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Battle of Kłuszyn (Klushino) 1610

Lębork (Poland)

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Table of contents

Was victory his destiny?.....	3
Before the battle.....	4
The strength of armies on the 3rd of July.....	9
The Battle.....	11
Casualties.....	25
The aftermath of the battle.....	26
Appendix 1.....	27
Appendix 2.....	28
Further reading.....	29

Was victory his destiny?

The history of the Battle of Klushino (Russian: Клушино; Polish: Kłuszyn) didn't begin either on the day of the battle (on the 4th of July, 1610)¹ or in the beginning of the Polish – Russian war (in 1609). Its history might be traced further back, deeply into 16th c., to the younger years of the future Hetman, Stanisław Żółkiewski. Why so deep? Because:

„[...] while still a young man when passing [on horseback] through a certain village, known as Świncza, near Rzeszów, [...] it was there, that some old woman, having taken him aside and looking at him closely - all his fortunes and [his] death was alleged to have been foretold him. We have heard this many times from the lips of those, which, at that time, were alive with him, and were his domestics and servants [companions].”

This story was written by the Hetman's great grandson, Polish king, John III Sobieski (Polish: Jan III Sobieski). Sobieski was born in the house of Stanisław Żółkiewski's daughter – Zofia Daniłowicz (nèe Żółkiewski). It was there that he was also raised.

Did destiny govern the Hetman's fate? The existing science can neither confirm nor deny it. But one thing is certain. Stanisław Żółkiewski believed in his destiny. He believed that someday, in Russia, he would win a great victory. Therefore, having only 2,700 soldiers, he went to Klushino, where, as he thought, should have been over 35,000 in enemy forces. And, as he dreamed so, he won this historically pivotal battle!

¹ All dates in the article according to the Gregorian calendar, which was already in use in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Sweden and Russia still used the Julian calendar in the same time. The difference between both calendars was 10 days in those years. So, for example the 4th of July in the Gregorian calendar was the 24th of June in Julian calendar.

Before the battle

The Battle of Klushino was a part of the military operation, whose main goal was a defense of the Polish siege of Smolensk (Russian: Смоленск; Polish: Smoleńsk). The city of Smolensk was within the borders of Muscovy since 1514.



Pic. 1. Smolensk fortification (source: wikipedia; click at the picture to enlarge it)

Before that time, it was within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The city had a strategical importance. It was 'the Portal to Lithuania' and simultaneously 'the Portal to Muscovy'. Whoever controlled Smolensk, controlled the passage to Lithuania / Muscovy.



Pic. 2 – 10. Walls of Smolensk (photo courtesy of the author; click at the pictures to enlarge them)

The army of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth besieged the city in September 1609. This war, which broke out in September 1609, was the consequence of an anti – Polish alliance signed by Russian Tsar Vasili IV (Russian: Василий IV Иванович Шуйский; Polish: Wasyl IV Szujski) and Swedish king Charles IX (Swedish: Karl IX; Polish: Karol IX), in February 1609. The alliance provoked Polish King Sigismund III Vasa (Polish: Zygmunt III Waza) to engage in a fight. He mobilized the army and went to Russia, to retake Smolensk. But the city, with its

powerful walls (Smolensk was the most strongly fortified of all Russian cities, ringed by 6.5 km of walls, 11 m high, 6 m thick and topped with 38 towers) was quite efficiently defended. However, it couldn't be defended without limitations. Therefore, since the second half of May, 1610, the Russians were gathering their rescue army in Mozhaysk (Russian: Можайск; Polish: Możajsk). Knowing this, the Poles divided its army at Smolensk. As the major elements continued the siege, the smaller contingent, under Crown field Hetman, Stanisław Żółkiewski, was sent east – against the enemy.

June 7 – 8 – Żółkiewski's army left Smolensk. Its 'on paper' strength was: 2,080 'portions' of cavalry, 1,100 'portions' of infantry, and 100 'Muscovites'/Cossacks. Altogether, 3,280 total 'portions' forces of this Division.

Portion – a unit of soldier's salary.

The 'on paper' strength of the Polish army is not the same as the actual number of its soldiers. The first fact which diminished the actual number of soldiers was the method of payment to the officers from "*blind portions*". To count the actual number of soldiers in the unit you have to deduct at least 10% (*because this is the percentage devoted to the officers' payment*) from its theoretical amount (*that is, from the number of "portions" of the individual unit*). This method was used with the entire Polish cavalry and the German infantry.

So, for example, the '100-horses' banner of winged hussars had, in its full strength, only 90 hussars. It had 90 soldiers, but it got from the state treasure 100 portions. A single portion for hussars of the so called 'quarter army' was 15 zł / 3 months in 1609. So, the state treasure paid 1500 zł / 3 months for this banner.

It was different however, with the Polish infantry, where the officers were paid the other way, which meant that the number of combatants of the Polish infantry unit should be equal to the number of soldiers of that unit.

The number of portions (the 'on paper' strength of a cavalry unit) was not the same as the actual number of a cavalry unit. And not only blind portions diminished the actual number of soldiers. There were also vacancies in units, because of marching losses, desertion, diseases, combat losses, etc.

The initial plan was to march east, to Tsaryovo-Zaymishche (Russian: Царёво-Займище; Polish: Carowe Zajmiszczce) and then to join up with another Polish pułks who were ordered to muster in that place. However, when Aleksander Gosiewski, the commandant of the Polish garrison of the captured Bely (Russian: Белая / Белый город; Polish: Biała) fortress, being in danger, asked about assistance, Hetman Żółkiewski altered his initial plans. He instead, marched to Bely to rescue the Polish garrison.

