

# Against Whom Was the Polish Army Actually Mobilized on the Eve of the “September Catastrophe” of 1939?

Iakov Ia. Grishin<sup>1a</sup>✉, Valerii A. Letiaev<sup>2b</sup>✉

<sup>1</sup> Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia

<sup>2</sup> Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Moscow, Russia

<sup>a</sup> [grishin.42@mail.ru](mailto:grishin.42@mail.ru), <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9453-6070>

<sup>b</sup> [valerii@letiaev.ru](mailto:valerii@letiaev.ru), <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7540-3099>

**Abstract.** The article is dedicated to the 85th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. This issue remains relevant, especially due to the current confrontation between the West and Russia. In political, public and scientific discourse, the USSR is often blamed for Poland's defeat. The authors draw attention to a number of facts related to Poland's preparation for the future war, the plans East (“Wskhud”) and West (“Zahud”), the mobilization plans of the Polish army before the war of 1939. Using documents, memoirs and scientific research, the authors aim to answer the question: against whom was the Polish army actually mobilized on the eve of the “September catastrophe” of 1939?

**Keywords:** international relations, Poland, Pilsudski, Rydz-Śmigły, Beck, “Zahud”, “Wskhud”, mobilization plans, settlers

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## Introduction

In 2024, it will be 85 years since the outbreak of World War II. A huge number of scientific works have been written about this event, also in Poland. In Polish modern literature, we can find that the blame for German aggression and for the defeat of Poland is often on the Soviet Union, due to its Treaty signing with Germany on August 23 in 1939.

This incorrect and subjective interpretation absolutely does not stand up to criticism. It does not take into account many facts, including Neville Chamberlain's policy of Germany “appeasement”, which was carried out by France and Great Britain. This policy was aimed at “maintaining peace in Europe” through minor concessions to Nazi Germany. Hitler used this policy in an attempt to prevent the creation of a Franco-Polish military alliance acting against his country. This policy did not stop Hitler and on April 28, 1939, he announced the termination of the 1934 non-aggression pact with Poland. And after that, in August 1939, negotiations began between Germany and the Soviet Union on concluding a Non-Aggression Pact.

The reasons for the outbreak of World War II and Poland's defeat are different, they can be found in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth itself. Hitler would obviously have proposed a different plan before starting a war against a state that was developed, strong, both economically and militarily, and had reliable allies, including the Soviet Union.

At that time, a lot of people in Europe understood that in the upcoming battle with Germany, Poland would inevitably suffer defeat due to its backwardness in all respects and its unpreparedness in military terms. And in order to be convinced of that, it is enough to consider the problem of the Polish armed forces mobilization on the eve of the war.

This issue has been considered in many works in Russian and other languages, primarily Polish. For achieving the goal of our study, the works of the following authors have been analyzed, in which similar ideas are discussed. There are some works by Soviet, Russian and foreign scholars such as H.Baldwin [1], L.Garth [2], A.Dybkovskaya [3], T.Jędruszcak [4], Z.Załuski [5], L.M.Lamov [6], M.I.Meltyukhov [7], Yu.Mukhin [8], D.M.Proektor [12], E.Radetsky [14], K.Tippelskirch [15], J.F.S.Fuller [16], W.Shirer [17]. There are also Polish academicians, for example, E.Duraczyński [18], T.Jurga [19], T.Machalski [20], F.Peplowski [21], W.Pobóg-Malinowski [22], A.Pragłowski [24], M.Staniewicz [26], German historian H.Sznajder [27]. The proceedings of a scientific conference held on the initiative of the Poland National Defense Ministry in 1959: «Sesia naukowa poświęcona wojnie wyzwolenczej narodu polskiego 1939-1945» [25] and the conference at the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1966: «Wojna wyzwolenicza narodu polskiego w latach 1939-1945. Więzlowe problem» [28] are important for this research too. To some degree, the above-mentioned authors considered issues related to mobilization activities in Poland. The conducted research is based on the conclusions already made by other researchers, and also allowed to obtain new results in accordance with the stated goal.

