

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume IV

The Regiment of the Saxon Duchies – Chapter Three Part I

By Commandant Sauzey

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THE
REGIMENT OF THE SAXON DUCHIES

THIRD CHAPTER

WAR AGAINST AUSTRIA (1809)

I. -- The camp of Passau.

From the first weeks of 1809, the warlike designs of Austria could no longer escape the Emperor Napoleon: our former enemy, anxious to repair its failures of 1805 and seeing the French army strongly engaged in Spain, had begun its arming and was preparing to make a tremendous effort. Nearly 200,000 Austrians, -- including 20,000 horsemen, -- with field artillery of 500 pieces of cannon, would once again dispute with the French the supremacy of Germany and of Europe.

The Emperor did not wish to believe in the imminence of a new war; but at the beginning of March the first movements of the Imperialists left him no longer in doubt; a "Corps of Observation of the Army of the Rhine" was organized under Masséna, and the divisions Legrand, Carra-Saint-Cyr, Molitor and Boudet would take the positions assigned to them; an important part of the army of Spain was recalled; finally, the princes of the Confederation of the Rhine were advised to immediately put on war footing all their federal contingents.

The troops of the petty princes of the Confederation were originally to form a special army corps, called the "Army Corps of the Confederation of the Rhine," three divisions amounting to about 30,000 men; but the previous sending into Spain of a part of the German troops (a battalion of Frankfort, a regiment of Nassau, a regiment of Baden) did not permit the formation of these divisions. Marshal Berthier, Chief of Staff, wrote to the Emperor on 5 March, proposing to him to incorporate the small German contingents into the divisions of the 4th Corps commanded by Marshal Masséna:

"...(does) Your Majesty wish me to write to his ministers with the Houses of Saxony, to inform them that the Regiment No. 4, composed of three strong battalions, each of 840 men, is destined for the 3rd Division of the Duke of Rivoli, and that your intention is that all the troops furnished by the petty princes should be reunited on the 20th of March at Würzburg?"

And the Emperor wrote in his own hand on Berthier's report:

"Will meet provisionally in Würzburg. - To write to Bacher."¹

In execution of these orders of Napoleon, Berthier at once notified Masséna:

¹Chargé d'affaires of France in Frankfort to the Prince-Primate, Arch-Chancellor of the Confederation of the Rhine.

Paris, 5 March 1809.

Monsieur le Duke,

I have the honor to inform you of the formation fixed by the Emperor for your corps, under the denomination (for the moment) of the Corps of Observation of the Army of the Rhine:

1st Division. Legrand (French, Baden).

2nd -- Carra-Saint-Cyr (French, Hessian).

3rd -- Molitor. Three French regiments. Regiment of five Ducal houses of Saxony bearing the No. 4 (2,200 men).

4th Division. Boudet (French, Nassau).



1809. — LE MARÉCHAL MASSÉNA

Commandant le 4^e corps (1).

(D'après une estampe de l'époque.)

1809. -- MARSHAL MASSÉNA Commander 4th Corps.² (After an engraving of the time.)

²MASSÉNA (André), Duke of Rivoli, Prince of Essling, Marshal of France, born in Nice in 1756, died in Paris in 1817. Enlisted in 1775 in "Royal-Italian"; released as adjutant in 1789. Returned from service in 1791 as Adjutant-Major to the 3rd Battalion of Volunteers of the Var; colonel in 1792, general of division in 1793. Determined the success at Rivoli in 1797 and earned from Bonaparte the nickname of "Child cherished by Victory". Beat the Russians at Zurich in 1799; defended Genoa in 1800. Marshal of France in 1804, Duke of Rivoli in 1807. Commanding the 4th Corps of the Grande Armée in 1809; conqueror at Eckmühl, was covered with glory at Essling

... The regiment of the five Ducal Houses of Saxony, attached to the third division, will be reunited on 20 March in Würzburg ...

The contingents of the Duchies thus proceeded on this last point. Although the Treaty of Posen had specified that the command of the 4th Rhine Regiment would be entrusted successively, in each new campaign, to an officer from Weimar and then to an officer from Gotha, the two Saxon dukes had agreed on 20 September 1808, that the regiment would remain under the command of Colonel Egloffstein (of Weimar), because of the distinguished manner in which this officer had commanded it during the campaign of 1807.