When the combined enemies (Swedish – Russian troops under Evert Horn) received word about the march of Żółkiewski to Bely, they resigned their plan to recapture the fortress and they withdrew.

June 14 – Żółkiewski was in Bely. Knowing about the withdrawal of the enemy, the Hetman, divided his forces. The one part (100 infantrymen + 5 banners of cavalry, i.e. 600 portions) was sent back to the Polish camp at Smolensk. The other part (100 reiters/portions + 540 infantrymen) reinforced the garrison of Bely fortress. The rest of the army (11 banners of cavalry / 1,380 portions + 5 banners of infantry / 460 portions + 100 'Muscovites'/Cossacks) under Żółkiewski went to the main area of concentration of the Polish pułks – to Shuyskoye (Russian: Шуйское; Polish: Szujsk).

June 22 – in Shuyskoye; Żółkiewski's troops (Mikołaj Struś' pułk and Żółkiewski's own pułk; the latter one was led by Prince Janusz Porycki, because Żółkiewski had to command the entire army) were joined with about 3,000 Cossacks and then, combined with the pułks of: Marcin Kazanowski, Samuel Dunikowski, Aleksander Zborowski.

The latest person in this epic, is indeed, a very interesting individual. Aleksander Zborowski was the son of Samuel Zborowski. Samuel was arrested by Stanisław Żółkiewski in 1584 and then executed on Jan Zamojski's order. Samuel Zborowski was sentenced to banishment in 1574, however, without infamy. Meaning, that when Żółkiewski arrested Samuel while in the house of a Polish noblewoman, he broke an important statute of Polish law; that which protected nobility while in their homes.

The execution of Samuel Zborowski was a famous scandal of Batory's reign. Now, at Shuyskoye, the progeny of the executed Samuel, finally met the man who arrested his father. An important point of note here is that Aleksander Zborowski commanded a pułk, which was almost as numerous as Żółkiewski's own troops. Furthermore, Zborowski's soldiers were of an exceedingly high caliber. Most of them were winged hussars. And, they were highly seasoned and experienced.

Aleksander was in a difficult situation. Not only was his personal experience an obstacle as a subordinate to Hetman Żółkiewski; His soldiers were not the soldiers of the Polish state army. They fought in Russia before the Polish – Lithuanian Commonwealth entered the war in September 1609, because they were mercenary soldiers, who had already fought for False Dmitry II since the beginning of 1608. These soldiers, hoping to join Sigismund III's army, abandoned the False Dmitry II in 1610, but the negotiations of terms of a new contract were not yet finalized. Zborowski's soldiers demanded money, which presented an important perplexity; Żółkiewski didn't have any money for them. This was the main reason of the initial failure of Żółkiewski's plan, who wanted (and needed) to conjoin Zborowski's pułk to his own (Żółkiewski's) army.

June 23 – Unfortunately, negotiations with Zborowski's soldiers failed. So the Hetman, with

the balance of the army, moved on to Tsaryovo-Zaymishche (roughly 20 km from Shuyskoye). In that time Tsaryovo-Zaymishche was garrisoned by the vanguard of the Russian army. There were about 5,000 of the best Muscovite soldiers, supported by another 3,000 – 5,000 camp-followers. The latter were sometimes better, sometimes worse armed peasants and servants. Although *technically*, they were considered as non-combatants, one may view them merely as an armed rabble. However, they can actually be more considered the valuable and important 'defensive support'. The entire Russian vanguard was commanded by Gregory Waluyew (Russian: Григорий Валуев; Polish: Grigorij / Grzegorz Wałujew), a most trusted man of the Tsar Vasili IV.

June 24 – The battle opened with Waluyew forces. As the result of the battle, Russians withdrew to their fortified camp.

June 25 – Zborowski's soldiers reversed their decision and conjoined to Żółkiewski's army. The common sense factor and an obligation of the Hetman (he promised that Poland will pay Zborowski's soldiers 100,000 zł, sometime in the future), made the difference which broke the prejudice and the resistance of joining together. This strengthened the combined Polish forces considerably.

During the battle of Klushino, Aleksander Zborowski fought with such élan and bravado, causing Hetman Żółkiewski to highly commend and praise Aleksander's actions, resulting in a recommendation of his services to the king.

June 25 – July 3 – The blockade of the Russian forces commenced at Tsaryovo-Zaymishche.



Engraving 1. The engraving of the siege of Russian troops in Tsaryovo-Zaymishche. It was done by Jakub Filip in 17th c. according to Teofil Szemberg's drawing (Teofil Szemberg was the Polish engineer, who in 1610 commanded the engineer actions at Smolensk). The copy of the engraving, thanks to and courtesy of, Bartosz Siedlar.

[click at the picture to enlarge it](#)

July 3 – Żółkiewski received Intelligence about a new army, which was marching against him. Its size was estimated at over 35,000, which numbers included also over 5,000 'Germans' (which is how many Polish sources referred these soldiers). Those 'Germans' were actually hired soldiers of the Swedish army, which was sent by Charles IX to assist the Russians against

the Poles. As a matter of fact, there were not only Germans. There were also mercenary soldiers hired from many European countries. So, apart from any 'true' Germans, there were also: Finns and Swedes, Frenchmen, Flemish and Spaniards, Englishmen and Scots. To help distinguish them from the actual Russians, I will refer to these soldiers as 'foreigners'.

