

Glimpse of Polish uniforms 1935 - 1945

Introduction

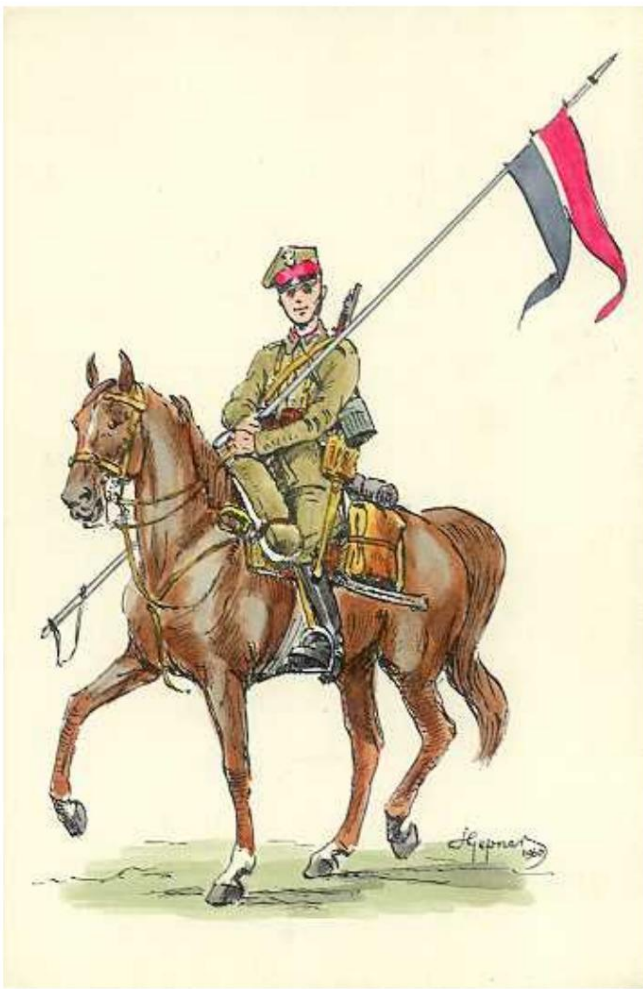
At Chakoten's figurine exchange on April 13, 2003, I was in many ways the symbol of the Polish army. I was lucky to find two uniform drawings of Polish lancers from 1939, opportunity to look in a couple of interesting books about Polish uniforms, including one about cavalry uniforms. Finally, I was also lucky enough to acquire a copy of a Polish postcard from 1935.

I would like to present the material here, which can complement my article Polish Cavalry in the Second World War - Glimpses of Myths and Realities in an excellent way and at the same time be an example of what you can also get out of visiting Chakoten's figurine exchanges .

Riding



7th Lancers Regiment, 1939.



12th Lancers Regiment, 1939.

The cards are approximately 18.5 x 12.5 cm and are made of stiff cardboard. From the back, it appears that the master of the drawings is Rys. S. Gepner and that they are published in a series aptly named *Kawaleria Polska, 1939* (Polish Cavalry, 1939). A previous owner has listed the regimental names in pencil. The cover shows that they were drawn in 1960.

The drawings immediately appear identical. However, the two regiments differ from each other in the lance flags and the collar mirror of the uniform jackets, which is a miniature reproduction of the lance flags. The raspberry colored cap band was also used by the 1st, 9th, 10th and 20th Lancer Regiments, while the other 37 cavalry regiments in the Polish Army were similarly distinguished by other colours. These other units also had collar mirrors - and in the case of the lancer regiments, lance flags - in different colours.

The two horsemen are excellent reproductions of uniforms and equipment from 1939, which they could have worn during the mobilization. The steel helmets of the soldiers would probably be of the French model, which was most frequently used by the cavalry.

7th Lancer Regiment "Lubelskich" was part of Cavalry Brigade Mazowiecka, while 12th Lancer Regiment "Podolski" was part of Cavalry Brigade Wolynska.