The battalions of the Duchies, gathered round Gotha, left on 16 March, and by Meiningen and Schweinfurth arrived at Würzburg on the 21st. There Colonel von Egloffstein took command of the regiment, which presented the following composition:

Regiment of the Duchies of Saxony.

Commander: Colonel von EGLOFFSTEIN (of Weimar).
Colonel von HENNING (of Gotha).

1st Battalion. Commander: Major von Bunau (of Gotha).
Major Knauth (of Gotha).

1st Company of Grenadiers (Gotha).
4 companies of musketeers (Gotha).
1st Company of Riflemen (voltigeurs) (Cobourg).

2nd Battalion. Commander: Major von Bose (of Meiningen).
Major von Kurnatowski (of Cobourg).

2nd Company of Grenadiers (Gotha).
2 companies of musketeers (Meiningen).
2 companies of musketeers (Gotha).
2nd Company of Riflemen (Cobourg).

3rd Battalion. Commander: Major von Germar (of Weimar).
Major von Arnswald (of Weimar).

5 companies from Weimar (light infantry).
1 company from Hildburghausen (light infantry).

The effects on 1 April was 73 officers and 2,295 non-commissioned officers and soldiers: it was 400 men below the federal figure.

The organization of the divisions of the French army had undergone various modifications. On 30 March the Emperor wrote to the Chief of Staff that all the troops of the petty princes would form a division of 6,000 to 8,000 men under the orders of General Rouyer and two brigadier generals "knowing how to speak German."

This division remained temporarily attached to the 3rd Corps (Davout), but could be summoned to the headquarters to furnish garrisons of towns and escort the prisoners.

The corps of Marshal Davout consisted of the divisions of Morand, Friant, Gudin, Demont, Saint-Sulpice (cavalry) and Rouyer: this last was to include:

and Wagram; appointed Prince of Essling. Failed in Portugal before Wellington at Torres Vedras in 1811. Deprived of employment for two years; governor of Toulon in 1813. Rallied to the Bourbons, and governor of Paris after Waterloo.

the 1st Regiment of the Rhine, Würzburg;
 the 2nd and 3rd Regiments of the Rhine, Nassau;
 the 4th Regiment of the Rhine, Duchies of Saxony;
 the 5th -- -- , Anhalt-Lippe;
 the 6th -- -- , Schwarzburg-Waldeck-Reuss.



1809. — LE GÉNÉRAL MOLITOR
 Commandant la 3^e division du 4^e corps (1).
 (D'après la *Biographie des Contemporains*.)

1809. -- GENERAL MOLITOR Commander 3rd Division of the 4th Corps.³ (After the *Biography of Contemporaries*.)

But the regiment of Würzburg and the 2nd Regiment (Nassau) were then in Spain; the 3rd Regiment (Nassau) was not entirely organized: in fact, General Rouyer had only the 4th, 5th and 6th Regiments of the Rhine in his division.

After having examined the Regiment of the Saxon Duchies at Würzburg, General Rouyer attached Major Kurnatowski to his staff, and gave Major Knauth the command of the two grenadier companies of Gotha, in case they were detached.

New dispositions temporarily attached General Rouyer to the corps of Vandamme (8th Corps), composed of the

³MOLITOR (Gabriel-Jean-Joseph, Count), born in Hayange (Moselle) in 1770, died in Paris in 1849. Volunteered in 1791; wounded at the siege of Mainz, general in 1799; combat in Switzerland under Masséna and on the Rhine with Marceau; appointed general of division; beat at Caldiero the Archduke Charles in 1805; chased in 1806 the Russians from Dalmatia, for which he was appointed governor. Governor of Pomerania in 1807; was distinguished in 1809 at Essling and Wagram. Commander in 1810 of the Hanseatic cities; was Governor-General of Holland in 1811; took part in the campaign of France in 1814. Rallied to the Bourbons, nevertheless joined the Emperor in the Hundred Days. Recalled to active duty in 1818, commanded a corps of army in 1823 during the expedition of Spain, and receives the baton of marshal and the peerage. Governor of the Invalides in 1817, and Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor in 1848.

French division of Dupas and a division from Württemberg.

The Emperor to the Chief of Staff.

Paris, 6 April 1809.

