

Cavalry in the Wehrmacht 1942 - 1945

Cavalry elements in the German Army after the disbanding of 1st Cavalry Division

Although the 1st Cavalry Division was disbanded and converted to the 24th Armoured Division in November 1941 the German army retained a considerable amount of cavalry.

The cavalry regiments of the peacetime army did upon mobilisation provide personnel to form a cavalry squadron for the reconnaissance battalion of the infantry divisions and a cavalry platoon for each infantry regiment.

The typical organisation of a reconnaissance battalion

Battalion staff (partly motorised)

Communications troop

- 3 Radio sections (motorised)

- 3 Radio sections (mounted)

1st Cavalry squadron (9 light machineguns, 2 heavy machineguns)

2nd Bicycle squadron (9 light machineguns, 2 heavy machineguns, 3 light mortars)

3rd Heavy squadron (partly motorised)

- Cavalry gun troop (2 light infantry guns (l. IG 18))

- Anti tank troop (3 3,7cm anti tank guns (Pak 35/36))

- Armoured car troop (3 armoured cars)

The reconnaissance battalion did provide vital intelligence information and was the most mobile element of the foot-marching, horsedrawn infantry of the Wehrmacht.

This superior mobility also led to using the battalion as a mobile reserve for the division.



In Russia it was further discovered when the bad weather set in in the autumn and roads were turned into quagmire, that the cavalry was the troops best suited to move around.

As such the cavalry squadron was highly regarded in the infantry division.

It was however often felt, that the strength of these small cavalry elements without integrated armoured support and without heavy weapons was too weak to make effective use of the excellent mobility of the cavalry arm.

Another problem was that the reconnaissance battalion consisted of elements with very different mobility that made it difficult for the companies to operate together.

Gradually the cavalry elements were depleted and the personnel often went into action as infantry, because of lack of trained replacements and of suitable horses.

The first attempts to create larger cavalry formations

As a result of these experiences steps were made in 1942 by Heeresgruppe Mitte (Army group Center) to form larger elements of cavalry by combining existing cavalry squadrons in larger formations.

I March/April 1942 the 9th Army formed Armee-Kavallerie-Kommando z.b.V. (Army cavalry group for special purposes), which consisted of three regiments, each of five squadrons.

The original idea was that this unit should have consisted completely of mounted troops, but in the end it was necessary to incorporate bicycle mounted troops and motorised heavy weapons.

The result was that this cavalry unit was in fact just a reinforced reconnaissance battalion with all its inherent weaknesses. This unit was disbanded again in July 1942.

The army group itself formed Reiter-Verband v. Winning (Cavalry unit v. Winning) in 1942.

This was a cavalry unit of four squadrons, but this was not a success either probably because of its lack of means to combat enemy armour.

This unit was disbanded in the spring of 1943.

Although these units were disbanded because their lack of success, it must also be considered, that the commanders of the divisions was reluctant to give up a part of their reconnaissance unit, which was a vital reserve unit for the divisions.

After these failed attempts to form larger elements of cavalry came a third initiative, which fared much better.

Reiter-Verband Boeselager (Cavalry Unit Boeselager)

The Cavalry Unit Boeselager was formed by order of Army Group Center in January 1943 with a strength four squadrons.

The unit, which was commanded by Georg von Boeselager, was formed from existing squadrons in the army group.

Unit	Formerly
1st Cavalry squadron	1st Cavalry squadron, 6th Reconnaissance battalion, 6th Infantry division
2nd Cavalry squadron	1st Cavalry squadron, 34th Reconnaissance battalion, 34th Infantry division
3rd Heavy squadron	1st Cavalry squadron, 35th Reconnaissance battalion, 35th Infantry division
4th Cavalry squadron	1st Cavalry squadron, 102nd Fast battalion, 102nd Infantry division

These squadrons were however far from their complement in manpower and equipment.

The unit was strengthened from the start by addition of 300 Cossacks and in February was further strengthened by the arrival of a squadron from Cavalry replacement battalion 15, which almost completely went to strengthen the 4th Cavalry squadron.

On March 23rd the unit was further strengthened by the horsedrawn 3rd Heavy squadron, from 102nd Fast battalion

This unit added some heavy machineguns, mortars and two recoilless guns ? to the unit.

These troops were used to form an artillery battery and a signals squadron.

Von Boeselagers cavalry unit was to have its baptism of fire very shortly after its formation. Before noon of March the 11th 1943 came the order to go to into action.