signal dropper



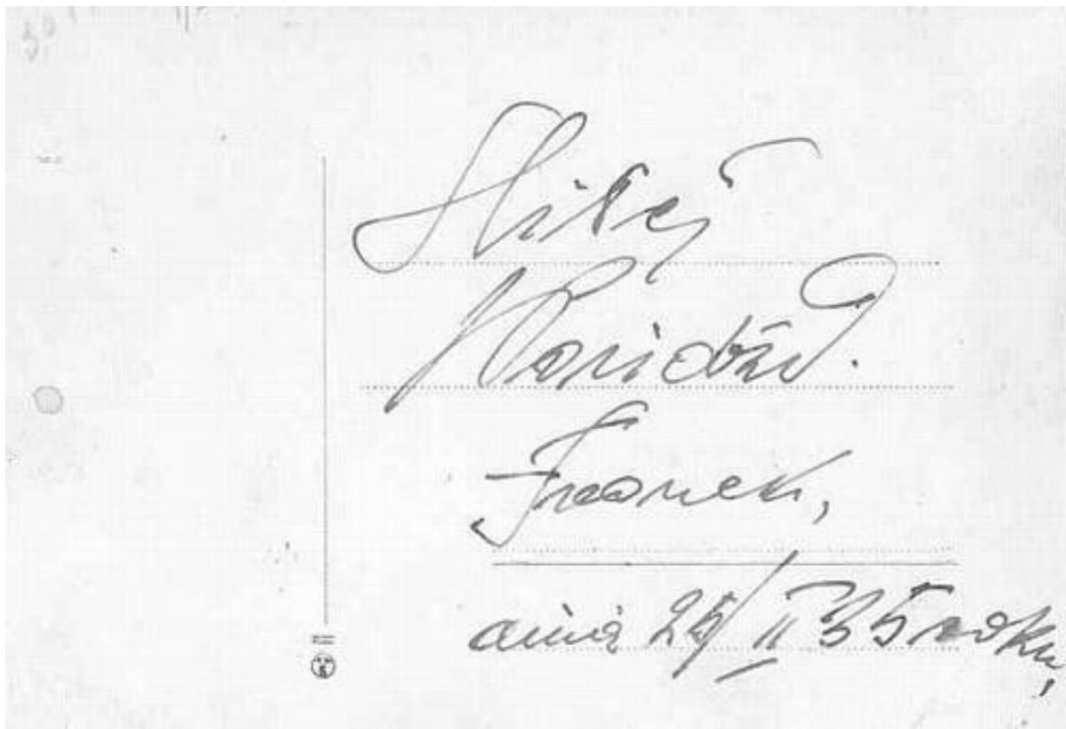
The group clearly shows a signal unit - field telephones, cable drums, switchboards, flashing apparatus and a spreader pole.

The soldiers' dark blue - or more likely - black collar mirror indicates the type of weapon. Black denoted engineer and signal troops, while dark blue was the infantry's coat of arms. The headgear is the distinctive Polish cap - or *czapka* - which had a black leather brim and chinstrap. A softer version of the hat was used as a field cap. The soldiers are probably wearing the latter headgear, as the stiffer version would have been fitted with cap bands in the color of the weapon or, for certain units, a special regimental colour.

The person in the center of the picture is an officer, which is evident from the light (white) trim along the square brim of the cap, as well as the uniform jacket, which is clearly of a different cut to that of the crew.

The Polish army introduced khaki uniforms in 1919 and a newer version in 1936. Uniform jacket M/1936 had 7 white metal buttons on the front. The uniform jackets worn by the soldiers in the photograph appear to have only six buttons (the collar button is not visible). Considering this, as well as the dating of the photograph, it is probably the early version of the uniform.

The back of the postcard



The text reads:

"Dear" - Here a special Polish word is used, indicating a friendly address to a woman.

"Unreadable maiden name" - In a loving way, which should be clear from the ending.

"Franczek" - The sender, presumably, and given one of the gentlemen in the photograph.

"25.2.35" - According to Polish writing something like "the day 25 of the second month (of the) 35th year.

All in all, a very interesting postcard.

Thanks to Thorstein Snorrason, who partly scanned the postcard for me, partly - with the kind help of a Polish-speaking neighbor - contributed a translation of the text on the back of the card.

Polish cavalry in Russian service

In one of the uniform books I had the opportunity to look in, there was a drawing of soldiers from 3. Lancer Regiment (1944-45), which was part of the 1st Independent Cavalry Brigade "Warsaw", which in turn was part of the 1st Polish Army, which was part of the Red Army - see Polish Cavalry in the Second World War - Glimpses of Myths and Realities.

The drawing showed 3 soldiers, one of whom was mounted. An officer and a private were shown on foot, and were wearing the standard Russian field uniform. Of particular Polish characteristics, the officer's headdress was a *czapka*, while the soldier's was a steel helmet, on the front of which the Polish eagle was painted, in white. Information that was completely consistent with my current knowledge of the uniforms of the Polish forces. What was new was that both officers and privates wore small lance flags as collar mirrors, similar to the Polish uniform before the war.



The third soldier in the group was ready. He was wearing a winter uniform, including the matching fur hat. In his hand he carries a lance, with a lance flag corresponding to the collar mirror of the other two soldiers. However, I do not think that the drawing should be taken as proof that the horsemen were armed with lances, but rather that it is a symbol used in parades.

As far as I interpret the text in my own Polish-language source (Source 2), the mark was introduced in 1943 in the Polish units in Russia, to mark the cavalry as a type of weapon, rather than a specific unit designation. Before the war, a similar mark was also used in Poland to mark units without belonging to a specific regiment, for example school and training units as well as certain special units.

Some might call the information unimportant, but I rather see it as another small puzzle piece that has fallen into place.

Sources

1. *The Cavalry of World War II* by Janusz Piekalkiewicz, Orbis Publishing Limited, London 1979, ISBN 0-85613-022-2.
2. *Wolsko Polskie 1939-1945*af Barwa I. Bron, Interpress Publishing House, Warsaw 1984, ISBN 83-223-2055-8.

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