You will make known to General Dupas that the Rouyer Division, composed of the contingents of the petty princes, forming 6,000 men, is under his orders. Thus, General Dupas will have a beautiful division of two brigades, one of French of 5,000 men, and the other German of 6,000 men, forming 11,000 men and twelve pieces of cannon.



1809. — LE MARÉCHAL DAVOUT

Commandant le 3^e corps (4).

(D'après A. Tardieu.)

1809. -- MARSHAL DAVOUT Commander 3rd Corps.⁴ (After A. Tardieu.)

During the first days of April, events rushed: the Austrians completed the organization of the nine army corps and the two reserve corps which they were about to be put into action; the Archduke Charles had the supreme command in Germany; his 1st Corps (Bellegarde) was at Teschen (Cieszyn); the 2nd (Kollowrat-Krakowsky), at Frauenberg; the 3rd (Hohenzollern), at Reigenberg; the 4th (Rosenberg), at Schärding; the 5th (Archduke Louis) at Obernberg and the 6th (Hiller) at Braunau; the two reserve corps (Lichtenstein and Kienmayer) were, one at Taufkirchen and the other at Braunau, with the Jellachich Division near Salzburg.

Archduke John commanded the 8th and 9th Corps (at Tarvisio and Kronau) composing the army of Italy, opposite that of Prince Eugène.

Archduke Ferdinand, with the 7th Corps, was in Galicia, where he would march against the Poles of Poniatowski in the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Finally, Chasteler with 9 battalions and 3 squadrons was at the entrance of the

⁴ DAVOUT (Louis-Nicolas), Duke of Auerstaedt, Prince of Eckmühl, born at Annou (Yonne) in 1770, death in 1823. Classmate of Napoleon at Brienne; chief of battalion under Dumouriez in the Army of the North. Brigadier general in the armies of the Moselle and the Rhine, 1793-1795. Egypt, Aboukir; 1805, Ulm, Austerlitz; 1806, Auerstaedt; 1809, Eckmühl; 1812, Mogilev; 1813, defense of Hamburg. Minister of War during the Hundred Days. Peer of France in 1819.

Pusterthal, must penetrate into Tyrol and descend from there to Italy.

The Emperor Napoleon had only seven army corps to oppose in Germany the attack of the Austrians: the 2nd Corps (Oudinot) was at Augsburg; the 3rd (Davout) at Ratisbon (Regensburg); the 4th (Masséna) at Ulm; the 7th (Lefebvre, with the Bavarians) at Munich, Straubing and Freising, the 8th Corps (Vandamme) at Elwangen, Bernadette (9th Corps) commanded the Saxons at Dresden, and finally the 10th Corps (Westphalians) was in Westphalia and in Franconia.

The offensive march of the Austrians was signaled by Berthier to the Emperor, who immediately wrote to him:

Paris, 12 April 1809.

My Cousin,

It is eight o'clock in the evening, and the telegraph gives me half of your dispatch, whence it appears that the Austrians have passed the Inn and declared war. I suppose you are in Augsburg, and you have centralized all my army on the Lech. It is necessary to send orders to the division of Dupas to proceed in a straight line and on great marches to Donauwörth, as well as to General Rouyer. I will set off in two hours: I shall leave the 14th from Strasbourg.

Napoleon.

Napoleon, in fact, arrived at the army like a thunderbolt; he quickly repaired the mistakes of Berthier and concentrated the army.

The Rouyer Division reached Donauwörth on 18 April by Anspach and Nordlingen. The light battalion of the Duchies Regiment was immediately carried to the bridgehead on the Lech, of which it was charged to guard; a few moments later, at 2 o'clock in the evening, the Emperor arrived at Donauwörth, escorted by a regiment of Württemberg jäger, and immediately went to the bridgehead, where he caused the artillery to be changed; then he inspected the Weimar battalion, having, with the officers, the opening of several gibernes himself, and ensured that the soldiers had all their cartridges; he then continued on his way to Ingolstadt, where the Duchies Regiment went itself the next day; a company of grenadiers of Gotha was appointed to form the guard of honor at the palace occupied by the Emperor; a battalion would occupy the bridgehead and provide the outposts.