The authors of this article have identified a scientific problem of “hidden mobilization” which hasn't been mentioned before. The emphasis has never been on Poland preparing for war not with Germany, but with the USSR. In addition, it has been revealed that there are large discrepancies in the academic works regarding the number of mobilized units of the Polish army. This is of great importance in assessing the reasons for Poland's defeat, since the Polish command did not manage to transfer units from the east to the west in a timely manner.

The goal of the article is to determine the significance of the Polish armed forces mobilization on the eve of World War II and its role in the country's defeat in the war with Germany, and to answer the question of whom the Polish army was actually mobilized against before the "September catastrophe" of 1939.

The authors' article is the first of two works published in succession in two issues of this journal, devoted to the Polish mobilization of 1939. Accordingly, a more detailed analysis of the references is presented in the first article, and the second one lists the main authors whose findings have been used in it.

## Materials and Methods

The materials of the proposed article are documents (first of all, this is the publication "The Year of Crisis 1938-1939. Documents and Materials", published in 2 volumes in Moscow in 1990<sup>1</sup>, as well as the texts of the documents presented in the works of other authors, primarily Polish, as well as the data from the German military journal "Die Gebirgsruppe", which were cited by H.Baldwin [1]); the documents also in the publication «Polskie sily zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej»<sup>2</sup>; personal sources: F.Halder's war diary<sup>3</sup>, Soviet diplomat I.M.Maisky's memoirs<sup>4</sup>, W.Churchill memoirs<sup>5</sup>, Polish Foreign Minister Józef Beck's memoirs (in the notes of his secretary, presented in E.Duraczyński's work [18]), Z.Zaremba's memoirs (Wojna i konspiracja)<sup>6</sup>, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland T.Artsishevsky's note about a conversation with Soviet Plenipotentiary Representative N.I.Sharonov in Warsaw on September 1, 1939 (introduced in the publication "The Year of Crisis 1938-1939. Documents and Materials", in Moscow, in 1990)<sup>7</sup>; Polish media materials (a youth newspaper "Bunt Mladykh", the newspaper "Kurier Vilensky", these materials are taken from L.M.Lamov's work [6]); Brauchitsch's directives on the attack plan of July 3, 1939<sup>8</sup>, published in the Military History Journal in 1969, the data on the mobilization plan of Poland, presented in the publication Wojna wyzwolenia narodu polskiego w latach 1939-1945 [28]; academic literature presented by the Soviet, Russian and foreign authors.

The use of general academic methods of analysis and synthesis makes it possible to study these basic documents, personal sources, and media materials to achieve the goal of the study. The methods of systematization and comparison are used to understand the systematicity and effectiveness of the mobilization activities, to identify and verify discrepancies in the number of mobilized units of the Polish army contained in various academic and documentary sources, as well as in personal data. The historical-genetic method

is applied to understand the genesis and characteristic features of the mobilization process at its various stages, including its "hidden" part, to identify the determinacy of the process under study by political, ideological, and economic factors of influence. The SWOT analysis method is also used to assess the internal and external factors that influenced decision-making process in Poland during this period. This allows us to examine the pros and cons of the country's policy, the opportunities and threats that existed for Poland in the 1930s.

## Results

As a result of the conducted research, a number of academic issues related to the study of the mobilization of the Polish Army on the eve and at the beginning of World War II have been identified.

The army of any state has its own strategic goals, objectives, directions, and in this regard, the Polish Army was no exception. Poland had two main directions: the East ("Wskhud") and the West ("Zahud"). At the same time, as the Polish writer Zbigniew Żałuski noted, the East was the main direction:

'Poland, as a bourgeois-landlord state, has had its frontier facing the East throughout its entire existence. Out of fear for its dominance over the lands seized in the East, the government of bourgeois Poland concentrated its attention, its efforts, its forces on the eastern border' [5:45].