The strength of armies on the 3rd of July

The enemy opposition to Żółkiewski consisted of:

- Roughly 5,000 soldiers + between 3,000 and 5,000 camp-followers at Tsaryovo-Zaymishche. Żółkiewski estimated the number of this army at roughly 8,000 men.
- Near Klushino: 3,330 foreign soldiers (1,830 cavalrymen and 1,500 infantrymen) + 15,000 Russian soldiers. A sizable force indeed, but these are only numbers of actual soldiers. We have to keep in mind, that typically in that period, many camp-followers assisted regular troops. If we take into consideration also these camp-followers (peasants, servants, women), the numbers of allied Swedish-Russian army will rise to at least some 38,000 possibly even to 48,000. The latter number was given by Żółkiewski, who noted it 2 years after the battle in his extensive description of the war and the battle. It includes 8,000 foreigners and 40,000 Russians. In producing the Russian numbers, Żółkiewski referred to the testimony of Dmitry Shuisky (Russian: Дмитрий Иванович Шуйский; Polish: Dymitr Szujski). Dmitry Shuisky was the brother of Russian Tsar Vasili IV and the commander of the Russian army in the Battle of Klushino. But this was now 2 years after the battle. During the actual days of the battle, Żółkiewski estimated the strength of this enemy army at 35,000.

On the other hand, Żółkiewski had at his disposal:

- 460 portions of infantrymen
- 4,730 portions of cavalrymen
- 4,400 Cossacks
- about 6,000 – 9,000 camp-followers

In total, less than 20,000 people. The enemy however, estimated Żółkiewski's forces at 45,000.

July 3 – The Hetman held a Council of War and resolved to divide its army into 2 parts. The larger body (but of lesser quality) were left at Tsaryovo-Zaymishche: cavalry (700 portions), infantry (260 portions), 4,000 Cossacks and all camp-followers. The smaller force (but consisting of the elite portion of his troops) he took to Klushino, where he expected to meet the enemy. Apart from 2 light cannons, during the battle, the Polish Army fielded 4,230 portions. That is:

- 23 Banners of Hussar (3,080 portions)

- 8 Banners of Light Cossack cavalry (850 portions).
- 1 Banner of Petyhorcy (100 portions). Petyhorcy – considered as a light cavalrymen with a shorter and lighter lances than those as used by hussars.
- 2 Banners of infantry (200 portions)

Taking into consideration the 'blind portions' (10%) in cavalry, the total number decreases to 3,630 cavalrymen. Together with 200 infantry, the numbers arrive at roughly 4,000. And the number (more or less) 4,000 is the number which is given by most of Polish primary sources (including members of the battle, Marchocki and Kulesza).

But there were also vacancies in cavalry as well, so the actual number of cavalrymen was even lower than the stated 3,630. According to Samuel Maskiewicz, a hussar comrade and member of the battle stated that the Polish army had consisted of only 2,500 cavalrymen and 200 infantrymen. And this is the total, actual number of the Polish army, which went into battle.

As an important note – there is no clearly defined written sources, by any Polish participants of the battle, which states that Polish army had some 7,000 soldiers. This figure, as commonly referred to, or thought of today, as the numbers of the Polish army at Klushino, were taken from one source (titled "Comput Zastuzonego Woisku Moskiewskiemu Stoiecznemu"), which has unfortunately been incorrectly and erroneously interpreted by past historians. This source is specifying only the numbers of the participants of the Polish garrison in Moscow and the payment for this garrison.

There is this entry under the year 1612:

"Quartał Kluszynski darowny na koni nro [a donative for 'Klushino quarter', for horses]: 5,556 [hussars], 290 [petyhorcy], 679 [cossack cavalry]"

However, past historians have erroneously interpreted these numbers as the numbers of cavalry which fought at Klushino, which is incorrect. This entry states only about the donative (or granted / donated funds) for the Polish garrison at Moscow in 1612, but, not for the Polish forces that fought at Klushino *proper*. This donative was for the period (yearly quarter = 3 months) called 'Klushino quarter' because the battle of Klushino occurred during this period (6, IV, 1610 – 6, VII, 1610).

Because the Polish camp-followers stayed behind at Tsaryovo-Zaymishche, the allied Swedish-Russian forces (18,330 soldiers + 20,000-30,000 camp-followers), outnumbered those of the Polish army (2,700 soldiers) up to 14 and possibly even 18 times! However disproportion in the actual number of soldiers was lower - 'merely' 7: 1 in favor of their Polish opponents.

The Battle

July 3, the evening – The Polish army departs the camp at Tsaryovo-Zaymishche bound for Klushino, where the enemy was expected to be met. However, the Swedish-Russian army bypassed Klushino altogether, arriving 7-8 km further west. So, the title 'The Battle of Klushino' is only a traditional one. The actual battle was fought far from Klushino itself. Past Historians needed some time to realize this fact.

The actual place of the battle

The Battle of Klushino in fact, took place about 8 km from Klushino. I was able to identify the actual location of the battle thanks to the comparison of Jakub Filip's engraving (engraving 2) to Russian maps from 1780 and 1792 (maps 1 and 2 - thanks to and courtesy of, Jerzy Czajewski). Look below.



Jakub Filip's engraving (in the center) and Russian maps from 1780 (on the left – map 1) and 1792 (on the right – map 2). Click at the picture to enlarge it.



Engraving 2. Jakub Filip's engraving in a high resolution (click at the picture to enlarge it). This indicates the deployment of the armies in the initial stages of the battle. Notice – The Haiduk's (Polish infantry) arrival on site, once the battle was already commenced. The engraving copy, thanks to and courtesy of, Bartosz Siedlar.

