

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume I

The Regiment of the Saxon Duchies – Chapter 7

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THE
REGIMENT OF THE FRANKFURT

CHAPTER VII
WAR OF SPAIN (1810)

While the French troops already in Spain occupied the provinces of North and East, two strong armies, with Soult and Massena, marched: one on Andalusia and the other on Portugal.

Soult arrived in Seville and pushed to Cadiz, where the Spanish junta has fled: he found there an unexpected resistance, and spent a year with Victor fighting in the south of the Peninsula.

Massena came to fail before the English lines of Torres-Vedras; he was obliged to fall back on Burgos in 1811.

Suchet, meanwhile, pacified Valencia and Catalonia.

The German Division is numbered with the Army of the North, under the command of Kellermann. Its leader, General Leval, wounded and returned to Madrid, carried the regrets of all: he was provisionally replaced by several successive brigadier generals. Of the 508 men that the Prince Primate battalion counted at the beginning of 1810, only 300 were present under arms.

Leaving for Valladolid on 31 January, the battalion arrived there on 2 February; it stayed there, and on the 15th of that month Lieutenant Colonel von Welsch and Major Fritsch received the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

It was all the more precious to them, -- said Bernays, -- as this decoration of the French troops was not like those obtained in the fumes of a feast...

Kellermann, fearing a landing of the English near Santander, pushed to this side the German Division towards the end of February; but, returning from this alarm, he brought it back to Valladolid, where on 4 March he passed in review of a large part of the Army of the North which had just been concentrated there.

On 15 March, the German Division went to Madrid. Lieutenant-Colonel von Welsch returned to Frankfurt, and his battalion passed under the command of Major Fritsch. General Lorge had been put at the head of the division which was reorganized as follows:

1st *Brigade*: General CHASSÉ (from Holland).

Regiment of Holland.
Regiment of Nassau.

2nd *Brigade*: General von NEUENSTEIN (Baden).

Regiment of Baden.
Battalion of Frankfurt.

The Hessian regiment was at the headquarters of Badajoz.

General Lorge was appointed governor of the province of Toledo, occupied by his division.

During the two years that the battalion of Frankfurt remained in garrison in this province, it did not remain inactive; it had to furnish frequent detachments and did not cease to operate against the guerrillas. In the absence of important events, we will briefly mention the main incidents in which it was involved.

10 *May*. -- Major Fritsch, with the company of grenadiers of the battalion, would relieve at Almagro the Spanish First Regiment of the Line. This regiment enjoyed a deserved reputation for courage; the Spaniards in the service of Joseph knew, indeed, that it was better for them to fall into the hands of the devil than into those of their compatriots of the guerrillas.

The 1st Company was established in the citadel of Manzanares; the 2nd and the half of the 4th at Valdepeñas; the voltigeurs, the 3rd company, and the other half of the 4th at Santa Cruz de Mudela.

21 *May*. -- Lieutenant Heres was massacred with 35 voltigeurs, on the road from Consuegra to Puerto Lápice: only 13 men managed to escape.

We would prefer, -- says Fritsch, in his report on this unhappy event, -- to be in battle under the fire of enemy batteries, rather than having to fight every day against such *enragés* (madmen-the word was in French in the German text).

A few days after, Joseph, in an inspection of all the posts and detachments of the German Division, had himself presented and complimented all the decorated men of the battalion of Frankfurt.

6 *June*. -- Captain Schiller arrived at Almagro, coming from Frankfurt, whence he had gone for nearly eight months; he came with a reinforcement of 160 men, and brought new uniforms for the battalion; these blue uniforms were made in Madrid. The battalion was increased to 500 men.

9 *June*. -- Major Fritsch was promoted to lieutenant-colonel.

27 *June*. -- The guerrillas attack the Almagro post: the Frankfurters had killed 5 and 15 wounded, including the new Lieutenant Colonel Fritsch, hit by a bullet in the thigh.

7 *July*. -- The battalion was concentrated in Manzanares to cover the headquarters of the division.

11 *September*. -- It goes to Valdepeñas to form the escort of a convoy carrying a treasure of 7 million: the guerrillas attack this convoy that nevertheless reached Manzanares safe and sound.

25 *November*. -- An aide-de-camp of the Emperor passed in a grand review the division of Lorge, in the neighborhood of Manzanares.

Fritsch complains, in his letters and his reports, that his troops are gradually melting away because of guerrilla warfare, incessant marches, diseases and even desertion. His report of 12 October ends with a detail that is not without flavor:

...The battalion has from 40 to 50 men at the hospitals, and the medical officer Stoffel is at a standstill, as he is ordinarily drunk-dead at 8 o'clock in the morning. Service is provided by a Baden doctor...

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