"Action against Russian partisans"

This battle report is taken from the book:

"Die Boeselagerschen Reiter - Das Kavallerie-Regiment Mitte und die aus ihm hervorgegangene 3. Kavallerie-Brigade/Division" by Hans Joachim Witte and Peter Offerman.

"Before noon on March 11th the cavalry unit got orders to move out to eliminate a gang of partisans, which had been identified operating west of Katyn. The goal was to prohibit the enemy's escape eastwards.

The 1st Squadron formed three scouting teams to reconnoitre in the wooded area north of Dnjepr between Katyn and the Beresina River.

When they reached their destination, they had orders to stay there as fixed observation posts.

Late in the afternoon the staff, the three other squadrons and the remaining parts of 1st Squadron had reached their destination near Brui, but so far no report was received from the scouting teams.

Early the following morning von Boeselager received information that the partisan gang had moved south and he was ordered to take up pursuit.

Without the three scouting teams - which had been held up by their radio teams due to the bad road conditions - the rest of the German cavalry marched south and crossed the Dnjepr at Kusino at 0800 hours.

Former Russian officers belonging to the unit formed the front of the column.

They questioned the locals and found out that the enemy force consisted of about 100 men, who withdrew from place to place plundering all their way.

Around 1400 hours the Germans finally made contact with the enemy, as the front units was taken under fire just before the village of Brjuchanowo. Orders were given to take up position in a scrubbery northwest of the village.

Observations from this position showed that around 70 men manned the positions in front of Brjuchanowo and as it seemed, that the surrounding hills were occupied as well, the enemy force was estimated to be between 100 and 200 men.

The Germans assembled for a frontal assault in a gully, which was hidden from the enemy. The 3rd Squadron opened fire on the Northern rim of the village with heavy machineguns and mortars to prevent the enemy from breaking out in that direction, which would be hidden from the German position.

While the present parts of 1st Squadron circled the village to the East, an attack was mounted by to platoons from the 2nd and 4th Squadron.

After a short advance this assault stalled in hollow ground.

The enemy's fire was slow, but well aimed and the Russian troopers, who made up most of the German front, were reluctant to advance further. As a result of this the present Germans - squad leaders and machine gunners - were the prime targets of the Russian fire.

In the meantime Rittmeister v. Boeselager had moved with the remaining platoons unseen to within 70 meters of the northern end of the village.

He ordered the squads on both flanks to make sure, that the Russians didn't outflank the advance and led the troopers from 2nd and 4th Squadron in an attack at the village supported by fire from the heavy weapons.

The attack was a success and the Germans entered the village only to find out, that most of the Russians had left the village.

The German casualties in this skirmish were 3 Germans and 1 Russian dead, 18 Germans and 4 Russians wounded.

Any attempt to pursue the enemy had to be abandoned. Partly because the Russian troopers couldn't be trusted, partly because the wounded had to be brought to safety and the road back to the German frontline led through areas, which wasn't cleared of partisans.

The After Action Reports revealed, that the enemy was very well led and that most of the opposition had been Russian regulars."

After this first action followed several more engagements with Russian partisans.

Why did von Boeselager succeed in forming his cavalry unit?

Von Boeselager was a dedicated cavalryman, who had an excellent service record in the Wehrmacht, as commanding officer of a cavalry squadron in a reconnaissance battalion during the campaign of France.

Boeselager was transferred home at the end of 1941 and this gave him time to formulate his ideas.

He kept constant contact with his former comrades at the front and could gather intelligence about the progress of cavalry in action.

Boeselager's vision was to use the cavalry as a mobile reserve force operation in conjunction with armour and his first proposal in July 1942 was to form a unit of 3 cavalry squadrons and an assault gun squadron.

However this proposal was not accepted and a little while after von Boeselager was transferred as teacher of tactics to the Rumanian army.

He did not forget his plan and on Christmas 1942 he spent his leave at the front visiting his old squadron and his brother Philip, who served as a liaison officer at the headquarter of Heeresgruppe Mitte (Army Group Center).

This gave von Boeselager an opportunity to speak to field marshal von Kluge about the advantages of having a cavalry element at the army group, who was able to move fast and to reconnoitre, but also able to engage in combat.

He convinced von Kluge and was appointed commander of this unit, because von Kluge saw no one better suited to overcome the difficulties facing such a project of forming a new unit at the frontline.

At last von Boeselager was placed where he could work directly at the spot, where his vision would be fulfilled.

