

Warrant Officer Karol Geier

Selected Actions of the 8th Lancer Regiment near the Villages of Borowo and Sielce, 23 August 1920

In 1920, after the failure near Lwow [L'viv], Budienny's Horse Army took a sudden turn northwards after crossing the Bug River. It did that hoping to get into the rear of our strike army from the Wieprz River, which was then operating under the personal command of Marshal Józef Piłsudski.

On 22 August 1920, the 7th Cavalry Brigade, to which our regiment belonged, garrisoned the Bug river bridgehead near Ruda Sielecka [Ruda-Silets'ka]. From there contact was to be made with Budienny's Horse Army. Making that contact and acting on the enemy's flank was the over-riding priority for the commander of 1st Cavalry Division, Colonel Rommel, at that time. At dawn of 23 August our regiment marched as the advance guard of the 7th Cavalry Brigade, with the task of encircling the town of Mosty Wielkie [Velyki Mosty] from the north-east. At the same time the enemy in Mosty Wielkie was to be attacked by a battalion of riflemen assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division.

Our regiment, under the command of Captain Krzeczunowicz, had to force its way through the wilderness and along paths, forced marching through the valley of the Zelda [Zhheldets'] River, a small, right-hand tributary of the Bug [Buh] River. The weather was nice, but hot. Here and there we came across trenches and barbed wire entanglements from the era of the World War. After a few hours of that march, when the forest started to thin and the town of Borowo [Borove] appeared in the distance, suddenly, from the right side of our line of march, shooting started.

Capt. Lucjan Bochenek, who commanded the 5th Technical Squadron, which was then the advance guard of the regiment, quickly deployed his men. Then combat patrols went forward, followed by the entire squadron in a line. The enemy had taken advantage of the old trenches and had fortified themselves there.

The enemy's heavy machine guns played incessantly, but did not do us much harm. Meanwhile, our two tachanka HMGs arrived and began to fire at the enemy over our battle line. When our lancers heard the help of their own machine guns they rushed forward and in less than 15 minutes the trenches were in our possession. The enemy withdrew in panic, and thus the way was cleared for a further march of the regiment. Now it had to cross the Rata River quickly, in order to reach the road connecting Mosty Wielkie and Krystynopol [Chervonohrad] in time. It was expected that the enemy, pushed out from Mosty Wielkie, would withdraw along that road.

The action of the 5th Squadron, related above, greatly accelerated the accomplishment of the regiment's task.

Our regiment had only just reached the road in question when enemy infantry, small cavalry units and wagons began to appear on it from the direction of Mosty Wielkie. The 3rd Squadron, separated from the regiment and under the command of Lieutenant Paweł Sapieha, immediately made a daring charge at the enemy. The surprised Bolsheviks scattered in panic, abandoning their rifles and ammunition. Our lancers chopped them down ferociously, spreading panic and death.

The regiment captured many prisoners and several ammunition wagons, unfortunately without horses, as the crew of these wagons had managed to escape on them.

Ulan Czachor was particularly distinguished in that action, as he captured the chief of staff of the 72nd Soviet Brigade. Lieutenant Sapieha, the squadron commander, was wounded. Among others, Corporal Myśliwiec was killed during the assault on the enemy trenches.

After the charge an immediate pursuit to the north-east was ordered, as a result of which further prisoners of war were taken from all around. That day went down as a golden moment in the history of the regiment, as the defeat of the 72nd Soviet Brigade was largely due to it.

It was worth all the sacrifices and suffering from the period from Korsun to Lwow, and then from Lwow on the trail of Budienny, to have that defeat of the enemy, who until then had been so arrogant and self-confident.

On the same day, i.e. 23rd August 1920, the regiment moved to further combat operations. Captain Krzeczunowicz, its acting commander, decided on his own initiative to bypass the enemy's defensive



positions on the River Sołokii [Solokiya], in order to reach Krystynopol at dusk and thus cut off the enemy's retreat past the Bug River,

The regiment's rear guard was a platoon taken from the 5th Technical Squadron under the command of Lieutenant Gliński. That rear guard was joined by the wounded, with Medical Captain Orzeł and a medical detachment, and the regiment's ammunition wagons. The sun was already setting when the platoon reached the village of Sielce [Silets'].

A farmer sneaked out to meet us and told us not to go any further, as the village was full of Bolsheviks.

During a short discussion we heard the sounds of fighting at a distance. Deciding that it was our regiment, we decided to reach it at all costs.

Night had already fallen; clouds covered the horizon which made the night dark, and in addition it started to rain. Lieutenant Gliński appointed officer Stanisław Czekaję to head the search party, and Captain Orzeł and Master Corporal Karol Geier volunteered to join him. We moved forward, adhering to the motto: "Everything depends on your spirit, and your spirit on your example!" We were followed, like ghosts, by the rest of the platoon. Suddenly we started being shot at from all directions; a veritable hail of bullets came from behind the houses and fences. Despite this, we scouts went straight ahead, while the platoon turned aside to the right of the road, into a small clump of trees.

We hadn't even made two kilometres when a loud: "Halt? Who goes there?" stopped us! Because of the darkness we couldn't tell if it was our side or the enemy. There was great joy when we found out that it was an outpost of our regiment's 5th Squadron. Capt. Krzeczunowicz immediately organised a relief party for Lieutenant Gliński's small forces, who had defended themselves heroically against the overwhelming Bolshevik troops, and after an hour we were together again.

The regiment reached its objective that day, namely the town of Krystynopol, and found itself in the enemy's rear. The related actions, which lasted until midnight, could have produced even more beautiful results; unfortunately, due to the superior strength of the enemy, we then had to withdraw to the town of Parchacz [Mezhyrichchya].

Thus a glorious day for the regiment was achieved at Borowo, Sielce and Krystynopol. The main merit fell to Captain Krzeczunowicz, who not only tactically commanded the regiment excellently, but also with his own determination, bravery and example encouraged the greatest possible sacrifice for the Fatherland.

The author's cursory impressions once again reflect the great effectiveness of bold actions resulting from cavalry's initiative and panache.

Then we notice in the description the tight spirit of the unit, this time in the 8th Lancer Regiment, the great camaraderie, always willing to cooperate, sometimes even without clear orders.

Everyone rushes to each other's aid in the direction of the shooting. The regimental commander aids a platoon left behind. The mutual trust is exemplary.

The squad is animated by a fighting spirit. The regimental doctor leads a platoon at critical moments. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a better model for the bravery of the unit.

The regiment was commanded by a reserve officer, a great soldier, Captain Kornel Krzeczunowicz. What he was for the regiment and what he was like in battle, the opinion of his subordinate testifies at the end of the description. It confirms unquestionably the great importance of a cavalry commander in battle.

Editor