During the entire interwar period, the establishment of Poland did incite hatred towards the Soviet Union. The idea that it was its main external enemy became the mission of those responsible for the defense of the Polish state, and encouraged them to have combat training and army education. This was expressed in the corresponding acts of the state authorities of that time, as well as in the content of the relevant orders and points of military regulations, which is discussed in more detail below.

The "sanation" propaganda media systematically published articles concerning the issues of preparation for war against the USSR. One of the first appeared 10 years before the start of Hitler's aggression against Poland.

It is noteworthy that the authors of numerous anti-Soviet publications portray the Soviet Union as a weak state experiencing a crisis. This indicates an underestimation of the USSR, which led to widely circulated boastful statements such as: "We will always cope with the Soviets." One of their authors was Colonel A.Malyshko, who confidently claimed that the Poles would always defeat the eastern enemy, "having such wonderful soldiers as our guys." To tell the truth, he further stipulated that it could be defeated "if only we maintain harmony in our own home" [26:208]. Consequently, not all was good in the Polish state. As M.Staniewicz writes,

It would be useless to search in the "Psheglenda Infantry" or other military journals for articles on the fight against the German infantry. Such questions did not interest either the Sanation

1 The Year of Crisis 1938-1939. Documents and Materials. 2 Volumes. Moscow, 1990.

2 Polskie sily zbrojne w drugiej wojnie światowej. Tom 1. Cz. 1. London. 1951.

3 Halder F. War diary. V. 1. Moscow, 1968.

4 Maisky I.M. Soviet diplomat's memoirs. Moscow, 1987.

5 Churchill W. The Second World War. V. 1. Moscow, 1997.

6 Zaremba Z. Wojna i konspiracja. London, 1957.

7 The Year of Crisis .1938-1939. Documents and Materials. 2 Volumes. Moscow, 1990.

8 Brauchitsch's directives on the attack plan of July 3, 1939. Military History Journal. 1969; 8.

practitioners or theoreticians. However, in Germany, Pilsudski's works were published, specially prepared by the Polish General Staff and provided with a preface by ... Goering (the preface to the German edition of Pilsudski's book "The Year 1920" was written by Field Marshal von Blomberg) [26:208].

The youth was brought up in an anti-Soviet way, and they accepted the slogans of the adults. Thus, the youth newspaper "Bunt Mladykh" published the appeal "We must destroy Russia and at its expense acquire lands." Such calls were supported by the newspaper "Kurier Vilensky." In particular, it was written in it that the youth were doing the right thing by trying to implement Marshal Pilsudski's plans to destroy the Soviet Republic [21]. Such ideas were established by the Polish establishment. And this policy was not limited to anti-Soviet propaganda. In Poland, for many years, even during Pilsudski's lifetime, a war plan with the eastern neighbor as the main enemy, codenamed "Wskhud", was being intensively developed. Its preparation was completed, many years later, on the eve of the Nazi invasion (March 1939). There is a paradox that they were going to fight a country that did not pose any threat to the Poles. This fact was confirmed by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Józef Beck, back in 1937. He was not afraid, as his secretary wrote, "that war would come from Russia." In September of the same year, giving vent to his convictions about the weakness of the USSR, he said that the 1932 non-aggression pact was sufficient for us [18:96].

In accordance with this plan, operational tasks were being developed, cartographic work was carried out, the personnel of the Polish army were trained in an anti-Soviet way, Polish intelligence was actively working concerning the Soviet regime [21], maneuvers and exercises were being conducted. Even in the conditions of an obvious threat from Germany, the policy of the Polish leadership remained unchanged. In accordance with the "Wshud" plan, a significant part of the financial and material resources was intended for preparing for war against the USSR. New strategic railway lines, highways and dirt roads, bridges, bakeries, warehouses, etc. were being built on the border with our country. In addition, as L.M.Lamov noted,

the network of airfields is increasing. The government strives to have one airfield for every 40 kilometers of the border. Of the 390 airfields built in Poland, 242 of them are located on the Polish-Soviet border [6:132].