Now, looking at map 3 you will see that the battlefield site is between the rivers: Gzhat (Гжать), Izezzhenka (Изьезженка) and Vdovka (Вдовка). Looking at the satellite picture (pic. 11). Point 2 on pic. 11, refers to where pic. 12 was taken; point 3 relates to pic. 13.

Map 3 – As noted in Engraving 2, The deployment of armies, in the initial stage of the battle. Notice – The Haiduk's (Polish infantry) arrival on site once the battle was already commenced (illustrated by the author).



Click at the map to enlarge it.



Pic. 11. The satellite picture (source: maps.google.com)

Click at the picture to enlarge it.



Pic. 12. Gzhat River and the fields, where the Russian troops were deployed in the initial stage of the battle (photo courtesy of the author; click at the picture to enlarge it).



Pic. 13. The view on the battlefield from the location, where the Swedish camp was situated (photo courtesy of the author; click at the picture to enlarge it).

During its night march to Klushino, the Poles initially filed along the outsides of the Swedish-Russian camps. Fortunately for the Poles, a trumpet in the Swedish camp gave the signal of a reveille; the Polish soldiers realized that their enemies weren't asleep at Klushino. Żółkiewski changed the direction/goal of the march. The Poles headed west, where Swedish-Russian camps were waking up.

It was at sunrise of **4th of July, 1610** (about 4 a. m.), when the first Polish soldiers began to appear on the fields of the battle.

Their enemies were self confident. They had no reason to expect that the Poles would attack them. Therefore, their overconfidence resulted in a cavalier attitude and thusly, didn't believe fortification of their camps would be necessary.

The Muscovite camp was surrounded only by an earthen embankment. It was only after the Poles arrived, that the Russian peasants hastily set about constructing anti – cavalry obstacles, so called 'kobylice' (pic. 14).



Pic. 14. Kobylice (drawn by Dariusz Wielec)

The situation wasn't much better in the Swedish camp; at first, it was surrounded only by

tabor wagons. Additionally, during the course of the battle, this camp was also fortified by 'kobylice'.

Żółkiewski's soldiers marched in a long column. Before the last of his soldiers exited the forest deploying into the battle formations, the Polish opposition were additionally able to array themselves as well.

In the meantime, the Poles, who earlier arrived on the battlefield, set fire to 2 villages: Izezhenka (Russian: Изъезженка) and Chernavka (Russian: Чернавка). Thanks to this tactic, the enemy infantry couldn't use these villages as any sort of perimeter defense. The Poles also were breaking down fences, to prepare the field for eventual cavalry charges. The fence between Izezhenka village and Vdovka river (Russian: Вдовка) was completely destroyed. But the Poles didn't catch up to do the same with the fencing between Chernavka and Vdovka. They were only able to create some gaps in the fenceline. But these gaps weren't wide enough for effect. In only a couple of places, they were only wide enough for 10 horses riding knee to knee. Resultantly, at their widest, these gaps had roughly 10-15 m opening at most.

Behind this fence the enemy infantry were deployed – in the initial stage of the battle there was 1 regiment (consisting of 5 companies) of German infantry serving under Reinhold Taube. All together 400 musketeers and pikemen. Opposing this regiment, was deployed Mikołaj Struś' hussar banner (200 portions). On the left wing of Taube's regiment, and behind it, were deployed reiters.

The overall shape of the terrain was favorable for the Poles. The forest and Vdovka river to the west and Gzhat river to the east, limited the placement of the battle to a narrow (about 1,5 km wide) field / passageway. The result of this was the enemy couldn't utilize its huge, numerical superiority to outflank the Polish forces. Thanks to this, although the Russian-Swedish army outnumbered the Polish one 7 to 1, only a small part of these soldiers could fight at once. This brings to mind the historical Spartans cleverly utilizing the limiting tight pass at Thermopylae against the Persians resulting in a similar tactic.

Someone might think that this might also be as favorable for the Muscovites as well. Comparatively speaking, the quality of Russian troops was far behind those of the Polish forces. The only hope was in foreigners. However, large numbers of foreigners had poor morale. During the battle some of them (like Jonann Conradh Linck von Thunburg's soldiers) lacked the will to fight at all. It was the result of the problems with salary, which should have been, (but wasn't), paid before the battle. It was also the masterful effect of Polish psychological diversion. Before the battle, at many times, the Poles (and Żółkiewski himself), advised and encouraged the foreign mercenaries to join the Polish army.



Pic. 15. Stanisław Żółkiewski with his guard in the battle of Klushino – the fragment of the 17th c. painting “The Battle of Klushino” by Szymon Boguszowicz (photo courtesy of Bartosz Siedlar).

Before the battle commenced, the Polish knights heard out the Hetman's speech. Then, with trumpets blaring, and kettledrums beaten, the army's priest blessed the Polish soldiers and they charged home, directly at the enemy. The initial conflict of the battle was the charge of Zborowski's hussar vs Evert Horn's Finns. Henry Brereton, who, very likely, fought in the battle, described it in this way:

„[...] the vangard he [Jakob Pontusson de la Gardie] gaue to Edward Horn a full Souldier and a braue Commaunder with his Regiment of Fynlanders, who were the first that stode the Poles charge. But being ouercharged by the Poles number of Launciers, they fled, scarce abiding the charge.”

The battle had commenced and first blood was drawn...



Pic. 16. The engagement of Aleksander Zborowski's hussars with cuirassiers – the fragment of the 17th c. Painting "The Battle of Klushino" by Szymon Boguszowicz (photo courtesy of Bartosz Siedlar).