One thing more, which helped make this attempt a success was that, the affairs of the cavalry and bicycle troops were transferred from the inspector general of armour to the inspector general of infantry.

Formation of Kavallerie-Regiment Mitte (Cavalry Regiment Center)

Based on the experiences of Boeselager's cavalry unit, Army Group Center sought permission from the Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH) (Army high command) to go on with the building of cavalry unit to use as a reserve.

The OKH issued an order in March 1943 concerning the formation of Cavalry Regiment Center from the nucleus of Cavalry Unit Boeselager.

This regiment was to be a trial unit and was to collect and add to the experiences from cavalry actions.

The regiment was to consist of

- Staff
- Staff squadron
- Signals squadron
- Anti tank company
- 3 battalions each of 3 cavalry squadrons and a heavy squadron
- Artillery battalion (horsedrawn)

The regiment was formed from Boeselagers cavalry unit and existing cavalry units in the armies of Army Group Center.

An order was given to 31st, 52nd, 86th, 87th, 98th, 129th, 131st, 260th, 330th and 331st division to transfer all cavalry squadrons or remaining parts thereof as well as the remainder of staff elements from the reconnaissance battalions to the new regiment at Teljaschi (10 miles west of Smolensk). The same order forbade all further transfer of personnel from these units to other parts of the division.

Georg v. Boeselager - driven by his vision of a rebirth of the cavalry in the German army - wrote a personal note to each commander of these cavalry squadrons to ensure, that these cavalry units arrived at the designated point as strong, and as well equipped and supplied as possible.

During March and April these cavalry elements arrived at their assembly point and were gradually incorporated into the Cavalry Regiment Center.

Not all of the cavalry units arrived in perfect condition. Some divisions had used their cavalry elements as infantry. As a result of this the condition of the horses was far from satisfactory and there was a lack of horse equipment.

The divisions furthermore often withheld the special mounted radio personnel in their staff elements and didn't voluntarily give up cavalry personnel already transferred to other units in the division.

The Army Group Center had to stand fast to secure that the order given, was followed and that all horsetrained personnel were transferred.

In spite of all these difficulties the regiment gradually took shape and on May 7th 1943 it consisted of:

Unit	Formed of
Regimental staff	Staff of the Cavalry unit Boeselager
9th (training) squadron	4th Squadron of the Cavalry unit Boeselager
13th (heavy) squadron with: Motorcycle troop Armoured reconnaissance troop Anti tank troop Engineer troop	Not completely formed
14th Signals squadron	Not completely formed

Light artillery battery	Part of 5th squadron of the Cavalry unit Boeselager
1st Battalion staff	Newly formed
1st Cavalry squadron	1st Squadron of the Cavalry unit Boeselager
2nd Cavalry squadron	Part of 31st and 331st cavalry squadrons
3rd Cavalry squadron	186th Cavalry squadron
4th Heavy squadron	152nd Cavalry squadron
2nd battalion staff	Newly formed
5th Cavalry squadron	2nd Squadron of the Cavalry unit Boeselager
6th Cavalry squadron	187th and 331st Cavalry squadrons
7th Cavalry squadron	330th Cavalry squadron
8th Heavy squadron	3rd Squadron of the Cavalry unit Boeselager

The strength of each cavalry squadron was:

- 301 men and 339 horses in
- 3 cavalry troops each with 6 light machineguns
- 1 heavy troop with 4 heavy machineguns

When dismounting there had to be one man left to hold four horses.

The heavy squadron consisted of:

- 2 heavy machineguns troops each with 4 heavy machineguns
- 1 mortar troop with 6 8-cm mortars

In the beginning the mortars were transported on packhorses like the heavy machineguns, but later a two-wheeled light wagon (If. 9/1) was introduced for the mortars. It was to be pulled by two horses in tandem.

In May and June the regiment continued to build up and 507th Supply company and 221st Tank company with 16 Medium tanks, Mk. III (PzKw III) was attached to the regiment.

Furthermore the regiment received 8 light guns (Leicht-Geschütze), 12 mortars and additional horses of high quality.

In June 1943 fieldmarshal von Kluge inspected the regiment and on June 19th the regiment was visited by a detachment from the Inspector general of infantry, who came to make up the final order of battle (Kriegsstärkennachweisung) for a cavalry regiment.