The construction in the eastern direction was terminated only in April 1939, which is confirmed by Polish researchers themselves [28:99], i.e. 4 months before the Nazi aggression.

The Law on the Protection of Border Regions, adopted on June 9, 1936, was also about the preparation for war with the USSR. Referring to this law, local chiefs, as L.M.Lamov writes, evicted Belarusian and Ukrainian peasants en masse from the designated zone at their own discretion. With such harsh methods, the "sanation" sought to ensure "peace in the rear" [6:132]. The system of military settlements, which began to be introduced soon after the seizure and occupation of Ukrainian and Belarusian lands in 1920, also

served this purpose. Its essence was that in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, large allotments (20-25 hectares) of the best and most easily cultivated land were allocated free of charge to military colonists. In 1939, they owned over 360 thousand hectares of truly best land [6:62]. They were selected from among former Polish legionnaires, reserve officers and non-commissioned officers, most of whom fought against Soviet Russia in 1920, as well as gendarmes, police officers, officials and other "reliable Polish members" [14:81; 10:37]. The colonists created numerous farmsteads and received funds for organizing a strong kulak (rich peasant) economy [11:20]. The Polish government relied on the colonists in carrying out the policy of both colonization of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, and Polonization. The chiefs were selected from among them. The colonists' farms served as a kind of stronghold for the Polish military in preparation for war with the USSR, and their owners were a kind of political agents, reporting on all "unreliable members." Polish intelligence did not disdain them either [11:26; 10:37]. Incidentally, the Ukrainian and Belarusian peasantry hated the colonists and called them dogs [9:26]. Obviously, the "sanation leadership" indulged itself in the crazy idea of a "campaign against the Bolsheviks." And the Polish army was oriented toward the fight against the Soviet Union, Russian and Polish researchers confirm that [13:38; 28:132]. For the sake of accuracy, it should be noted that even under Pilsudski, attempts were made to develop plans for Germany. But they remained just a draft and did not turn into the "Zahud" plan. They returned to it a little over 5 months before the Polish catastrophe. The "sanation leadership" showed surprising carelessness in strengthening the western borders, turning its back on them while simultaneously declaring that Poland "was safe", which is confirmed by the results of research by Polish authors, such as M. Staniewicz [26:208]. The western direction was completely abandoned until the beginning of 1939. That is, by and large, there was no plan for defense against German aggression. Z.Załuski also noted: "our government was inactive when it was necessary to prepare the western border for defense" [5:45].

Life forced the Poles to pay attention to the "Zahud" plan 11 days before the liquidation of Czechoslovakia by Hitler, that is, on March 15, 1939. By this time, the Reich was already different than when the Nazis had come to power. Based on the fact that the German military potential in 1939 exceeded the Polish one by 2 times, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would not have been able to wage war on Germany without the help of the Allies.

However, they believed that they should not expect too much military assistance from Western countries and that they should rely on themselves to hold out. Therefore, the plan was defensive. The battle of the main forces was supposed to be conducted in the western territory of the country in three stages. In the first stage, it was supposed to delay the movement of German troops to the main line of defense. By agreement, 40 French divisions would begin fighting after 15 days of mobilization before England and France entered the war, and the bombing of the British aviation was planned to be carried out in the first days of the war. In the second stage, it was supposed that the Polish armies would retreat to the main positions (110-240 km) in order to drag out the fight until the French pulled German troops out of Poland. In the third stage, the Poles, as L.Garth writes, counted on the success

of counterattacks<sup>9</sup>, which, in their opinion, the Polish army was capable of despite the lack of mechanization [2:1].