The presence of the Emperor among the troops of the Rhine, the divisioning of these troops in the corps of Marshal Davout, and the rapid march on Ingolstadt, gave hope to the Germans of Confederation that they would take an active part in the great events of war, and all expected to be pushed into the front line. It was not yet the case: while the French and their other allies were victors at Abensberg, Landshut, Eckmühl and Ratisbon, the regiment of the Duchies remained at Ingolstadt for six days to hold the passage of the Danube.

On 21 April, Napoleon at Landshut wrote to General Rouyer at Ingolstadt:

"The Emperor no longer occupies himself with the Danube; Marshal Davout has sent the Boudet Division to Ingolstadt; it is sufficient to defend the Altmühl. All that is on the Danube, from Donauwörth to Vohlbourg, is under the command of Rouyer; he must have everything. If the enemy forced the line at Donauwörth, the general would cut off the bridges and concentrate all on Ingolstadt, without forgetting what was at Neuburg; in case of impossibility, he would go to Augsburg."

On the 26th of April the regiment of the Duchies, with the whole division of General Rouyer and General Dupas, occupied Ratisbon, whose battlefield was still covered with corpses. The two battalions of the line remained in the town, while the light battalion was established on the Straubing road. This battalion traversed Ratisbon on the 25th, crossed the bridge of the Danube, still half destroyed, and occupied the hill of the Trinity on the left bank of the river. The corps of Marshal Davout, returning from the frontiers of Bohemia, where it had gone to watch the retreat of the Archduke Charles, crossed Ratisbon on 30 April; on the following day, the 1st of May, the Duchies Regiment followed him to Straubing, and arrived on the 4th at Passau, where it bivouacked at 7 o'clock in the evening at Riesberg on the left bank of the Danube; it immediately established a line of outposts, whilst the three French divisions of Marshal Davout continued their march to join the columns of the French army marching on Vienna.

At Passau the Rouyer Division and the French division of Dupas had the mission of covering the line of communication of the army, of defending the passage of the Danube, and of maintaining liaison with the corps of Bernadotte.

The Rouyer Division then passed to the 8th Corps, commanded by General Vandamme, and composed of a Württemberg division (14 battalions and 16 squadrons) and the French division of Dupas (5 battalions of the 5th light infantry regiment and the 19th Regiment of the Line).

Momentarily brigaded with the French 5th Light Infantry Regiment, the regiment of the Duchies was counted with the brigade of Gency, of the Dupas Division; the Veau Brigade of the same division included the French 19th Regiment and the 2nd Regiment of Nassau, which had finally arrived: the two brigades are responsible for the occupation of the works to be constructed to protect the town of Passau on the side of the Bohemian mountains.

The Duchies Regiment remained in Passau until 23 July, participating for 11 weeks in the occupation and state of defense of this important point situated at the confluence of the Danube, the Inn and the Ilz.



1809. — LE GÉNÉRAL VANDAMME
Commandant le 8^e corps (1).

1809. -- GENERAL VANDAMME Commander of the 8th Corps.⁵

The town of Passau, a Bavarian fortress, was divided into several districts; one of them, between the Danube and the Inn, on a long and slender tongue of land, was closed by an old rampart with a ditch and counterscarp; on the hill between the Danube and the Ilz, the castle of Oberhaus with its two small forward bastions, the reunion of which formed a crowned work; on the right bank of the Inn, near the hill of Notre-Dame de Bon-Secours, formerly occupied by a fortified camp, the suburb of Innstadt, surrounded by a wall like the little suburb of Ilzstadt, right of

⁵VANDAMME (Dominique-René), born and died in Cassel (Nord), 1770-1830. Son of a surgeon from Cassel. Already in service before the Revolution, in a colonial regiment; freed, then voluntarily re-engaged in the 24th Line, he was in charge of organizing, in 1792, the free company of the Mont-Cassel chasseurs; General of the Brigade after Hondschoote (1793); made the campaigns of Belgium, Holland, the Rhine, the Danube, and Italy. Illustrious at Austerlitz (1805); Count of the Empire in 1808; commanded the Württembergers in 1809 and fought at Eckmühl; distinguished himself at Dresden (1813), then was soon taken prisoner at Kulm and sent to Siberia until 1814. He again fought at Ligny and at Waterloo; obliged to leave France after the Second Restoration, he moved to the United States, where he returned from in 1819; retired in 1825, he died in 1830.

the Ilz. The city, occupied by the 9,000 men of the Austrian General Richter who blockaded the fort of Oberhaus, had been delivered on 26 April by Marshal Masséna. Its present garrison consisted of 10,000 men: the Rouyer Division, the French Division Dupas, two companies of sappers and two companies of artillery, a battalion of sailors destined to bring to the army by the Danube the provisions and artillery ammunition, a cavalry depot; finally, as Bavarian troops, a battalion of the 8th Infantry Regiment "Duke Pius" and three companies of artillery with a certain number of cannon.

