

● The National Bank of Poland is putting into circulation coins of the series "History of the Polish Cavalry", depicting the hussar of the 17th century, of the following face values:

200 zł – struck in proof finish, in gold,

10 zł – struck in proof finish, in silver,

on **23 January 2009**

2 zł – struck in standard finish, in Nordic Gold,

on **21 January 2009**

The National Bank of Poland

holds the exclusive right to issue the currency

in the Republic of Poland.

In addition to issuing **coins and banknotes of general circulation**, the NBP issues collector coins and banknotes.

The issue of collector items is designed both to commemorate events, anniversaries and well-known personalities and to disseminate knowledge about Polish culture, science and tradition.

Since 1996, the NBP has also been issuing **occasional Nordic Gold coins of 2 zloty denomination**.

All coins and banknotes

issued by the NBP are legal tender in Poland.

COINS ISSUED IN 2009 COINS ISSUED IN 2009

Since 2006, the NBP has been issuing coins of the series "History of the Polish Cavalry". The series features 200 zloty gold coins, 10 zloty silver coins and 2 zloty Nordic Gold coins. The "Hussar – 17th Century" is the third theme in the series.

Information on the schedule of issue and the sale of coins can be found at the websites:

www.nbp.pl

www.numizmatyka.nbportal.pl

The coins have been struck at the Polish Mint Plc in Warsaw.

Edited and printed: NBP Printing House

NBP

National Bank of Poland

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HISTORY OF THE POLISH CAVALRY

– the Hussar –
17th Century –



History of the Polish Cavalry: the Hussar – 17th Century

- "Usars are the most beautiful cavalry in Europe, in terms of men, splendid horses, brilliance of dress and bravery of horses..." – François-Paulin Dalairac wrote about Polish hussars in his book (1699) on the reign of Polish King, John III Sobieski.
- The origin of the Polish hussars (winged cavalymen) dates back to the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. The first hussars were Serbs and Hungarians who came to Poland to fight against the Turks. Hired as mercenaries, they formed cavalry units and celebrated their first victory as early as in 1506 when they defeated the considerable Tartar forces in the battle of Kleetsk.
- Initially, hussars wore no armours, and their bodies were only protected by large wing-shaped wooden shields and by top hat-shaped headgear. Against weapons of the enemy, hussars carried a characteristic long light lance. Early hussars, then only a light cavalry, became famous after defeating the Muscovite army in the Battle of Orsha in 1514.
- From mid-16th century, hussars became the main striking force of the Polish army. During the reign of King Stefan Batory (1576-1586), the hussars took its final shape, known to all Poles. From that time on, hussars began to wear torso-protecting cuirass, as well as zischägge helmets or capelines. Pauldrons (shoulder armour) and bracers were also elements of the protective armour. Up to five metre-long lances were the hussar's main weapon; they owed their lightness and durability to their peculiar design – the centre of the lance was hollow. Around 2.5-3 metre long pennants representing colours of

a unit were fixed below the lance's spearhead. The pennants often featured the knight's cross, the symbol of cavalry for centuries.

- When the lances had broken, hussars used estocks in combat – a 160 centimetre long stabbing sword able to pierce chainmaille armour worn by the Turks and Tartars. Sometimes the broadsword, a cold steel weapon with straight blade used for slashing and thrusting, was strapped under the cavalryman's saddle. Hussars also carried firearms, usually a pair of pistols mounted to the saddle's holsters. However, in direct combat hussars would fight with sabres designed exclusively for this formation; the sabre had a closed hilt with the so-called "thumb-ring" at the cross-guard in which the thumb was placed. This design allowed the hussar to make efficacious cuts which were also executed with great precision.
- What set the Polish hussars apart were wings which had been the formation's identification mark since the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. Initially, the wings were attached to the horseman's saddle and later they were also fixed to the hussar's backplate. The wings were mainly worn during parades, whereas in combat hussars occasionally wore not very tall single wings. Apart from feathers, hussar companions used to wear animal (tiger, leopard) skin capes over plate armours. Wolf skins, as well as bear and lynx skins, occasionally replaced by embroidered Eastern style capes called "kilimki" and burkas, were popular among commanders of the hussar units.
- In addition to plate armour, a new type of armour was developed towards

the end of the 17th century – scale armour which consisted of steel scales riveted onto a backing of leather. It was heavier and more expensive than plate armour and provided poorer protection. King John III Sobieski (1674-1696) contributed to the popularity of this type of armour among high commanders as he often wore scale armour and was portrayed wearing it. The scale armour embodied the essence of Sarmatism and was one of its most beautiful symptoms.