At the same time, defensive actions inside the country in case of necessity to abandon the main position were not worked out. There was only a general view, which was not brought to the consciousness of the executors, i.e. the army commanders. The intention of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief did not represent a thoughtful and worked out holistic strategy. Before the start of the war, they managed to prepare the general principles and the tasks of the operational units in the first phase of the war, as well as the scheme of transportation, communications, etc. Not a single part of the scenario was "lost" before the war, either by the high command, their headquarters, or the army. The "Zahud" plan underwent certain changes during the development. As a result, as the Polish researcher T.Machalski stated, the echelon of the Polish defensive front was created by such armies as "Modlin", "Pomozhe", "Poznan", "Lodz". "Prussians", "Carpathians", "Krakow", the "Narev" operational group, the Supreme Command Reserve - "Wyszkow", the "Kutno" reserve [20:143–144].

Following the executive orders concerning the initial troop groupings, mobilization measures were also taken. In general, the mobilization system in Poland on the eve of the war lagged behind the mobilization systems of other capitalist countries in many ways.

At the core of Poland's mobilization plans, as K.Tippelskirch and other authors wrote, was a military-theoretical concept, according to which it was believed that the future war would begin in the same or almost the same way as the First World War, that is, having gone through the "classical" stages of mobilization, concentration, deployment of armed forces and, finally, the actual beginning of military action [11:134; 15:24]. As J.F.S.Fuller noted, the Poles continued to think in terms of leisurely military action [16:72]. However, the German command, according to K.Tippelskirch, did not intend to understand war in such an outdated form [15:24].

The Polish mobilization plan envisaged bringing the armed forces to a state of combat readiness both throughout the country and within the territory of one or several corps districts. It was burdened by class and national nuances: it allowed the mandatory proportional movement of class and national elements within individual units. This was supposed to ensure greater combat capability of the army in a clash with a specific enemy.

In determining the reasons for Poland's defeat in September 1939, researchers W.Pobog-Malinowski and T.Jędruszczyk pointed to one of the main ones - the general mobilization began too late. Announced on August 30, it was carried out on August 31. Moreover, the culprits in this case were the British and the French, who put pressure on the Poles so as not to anger Hitler prematurely (by negotiating with him) and not to provoke him [22:36; 4:231]. There is no need to deny the fact of the delay in general mobilization. However, in this case, it is not taken into account that the Polish military command used the second option 5 months before the start of the war, which was noted by M.I.Meltyukhov

9 The reliance was on the Supreme Command Reserve.

[7:337–338], K.Tippelskirch [15:16] and W.Pobog-Malinowski [22:36], that is, classified, "quiet", hidden, gradual or partial mobilization.

There were four of them in total. On March 23, 1939, the commanders of the operational units received instructions regarding the defense of the territory entrusted to them. Along with the executive directives of a strictly operational nature, the first covert mobilization was carried out, 36 days before Hitler denounced the Non-Aggression Pact (1934), and a little over five months before the start of the war. Several divisions and one cavalry brigade (KB) were mobilized at that time. Headquarters units of several armies were created, and the first movement of Polish troops to the western border was carried out. The second partial mobilization took place from August 13 to 18, when the troops were concentrated closer to Gdansk. The third covert mobilization was carried out on August 23 and affected all armies, as well as the reserves of the Supreme Command, aviation, air defense, railway troops, and army headquarters. Three days later, the fourth secret mobilization began: the troops moved to the concentration area and were regrouped. On August 30, an order was issued for the armies and operational groups of the first echelon to occupy their initial positions. As we can see, the Polish command was conducting mobilization at full speed. M.I.Meltyukhov wrote that the mobilization in Poland was carried out in secret from its allies, who feared that these Warsaw actions could push Germany into war [7:338].

But this was no secret to Germany. They were keeping a close eye on it in Berlin. There are diary entries by the Chief of Staff of the German ground forces, F.Halder. He wrote on March 15, 1939:

'The latest data on Poland. Mobilization in Poland will be completed on August 27. Consequently, we will lag behind the Poles with the end of mobilization. In order to complete mobilization by the same date, we must begin it on August 21, then on August 27 our 3rd and 4th line divisions will also be ready<sup>10</sup>'.