Being thoroughly trounced by the hussars' charge and no further stomach for the fight, the Finns fled in disarray, however, the French, Flemish, English and Scottish cuirassiers and arquebusiers (both cavalries were referred to as 'rajtarzy' / reiters by the Poles) checked the advance of the Poles. The fierce fighting in that location lasted longer than the engagement vs Taube's infantry.

However, the most extreme and difficult engagements were those embittered conflicts against Taube's pike and shot regiment. Deployed behind the fence, it was an extremely difficult position to break. Compounding the issue, the afore mentioned gaps in the fence weren't wide enough, so the hussars, initially, had to charge the fence itself (horses' chests were breaking right through the fenceline!) and only after that, could they then charge the enemy's pikes. Incredibly, all of this occurred while under enemy fire, which was given at unbelievably point blank range; so close, that according to Polish sources, as the musketeers fired, their weapons were virtually coming into direct contact with hussars' horses!

With fortitude and élan, the husaria were shattering and splintering the fences and charging the pike formations, but in three charges, they were unable to smash German infantry. Unbelievably, during the entire battle, Mikołaj Struś' hussar banner, lost: 1 wounded lieutenant, and four of his own horses: (2 wounded, 2 killed). And apart from this: two hussars were killed and eight wounded, 1 missing in action; twenty horses killed and seven wounded, with one horse also missing in action. Most likely, the bulk of the casualties were caused by the combat engagement vs Taube's infantry, which is a testament of their efficiency and vicissitude.

The Swedish chronicler Johan Widekindi indicates, that in the initial stage of the battle, the Swedish army lost 50 soldiers killed. But this is the number of casualties not only of Taube's infantry, but also the cavalry who fought alongside the infantry. A Russian source ('Летописная книга') claims that the Germans were losing pikes (due to their breaking apart), for which (those pikes) were their only hope for a relief (of defense).



Fig. 17. The combat between Mikołaj Struś' hussars and Taube's infantry – the fragment of the 17th c. painting "The Battle of Klushino" by Szymon Boguszowicz (photo courtesy of Bartosz Siedlar).

Fortunately for the hussars, the delayed Polish Haiduks (Żółkiewski's and Struś' banners of infantry) and 2 cannons / falconets finally arrived on the battlefield. The first salvo from a close distance performed by 2 Polish cannons and 200 guns dropping a few Germans to the ground. The Germans returned fire. Their barrage killed merely two or three Haiduks. (This gives us food for thought concerning the efficiency of this period's long-arms, and the soldiers wielding them, especially at close distance). Although the exchange of fire was relatively bloodless, it was the follow-up cold-steel charge by the Polish Haiduks with sabers in hand (Haiduks were most likely supported by hussars), which resulted in the German retreat. Fortunately for Taube's infantrymen, the French and the English reiters held the Polish rout, so the Germans were not entirely massacred. The bulk of them fled to the nearby forest.

It was now the time to break the Reiters. They fought bravely and courageously so far. After the battle, in the letter to the king, Żółkiewski particularly praised the French cavalrymen very highly. But this time a new, two-pronged pincer-charge (from both the Reiters' front and left flanks) by the Polish cavalry, decimated most of the Reiters' resistance.

It is interesting to note, that the Reiters were fighting with guns to this point. Some sources claim that by this time, three volleys were discharged so far. Now, in this two-sided charge, the Reiters used only their swords. Could this be the result of their guns being already discharged by the time of the Husaria's charge, preventing them from time to adequately re-load?

Additionally, however, many Polish Hussars hadn't used their primary weapon (lances) yet. The Hussar lance was the weapon, which when struck home, was broken, shattered, and

splintered. After just a couple of charges, even those hussars in the deepest ranks no longer had any remaining lances to draw from, as they all were broken. Only of the hussars, who hadn't yet charged too many times so far, were able to still wield lances in this two-pronged charge. The balance of Hussars used their pallasches (a saber-hilted, cut-and-thrust type straight-broadsword) and koncerz swords. A Koncerz was a long (even up to 1.8 m) rapier-like thrusting weapon, used like a secondary demi-lance to pierce / penetrate through chain mail or light armor. According to the specification of Polish hussars written around 1640 for Spaniards, to pierce plate armor, hussars applied koncerz swords to pommels of their saddles and then charged at a high velocity.



Pic. 18. Hussar and koncerz. In this way Hussars used their koncerz swords to pierce enemy armors (photo courtesy of Andrzej Jaroszyński).

Of those hussars, who still had lances in the charge, having broken them, they then 'caught' their sabers. That is, their sabers often were attached to lanyards which dangled down at their wrists during the charge. This way they were 'immediately' ready to use.



Pic. 19. Hussars with sabres attached to lanyards and wrists – the fragment of the 17th c. painting “The battle of Klushino” by Szymon Boguszowicz (photo courtesy of Bartosz Siedlar).



Pic. 20. Hussar with a sabre attached to a lanyard and a wrist (photo courtesy of the author).

Polish Hussars also possessed firearms. It was their obligatory weapon. But there is no contemporary records of their being used by the husaria in the Battle of Klushino. Hussars used firearms only in special occasions, preferring the cold steel in an ordinary fight.



Pic. 21. Hussar utilizing a pistol (photo courtesy of Wojciech Śniatecki).

When lances of Polish Husaria were extremely long (they were known to be up to 6.2 m long), the Hussars wielded them in a 'tok' (this tok is a sort of strapped leather 'shoe' for a lance). In this way, lances were 'lighter' and easier balanced for hussars. And thanks to the tok, the impact of a striking lance was then transformed to the saddle rather than to the Hussars' arm.



