke out on the convention floor when the Maestro made his platform appearance and for a while it appeared it would last indefinitely. Once calm was restored, the renowned pianist began his memorable address. He outlined the contemporary alignments and the trend of events and pointed out to the delegates that the future of Poland rested only in their "hands and bayonets." He went on to point out the necessity for such an army which would be a telling factor in winning Polish independence not only on the battlefield but also at the conference tables, then he urged the delegates to be loyal under all circumstances to the United States of America, stating in part, "I have full confidence in the United States, in its future and in their ideals upon which this great nation was built. Particularly let us be loyal to President Woodrow Wilson, the champion of the down trodden nations."

The hushed audience listened as the artist proposed that the convention go on record "To form a Kosciuszko Army for service under Stars and Stripes and to fight alongside the Allies against Imperial Germany which has infringed on the rights of almost all nations of the world. Furthermore permit me to send a wire to President Wilson offering an army of 100,000 men." When the great patriot concluded his plea for the formation of the Kosciuszko Army, a thunderous cheer that reverberated from the convention hall to the crowded street around the building went up from the assembly. At the conclusion, the Rev. Z. Rydlewski of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church, Herron Hill, Pittsburgh, replied on behalf of the Pittsburgh Poles to Maestro Paderewski's plans, stating that "the Polish People in America will whole-heartedly respond to the Polish Cause." 25

Then the convention proceeded to go on record and adopted the following resolution:

25 Gazette, April 5, 1917.
We have reached a time when momentary deeds decide the fate of monarchies and nations, and which has brought our cause before the tribunal of the world. We realize that the existence of nations depends upon their deeds, and being further aware as loyal Americans that it is our urgent duty to stand in the ranks of the defenders of liberty of the country, we, the delegates of the Convention of the Polish Falcons of America being aware of the existing state of war, do hereby promise allegiance to the United States of America, the country which takes up arms at this time against Imperial Germany, which has infringed on the rights of almost all the nations of the world.

Whereas, war waged against the United States is war against the Polish race, of which the Prussians have been traditional foes for 1,000 years, we resolve to create a Kosciuszko army and hereby appeal to the entire Polish people of this country unanimously to approve this move and lend a helping hand to the realization of this worthy cause. We further command our superior officers to commence without delay mobilization movements fully to prepare the army, expecting to accomplish deeds to be added to the history of free Poland, the realization of which is now at hand.

We extend to our officers our utmost confidence, especially our President Dr. Starzynski, and to our man of the day, Ignace Paderewski, to whom we promise to stand by the colors of Kosciuszko, and never permit them to leave us until we have nobly and heroically defended our cause.

We appeal to you, our countrymen, scattered throughout the lands of your adopted country, to hasten to the ranks of the Kosciuszko Army that we may perform deeds which will lead us with triumphs to the realization of a free independent Poland.26

The adoption of the resolution had a dynamic effect upon the local residents of Polish descent. There was immediately a rush to form a Polish Fighting Unit. However, cooler heads adopted a waiting policy pending the official approval by the United States government. To re-emphasize the Polish Falcons' position, President Starzynski sent the following telegram dated April 6, 1917, to President Woodrow Wilson:

Polish Falcons of America only ask and hope that the Government considering the glorious ties binding their ancestry with this country of ours allow the fighting force to bear the name of Kosciuszko's Army.

Dr. T. A. Starzynski27

In its final session held on April 4, the convention adopted the following recommendations: that the Polish Falcons of America through its Technical Commissions and District Physical Leaders assume all action pertaining to mobilization and training schools until the needs are fully met; mobilize all nests into active companies; establish recruiting offices and open training courses not only to the Falcons but all eligibles who have a desire to join the Polish forces.28

To expedite the approval of recruiting in the United States, the
Polish Relief Committee took on the task of contacting United States officials. In spite of persistent urgings there appeared a general reluctance on the part of the United States authorities to take any formal action for the following reasons: the United States was at war and needed all the men it could muster; secondly, it would set a precedent for other nationalistic groups who also might be interested in recruiting their nationals and thereby jeopardizing the United States war efforts; then again the United States had no desire whatsoever to strain its diplomatic relations with the Russian government who at different times looked with suspicion on any Polish Army recruiting. In the meantime, the Polish Falcon ranks were being depleted with eligibles joining the American Army.

