

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume I

The Regiment of the Saxon Duchies – Chapter 9

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THE
REGIMENT OF THE FRANKFURT

CHAPTER IX

WAR OF SPAIN (1812)

On 12 February, Vogt, with the 3rd and 4th Companies, was sent to garrison at Villarrubio. Fritsch returned to Manzanares with the two elite companies, bringing back the 123rd Regiment (formerly Dutch).

Marshal Victor having passed alone by Manzanares, Lieutenant-Colonel Fritsch held in his honor a review of the garrison "in full dress". This attention of the Lieutenant Colonel for his former general-in-chief touched the marshal:

Who gave them all his grateful satisfaction, and recalled to him with pleasure the battles in which the battalion had picked up laurels, while he had it under his command... (Letter of Fritsch.)

At the beginning of April, the battalion of the Prince Primate is summoned to Madrid; united with the Westphalian light horse, it was sent to Cuenca against the guerillas of Empecinado; after returning to Madrid, it returned to Toledo, whence it escorted a large convoy to Talavera towards the end of the month.

The Anglo-Spanish army of Wellington had just taken Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz; it slowly ascended the Tagus, and the desertions increased in a considerable manner in the ranks of foreigners in the service of France:

Many recruiters, emissaries of the English, excited the German troops to desertion, appealing either to their patriotism or to their interest. A German Legion, composed chiefly of Hanoverians, and recruited also by means of deserters, served in the British army. It was not one of the least curious facts of this war, to see German troops, brought by the chances of politics to the center of Spain, and fighting in both parties. -- (COSTA DE CERDA).

On 18 May, General Hill, with several Scottish and English regiments, took by surprise Fort Napoleon, defended by the French 75th Line. This fort covered the bridge of Almaraz, on the left bank of the Tagus; after having destroyed this bridge, which was the only communication between Soult and Marmont, the English detachment fell back on the main body of Wellington's army.

King Joseph, concentrated in Madrid, sent General Armagnac to Talavera on 11 May, with a division composed of the 75th Line, the battalion of Frankfurt, the regiment of Baden, Westphalian light horse, and the 13th Dragoons. The 75th, placed at once at Almaraz, suffered there on 18 May the failure of which we have just spoken; the battalion of Frankfurt, which had been ordered to arrive on this point on the 19th, found there nothing but the remains of the French regiment; in the presence of the resolute countenance of the English, Lieutenant-Colonel Fritsch retired to Oropesa, and the detachment returned in its entirety to Madrid.

After the defeat of Marmont at the Battle of the Arapiles (or Salamanca), Clauzel brought back the debris of the army by Valladolid, in Burgos. King Joseph then attempted to connect himself with Marshal Marmont by Segovia, and advanced to Arévalo; but the progress of the English compelled him to retreat; cut off from Marmont, he wished to rejoin Suchet, then Soult; abandoning then Madrid, he went to Valencia.



SOULT.

(Extrait de l'*Histoire de France* d'Henri Martin).

SOULT. (Taken from the *History of France* of Henri Martin).

The forces he had were as follows:

	1 battalion of Grenadiers of the Guard.	
	1 -- of Voltigeurs of the Guard.	
	1 -- of Fusiliers of the Guard.	
I. Corps of Spanish	1 -- of Irish of the Guard.	
Capitán General {	1 -- of Royal Foreigners.	
MERLIN.	Elite Spanish regiments "Madrid" and "Castille".	
	Light Horse of the Guard.	
	Westphalian Light Horse.	
	1 squadron of Nassau (mounted) Jäger.	
Cavalry Division of		
TREILLIARD.}	13 th , 18 th , 19 th , 22 nd Dragoons.	
III. Brigade of Spanish	Corps of Manco.	
Cavalry{	Corps of Moralès.} Counter-guerillas.	
(General ALVARO).	Corps of Méta.	
	Regiment of (mounted) Chasseurs "Alvaro."	
	2 battalions of 75 th .	
IV. Division of Infantry of	2 -- of 28 th .	
DARMAGNAC.	2 -- of Baden.} General von Neuenstein.	
	battalion of Frankfurt.	
V. Artillery.	4 batteries of 4 pieces.	

The Nassau Regiment joined the Army of Joseph as it passed through Madrid; on its side, Suchet sent the Italian Division of Palombini and two regiments of cavalry to meet it. Joseph fell back by Aranjuez and destroyed behind him the bridges of the Tagus, while the division of d'Armagnac, in the rear guard, covered the convoy.

Wellington and Empecinado made their entry into Madrid, at the moment when Joseph, arrived at Almanza by Corral-de-Almaguer, made his junction with Suchet and arrived on 29 August in Valencia.

The division of d'Armagnac was confined to Canalès. Joseph held 17 September, in Valencia, a major review of his army.

Soult arrived slowly through Andalusia and La Manche, reluctantly abandoning these beautiful provinces. The cavalry of Trelliard and the German regiments were sent to meet him and the meeting was held in Almanza on 30 September.

The King, Soult and Suchet, decided on 8 October, in a council of war, that Soult, with the Army of the South, should march again on Aranjuez and Madrid; -- that Drouet d'Erlon, with the Army of the Center, would take the road of Cuenca to arrive also at the capital; -- finally, that Suchet would remain in Valencia, would operate against the English General Maitland and would try to seize Alicante and Cartagena.

The Germans, belonging to the Army of the Center, left with regret what they called "their paradise of Valencia!"...

On 29 October, the army arrived on the Tagus. General Hill had destroyed all the crossings: pontoon bridges were thrown over the river, and Joseph made his third entry into his capital, where the Germans arrive by Villamanrique and Valdemoro. Then, without leaving a garrison in Madrid, the army continued its march on Salamanca. It reached Tormes on 11 November, and its vanguard joined the Army of Portugal. Joseph now had 85,000 men, and the English hasten to return to the Spanish-Portuguese border.

During all these marches, hard and tiring, the battalion of Frankfurt lost only 12 men. After bringing Joseph back to Madrid, it moved to Segovia at the beginning of December.

The military situation was as follows, at the end of 1812:

Soult, with the Army of the South, occupied Avila, Toledo, Cuenca, La Manche, Talavera.

Clauzel, with the Army of Portugal, was at Salamanca and Leon.

The Army of the North stretched from Burgos to Olmedo.

D'Erlon, with the Army of the Center, held Madrid, Segovia, Guadalajara, Aranjuez.

Suchet, finally, occupied the kingdom of Valencia.

In summary, in spite of some unfortunate events, the year ended with glory: Joseph had reconquered his capital, and the French armies, dispersing everywhere the insurgents, had obliged the victorious English to retire.

Bernays notes with sadness that at this time:

Napoleonicism had entered the depths of the soul of all the German soldiers, whose heart was as chained in its magical and legendary circle; let us excuse them as patriots, "he adds," and let us admire them as soldiers!

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