

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume I

The Regiment of the Saxon Duchies – Chapter 8

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THE
REGIMENT OF THE FRANKFURT

CHAPTER VIII

WAR OF SPAIN (1811)

Masséna, in his retirement, after his failure in Portugal, delivered the battle of Fuentes de Oñoro; he was replaced by Marmont.

Soult, on the right wing of the Army of the South, took Badajoz from the Spaniards. Wellington settled into siege in front of this city (where the regiment of Hesse was enclosed) and in front of Ciudad-Rodrigo.

Suchet occupied Lerida, Valencia, Tortosa, Tarragona and Morviedro (ancient Sagunto).

The German Division, which received in 1810 about a 2,000 men reinforcements, counted at the beginning of 1811:

5, 673 bayonets,
663 horses,
252 gunners and soldiers of the train.

It had 1,181 men in hospitals and 401 prisoners of war. The Dutch Regiment no longer appeared in its ranks: Holland was reunited with France, and its troops, now French, were distributed among the national troops.

The battalion of Frankfurt returned to its two garrisons of Manzanares and Almagro, after a short posting at Toledo.

The governor of the province organized a large raid in the district of Almaden, where the richest mercury mines in the world are; there was a booty of fifteen millions, which the battalion escorted to Madrid.

In the month of March, Major Vogt accompanied to Madrid a convoy of 6,000 prisoners in terrible weather.

Lieutenant-Colonel Fritsch often unites his officers at his table; they arrive there from distant posts, under the escort of 50 bayonets. These meetings are imitated by the commanders of the French troops; General Lorge, at Toledo,

does the same, and his house becomes a real "Eldorado" for the officers of the division.

At the beginning of June, the battalion sent a detachment to permanently occupy Ciudad-Real.

The Emperor begins to draw troops and cadres from the Spanish army for his campaign against Russia. Baden and Nassau return to Germany the necessary cadres for new formations. General von Zweyer, Minister of War of the Grand Duchy of Frankfurt, wished to have the battalion of Spain relieved by a new battalion; the Prince Primate formally opposed it, and the battalion, without even dismissing cadres in Germany, remained entirely in the Peninsula.

The guerrillas grew bolder when they saw the troops of occupation in Spain empty:

The escorts of convoys, which previously were only 30 bayonets, must then be 100, at least The guerrillas have strengthened, and it was necessary to operate against them with mobile columns. -- (Fritsch report, 31 July)

The four fusilier companies of the battalion were sent against the Spanish General Murillo, who, at the head of 1,000 infantry and 600 horses, had entrenched himself at Puertollano; but spies informed him of the surprise which was reserved for him, and when the companies of Frankfurt arrive, they find the bird gone.

Another column, combined with companies from Nassau and Frankfurt, under the command of Colonel Kruse, of Nassau, was happier at Lezuga: the guerrillas undergo a bloody defeat.

Fritsch writes on 20 August from Manzanares where he was with the two elite companies of the battalion;

... The Army of Portugal no longer exists: the English are advancing little by little. The fortress of Olivenza was blown up and abandoned. Badajoz was besieged; the battle of Albuera decided nothing. The happy junction of Marmont and Soult alone delivered Badajoz. Marmont is at Elvas, on the borders of Portugal; Soult in Andalusia, to be in range, in case of an English landing in Cartagena.

I hope that the Army of the Center, where the Confederation Division is numbered, will make a move on Valencia, now that the fortress of Tarragona has fallen into our hands. I will bless the circumstance that will bring us out of La Manche, where we are sandwiched between two provinces occupied by the enemy, Murcia and Estremadura.

Guerrillas swarm like mushrooms. There are now more than 6,000, whose chiefs have cavalry and cannon. From Vitoria to Madrid, Aragon, Catalonia and Estremadura, one must resign oneself to send no convoy without being escorted by a 1000 men. Andalusia is the most tranquil of all provinces... In the opinion of all soldiers, if a man of genius does not hasten to finish it with considerable forces, this war will be eternal and fatal...

General Lorge returns to France to receive a command of the troops who will campaign against the Russians. He was replaced by General Trelliard. The grenadiers of Frankfurt escorted General Lorge to Madrid, where they remained for four weeks.

A report of 18 August mentions the following fact: during a bullfight, a lieutenant of the battalion of Frankfurt was mortally wounded in the eye by a stone thrown by a sling, in the governor's box and in the middle of a large audience...