The Polish Army cause in America was given an additional impetus when President Raymond Poincaré of the French Republic issued a formal decree dated June 4, 1917, approving the formation of autonomous Polish fighting forces in France under the Polish flag and Polish command. This decree was made possible when the Czarist Régime was abolished by the Bolshevists in the Revolution of 1917. President Poincaré's decree created spontaneous enthusiasm for immediate formation of the Polish Army in France.29

A special session of the Polish Central Committee representing all Polish major organizations was called in Chicago, April 11, 1917, with Attorney C. W. Sypniewski and Dr. Starzynski being present. It was presided over by Maestro Paderewski who again urged the representatives of various Polish organizations to take immediate steps in line with the French decree. It gave unqualified approval of formation of the Polish Army in France. The task of organizing a military force became an assignment for all Poles. As a result an Army Commission was formed, which included Dr. Starzynski, whose task was to secure the official consent of the United States government to permit the recruiting of eligible and qualified Polish citizens.30

One of the first actions following this meeting was to issue an order to synchronize all training and to adopt a formal military procedure as well as to be alerted to anticipated approval of official recruiting. At a special meeting called by the Polish Falcon Executive Board June 7, President Starzynski appointed the following members of the first military Falcons Commission: Jan Bartmanski, W. N. Skarzynski, and Jozef Sierocinski, all Falcons and qualified officers

29 *Czyn Zbrojny*, 372.
and recent graduates of the Canadian Officers Training School. They were to function on behalf of the Falcons until the Polish Military Commission could take over the recruiting and financing of the Polish army in America.

The Executive Board of the Polish Falcons in Pittsburgh issued a recruiting appeal to all eligibles for three hundred potential officer candidates. The candidates in order to qualify were required to be physically fit, be able to speak and write Polish and English, have a basic knowledge of mathematics, be of good character, and be between the ages of eighteen to thirty-five. In addition, they were to bring their own two military uniforms, belt, shoes, army shirts, two pairs of brown shirts, rifle, and bayonet. Because of an enthusiastic response, a special announcement was made that on July 5, 1917, candidates would no longer be accepted.

Additional pressure for recognition of the Polish Central Committee and its aims came from the British government upon the urgings of the Polish Committee in Paris which was duly recognized by the British and French governments. In a note dated July 23, 1917, to the State Department, the British government expressed itself as follows: “As favoring free and independent Poland.” It further asserted that “Poles living in countries of Allied Powers, whether German, Austrian or Prussian origin, should be granted open recognition as friends and potential allies.” Such a step would crystallize the idea of a separate and free Polish state.

In a reply to the above, Secretary of State Robert Lansing stated the United States position in a note dated August 17, 1917:

The Department has been considering for several months means to support the Polish people in their efforts to obtain their freedom and to restore Poland as an independent state. It has been suggested that a great stimulus might be given to the Polish cause and indirectly to the general cause against Germany by establishment in this country of a Polish provincial government to be recognized by the Government and the Allied Governments as the Government of Poland. Upon such recognition this Government could legally loan the government so set up funds for the military purposes secured by Polish bonds underwritten by this country and the Allies. A further suggestion had been made that such government begin recruiting Polish residents in this country. The Army so recruited to be trained in Canadian Camps supplied by the English.

