

# Marshal Enterprises

Kaiserliche Kavalrie

By Dennis A. Spors



Austria was one of the leading opponents of the French Republic and its successor, the Empire of the French. From the first days of the Revolution through 1814 and then for the 100 Days in 1815, Austria battled with France. Whether it be in Italy; Poland or Germany, Austria provided huge armies for the counter-revolutionary forces; and included in those large armies were several classes of cavalry. Often the cavalry succeeded where the rest of the Austrian Army failed.

When we think of Austria today, many of you would only consider the small country in central Eastern Europe. However in Age of Revolution and Napoleon Austria was a huge multi-national empire. The multi-national makeup of the empire is illustrated by the fact that its population included 6,500,000 Germans; 3,360,000 Czechs; 2,000,000 Walloons and Flemings; 1,000,000 Poles; 900,000 Croats; 700,000 Serbs; 700,000 Slovenes and numerous smaller nationalities. Even as Napoleon was carving out territory as compensation in the various wars he won, the remaining Austrian regiments included soldiers from upper and lower Austria; Germany; Bohemia; Moravia; Hungary; Galicia (Poland) and Italy. While this created a huge pool of troops; with all the distinct languages, communication was a problem. Like Russia, many of Austria's territories bordered on Turkish or Moslem lands, and thus they were involved in centuries-long on-going border wars.

Austria had no affection for the Kingdom of Prussia. Austria saw itself as the Roman Catholic leader of Germany. It had not been that long ago that Austria and Prussia had been locked in a series of wars. Only the bigger issue of the Revolution and dominance by the French Republic eventually drove Austria to a coalition with Prussia. The Austrian Emperor Franz continued to be suspicious of German Nationalism and the extremes pushed by the Prussian nobility.

Many of the types of European cavalry we are familiar with originated in Austria. Since the Empire included so many cultures, distinct cavalry types such as the hussars, uhlans and irregular regiments were developed alongside the more traditional cavalry of dragoons, cuirassiers and chevaulegeres. Austria cavalry became the model force to provide reconnaissance; screen their army's movements for enemy intelligence; and especially interfering with the enemy's lines of communication. Other armies had to train and commit resources to their light cavalry just to counter Austria's advantage. By the time of the Napoleonic Wars; every major combatant had regiments of hussars and many had lancers.

The Austria method of creating the Army's regiments was completely different from the national armies of their opponents. The regiments were organized based on Austria's feudal social system. A wealthy sponsor would raise a regiment by usually enlisting the serfs/peasants of his domain and paying for their maintenance and upkeep. Thus the regiments are named after an individual, and if the sponsor changes, so does the name of the regiment. When researching orders of battle, this unusual fact can lead to confusion when the name of the of a regiment changes during a campaign. Rather than a nation in arms, Austria was a feudal army fighting to maintain an antiquated social order.

As in most armies of the period, the cavalry took more training and equipment than an infantry regiment. With the costs of the horses, feed, veterinary, horse furniture and typically more extravagant uniforms, the maintenance costs for mounted units are much more than an infantry regiment. Just marching cavalry from one place to another can be quite expensive. The horses must be rested frequently; tended to with medicines and given the correct foods. Without this regime of care, attrition will rapidly reduce the effectiveness of this precious resource. The soldiers of the cavalry need to be trained in basic military etiquette, riding, fighting on horseback, maneuver on horseback and care of the animals.

Austria had the lowest percentage of cavalry to infantry of any of the major armies. Although the empire was large, much of the terrain is mountainous and the availability of horses and the populations' experience with them was more limited. Some areas of Bohemia, Hungary and Galicia (Poland) provide flatter geography and that is where most of the Austrian Cavalry originates. Unlike other armies, there were no guard cavalry units in the Austrian Army. However, there were many proud regiments with solid histories, including the hussars and lancers.

In 1809 the ratio of infantry to cavalry was only 7.5 to 1. France had ratio 6 to 1 and Russia 5 to 1. The grand Duchy of Warsaw had the lowest ratio of infantry to cavalry, 4 to 1. It is interesting to note that even after the armistice of 1813, France had a ratio of 10 to 1. This explains their lack of pursuit after many victories.