The final order of battle consisted of:

- Regimental staff
- Signals squadron
- Staff squadron
with engineer troop, anti tank troop, armoured reconnaissance troop and motorcycle reconnaissance troop
- Anti aircraft squadron
- 3 cavalry battalions each with staff troop, communications troop, 3 cavalry squadrons and 1 heavy squadron
- Artillery battalion (light guns)
- Supply units
- Tank company

In July/August 1943 the regiment was involved in heavy fighting defending against the Russian counter offensive at the Northern flank of the German attack at Kursk (Operation Zitadelle).

The formation of further two cavalry regiments

It was decided to form two further cavalry regiments based on this order of battle - Kavallerie-Regiment Nord und Kavallerie-Regiment Süd. (Cavalry regiments North and South).

Cavalry Regiment North

Cavalry Regiment North began forming in Estonia in May 1943 under the command of Army Group North.

The reconnaissance platoon received VW Kübel- and Schwimmwagen; the anti tank troop had Pak 97/38 and half-track tractors.

The cavalry squadrons of this regiment were among the first troops of the Wehrmacht to receive the brand new Sturmgewehr 1944, which added considerably to the firepower of the units.

The artillery battalion, which joined the regiment in October 1943, had an establishment of staff, staff battery and 2 batteries. The battalion was equipped with 10,5 cm howitzers drawn by full tracked tractors (Raupenschlepper Ost (RSO)).

The order of battle for the cavalry regiments was changed in the end of 1943 to:

- Regimental staff
- Staff squadron with
engineer troop, anti tank troop, armoured reconnaissance troop and reconnaissance platoon
- Anti aircraft squadron
- 2 cavalry battalions each with staff troop, communications troop, 3 cavalry squadrons, 1 heavy machinegun squadron and 1 mortar squadron 1)
- Heavy battalion (motorised) 2)
- Artillery battalion
- Supply battalion

1) The separation of machineguns and mortar in separate squadrons was a change of organisation, which

derived from the experiences by Cavalry Regiment Center and was incorporated into all three regiments.

2) The heavy battalion consisted of a tank company, an assault gun battery, an anti aircraft- and an engineer squadron.

A heavy squadron could not be established by Cavalry Regiment North before the spring of 1944.

Cavalry Regiment South

This cavalry regiment began forming in July 1943 under the command of Army Group South.

At first the regiment did only achieve a strength of regimental staff and a single cavalry battalion.

Gradually the regiment was strengthened and in August 1943 the forming of the second battalion was begun.

However - as for all three regiments - the build-up did not take place in peace and quiet and the regiment was committed to the heavy fighting around Shitomir in July of 1943.

The result of these actions was severe losses and large parts of the regiment had to be reformed and the battery of light guns had to be disbanded in mid-September 1943 due to casualties.

By the end of February 1944 the regiment consisted of:

- Staff
- Staff squadron with communications troop, anti tank troop and reconnaissance troop
- 2 cavalry battalions, each of five squadrons (3 cavalry-, a heavy machineguns- and a mortar squadron)
- Artillery battalion South (the former 2nd Battalion of artillery regiment 340)

A mountain anti aircraft squadron further reinforced the regiment.

The forming of cavalry brigades

The three cavalry regiments had more than lived up to the expectations and at the end of 1943 considerations were made about forming greater cavalry elements by gathering the regiments together into brigades.

The first proposal came in January 1944 suggesting the forming of one brigade from all three regiments.

As commander of the brigade was chosen colonel Freiherr v. Wolff whose last appointment had been as a brigade commander in the 1st Cossack Division.

On February 15th 1944 came the order to form the 3rd Cavalry Brigade under Army Group Center (*Numbered as the third because the original 1st Cavalry Division had contained the 1st and 2nd cavalry brigades*).

A few days later the depleted remnants of Cavalry Regiment South arrived. It had been relieved at the front in January 1944 after heavy losses in the fighting around Shitomir.

In mid March the brigade staff was fully formed and the raising of the heavy cavalry battalion and the train battalion began.

March and April 1944 saw the arrival of replacement personnel and several smaller units, which were

destined for incorporation in the brigade. Sturmgeschütz Abteilung 177 (Assault gun brigade 177) arrived in April.

During the build-up the OKH began to reconsider if a brigade with three regiments of the planned size was too large and cumbersome to manoeuvre and in the end made the decision to form two smaller brigades instead, each formed around two cavalry regiments.

The first proposal was to form 3rd Cavalry Brigade from Cavalry Regiment Center and the remnants of Cavalry Regiment South and the 4th Cavalry Brigade from Cavalry Regiment North.

To make the two brigades equal in strength this meant that a part of Cavalry Regiment Center was to be attached to 4th Cavalry Brigade - an idea which did not please the former regimental commander v. Boeselager.