Not desiring to wait for the formal recognition much longer, Ignace Jan Paderewski as the General Chairman of the Polish Central Relief Committee on October 4, 1917, sent a telegram to President Woodrow Wilson, which read in part as follows: “On October 14th, the bells of the Polish Churches of those still remaining will call upon the faithful to join in fervent prayers in memory of the noble hero
departed two hundred [sic] years ago, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, that the Polish National Committee in Paris has been recognized, the Polish National Army has been sanctioned by our beloved President Woodrow Wilson, this would certainly give new strength, new hope, and new courage to the stricken nation that trusts but God and you."

The Commission was finally successful in receiving formal United States approval and on September 27, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson gave consent stating — "That recruiting to the Polish Army all those who do not fall in the category of potential recruitment into the United States forces is hereby approved without any impediments."

However, it was now necessary to work out the details with the War Department.31

After prolonged negotiations with the Polish National Committee and the Allied Powers, the United States Government gave its official blessing to recruitment of the Polish Army in France.

A note was issued by the War Department dated October 8, 1917, which stated:

It has been brought to the attention of the War Department that the Military Commission of the National Department of the Polish Central Relief Committee, lodged in Chicago, Illinois, intends to start on October 7, 1917 an active campaign for recruiting for the Polish Army now fighting in the Western Europe in France. The War Department has been advised that no individual of Polish Nationality resident of the United States who is in any way subject to the draft will be accepted as a recruit by this Military Commission. Having in mind the attitude of this Government toward a united and independent Poland, the War Department is glad to announce that it is entirely in accord with the proposed plan of this Military Commission.32

When these data were made public, the Polish Falcons surrendered its recruiting activities to the Polish Military Commission who took on all the recruiting duties and assumed the obligations that were contracted by the Polish Falcons. The Commission received the official information on September 27, 1917, from the French Mission that recruiting could commence. The recruiting offices were ready on October 4.33

Upon the announcement of approval, the Military Commission opened the first national recruiting headquarters in Pittsburgh, on October 7. The Bureau was located at the Farmers Bank Building at Fifth Avenue and Wood Street. Officers were located on the eleventh

31 Ibid., 437.
32 Ibid., 439.
floor until December 31, 1917. On January 1, 1918, the officers were moved to 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

To expedite recruiting the Military Commission divided the recruiting areas into twelve centers, each headed by commissioned military personnel.

To Pittsburgh’s recruiting officer Dr. B. M. Zielinski, a noted patriot and orator, was assigned Number 1 and the recruiting center became known as “Centrum 6.” Being energetic and zealous Dr. Zielinski lost no time in organizing the scattered Polish colonies into one smooth functioning recruiting unit.

Assignment Number 2 was given to Miss Helen (Pawlak) Adamczak of 3017 Pulaski Way, Herron Hill, with a rank of “Recruiting Sergeant” of Center Number 6 of the Polish Army in France and with specific authority to open a recruiting station in Pittsburgh. Miss Pawlak was the first and probably the only woman in the Polish army recruiting ranks to receive a military commission.

At first local recruiting activities were performed at Nest 8, 97 South 18th Street, subsequently transferred to Nest 176 in November 1917, then located at 2813 Penn Avenue in the Strip area. Finally, the recruiting was transferred to 3402 Butler Street in Lawrenceville, where the activities continued until the closing of recruiting on February 15, 1919. The monthly budget for the above bureau called for a minimum of $1,800.34

The Polish Military Commission decided personal contact was to be the prime factor in promoting and encouraging eligibles to join with the Polish Army. Therefore, under the auspices of the Polish Military Commission an auxiliary group known as a “Citizens Committee” was organized. Its duties were to promote recruiting and solicit funds. The Pittsburgh group was known as Citizens Committee of Center Number 6, and the directors were representatives of local organizations. That this committee achieved results is borne out by the fact that the one-thousandth recruit was signed on or about April 8, 1918.35

The backbone of the Polish Army recruiting in the Pittsburgh area was the Polish Roman Catholic Churches and the citizens sub-committees organized at the parishes. The members of the respective sub-committees were usually the outstanding and indefatigable citizens in their communities. To them the cause of freedom and independence for Poland was a sacred cause that demanded infinite self-sacrifice and endless toil.