F.Halder did not keep his records for propaganda purposes. He was responsible for preparing the war with Poland and in the event of a failure of the mobilization he could pay for it not only with his career.

Thanks to the hidden mobilization in Poland, a certain number of wartime units were created, reserve units stipulated by the plan were formed (regiments, separate battalions and artillery divisions, and they were for the time being classified as regular units). It was envisaged, as K.Tippelskirch wrote, to unite the reserve units into 10 divisions [15:16]. According to D.M.Proektor, by the morning of September 1, the mobilization plan was fulfilled by 60% [13:42].

But many studies do not mention this side of the issue at all.

One can easily imagine the situation in Poland if preliminary preparations had not been carried out. The Germans would obviously have needed several days, a week at most, to completely occupy the country.

10 Halder F. War diary. V. 1. Moscow, 1968.



When analyzing the problems of Polish army mobilizing, it should be remembered that its delay was influenced not only by the position of London and Paris, but also by the economic weakness of the country. A significant role was played by fears of excessive costs associated with maintaining a mobilization army for a long time. As a result, the second day of mobilization coincided with the beginning of German aggression [28:138]. As reality showed, mobilization issues were not resolved in the country in the best way, including the placement of mobilization bases and warehouses. Not everything was good with the construction of fortifications. Only a part of the planned work was completed due to late loans. The allocated millions turned out to be useless. It should be noted that the forces of the first echelon were deployed along the entire main line of defense, 1,500 km long. The width of the defense zone of an infantry division ranged from 12 km to 70 km. On average, one division had up to 41 km of the defense front. As a result, in the main direction of the German tank groups' attack, there was only one 7th infantry division with the task of defending a strip 35 km wide. In the directions where the main defensive efforts were concentrated (within the framework of individual operational directions), about 50% of the infantry and artillery and 70% of the tanks were deployed.

From a comparison of these figures, it is easy to conclude that the concept of the Polish defensive grouping developed by the High Command was more than risky. Considering the limited available forces, in comparison with the extended front, such a grouping led not to their concentration, but to their dispersion [19:288–289].

According to K.Tippelskirch's conclusion,

“such a dispersion of the army, which wanted to cover everything and was not strong anywhere, could not lead to success in a war against a superior, purposefully advancing enemy. If, at all, it is worth talking about some strategic value of this plan, it should be explained only by a completely obvious underestimation of the enemy's forces and capabilities” [15:24].

Unlike the Polish command, the German command concentrated from 80% to 90% of the infantry and artillery and 100% of the tanks in each of the separate operational directions to deliver the main attack. Overall, it concentrated about 80% of the infantry, over 80% of the artillery and 100% of the tanks for offensive operations in the main directions. The Germans managed to create a serious superiority of forces and resources. The Polish disposition of forces was fatal. T.S.Yurga generally writes that they were scattered [19:288–289]. There was also low operational efficiency. And between the inner flanks there were gaps of up to several tens of kilometers. In practice, all this meant the abandonment of active defensive actions in favor of passive defense [19:288–289], which is also confirmed by D.M.Proektor [13:42].

The implementation of the fatal plan by the Poles “gave the Germans the opportunity to achieve in certain operational directions such a balance of forces that did not allow any attempt at counteraction on the Polish side” [13:42]. It should be emphasized that, in addition to military and economic considerations, political ones also had a significant influence on the deployment of Polish forces along a front of about 1,500 km, as well as on the formation

of the main defensive position along the borders with Germany, which, among other things, showed the creation of a visible defense of no more and no less than every inch of land.

Let us cite the opinion of the French military specialist L.Faury, a long-time director of sciences at the Higher Military School in Warsaw (1921-1928) on the issue of the defense of the Poland western territories:

“Without taking into account what the Polish command wants to undertake in a defensive war with Germany, two points are obvious and there can be no doubts or hesitations regarding them. The Poles cannot leave any forces in the Pomeranian Corridor, because they will be pressed against the Vistula and cut off; they cannot move forces to the operational dead Poznan salient, because the enemy will surround them, cut them off from the main forces and defeat them one by one” [24:79].

