

Captain Józef Dworakowski

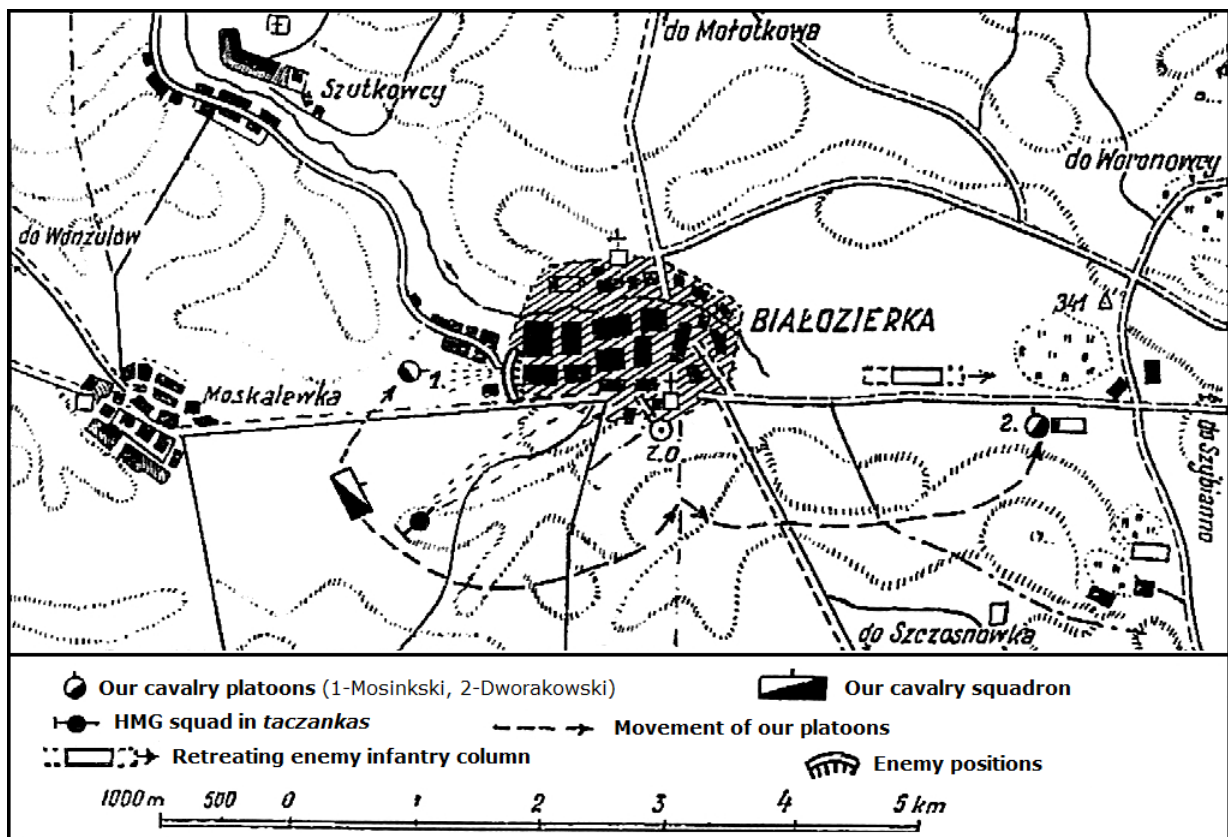
Charge At Białozierka

On 21 September 1920 the 1st Cavalry Brigade marched in pursuit of the retreating enemy. The 11th Lancer Regiment was the brigade's lead unit, with its 2nd Squadron, commanded by Lieutenant Pawel Budzik, as its vanguard.

The platoon commanders in that squadron were: Second Lieutenant Chróścicki, Cadet Kremitz and Sergeants Mosiński and Dworakowski.

On the way to Białozierka we learned from the peasants – returning from cart duty – that there were no Bolshevik troops in front of us and that only Włodzimierz Wołyński [Volodymyr] had a lot of infantry with artillery. This news partly reassured us, especially as the enemy was retreating in panic, and we had not encountered any serious resistance, having pursued for three days already.

When the leading units of the squadron approached Białozierka, they came under heavy fire.



The squadron leader decided to launch a quick attack on the village. He moved the majority of the squadron to the right behind the closest fold in the terrain and engaged the enemy with heavy machine gun fire.

Two platoons advanced in front. Platoon commander Mosiński secured the left wing. My platoon (16 sabres and a *taczanka*) was ordered to move further to the south-east to secure the right wing of the squadron. As far as possible, the platoon was to co-operate actively with the squadron's attack.

After advancing in the direction ordered and having oriented myself, I decided to move with the platoon and the *taczanka* past the hills (led by a combat patrol) to reach the southern edge of Białozierka and attack the enemy.

I encountered a wide and deep ditch, over which the *taczanka* could not pass, and at the same time dense shots started to fall in my direction from the village. Not being able to use the *taczanka*, I sent it back to the squadron commander. The platoon itself, after jumping the ditch, continued its manoeuvre.



After approaching the southern edge of Białozeria I came under heavy fire, as a result of which I withdrew my platoon behind the hill, while I myself went to the ridge line and noticed infantry retreating eastwards. I decided to charge them. However, bearing in mind that the retreating infantry column was close to the buildings and would be able to return to the village to hide, I moved my platoon off the hill further to the east to charge the enemy infantry from the rear in the open.

As soon as I got to its rear with my squad of about 10 lancers, I charged. The infantry column stopped and single shots started to be fired our direction, but soon the enemy infantry dropped their weapons and surrendered.

In the meantime the squadron leader attacked Białozeria frontally, disarming the rest of the infantry defending themselves in the village. After re-joining the squadron I reported on my charge, handing over about 90 prisoners taken by my platoon, including the battalion commander of the Soviet 419th Rifle Regiment.

In the described episode I want to emphasise the factor of surprise, because without it the platoon could have done nothing in this case, and would have suffered losses. It was only thanks to surprise that the result was favourable.

I realise that if the enemy had used his machine guns, he would have destroyed my platoon completely.

However, heavy machine guns were not used and the small arms fire inflicted no losses. You can see from this that the charge of even a small detachment makes a great impression if it is made firmly, suddenly and quickly.

The charge at Białozeria is a typical example of cavalry surprising an infantry unit from the rear while retreating.

The whole fight of the vanguard lasted no longer than 20 minutes, so that when the main forces of the regiment arrived its path onwards was already cleared.

The above episode is a classic example of how a vanguard works well! The tactical assessment given by the author is very clear and accurate. I enclose his sketch so that the reader can keep a good eye on the shift and direction of entry of the platoon commanded by the author.

Of course, it took a sound tactical mind and the right dose of swagger to charge a much larger enemy detachment. But that the author had both and a bit of soldier's luck, so his action worked out well and opened the way for the main forces of the squadron.

I recommend imitation in reasoning and conduct. I would like to point out that the author was aware at the time of the drop in morale in the ranks of the opponent.

Editor