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
That the clergy of Polish descent in the Pittsburgh Diocese, which also included the present Greensburg Diocese, was a factor in promoting the recruiting, there is no better authority than the testimony of the Polish Military Commission as quoted in the Commission’s official publication *Bulletin* dated April 11, 1918, Numbers 13 and 14: “The clergy in the Pittsburgh Diocese is steadily taking an active and energetic part in promoting recruiting in this area.” A further attestation of the fact is that when a rally was held in West End Guardian Angels Roman Catholic Church it resulted in the recruiting of twelve eligible men. In addition, the Reverend A. Pniak asked those present to pledge themselves to pay a monthly assessment of fifty cents towards the Polish Army recruits’ needs.36

Similar assessments were voluntarily agreed upon among many other parishes in the Pittsburgh area and Polish fraternal organizations, such as St. Joseph’s Union which assessed itself $50.00 per month. The Polish Roman Catholic parish was the core of the recruiting and fund solicitation.37

A. Curzytek, Pittsburgh recruiting officer, in his confidential report to the National Military Commission dated April 18, 1918, stated “That the recruiting can be successful only with the fullest cooperation of the local Polish Clergy.” 38 Among the first to enroll as chaplains in the Polish Army in France, were three Pittsburgh priests of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers.

The Rev. Joseph L. Jaworski was the first chaplain who enlisted. At the time of his enlistment he was pastor in Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania. Prior to that he served as an assistant at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Brereton Avenue, Herron Hill, and attended Duquesne University. In a letter to Dziennik Chicagoski, dated March 31, 1917, the Rev. Joseph Jaworski urged the formation of a Polish army.

In April 1917, Father Jaworski forwarded his application to the Polish Falcons of America. A reply dated April 10 acknowledged his application and finally on September 12, he was officially notified that his offer of services as a chaplain was accepted.39

According to the official Polish Army Records, “Polowa Kurja

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37 *Ibid.* For a complete list of Western Pennsylvania and Tri-state recruiting offices and officials see “Fiftieth Anniversary Issue of Polish Army Recruiting” by the author and issued by the Citizens Committee relative to observance of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Recruiting of the Polish Army on November 19, 1917, Pittsburgh.
39 This particular telegram is on file with Polish Falcons of America Archives.
Biskupa," dated April 14, 1931, the Rev. Joseph L. Jaworski was in active service as a volunteer from October 1, 1917, to December 26, 1917, in Canada, and sailed with the first contingent on the Niagara from New York City. A rather interesting incident is related by Father Jaworski. The Polish Army was originally scheduled to embark from Halifax, Nova Scotia. As the train reached the outskirts of Halifax, heavy snow fell, delaying the progress of the train. While waiting for the clearance of the roads, a terrific explosion shook the entire Halifax port area, killing thousands of troops and workers. The explosion took place the very hour the first contingent headed by Father Jaworski was to board the ship. With the port area totally demolished, the first Polish contingent sailing was transferred to New York City, from which they sailed to France. Father Jaworski returned to the United States on May 20, 1920, with a transport company of 2,165 demobilized and wounded, and upon landing was asked to promote the First Polish Loan of 1920. He, with his committee, was successful in raising $20,000,000. Upon returning to Poland, Father Jaworski continued his active service among the Regular Polish Army Forces until the time of his honorable discharge as of June 20, 1922. Among his numerous decorations received was Poland's highest medal of "Virtuti Militari." 40

Another clergyman who displayed the utmost endeavor in promoting the idea of organizing the Polish Army was the Rev. Zygmunt Rydlewski who at the time of his enlistment was an active pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church, Herron Hill.41 He was one of the most zealous patriot priests on the Pittsburgh scene. When Ignace Jan Paderewski spoke at the Falcon Hall on April 2, 1917, with reference to the "Kosciuszko Army," Father Rydlewski, representing the Polish inhabitants of Pittsburgh, had occupied the same platform. It was his duty to reply to the great oration which he did not only with words but also with deeds by joining the Polish Army, serving in France and Poland, where he decided to stay upon termination of the Polish Wars. He died in a Nazi prison camp in 1946.