Contrary to L Faury's opinion, about a third of all Polish forces

“were concentrated within the Polish Corridor (or close to it), where the troops were exposed to the risk of double envelopment - from East Prussia and from the West. The weakness of the first echelon forces, as well as their erroneous deployment, were not compensated for by either the reserves of the operational units, or the reserves of Edward Rydz-Śmigły. This was evidenced not only by the numerical strength of the reserves, but also by their low mobility and striking power. These were exclusively infantry divisions and cavalry brigades. The lack of anti-tank weapons became one of the greatest weaknesses of the Polish defense system. The command system adopted in the Polish plan was also unfavorable. Its weakness was aggravated by the old means of communication and their quantity. The basis of the central communication system in Poland was wire means, pole-type overhead lines. Their main nodes were located in large populated areas, and they were the first targets for German bomber aircraft. Consequently, it could be assumed that it would be difficult to command the armed forces even during the period of fighting for the main line of defense. And after its abandonment and during the period of retreat, the leadership could be completely paralyzed” [28:138].

To sum up the examination of the two plans, we note that the “Wskhud” plan, if we look at it objectively, was fundamentally very risky for Poland. And, first of all, it is because until the last days preceding the outbreak of war, more than half of the Polish army units continued to be stationed in the eastern regions of the country and were aimed against the USSR.

Thus, according to Russian researchers, to the east of the Polish capital, not far from the borders of the USSR, the Poles had 17 regular, 5 reserve infantry divisions, 7 cavalry brigades and 1 tank-motorized brigade, that is, 30 units. Slightly to the west of Warsaw and in its area there were 13 regular, 4 reserve infantry divisions, 4 cavalry brigades and 1 tank motorized, that is, 22 units [13:38; 11:148]. D.M. Proektor drew attention to the fact that, in accordance with the mobilization plan, military units located in the east had to be simultaneously transferred along several railways to the West across the entire country at

a distance of 500-800 km. This required a total of up to 700 echelons [13:39]. The reckoning followed immediately, since the Polish command did not manage to transfer units from the east to the west in a timely manner. Before providing evidence for this, let us pay attention to the fact that there are large discrepancies regarding the number of mobilized units of the Polish army.

## Conclusion

The mobilization of the Polish armed forces on the eve of World War II was carried out in four stages. There was also a “hidden mobilization”, the factual side of which was not considered by many researchers. In academic literature, especially Polish, there was no emphasis on the fact that Poland was preparing for war with the USSR, and not with Germany. And this is of great importance in assessing the reasons for Poland’s defeat, since the Polish command did not have time to transfer units from the east to the west in a timely manner, which significantly affected the country’s defeat in the war with Germany, in addition to its unpreparedness in economic, socio-political, and ideological terms. The “Wskhud” plan turned out to be extremely risky for Poland. Before the start of the war with Germany, more than half of the Polish army was aimed at the USSR and was on the eastern border. Based on this, we can conclude that in fact, on the eve of the “September catastrophe” of 1939, the Polish army was mobilized against the USSR, which became the fatal mistake of the Polish government, leading to a catastrophic result for it, which became the beginning of the Second World War.

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## About the authors

Iakov Ia. GRISHIN. DSc. (Hist.). Professor of the Department of International Relations, World Politics and Diplomacy, Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies, Kazan Federal University. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9453-6070>. Address: 1/55, Pushkin str., Kazan, 420111, Russian Federation. [grishin.42@mail.ru](mailto:grishin.42@mail.ru)

Valerii A. LETIAEV. DSc. (Law), CandSc. (Hist.). Professor. Professor of the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7540-3099>. Address: 53/2, building 1, Ostozhenka Av., Moscow, 119034, Russian Federation. [valerii@letiaev.ru](mailto:valerii@letiaev.ru)

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