Pic. 22. The lance in the tok (photo courtesy of the author)

Of the sources known to me and the painting of the battle, there is no clearly defined indication or illustrations, that this manner of lance-wielding was used at Klushino. It 'might' indicate, that some (many? most of? all?) Hussars at Klushino hadn't used the longest of lances they had in their long illustrious history. This might also explain why Struś' Hussars had encountered such serious issues with breaking Taube's pikemen.

Let's go back to the two-sided charge of Hussars. It was plausible to consider, that because some Husaria finally forced their way through, breaching the fence-line, (which was situated on the left wing of Reiters), that, the fence between Chernavka and Prechistoye (Russian: Пречистое) villages (look at the [Map 3](#)) gave way enough to complete the action sufficiently. Also interesting to note was that the commander of the entire Swedish army, Jakob Pontusson de la Gardie, fled during this action.

The two-sided Husaria charge against the Reiter cavalry occurred simultaneously with another ongoing action. When the Hussars forced the fence between Chernavka and Prechistoye, one element of them attacked through the Reiters, while the second element attacked the vanguard of the Russian cavalry, which was commanded by Vasili Buturlin (Russian: Василий Иванович Бутурлин). This was the first action against the actual Russian troops in this battle. All sources written by participants of the battle confirm that the vanguard of the Russian cavalry fled, virtually without any resistance. At this time, the balance of only Russian troops under Commander-in-chief Dmitry Shuisky were inclined to give fight. They were deployed in front of the Russian camp.



Pic. 23. Russian cavalry in the battle of Klushino – the fragment of the 17th c. painting “The battle of Klushino” by Szymon Boguszowicz (photo courtesy of Bartosz Siedlar).

Seeing the hasty Russian retreat and realizing that the Swedish Commander-in-chief also fled the field, many of the beaten but impressed French Reiters actually switched sides and joined forces with the Polish army. An anonymous English cavalryman, who fought in this battle in Crale's company, described the moment in this way:

„none but wee strangers were left in the field, and of us there was not in all, aboute two thousand, and of that number there were aboute six hundred French horsemen, who, seeing both Generall gone, and the Russes fled, turned their backs upon us, and ranne away too most valiantly, yet not out of the field, but to (against) the enemy. Then were wee not aboute twelve or fourteene hundred at the most left [...]”

The anonymous cavalryman probably exaggerated the number of Frenchmen who joined to the Poles. The total number of French cavalry in this battle was 600. Polish sources state that some Frenchmen joined up to the Poles much later, so apparently, not all of them escaped or joined sides to the Poles when Russian vanguard and Jakob de la Gardie fled.

It was still not yet the end of the battle however. Russian forces, under Dmitry Shuisky,

deployed themselves in front of the Russian camp, and were still ready to fight. And although the Poles broke most of reiters so far, six English-Scottish companies of cavalry still resisted. According to the anonymous English cavalryman, apart from these six companies of cavalry:

„there was no left in the field about six or seven hundred, which were foot-men. And of these, one half was English, one half Dutch, who kept only a certain place by a wood side, barricaded about with wagons”

The English-Scottish cavalry was able somehow, to withstand the next 3 Polish charges, but:

“at the fourth time, for want of powers to second them (which the French should have done) all our six companies were scattered and overthrown with the loss of few of our colours.”

Samuel Maskiewicz, who also participated in this engagement, described the final charge against the Reiters in detail. According to him, two companies of Reiters tried to perform the *caracole* maneuver. The first rank fired at his unit (prince Janusz Porycki's hussar banner) and began to withdraw to reload their weapons. The second rank in that time, moved forward to fire. Seeing this, the Hussars (no longer possessing their lances), charged the Reiters with only pallasches in hand. The Reiters fled and mixed through the Russians who were deployed behind them (in front of the Russian camp). So began the commencement of the Russian army's panic. Routed soldiers were fleeing back to their camp in wild disorder. The Poles, chasing them, broke into the Russian camp without any resistance from the Russian side. The Russians, seeing the Poles in their camp, were creating further gaps in 'kobylice' (the aforementioned anti-cavalry defenses) hastily leaving the camp. The Poles left the camp too, and continued a routing, yet time-consuming chase after the Muscovites, at the distance of over 1 Polish mile (over 7 km) from the camp! When the Poles eventually abandoned the Russian camp, some Russians returned back to the camp and fortified (surrounded by kobylice) it again.

As this took place, other Polish cavalry chased fleeing Reiters (some Polish Hussars chased the fleeing Reiters at the distance of a half Polish mile; while others chased to the distance of even 1.5 Polish miles, i.e. roughly 10 km), resulting in most of the Polish cavalry having left the battlefield. Only 2 Hussar banners (Kazanowski's and Wilkowski's) stayed at hand with Hetman Żółkiewski.

The enemy cannon, from both camps, now opened fire on these 2 banners. Fifteen cannon, shooting for some time, didn't cause any great damage in the Polish ranks. Kazanowski's

banner lost only 2 killed and 2 wounded horses. Wilkowski's banner suffered: 5 soldiers lost and at least 4 horses killed.

During the bombardment, Taube's infantry (those German soldiers who withdrew to the forest) now returned to the Swedish camp. The Polish cavalry was slowly returning from the chasing rout. The Poles were extremely tired. By now, they already had to march all through the night, then, fight a battle for several hours with a fresh enemy, charging them up to 8 – 10 times, and now, they just gave an extensive chase to a fleeing enemy at long distance (from 3.5 to virtually 10 km). It was about 10 a. m, when the last Poles returned back to Żółkiewski, who, in the meantime, ordered to hear a mass at the battle field.