Father Dekowski, who also served as a chaplain in the Polish Army in France, was one of those individuals who believed that serving a righteous cause is serving God.42 He distinguished himself on many occasions while serving as an assistant at the Immaculate Heart

40 Personal interview with Father Joseph Jaworski at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Brereton Avenue, Pittsburgh, about April 1955.
41 Czyn Zbrojny, 522.
42 Ibid.
of Mary Church as a priest and as a writer. As a literary man, he was prolific in his output of Polish writings devoted to religious topics and in promoting a well-known Polish literary society known as the Filarets. His military duties in the Polish Army with the Third Regiment in no way deterred him from continuing his literary efforts towards raising hopes and inspiring at times the faltering spirits of Polish soldiers. Upon his discharge from the Polish Army he transferred his spiritual activities to the Polish settlement at St. Catherine's, Toronto, Canada, where he served until the time of his death. He was buried in the neighboring Polish Soldiers Cemetery, Niagara-on-the-Lake, where sleep many of his friends.

Other Pittsburgh area clergymen of Polish descent, who volunteered their services as chaplains were the Rev. T. Siatecki, Connellsville, and the Rev. Czeslaw Duszynski who enlisted January 2, 1918.

The Polish Army in America, particularly in the city of Pittsburgh, had been created amid an atmosphere of song, poetry, and lofty patriotism. The recruiting meetings were almost religious festivals, the farewells of the Polish were marked by emotionalism and patriotic appeals. The united efforts on the part of the Citizens Committee and local clergy brought results and every week from twenty-five to two hundred volunteers were recruited. First the volunteers congregated at the Polish Falcons Hall of Nest 8, where they were given a physical examination, and in the evening they were entertained.

Following dinner, a parade was formed in which all the societies, particularly those uniformed, escorted the recruits to the Pennsylvania Railroad Station where at 11:05 p.m. they were entrained for the training camps, arriving in Buffalo, New York, at 7:15 a.m., from which they were transported to the Canadian camps. Similar affairs were also held at the Polish Falcon Hall, 3028 Brereton Avenue, Herron Hill. In all there were sixty-five fully manned sub-recruiting stations scattered over the tri-state area which included Western Pennsylvania, the immediate eastern area of Ohio, and the northwestern parts of West Virginia.

With the ending of World War I, the French government, being the godfather of the Polish Army in France, called "a halt to recruiting of the eligibles in the United States in view of the fact that the Polish Government no longer depends on the Allies for support." Consequent-

43 *Sokol*, September 16, 1968.
45 Centrum No. 6 Files with "Military Commission Records."
ly, February 15, 1919, was the last enlistment opportunity and the closing of all Polish recruiting offices in the United States of America. From the time the recruiting was opened in October 1917, to the closing date, approximately 38,088 volunteers joined the Polish Army, of which about 3,000 were from the Pittsburgh area.46

With the closing of recruiting came the termination of training camps in Ontario, Canada. The official closing was on February 22, 1919. The Rev. Stanislaus R. Labujewski, of Ambridge, Pennsylvania, Chaplain of the Polish Falcons of America, represented the Falcons at this event and delivered appropriate remarks.47 This was the end of an act that had its inception in Pittsburgh and blossomed into a free and independent Poland in 1919.48

46 Ibid.
47 Sokol, March 27, 1919.
48 Personal interview with Msgr. Stanislaus Labujewski on or about May 1955 at the St. Stanislaus Bishop Martyr Rectory, Ambridge, Pa.