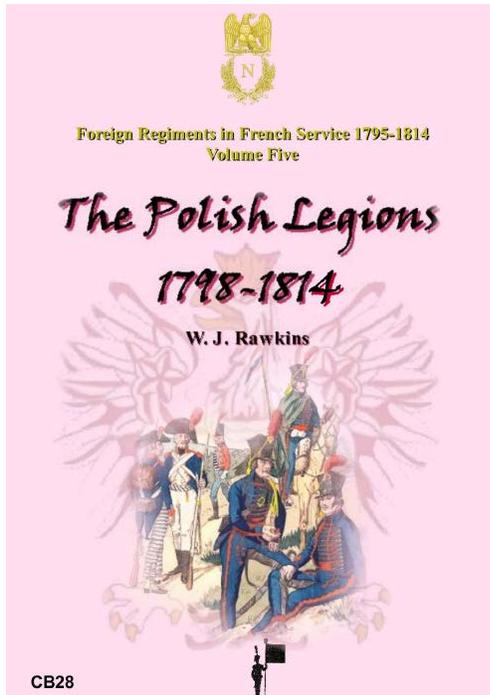


The Napoleon Series Reviews

Rawkins, W.J. *Foreign Regiments in French Service 1795 – 1814 Vol. 5: the Polish Legions*. History Bookman, 2017. E-Book. 234 pages. £4



This is the 16th book in Bill Rawkins' revamped [Armies and Uniforms of the Napoleonic Wars](#) series. Recent books include ones on the [Austrian Army](#), [Swiss Troops in the Service of France](#), and the [Royal Saxon Army](#). Before I continue I need to stipulate that *The Polish Legions* covers the Polish troops in the French Army and not the troops that were part of the [Duchy of Warsaw](#).

Like its predecessors, *The Polish Legions* follows the same basic format. It begins with a 65 page history of their service starting with the partitions of Poland in 1732, 1792, and 1794, and the formation of the *Legii Polskie* under Jan Dabrowski in Italy. There are 16 pages on the early service of the Poles in Italy, along the Danube, and in Haiti; and another 12 pages on their activities in 1806 – 1807. The book also includes a dozen pages on the history of the Vistula Legion in Spain and Russia, and finishes

with a look at the Polish units in the Imperial Guard.

The majority of *The Polish Legions* (150 pages) examines in detail the organization and uniforms of the various units that formed Napoleon's Polish Legions. These include

- The Polish Legions in Italy 1797-1799
- The Danube Légion 1799-1802
- Demi-Brigades 'Polonais' 1801-1803
- Lanciers Polonais 1801-1807
- Hussards Polonais 1807
- Légion du Nord 1806-1807
- Légion Polacco-Italienne
- Légion de la Vistula 1808-1813
- Lanciers de la Légion de la Vistula 1808-1811

The organization section of each unit covers the unit headquarters, the subordinate headquarters, battalion structure, and company organization. This is for all the units, including the pre-1800 Legions!

Where the book shines is the discussion of the uniforms and equipment. Each unit has separate sections on headgear, coats, breeches, and equipment, not only for the men, but also for the non-commissioned officers and officers! A typical entry is this one for the infantry battalion of the *Legii Polski* in 1797

COAT The In May 1797 the infantry battalions of the *Legii Polski* were re-organised and officially issued with their first uniform of the design approved by both Bonaparte and Dąbrowski reflecting the Polish heritage. Dąbrowski appears to have pushed through the issue of the new 2 June 1797 regulation uniforms and by late June most battalions had received the first supplies of their new garments. The coat was styled after the traditional Polish 'Kurtka' and was dark blue [17] with facing colours individual to each battalion, each of which was chosen to emulate a former regiment of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, in the hope that each battalion would be the cadre for a new national regiment. The coat had short tails, only just covering the buttocks the turnbacks were triangular and were commonly stitched back to stop them ripping loose. The inner edges of the tails were straight and piped with the battalion distinctive and the tails were decorated with a vertical pocket piped with the facing colour with three points and three buttons. The coat had plastron lapels fastened back with seven battalion coloured buttons either brass or white metal, usually tin, and a high, upright Swedish pattern fall collar.

In many cases the narrative is followed by a color plate of the items discussed.



When there are multiple subordinate units wearing the same uniform within the Legion or Regiment being discussed, Mr. Rawkins also includes charts showing their different facings. Unfortunately the chart was too complicated to copy for this review.

In addition to uniforms, *The Polish Legions* includes color images of 15 flags carried by the Poles.

A hallmark of the Rawkins uniform series is how lavishly they are illustrated. *The Polish Legions* is no exception. It has over 100 color plates, as well as two color maps. These illustrations are by some of the best known military artists, including:

Henri Boisselier
Ludwig Scharf
Richard Knötel
C. F. Weiland
January Suchodolski
Eugène Bucquoy
Constant Leinhart & René Humbert
Kajetan Saryusa Walski
JW Schäfer
Walery Radzikowski
Louis Braun
André Jouineau
Jean-Pierre Perconte
JOB
Peter Bunde
Jan Chelminski
Herbert Knötel
Albert Rigondaud
Wojciech & Juliusz Kossac

The Polish Legions is the perfect reference book for the wargamer or modeler! It can be ordered from the [History Bookman](#) and is available on CD-ROM or as a pdf, which can be sent immediately.

Reviewed by [Robert Burnham](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: September 2017