Żółkiewski had planned to gather all his troops and then attack the Swedish camp. But before all the Poles returned, Andrzej Firlej's Hussar banner (Hussars of this unit somehow were able to preserve their lances; it's plausible to surmise that they probably hadn't charged too many times so far), followed by Krzysztof Wasiczyński's Hussars (who were completely devoid of any remaining lances), now charged the fortified Swedish camp which was defended by pikemen.



Pic. 24. Hussars and pikemen (photo courtesy of Łukasz Wojtczak).

They not only succeeded in charging the 'kobylice', (anti-cavalry devices) but also the pikemen as well! This virtually incredible achievement of Husaria cavalry is described in three Polish sources. Unfortunately, they don't explain *how* the hussars were able to do it. Did they jump over

the kobylice? And how did they defeat the pikemen? It is currently not known. It is only known that they actually accomplished it and that these broken pikemen also wore armor and stood their ground in the battle order, so they were prepared for a stand-up fight well-before the Poles charged. It is also known that after a fierce fight within the camp, with the enemy outnumbering Poles many times over, the Polish Hussars had to eventually withdraw from the camp. Thanks to the register of casualties of the Polish army, we also know that Andrzej Firlej's Hussar banner lost in the entire battle: 1 killed and 4 wounded men, while only 4 horses killed and 16 wounded. I think the bulk of these casualties were caused in this single action alone.

Finally, some time later, all the Poles returned back to the battlefield. They regrouped and were ordered by Żółkiewski to now move toward Swedish camp. At seeing this, foreign soldiers (both, singly and small groups) began to desert and join sides to the Poles. Żółkiewski halted the advance of the Polish army. Then negotiations began. Evert Horn and Jakob Pontusson de la Gardie tried to prevent them (attempting to break the negotiations), but their soldiers obeyed neither orders nor requests. They simply didn't want to fight any further. Seeing this, Jakob de la Gardie warned Dmitry Shuisky that the situation in his camp had grown beyond his control. The Russian commander-in-chief's reaction was a rather quick one. He fled from his camp, followed rapidly by his soldiers. To avert another Polish chase, the Russians tossed valuables about in their camp. And indeed, many Poles did not chase the Russians, but, began to plunder the Russian camp. And, they weren't alone. The Foreign mercenary soldiers also joined them. However, some Poles simply couldn't resist, and so, with honor in hand, chased the fleeing Russians anyway. It was the longest chase in the entire battle. The Russians were soundly chased to a distance of up to 3 Polish miles (over 21 km) from the camp. This pursuit concluded the battle.

In the meantime the negotiations with the foreign soldiers also concluded. Those who wanted to return back to their homes were allowed to do so. They (at least some 100 men) went to Smolensk to ask the Polish king about acquiring free passage back to their countries. And those who wanted to continue soldiering and join Żółkiewski's army were also free to do so. This option, apparently, was the most popular among the foreigners. Estimates indicate some 2,000 – 2,500 foreign soldiers joined the Polish army. The others, from those who survived the battle (some 300 – 400 soldiers), joined with Horn and la Gardie and struck out for Pogorelye (Russian: Погорелье; Polish: Pohorełoje Grodiszcze) where ailing French Commander, Pierre de la Ville, with 2 companies of his French cavalry, were located.

Casualties

There are several sources (including 2 detailed registers) which inform about the Polish casualties. But all these sources contain some disadvantages. For example, the detailed register „Regestr pobicia Towarzystwa w potrzebie pod Kluszyńem za Carowym Zamiesciem mil 2 dnia 4 Lipca”, which goes on to describe about prices of some lost weaponry and horses, doesn't include casualties of the Haiduks and there is also missing, data for 7 banners of cavalry.

There are also some differences between the registers of casualties as well. The registers were written at different times, so the one written later, gave higher numbers, because some wounded men had already by then, died of their wounds.

In any case, after the detailed analysis of various sources known to me, I can say that estimated Polish casualties during the battle were roughly: 80 men killed and 100 wounded, while 200 horses were killed and 200 wounded.

Data for the casualties of Swedish and Russian troops are much less precise; sources vary highly. According to them, the Swedish army lost between 100 and 2,000 killed in the battle. The highest number is probably exaggerated, because the members of the battle give lower estimations (between 200 and 1,200 killed men). The lowest number (100) is also most likely false, because according to that anonymous English cavalryman, only in *his* company of horse:

“Captaine Crale was shote in the knee, and within a short time after, dyed of that wound; not above twelve of his companie escaping.”

So, only this single company of cavalry lost some tens soldiers.

According to various sources, the Russians lost between 2,000 and 15,000 men. The casualties of Russians in the actual battle were minimal. Much higher losses were actually caused in the two long pursuits. And the only one certain thing I can tell about Russian casualties is this: The rest is only a speculation. In my opinion, the highest number is an exaggeration. The participant of the battle, the anonymous Polish Hussar from Zborowski's pułk, stated that the Russians lost up to 2,000. His various data are highly credible, so this number might also be accurate. This number probably includes not only soldiers but also the camp followers.