- The Battle of Vienna in 1683 was the last victory of the Polish hussars. On the back of changes in combat methods in Europe, the importance of the formation dwindled in the 18th century and hussars participated only in military parades and came to serve as attendants of various ceremonies. For this reason, hussars were often being referred to as "funeral army".
- In 1775, the hussars were disbanded as a combat formation by virtue of the resolution of the Sejm, the lower House of the Polish Parliament, and the companies of hussars and armoured companies were transformed into national cavalry brigades.
- The Polish hussars were a unique phenomenon – seen as an exceptional formation both in the times of glory and later when the legend of the hussars served to cheer the heart, reliving the times of glory of the Polish army.

Witold Głębowski
Polish Military Museum

COINS ISSUED IN 2009 COINS ISSUED IN 2009



FACE VALUE **200** ZŁ

metal **900/1000 Au** ■ finish **proof** ■ diameter **27.00 mm**
weight **15.50 g** ■ mintage (volume) **10,500 pcs**

OBVERSE: At the top, on the right-hand side, an image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland. Below the Eagle, an inscription, 200 ZŁ. Above the Eagle, the notation of the year of issue, 2009. In the middle of the coin, the stylized images of parts of the hussar's gear: zischägge helmet, breastplate, a mace and a lance with a pennant. On the left-hand side and at the bottom, a semicircular inscription: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA. The Mint's mark, M/W, under the Eagle's left leg.

REVERSE: A stylized image of the hussar of the 17th century, on horseback, in armour, with wings and leopard skin on the back, holding a lance with a pennant. On the left-hand side and at the bottom, a semicircular inscription: HUSARZ – XVII w.

Coin designed by: **ANDRZEJ NOWAKOWSKI**



FACE VALUE **10** ZŁ

metal **925/1000 Ag** ■ finish **proof** ■ dimensions: width **32.00 mm**,
length **22.40 mm** ■ weight **14.14 g** ■ mintage (volume) **100,000 pcs**

OBVERSE: At the top, on the right-hand side, an image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland against the stylized hussar's wing; on the left side of the Eagle, an inscription, 10 ZŁ; below the Eagle, the notation of the year of issue, 2009. Underneath, on the left-hand side, stylized images of parts of the Hussar's gear: a pennant, zischägge helmet and a mace. At the bottom, an inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA/POLSKA. The Mint's mark, M/W, under the Eagle's left leg.

REVERSE: A stylized image of the hussar of the 17th century, on horseback, in armour, with hussar's wings and leopard skin on the back, holding a lance with a pennant. On the right-hand side, a vertical inscription, HUSARZ – XVII w.

Coin designed by: **ANDRZEJ NOWAKOWSKI**



FACE VALUE **2** ZŁ

metal **CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy** ■ finish **standard** ■ diameter **27.00 mm**
weight **8.15 g** ■ mintage (volume) **1,400,000 pcs**

OBVERSE: An image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland; on the sides of the Eagle the notation of the year of issue, 20-09; below the Eagle an inscription, ZŁ 2 ZŁ, in the rim an inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA, preceded and followed by six pearls. The Mint's mark, M/W, under the Eagle's left leg.

REVERSE: A stylized image of the hussar of the 17th century, on horseback, in armour, with the hussar's wing and leopard skin on the back, carrying a lance with a pennant. On the left-hand side, a semicircular inscription, HUSARZ – XVII w.

ON THE EDGE: an inscription, NBP, repeated eight times, every second one inverted by 180 degrees, separated by stars.

Averse designed by: **EWA TYC-KARPIŃSKA**
Reverse designed by: **ANDRZEJ NOWAKOWSKI**