Support point in case of retreat of the Grande Armée, supply center, grand reserve magazine and general hospital, Passau was of great importance for the French Army; it was necessary that the town should be unassailable. Therefore the General of the Engineer Chambarlhac reinforced the place by a whole series of works, the construction of which occupied every day of thousands of soldiers and peasants.

The old rampart was rehabilitated, a half-moon was built in front of the big gate and allowed an effective fire on all the approaches; a strong palisade was built on the hill overlooking the town; a work was erected on the left bank of the Danube; on the right bank of the Inn was a camp with small entrenchments which covers the bridges against an attack and will enable 1,000 men to stand up to 20,000; the entrenched camp at Itzstadt was restored; the old castle of Oberhaus was reinforced by eight works and organized for a garrison of 1,000 men with four months of provisions; the place finally had in its own stores, forty days of food for 10,000 men, and a general reserve of forty days of biscuit, flour, brandy and fodder for the whole army.



1809. — LE MARÉCHAL BERNADOTTE

Commandant le 9^e corps,(1).

1809. -- MARSHAL BERNADOTTE Commander of the 9th Corps.⁶

⁶BERNADOTTE (Jean-Baptiste-Jules), Marshal of France, Prince of Ponte-Corvo, then King of Sweden and Norway; born in Pau in 1764, died in Stockholm in 1844. Came to the service in 1780, sergeant in the regiment of Royal-Marine in 1789, colonel in 1792, general of division in 1796; was distinguished in 1794 at Fleurus, in 1797 at the passage of Tagliamento and to the capture of Trieste. Ambassador to Vienna; Minister of War on the 15th Messidor, Year VII; marshal of France in 1804; fought at Austerlitz, was created prince of Ponte-Corvo in 1806; pursued Blücher under Lübeck, and then defeated the Russians at Mohrungen and Bromberg. Commanded at Hamburg in 1808, attended the battle of Wagram at the head of the Saxon Corps, and was disgraced after the campaign. On the death of the crown prince of Sweden, King Charles XIII adopted Bernadotte, who became Crown Prince of Sweden under the name of Charles-Jean. Sweden entered the coalition and Bernadotte landed in Stralsund in 1813 with 30,000 Swedes; united with 70,000 Prussians and Russians, he beat Oudinot at Gross-Beeren and Ney

On 12 May Bernadotte entered Passau with the 15,000 Saxons of the 9th Corps; on the following day he reviewed the troops of the garrison, and departed the next day for Linz, the regiment of the Duchies was to also fall back to this last point: but a counter-order arrived, and it was the Dupas Division which followed the Saxon corps to Linz. In the staff of the Prince of Ponte-Corvo was Prince Bernard of Saxe Weimar, then 17 years old, and captain of the grenadiers of the Saxon Royal Guard. This young officer behaved with such distinction on the 5th and 6th of July, at Wagram, that he received from the Emperor the cross of the Legion of Honor.

Major Arnswald (of Weimar) was appointed commander of Fuchsberg, which he would occupy with three companies of the light battalion; Major de Bose (of Meiningen) became commander of the castle of Oberhaus; the Captains von Munch and Krälzschmar (of Gotha) commanded the forts Eugene and Alexander.

The end of May was used to reinforce the works situated around the town. General Bourcier took command of all the troops stationed between the Danube and the frontiers of Bohemia, from Ratisbon to Passau. He sent to Zwiesel a detachment consisting of the first company of Weimar (Captain von Schierbrandt), 100 men of the 8th Bavarian Line and 20 French hussars: the Austrians were more active towards the mountains of Bohemia and it was necessary to monitor their movements more closely.