He was furthermore against reducing the strength of the cavalry regiments to two battalions each, which meant that the new brigades were only marginally stronger than an original regiment.

In the end the decision was made to form the two brigades around two two-battalion cavalry regiments and the order went out from the Organisations-Abteilung OKH (Directorate of Staff Duties) in May 1944 to form the 3rd Cavalry Brigade with 31st and 32nd Cavalry Regiment from Cavalry Regiment Center and the 4th Cavalry Brigade with 41st and 42nd Cavalry Regiment from Cavalry Regiment South and Cavalry Regiment North.

Because of tradition the "Reiter-Regiment 42" (42nd Cavalry Regiment) was later renamed "Kavallerie-Regiment 5" (5th Cavalry Regiment) and in December by direct order from Hitler received the name "Field marshal von Mackensen" in honour of the German field marshal from WW I who celebrated his 95th birthday that year.

Although the two brigades each had two cavalry regiments their strength and composition were not completely identical when it came to support troops.

Furthermore the brigades were continually being build up, which caused their organisation to change constantly.

The reforming of the brigades to divisions

In February 1945 it was decided to reform (or rather rename) the two brigades as divisions.

This didn't mean any strengthening of the units. The change was only made because experiences in the autumn and winter of 1944/45 had shown that the brigade commanders due to their low rank had problems when operating attached to other formations whose commanders did know little or nothing about the ways of cavalry.

Furthermore the redesignation ensured, that the commanding officer would have a better training in co-operation between different units and troop types.

I. (Heeres-) Kavallerie-Korps (1st (Army) Cavalry Corps)

Considerations about forming a cavalry corps

The idea of gathering the German army cavalry into a larger formation was brought about by Hitler in the first half of 1944.

Several experienced cavalry commanders spoke against the idea because of the problem with supplying so many horses and keeping such a large concentration of cavalry hidden from the enemy air power.

However Hitler was not to be stopped.

As already mentioned the 3 regiments were reformed into to 2 brigades, but things did not stop there.

Hitler, who was grasping after any straw that he could see or felt he could see, was very impressed with the successes of the newly formed German cavalry regiments as well as the effectiveness, with which the Russian had used their cavalry during the campaign on the Eastern Front.

The high ranking officers of the Wehrmacht did also look very closely to the Russian use, composition and equipment, because of the successes that the Russian cavalry had achieved during 3 years of battle on the eastern front.

The Russians had started the campaign operating with cavalry divisions mixed together with infantry and armour, but chose to gather their cavalry into corps formations in 1942.

The 3 existing German cavalry regiments was in many ways just as strong as a Russian cavalry division.

It therefore looked like a sound idea to gather the two German cavalry brigades formed in 1944 into a cavalry corps.

A further incitement was the fact, that the Hungarian leader Admiral Horthy had promised (although not completely voluntarily) to release the Hungarian 1st cavalry Division for service on the Eastern Front.

Such a formation would be put to better use, when incorporated into a corps together with other cavalry formations.

The formation of the 1st (Army) Cavalry Corps

The decision was made and the order was given.

Cavalry general Harteneck was appointed as commanding officer of the 1st Cavalry Corps and the forming date was set as May 25th 1944.

The Hungarian division was to join the 1st Cavalry Corps on June 22nd 1944.

Such was the plan, but at this time the cavalry corps command did not exist, but on paper.

The corps command was formed from the former LXXVIII. AK z.b.V. (78th Corps Command for special purposes), who had had neither the training nor had the equipment to lead cavalry in battle.

The corps troops were not yet present, including the vital signals battalion.

The two German cavalry brigades were still forming and the Hungarian division had already been engaged in fighting with the Russians in the Pripjet marshes.

The beginning of "Operation Bagration"

At this point of time the Russians started their great summer offensive "Operation Bagration".

The cavalry corps was ordered to stem the Russian advance and General Harteneck received the following order:

"Stop the Russian advance.

At Sluzk on the main road from Baranowitschi you will find a local commander and the troopers from 4th Cavalry Brigade lorried forward without their horses.

This town has been declared a fortress.

All German troops moving in the area is under your command."

On June 27th the corps command reached the assigned area and set up their command post in a small town north-west of Sluzk.

At the same time the horses of the cavalry brigade were being brought forward by the horse-holders already in combat with Russian partisans.

The 4th Armoured Division was brought up from the rear and dispersed units retreating from the Russian advance was gathered together and attached to the corps. Amongst these was a signals battalion from an infantry division and this was a valuable addition as the corps - up to that point - had been without any communication troops.

