

Those infernal lanciers!



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Los infernos picadores!

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The Tin-Roofed Palace

The Polish lanciers became famous in the Napoleonic era as exceptionally dangerous and effective cavalry fighting in the French army. Los infernos picadores! (Those infernal lanciers!) was the nickname given by the Spanish during the Iberian Peninsular War of 1808-1812. We invite you to the exhibition dedicated to the historical troops that were truly feared among the Spanish and British troops during the Napoleonic Wars.

Two cavalry regiments composed of Poles fought under Napoleon's orders. The first was derived from the old Legion cavalry, which had been formed while still in Italy by Jan Henryk Dąbrowski. The regiment was commonly referred to as the Vistula Lanciers. The second was formed on the initiative of Wincenty Krasiński in 1807 as the 1st Cavalry-Lancier Regiment and quickly became part of the Imperial Guard. The Vistula Lanciers, although more experienced in the Spanish War, were recruited

from illiterate peasants. For this reason, there was no one to describe their vivid and brave history. Among their finest charges was the capture of as many as four British banners on 16 May 1811 at the Battle of Albuera on the Spanish-Portuguese border. The elite of the Polish nation, the aristocratic and noble youth, served under the banners of the Cheval Legers. The unit was famous for its murderous charge on four Spanish cannon batteries in the Somosierra Gorge, thus opening the way for Napoleon to march on Madrid. The two regiments joined forces in the war against Russia during the tragic retreat from Moscow in 1812. Forming an ariergarde, they saved Napoleon and the retreating French army. Among the characteristic elements of their armour were the lances. This weapon, extremely effective in cavalry combat, still made a rapid career in the Napoleonic era.

The following objects were lent to the exhibition: The Royal Castle in Warsaw - Museum; the Collection of dr Tomasz Niewodniczański, dep. Deutsch-Polnische Stiftung Kulturpflege und Denkmalschutz (Görlitz) and private collectors.

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