Austria typically fielded only 8 cuirassier, 6 dragoon, 4 Uhlan, 6 Chevauleger and 12 hussar regiments for their whole army. This force might be divided between armies in Italy and Germany.



Having fewer cavalrymen than France and Russia, the Austrians were reluctant to use it *en masse*. There was a lack of large scale exercises for the cavalry; and the Austrian generals were not experienced or trained in large cavalry operations. Single regiments and brigades of Austrian cavalry were often defeated by French brigades and divisions.

There were a few exceptions to the lack of *en masse* tendencies, such as at Aspern-Essling where General von Liechtenstein sent nine cavalry regiments against French light cavalry under General comte de Lasalle. Four regiments attacked from the front and five attacked Lasalle's flank. The Austrians drove off the French.

Unlike the French Corps, limited numbers of light cavalry are not attached to an 1809 -1814 Austrian Corps. Therefore, the Corps must move across the battlefield, against enemy cavalry without their own support. The Austrians developed special formations like the *battalion masse* and *divisional masse* to

protect their infantry regiments.

Napoleonic Cavalry usually includes two primary functions. The first is to be a decisive element on the battlefield in shock combat. Heavy cavalry against wavering infantry is a decisive element. Heavy cavalry against heavy cavalry is usually an indecisive contest where one cavalry regiment is used to cancel the decisive effect of another cavalry regiment. Casualties are few and the troops require frequent rest. Once the cuirassiers and dragoons are committed to battle, their worth as a decisive element rapidly diminishes. That is why these units are held in reserve to the last possible counterstroke.

The Austrian heavy cavalry was only moderately successful in comparison to the impact of the French, Russian, Prussian and British heavy units. However their tactics of attacking by regiment or brigade did not typically achieve dramatic results.

Light cavalry functions are where the performance of Austrian cavalry exceeded most other armies. Reconnaissance of positions; tracking the enemy movements; screening their own armies; raiding; and forming rearguard screens are all functions at which these flexible Austrian formations excelled. They also provided some shock combat in an emergency, yet their value is not measured in melee combat.

The light cavalry also worked in combined light divisions with Jaegers, Grenz and Cavalry batteries. The Advance Guard (Light) divisions used rapid movement and their troops skirmishing ability to move ahead on the main army to seize key points until stronger formations move up. Advance Guard Divisions worked best in forests, swamps, towns and other mixed terrain. The Austrian light cavalry is the element deployed in limited charging against a strung out enemy. They were not very durable in sustained combat. It is interesting to note that some Austrian Generals actually discouraged skirmishing as a battlefield tactic.

The Hungarian Hussars were the model for these operations. Recruits were very strictly screened and had long enlistment commitments—often up to 30 years. Given that their regiments' size was



maintained through diligent care of their mounts, and virtually no desertions, the Hungarian Hussars were less affected by attrition than other cavalry. They ranged far and wide getting the special foods and providing care to their horses.

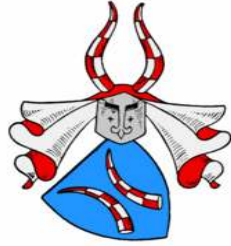
The Austrian cavalry had a little more accurate firepower than the French. The Hungarian Hussar and Chevaulegeres Squadrons (165) had a limited number of sharpshooters equipped with rifles. Each squadron of cuirassiers and Uhlans had 8 men armed with rifles and 8 with carbines. Each squadron of dragoons had 16 men armed with rifles. Average squadron size was 165. French Cuirassiers received carbines in 1812 but almost none carried them. French Dragoons had muskets. French Lancers Chasseurs a Cheval and Hussars had carbines.

Notable Austrian cavalry commanders include the Prince of Hesse-Homburg, Graf von Nostitz, FML Karl-Philip Schwarzenberg and Field Marshal Leichtenstein. While none showed a particular brilliance in any

of the Coalition wars, they did have moments of victory during major defeats. Their ability to survive the endless wars and their pedigree family status kept them in command through the Napoleonic Wars. Each learned from successive defeats until they achieved success at the Battle of Leipzig.