The situation of the army on 1 June gives us the following figures for the Rouyer Division:

Regiment No. 2, Nassau: 2 battalions, 18 officers, 577 men. (This regiment is detached at Vienna from 14 June.)
 Regiment No. 4, Saxon Duchies. 3 battalions
 -- No. 5, Anhalt-Lippe... 2 --
 -- No. 6, Schwarzburg- } 155 officers, 5,488 men.
 Waldeck-Reuss... 2 --

As of 1 July, another situation gives us more details on the effectives:

German Division of Rouyer.
Chief of Staff, Chief of Squadron Charles von BAÏNE.

Regiment No. 4, Saxon Duchies. 3 battalions, 2,334 m.
 -- No. 5, Anhalt-Lippe ... 2 -- 1,412 m. } Total: 14,730 men.
 -- No. 6, Schwarzburg- --
 Waldeck-Reuss... 2 -- 984 m.

On 10 June the Passau garrison received a order of the day of the Emperor of May 28, in which the Sovereign showed his complete satisfaction with the German Army and announced that he was making a donation to each French or German regiment of a gratuity of 100,000 francs: the distribution of this sum was made between the various contingents of the regiment of Saxony.

Up until then the soldiers of the Duchies had not fired a single cartridge; they learned, by brilliant proclamations, of the capture of Vienna, the victorious march of the army of Italy, and the triumph of Raab. This inaction was about to end, the Landwehr of Bohemia were threatening Passau. On 19 June, the detachment. Captain Schierbrandt had a first engagement with the enemy, of whom he made thirteen prisoners. This was the prelude to an offensive against which General Bourcier took the following measures:

at Dennewitz; he fought again against France at Leipzig, and entered Paris with the Allies. He ascended the throne of Sweden in 1818, under the name of Charles XIV and died in 1844.

Order of the day to the regiment of the Saxon Duchies.

Passau, 30 June 1809.

The 4th Regiment (of the Saxon Duchies) is charged with the defense of the two banks of the Danube. In the event of an attack, the troops shall immediately assemble at the points indicated below:

1st Battalion, to the forts Alexander and Eugène, each of which will be occupied at once by 320 men.

2nd Battalion, three detached companies on the right bank of the Inn, each occupying with 120 men the redoubts of Thann, Abensberg, and Eckmühl; the other two companies, to the left of Fort Eugène.

The two companies available from the light battalion, to the right of Fort Alexander (the light battalion had 126 men at Zwiesel, 116 men at Leoprechting and 30 men at Tynau). The two companies of grenadiers, in reserve behind Fort Alexander.

The troops being thus distributed in case of attack, Colonel von Henning will command Fort Eugène, Major von Germar the right wing, Major von Bunau Fort Alexander, Major von Bose the three companies placed on the right bank of the Inn, and Major Knauth the reserve.

The outposts will resist until they are obliged to retire to superior forces; they will then retreat, while fighting, on the main body of the regiment.

These defensive measures were completed on the following day, 1 July, by a reconnaissance led by Captain Potier, aide-de-camp to General Bourcier, on a body of 5,000 men of enemy landwehr reported five hours' march from Passau to Wegscheid, had entrenched himself. After a short skirmish, the three companies of the Saxon Duchies composing this reconnaissance fell back without loss into the town.

On the night of 3 July, the Hildburghausen company stationed at the village of Salzweg was attacked by some hundred Austrian partisans: it repulsed them after a short battle and then joined the camp of its regiment.

Marshal Lefebvre, arriving from Linz, entered Passau on the 6th of July. He visited in detail all the works of fortification erected for several months around the town, and on the following day reviewed the Rouyer Division; he promised Captain von Schierbrandt the cross of the Legion of Honor, for his brilliant combat of Zwiesel. This officer was not to receive it, for he perished gloriously shortly afterwards in the Tyrol.

On 16 July, news was heard of the great victory which Napoleon had won over Archduke Charles on the 5th and 6th of this month at Wagram, as well as that of the armistice of Znaïm concluded on the 12th.

The rumor spread shortly after that the Rouyer Division, with Marshal Lefebvre, was to be sent to the Tyrol to fight against the insurrection of the inhabitants who had taken up arms for Austria. Indeed, the camp of Passau was raised during the night of 22-23 July; the three regiments of the Rouyer Division, directed to Salzburg, arrived on the 26th by Schärding and Neumark.

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