The aftermath of the battle

Just after the battle, the Polish army, bearing great war-trophies, returned to their camp at Tsaryovo-Zaymishche. Fortunately for the Poles, Waluyew hadn't noticed the great division of numbers of Polish troops and remained inactive in the meantime. When the Poles informed him about their great victory, Waluyew didn't believe the news. Żółkiewski gave him permission to send his own soldiers to the battlefield. Additionally, the Poles showed him captured banners and prisoners of war. It was then that he believed Żółkiewski. After longer negotiations, Waluyew and his army ultimately capitulated. The way to Moscow was now opened. There was no army; there was no will to hold the Poles. The Polish army, with its new allies (foreigners and Russians who joined up with the Poles) advanced on to Moscow. Żółkiewski commenced negotiations with the Muscovite boyars, who imprisoned their Tsar Vasili IV (on the 27th of July, 1610) and then delivered him into Żółkiewski's hands. Vasili IV was sent back, to the Polish king. He died in Poland two years later. The new Tsar was elected (on the 27th of July, 1610). He was Władysław Vasa (Polish: Władysław Waza), the son of the Polish king. Władysław held the elected title of Tsar of Russia until 1635. The Polish army entered Moscow (on the 29th of September, 1610) and stayed there until the 6th of November, 1612.

Such were the consequences of the battle of Klushino, which was the top military achievement of the Polish Hetman Stanisław Żółkiewski, and one of the greatest victories of Polish Winged Hussars. So it would appear that the predictions by the old woman, and the dream of a great victory were, after all, within the fate and destiny of Stanisław Żółkiewski, one of the greatest military commanders of Polish History.

Appendix 1

The Polish army in the Battle of Klushino 1610 (Under Commander-in-Chief Stanisław Żółkiewski)

Pułk (commander)	banner		Number (portions)	Type of unit
	Nominal commander / rotamaster	Real commander (either rotamaster or lieutenant), i.e., who actually led the banner into battle		
Nominal: Stanisław Żółkiewski Actual: Janusz Porycki	Stanisław Żółkiewski	Lieutenant Mikołaj Górski	250	Hussars
	Janusz Porycki	Lieutenant	130	Hussars
	Krzysztof Zbaraski	Lieutenant	100	Hussars
	Aleksander Bałaban	Rotamaster	100	Hussars
	Jan Daniłowicz	?	100	Hussars
	Stanisław Chwalibog	Rotamaster	100	Petyhorcy
	4 Banners of Krzysztof Zbaraski (so called 'Pohrebiszczanie')	Piaskowski	400	Cossacks
	Stanisław Żółkiewski	Lieutenant	100	Infantry
Mikołaj Struś	Mikołaj Struś	Lieutenant	200	Hussars
	Mikołaj Herbut	Rotamaster	100	Hussars
	Adam Olizar Wołczkowicz	?	100	Hussars
	Niewiadomski	Rotamaster	100	Cossacks
	Mikołaj Struś	Lieutenant	100	Infantry
Marcin Kazanowski	Marcin Kazanowski	Lieutenant	100	Hussars
	Andrzej Firlej	Rotamaster	100	Hussars
	Janusz Skumin Tyszkiewicz	?	100	Hussars
	Spodwiłowski	Lieutenant	100	Cossacks
	Abraham Zylicki	Rotamaster	150	Cossacks
Nominal: Ludwik Weiher Actual: Samuel Dunikowski	Ludwik Weiher	Lieutenant Grzegorz Trajan	100	Hussars
	Samuel Dunikowski	Lieutenant	100	Hussars
	Krzysztof Wasiczyński	Rotamaster	100	Hussars
Aleksander Zborowski	Aleksander Zborowski (White Banner)	Lieutenant Stanisław Gruszewski	500	Hussars
	Aleksander Zborowski (Black Banner)	Lieutenant		Hussars
	Aleksander Zborowski (b.d.)	Lieutenant		Hussars
	Stanisław Bąk Lanckoroński	Rotamaster	200	Hussars
	Mikołaj Marchocki	Rotamaster	100	Hussars
	Szymon Kopyczyński	Rotamaster	200	Hussars
	Marek Wilamowski	Rotamaster	100	Hussars
	Wilkowski	Lieutenant Józef Chłuski	100	Hussars
	Andrzej Młocki	Rotamaster	200	Hussars
Undetermined which pułk was Wysokiński Banner	Wysokiński	Rotamaster	100	Cossacks

And 2 cannons (falconets).

Appendix 2

The Swedish army in the Battle of Klushino

Type	Commander	Number
Cavalry	English – Scottish Regiment under Samuel Colbron Commanders of companies in this Regiment: 1. Samuel Colbron (vel Cockburn, Coburn, Koburn, Cobron) 2. John Craul (vel Crale, Crail, Kreyel) 3. Hugo Kendricke (vel Hugh Kendrick, Kendrich) 4. Benson 5. Thomas Creyton (vel Crichton, Creighton) 6. Carre	6 Companies / 500 horses
	Nominal: Pierre de la Ville (actual - unknown)	2 French companies / 200 horses
	Nominal: Pierre de la Ville? (actual - unknown)	4 French companies / 400 horses
	Evert Horn	200 Finns
	Posse	200 Finns
	Johann Jost von Quarnhemb	150 Germans
	Glazerabi	180 Flemish
Infantry	Nominal: Samuel Colbron (actual: unknown)	4 Companies /500 Englishmen (and Dutchmen?)
	Johann Conradh Linck von Thunburg	5 Companies / 600 Germans
	Reinhold Taube	5 Companies / 400 Germans
Artillery	-	4
Total sum: 1,830 Horses, 1500 Infantrymen, 4 Cannon. These are actual numbers of soldiers. The on paper strength was roughly 6,000. Some primary sources claim that the on paper strength of this army was actually 10,000.		

Further reading

[Sikora, R. *Kłuszyn 1610. Rozważania o bitwie* \(Warsaw, 2010\).](#)