

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume I

The Regiment of the Saxon Duchies – Chapter 4

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THE
REGIMENT OF THE FRANKFURT

CHAPTER IV

THE PRUSSIAN CAMPAIGN IN 1806

The Prince-Primate had scarcely taken possession of his new state, when the Emperor demanded his Confederation contingent. Great was the excitement in the principality: the bourgeoisie of the former free cities of Frankfurt and Regensburg had hitherto been exempt from all military service; they protested energetically against the unexpected baptism which this Confederation gave them at the birth of which they had so much applauded. As conscription was not regularly established until 1810, the Emperor and the burghers were satisfied. The sons of these latter were exempted; the Jews were so by right, for they had always been denied all military virtue; only foreigners and sons of soldiers were raised. These recruits, placed in cadre with the old municipal troop of Frankfurt, strengthened the corps of the Chasseurs of Albini, serving for the formation of the battalion claimed by the Emperor.

In 1813, when it was a question of crushing wounded France, the same German writers who judged the raising of this single battalion exorbitant did not fail to find the organization sublime on behalf of the Allies in the Grand Duchy of Frankfurt, of three battalions of war, three landwehr battalions, not to mention the free mounted and foot companies of jäger...

How donkeys are willing to kick an expiring lion!

Major-General Zweyer, charged by Dalberg with taking the direction of military affairs -- with the recommendation of having to serve as a model for the other princes of the Confederation -- assembled the battalion of war at Aschaffenburg. Comprising 1,204 men and 17 horses, this battalion, under the command of Colonel Weinrich, had 9 companies, including:

1 company of grenadiers,

7 -- of chasseurs,
and 1 -- of voltigeurs.

The companies had from 125 to 139 men, and the cost of maintenance of the battalion was to be 11,502 florins, 35 kreuzers 3/4 a month.

The point of Wurzburg was of the greatest importance for the army as a depot; also the Emperor writes from Mainz, on 30 September, to the Prince-Primate:

Brother, I received your letter. The movements of the Prussians oblige me to speed up mine. A large quantity of troops arrive at every moment at Wurzburg, I would like you to be able to send 20,000 quintals of wheat or flour. The price will be promptly paid at the country rate. The promptness necessary to get these meals to Wurzburg alone makes me decide to write to your Highness. I ask him to instruct one of his ministers to bring this supply to this place as soon as possible.

I also beg him to send me, by the officer I am sending him, the news he may have of Cassel, Fulde, and the surrounding countries. I cannot give you any news of the negotiations with Prussia. It appears that there is a Prussian courier who crossed with me en route. However, I beg you to be without anxiety, never to doubt my constant and firm will to protect the Confederation and especially to please you.

The next day, October the 1st, the Emperor sent Augereau, whom he ordered to inspect the battalion of the Prince-Primate:

...You will leave with your army corps, that of Hesse-Darmstadt, and what you will be able to gather of the troops of Nassau and the Prince-Primate, so as to have arrived on the evening of the 4th in Wurzburg...if the Prince Primate still need a few days, they cannot arrive until the 8th at night...

But Augereau, the same day, announced from Frankfurt to the Emperor that:

The troops of the Prince-Primate are not ready and he sends an officer to this prince to invite him to make his arrangements with the greatest celerity.

When Marshal Augereau passed the inspection of the battalion, he found it in a situation which motivated his strongest dissatisfaction: the arms were in a pitiful state, etc. The consequence of this review was that this battalion did not march to the enemy and was simply employed in the service of stages on the lines of communication of the army.

It was Erfurt which was first given as a point of direction to the battalion of Frankfort; a letter from the Emperor to General Clarke, Minister of War, enjoins him, on the 26th of October, to write to the princes of the Confederation to bring together at this point a battalion of the Duchy of Wurzburg, a battalion of the Prince Primate, and a second battalion from Nassau. All these designated troops, not appearing, a second letter, of 28 October, ends thus:

...Write to my ministers about these princes to know why these troops did not arrive...

The Confederation princes were not yet accustomed to mobilize in the rapid manner of Napoleon, and perhaps, for the safety of their states, they would have liked to keep their troops on their territories; a letter from the Emperor to Mortier on the 1st of October, however, showed them that they would be well guarded:

Cousin, on the 4th or 5th of October, you will send officers to the Prince of Nassau, the Prince-Primate, and the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, so that they may know that you command a corps of 28,000 men, arriving in Mainz, and who is specifically charged with protecting their states and the territory of the Confederation of the Rhine...

In short, the battalion of Frankfurt was sent to Erfurt, Brunswick, and Magdeburg. A effective strength summary of 15 November shows it to 970 men present under arms.

It lost one-fifth of its staff and returned to Frankfurt in July 1807. It only had one affair during the campaign; at the time of the uprising of the former dismissed soldiers of Hesse-Cassel, -- at the beginning of the year 1807, -- a troop of these soldiers and countrymen broke down a gate of the small town of Smalkalde and fell on the post composed of soldiers Prince Primate; some were wounded, two were taken prisoner and the rest were chased off... The rebels seized 13 electoral cannons at Mainz. The arrival of General Barbeau, with 2,000 men, soon restored everything to order, and the 13 cannons of the Grand Duchy of Hesse, so badly guarded by the Frankfurters, returned without delay from the road of captivity.

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