In early September, another guerrilla attack took place on Ciudad-Real: the attackers managed to enter the city, but Major Vogt soon pushed them back outside, inflicting heavy losses on them.

10 *September*. -- Lieutenant-Colonel Fritsch takes command of the town of Almagro. The two elite companies of the battalion remain in Manzanares.

19 *September*. -- An officer and 50 men would strengthen the post of Santa-Cruz.



Mina.
(France militaire.)

Mina.
(Military France.)

29 September. -- Fight in front of Almagro. The guerrillas are repulsed, but the battalion loses 2 officers and 24 men.

8 October. -- The garrison of Ciudad-Real received the order to go to Almagro; it took the companies of the center and goes to Manzanares, whence the battalion, assembled in its entirety, went by Toledo to Madrid. On 18 October, the battalion arrived in Guadalajara: this march (which cost it 600 pairs of boots) was motivated by the presence of the supporter El Empecinado, which infested the province with 4,000 guerrilla men and cannon.

Vogt was sent to Pastranna with 300 men to requisition provisions, before the expeditionary column was put to march, commanded by the governor of the province, Marquis Rio de Milano; it added to the battalion of Frankfurt, the regiment of Westphalian light horses (300 horses), a company of the 21st Line, two pieces of cannon and some Spanish companies. Faced with this imposing manifestation, El Empecinado retreated to Aragon, and the column brought back from this 12-day expedition 1,800 mules loaded with food.

In November, the battalion fought several battles with the guerrillas of Mina.

Expedition in the province of Murcia.

In December 1811, Marmont detached three divisions under command of Montbrun to march on Valencia and support Suchet. The armies of the Center and the North must be linked to this movement.

The Army of the North placed the division of Caffarelli at Teruel and Zaragoza to keep the insurgents at a distance; the Reille Division was pushed on Valencia.

The Army of the Center sent a strong combined division from the Upper Tagus on the road to Valencia by Castilla la Nueva; this division, under General Armagnac, was to give Suchet its hand and cover the Montbrun march to the left.

The battalion of Frankfurt entered the division of Armagnac, of which it made up the vanguard. Arrived at Moya, it pushed into the valleys of Guadalaviar and Magro detachments that rallied at Cuenca. There, an order passed the battalion under the command of Montbrun "general-in-chief of the body of the expedition on Valencia".

On the 31 December, the Frankfurters arrive at Belmonte, by Valverde and Alberca:



Elche.

(Gravure tirée de la *France militaire*.)

Elche. (Etching taken from *Military France*.)

...The last night of the year 1811, -- says Fritsch in a report, -- was passed by our officers drinking mulled wine (in French in the German text) with the officers of the 22nd dragons and 26th Chasseurs...

From Belmonte, Vogt was detached to La Gineta with the two elite companies. He rejoined the battalion on the 6th of January, 1812, at Albacete, where Montbrun passed a review.

Suchet was about to take Valencia, and no longer needed the assistance of the Armagnac Division, which was then formed into movable columns.

Fritsch, with three companies and the French 3rd Hussars, forms the vanguard of the corps of Montbrun; Vogt, along with the rest of the battalion and the 22nd Chasseurs, was on the flank on the right of the column. The vanguard of Fritsch fought at Corral-Rubio the rearguard of the Spanish General Freyre (Freire), while Montbrun arrived, on 9 January, at Yecla.

Suchet had just taken Valencia. Montbrun, on the 15 January, marched on Alicante; a sudden attack on this place having failed, he retired.

After a happy fight in Elche (17 January 1812) where Fritsch, with the grenadiers and the first company of Frankfurt supported by the 22nd Dragoons, drove 2,000 Spanish horses, the column of Montbrun operated a retrograde march by Elda, Saxe, Yecla, Montalegre, Chinchilla and Albacete. Fritsch made up the rearguard with the 22nd Dragoons. The flanking guard of Vogt had marched by Pozo-de-la-Canada, Tumilla, and Albacete, and the battalion reunited on the latter.

The expedition was over: the 1st and 3rd Companies, with Captain Schuler, escorted Montbrun to Madrid, and then

returned to settle at Consuegra, north of Manzanares; the rest of the battalion went to Membrilla, and also returned to the command of General Trelliard.

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