

## POPULAR SCIENCE SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

At the end of World War I there were more than 0,5mln Poles in East Russia and Siberia. Polish community that had settled there long before, was joined by about 50 thousand refugees from western regions of Russia (refugees, Polish military personnel from the Russian Army and Poles released from POW camps who were former German and Austria-Hungarian soldiers). In the summer 1918 they began to form national military units in Samar, Kazan, Sybirsk, Syzran, Ufa, Chelyabinsk, Omsk, Semipalatynsk, Irkutsk, Harbin. In December French military Mission of gen. Janin arrived. He became the chief commander of allied forces in East Russia and Siberia. All military units went under his command. Their core was 5<sup>th</sup> Polish Infantry Division that was 11 thousand strong at the beginning of April 1919. For more than one year these units fought against Bolsheviks and secured the Trans-Siberian Railway and its branches. Since November 1919 these forces were the rear guard of the Czechoslovak Legion. On the first days of January 1920 the units were surrounded by Bolsheviks and capitulated at the railway station Klukwiennaja near Krasnoyarsk. The majority of soldiers were kept in camps, prisons or were placed in labour commandos. After the Peace of Riga more than 5,5 thousand returned to Poland in 1921 and 1922. Around one thousand of soldiers did not accept the capitulation and managed to get to Far East, from which they returned to Poland by ships. In June 1920 they became the core of Siberian Brigade that took part in the Battle of Warsaw. Not known is the number of Poles that served in Russian 'white' units, for example Mamert Stankiewicz, who was the author of basic textbooks and articles popularizing maritime issues in Poland in the mid-war period. The files of Polish forces were captured by Bolsheviks, a small part was destroyed in the last moment. In Polish archives, mainly in the Central Military Archive in Warsaw, there are only remains of file documentation from Polish armed units formed during the civil war in East Russia and Siberia. The most valuable materials are kept in Russian, Czech, French, Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian archives. During fights and retreat along the Trans-Siberian Railway, Polish forces were under gen. Syrovyy, who was the commander of the Czechoslovakia Legion and gen. Janin, who was the chief commander of allied forces in East Russia and Siberia. That is why they were informed about the situation of Polish units in terms of their strength, supplies and military potential. They gave them orders, interfered in conflicts between the Poles and Russian 'white' forces and Russian authorities. The files from this period were brought from Russia to military archives in Prague and Paris. So far there has been no query of these documents, the research was limited to browsing the files in CAW in Warsaw. The aim of the research will be the collection of source material (documents, descriptive and iconographic sources), its selection, elaboration and publication in two volumes. In **Volume I** – documents, in **Volume II** – descriptive sources (memoirs, accounts, diaries, logs, testimonies of soldiers, accounts from camps and Soviet prisons and from work in labour commandos). There will be created a source material base for further research on Polish presence (military, political, economic, social, cultural, educational and religious) in East Russia and Siberia in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The summation of the research will be a **monograph** presenting struggle, martyrdom and paths of return that Polish soldiers took on their way to their homeland from East Russia and Siberia between 1917-22. As a result, another gap in Polish historiography will disappear.