Graf von Nostitz was born in Prague. In 1809 Count von Nostitz was commander of the Reserve of I Corps (5 battalions, 2 squadrons); on 18 May he was promoted to *Feldmarschalleutnant*. He commanded the 2nd Column (I Corps) in the centre at Aspern, where he was very distinguished, wounded and had two horses shot from under him. At Wagram von Nostitz commanded four cavalry regiments in support of IV Corps on the open left wing, behind Markgrafneusiedel. He was again wounded and distinguished.

Subsequently, he was on sick leave until 1813, then was given command of the 36 - squadron strong Cuirassier Corps in the Reserve. He fought at Wachau and Liebertwolkwitz on 16 October, to prop up the battered allied left wing. When von Nostitz arrived on the southern battlefield at 2 pm from the defile at the village of Gröbern, Wittgenstein's troops were in full retreat. His two leading squadrons (Cuirassier Regiment "Albert Sachsen-Teschen" N°3) were swept away by the fugitives. Von Nostitz formed the next two squadrons of the regiment into line and led them at a walk against the advancing French to gain time for his regiments to thread their way through Gröbern. He then led the Cuirassier Regiments "Albert" and "Lothringen" into the front and flank of GdB Baron Louis-Michel Letort's cavalry, broke them and threw much of the Guard infantry of Marshals Mortier and Oudinot into chaos; they fell back to Wachau. Nostitz withdrew in good order on Gröbern, pursued by Letort's cavalry.



Von Nositz

Prince Schwarzenberg, commander of the Coalition Army at Leipzig, actually fought with Prince Poniatowski in the wars against the Turks in 1788. Later he transferred to the cavalry. He commanded divisions in 1805 and 1809; a corps in 1812; and the Army of Bohemia in 1813.



***God Save His Imperial Majesty Franz Karl the First of Austria, By the Grace of GOD, Emperor of Austria; King of Jerusalem, Hungary, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Galicia and Lodomeria; Archduke of Austria; Duke of Lorraine, Salzburg, Würzburg, Franconia, Styria, Carinthia and Carniola; Grand Duke of Cracow; Grand Prince of Transylvania; Margrave of Moravia; Duke of Sandomir, Masovia, Lublin, Upper and Lower Silesia, Auschwitz and Zator, Teschen and Friule; Prince of Berchtesgaden and Mergentheim; Princely Count of Habsburg, Gorizia and Gradisca and of the Tyrol; and Margrave of Upper and Lower Lusatia and in Istria***

## Notes on Using the Austrian Cavalry in the La Bataille System

1. Cuirassiers – you typically will only have one division so use them carefully. Better to have some reserve for a key defensive or limited offensive attack. Once placed, these units should not even be moved until the afternoon. Use them in conjunction with a Grenadier Division to form a potent attacking force.
2. Dragoons and Chevaulegeres – use these regiments to support the line of infantry in counterattacks and limited charges.
3. Uhlans – large formations with a lance bonus. Most effective at charging infantry moving unsupported over open ground. Use them, then retreat and recover. They have enough increments to get several charges out of them if you are patient with their recovery.
4. Hussars - In game terms the Hussars worth is screening an advance, reaction charging, skirmishing or covering a retreat when the fates have dictated an infantry formation has broken. Given their size and morale, a Hungarian Hussar unit should be keep just behind the line for support. They should not be used in a front line like other light cavalry.
5. The individual Austrian Cavalry regiments will have good morale, large size and a powerful melee value. However there are too few and they are used a regiment at a time in countermeasures like opportunity and reaction charges.
6. The Austrian Army is about large infantry battalions fighting in line. Everything else must support that. Use the Austrian cavalry as a counterstroke to the French Cavalry charges. The Austrians cannot use their cavalry on its own to initiate an offensive move. Once the Austrian cavalry is used up, the Infantry will really be at the mercy of the combined arms of France.
7. A Good Austrian player will never let any Prussian player dominate his position or Prussian troops of the Sixth Coalition to claim any glory. Prussian is just a Lutheran mob trying to unite someone else's empire because they speak a common language. Without Russia they would barely exist.