The pressure of the Russian advance did not slack and the command post itself was attacked and pushed back on the second day.

The 4th Armoured Division and the 4th Cavalry Brigade did have some success of slowing the Russians down by counter attacks, but very soon the advance of Russian cavalry and motorised units forced the cavalry corps to give way and retreat to Baranowitschi.

At this point the corps was reinforced by the arrival of the remnants of 129th Infantry Division, which had fought its way out of a wandering pocket.

In the meantime general field marshal Model had taken over command of the Army Group Center and had ordered the forming of ad hoc combat units from dispersed remnants of retreating units, soldiers on leave etc.

These units were attached to 1st Cavalry Corps as independent units, not incorporated to strengthen existing units in the corps.

These rag-tag reinforcements couldn't avert the inevitable. Baranowitschi fell to the first Russian attack, but after all the cavalry corps had succeeded in slowing down the Russians, helping other German units in the area Brest-Litovsk - Pinsk to retreat and thereby avoid annihilation.

The Hungarian 1st cavalry division joined the cavalry corps at the end of August, but proved to be of little worth.

The cavalry corps fought a series of retreating battles during September and October 1944.

The 3rd Cavalry Brigade finally joined the corps in mid-September.

This continuing retreat ended at last when the 1st Cavalry Corps took up defensive positions behind the river Narew at the end of October and the Russian advance ground to a halt partly because of the stubborn resistance of the German cavalry brigades.

In these month of fighting you might say, that the 1st Cavalry Corps had earned its spurs.

The period at Narew provided the opportunity for the German cavalry brigades to rest, recuperation and training, which was indeed sorely needed.

In November-December the two cavalry brigades was transferred away from the cavalry corps and put into action in East Prussia.

This was absolutely unsuccessful, because senior commanders, who had no experience with cavalry, commanded the cavalry and the end result was little gain and high losses.

Just before New Year of 1944 the cavalry brigades was withdrawn from the front in East Prussia and again attached to the 1st Cavalry Corps.

The corps was moved to Hungary in preparation for the attempt to relieve Budapest.

After the failure of this attempt the 1st Cavalry Corps together with 6th SS Tank Army made the last German offensive of the war: "Unternehmen Frühlingserwache" (Operation Spring Awakening) - an attempt to push forward to the Danube to cut off the spearhead of the Russian advance and at the same time protect the oilfields of Hungary.

In spite of initial success this offensive ground to a halt, primarily because of bad weather conditions which made the movement of tanks nearly impossible.

At some point there was even a risk, that the Russians might overwhelm the Germans and cut them off, but this was avoided by a stern defence of the 1st Cavalry Corps.

The order "*No retreat. The corps command and the divisional staffs move to regimental level. The regimental staffs move to battalion level. All orders are to be given verbally.*" was given and this effort proved to be enough. The German positions were held and retreating units could reform behind the line.

From the end of March to the final surrender in May 1945 the 1st Cavalry Corps slowly retreated, fighting towards Austria and capitulated to the British on May 8th .

The final parade

Immediately after surrendering to the British and laying down their weapons the German cavalry was interned in Austria, man and horse together, unit by unit, but on June 9th 1945 came the time when the German POW's were to be transported back to Germany.

This meant that Lieutenant Colonel Sauer (who was an Austrian) had to give up command of the 4th Cavalry division to be replaced by major Hacke.

A parade marked this occasion, in which all mounted elements of the division marched by the two commanding officers. This was a solemn moment as the squadrons marched by in perfect order, rank by rank - file by file. All knew that this did also mean the disbandment of the units and the separation of the former comrades-in-arms, who had in many cases been together during the course of the whole war.

For each of the riders it also meant saying farewell to a close and trusted companion - his horse, who had carried him on the battlefields of Poland, France, Russia and Hungary.

The discipline and order of these troops impressed British and Americans watching this parade.

This was not a broken enemy although the war was lost.

Afterword

This final parade also meant the end of German cavalry and in the years since 1945 cavalry has also ceased to be a part of armed forces throughout the world.

In the beginning of the 21st century, it is hard to imagine, that cavalry will ever again be used on the battlefield.

On the other hand: Who knows what the future will bring.

In times of fuel shortages the team of man and horse may again be "discovered" and set to do the job of war; not as sabre swinging cavalymen in the charge, but - as the German cavalry had done it, during its final years - as mounted infantry.

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