

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume IV The Regiment of the Saxon Duchies – Chapter Five Part I

By Commandant Sauzey

Translated by [Greg Gorsuch](#)

THE
REGIMENT OF THE SAXON DUCHIES

CHAPTER V

THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN (1812)

I. -- The Saxon Duchies Regiment in Hamburg.

The debris brought back from Spain in June 1811 was soon to be reformed, in the Weimar, Gotha and Altenburg depots. Men from new levies filled the voids of the units; horses, uniforms bought; the Weimar-Hildburghausen contingent abandoned the "Russian-style" hat adopted since 1807, to take a "French-style" shako similar to that worn by the soldiers of Gotha, Meiningen and Cobourg.

In August 1811, the contingent of Gotha-Altenburg was reconstituted to 2 battalions: 2 companies of grenadiers and 3 of fusiliers were at Gotha; 3 fusilier companies at Altenburg; Major von Bunau was promoted colonel.

But political events were rushing; the rupture became inevitable between the two empires of France and Russia. Napoleon began with diplomacy the work he wanted to finish by arms; Austria and Prussia, his enemies of yesterday, would march at his side against the Tsar of Russia, and augment with their contingents the Grand Army, where the sons of more than twenty nations are already united.

From the beginning of February, 1812, Bascher, ambassador of France at Frankfort, asked the Prince Arch Chancellor of the Confederation of the Rhine to inform the governments of the five Duchies of Saxony that they had to prepare their military state for a next requisition; the order of Major General Berthier, prescribing this mobilization, arrived at Gotha on the 18th of February, and at Weimar on the 19th.

ORDER.

It is prescribed to the 4th Regiment of the Princely Division, 2,800 men strong and composed of the contingents of T. H. the Dukes of Saxony, Gotha, Weimar, Meiningen, Hildburghausen and Coburg, to concentrate immediately at Gotha; this corps, complete for war and in the best state, will leave on 20 February for Hamburg where, reunited with the 6th Regiment, it will form the 2nd Brigade of the Princely Division.

The regiment will hold the following route:

20 February, at Mülhausen;
21 -- , at Dingelstädt;
22 -- , at Heiligenstadt;

23 -- , at Göttingen;
 24 -- , at Nordheim (rest);
 26 -- , at Einbeck;
 27 -- , at Gronau;
 28 -- , at Hannover;
 29 -- , at Schillerschlage;
 1st March , at Celle (rest);
 3 -- , at Bergen;
 4 -- , at Soltau;
 5 -- , at Welle;
 6 -- , at Harburg;
 and 7 -- , at Hamburg.

where it will find new orders from Marshal Prince Eckmühl, commander of the 1st Corps of Observation of the Elbe, for the establishment of its cantonments in the country of Hamburg.

The commander of the regiment will execute the marches in the greatest order, will ensure that no soldier leaves the ranks or stays behind, and will observe the strictest discipline.

At the cottage stops, the accommodation and food will be provided to the regiment in accordance with the regulations in force.

Paris, 9 February 1812.

The Prince of Wagram and Neufchatel



1812. — CARRA-SAINT-CYR

Commandant le Corps de Réserve

(D'après une lithographie tirée de la collection des Généraux Lyonnais, publiée par Chevalier)

1812. -- CARRA-SAINT-CYR Commander of the Reserve Corps (After a lithograph taken from the collection of Generals of Lyon published by Chevalier)

CARRA-SAINT-CYR (Jean-François, count): born in 1756, died in 1834. -- He made the American War, was appointed Brigadier General in 1794: distinguished himself at Marengo, at Hohenlinden; Major General in 1801. Made himself noticeable at Eylau. Baron of the Empire in 1808. Governor of French Guiana from 1817 to 1819.

As soon as it was received at Gotha on the 18th of February, this urgent order was carried by courier to Weimar, Hildburghausen, Meiningen, and Coburg; but it was physically impossible to put all the elements of the regiment on the prescribed date, and only the five companies stationed at Gotha were able to leave on the day indicated, on 20 February: these five companies included a total of 542 officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers. The following day, at Dingelstädt, 4 Weimar companies arrived, brought by Colonel von Germar: Colonel von Egloffstein at that time took command of the regiment, which still had only 9 companies, and arrived exactly in Hamburg on 7 March, after having passed the Elbe in boats united the day before for this purpose.

Hamburg, having become one of the "good cities" of the French Empire and the seat of the 32nd Military Division, had as commander of arms General Carra-Saint-Cyr; its garrison was to include the 4th and 6th Regiments of the Confederation of the Rhine; as early as 9 March, the Saxons of Colonel Egloffstein began guard service there.

On the 9th of March, Major de Bose arrived in the town with the contingent of Meiningen; he was followed on the 13th by Major Wagner, who brought the battalion of Altenburg; finally, on the 16th of March, the arrival of the contingent of Coburg led by Major Hoffmann completed the regiment of the Duchies, to which Colonel von Egloffstein then gave a definitive organization.

The regiment was formed as follows:

GENERAL STAFF.

Commander of the Regiment.....	Colonel Egloffstein (from Weimar).
Aide de Camp of Brigade.....	Captain Seebach (from Gotha).
Brigade Secretary.....	Captain Quartermaster Muller (from Weimar).
Quartermasters.....	{ Captain Trompheller (from Gotha). Lieutenant of Uttenhoven (from Cobourg).
Chief of Medicine.....	Doctor Hasskarl (from Gotha).

SMALL STAFF.

1 music leader and 29 musicians (from the various contingents).
1 wagon and 31 soldiers of the train (of the various contingents).
1 armorer (from Weimar).
1 saddler (from Gotha).

1st Battalion. -- Major von BOSE (from Meiningen).

1st Company of Grenadiers (Gotha).
1 company of fusiliers (Meiningen).
3 companies of fusiliers (Gotha).
1 company of fusiliers (Cobourg).

Total: 26 officers; 759 NCOs and soldiers.

2nd Battalion. -- Major WAGNER (from Gotha).

2nd Company of Grenadiers (Gotha).
1 company of fusiliers (Meiningen).
3 companies of fusiliers (Gotha).
1 company of fusiliers (Cobourg).

Total: 27 officers; 763 NCOs and soldiers.

Light Battalion. -- Colonel von GERMAR (from Weimar).

1 company of carabineers (Weimar).
3 companies of fusiliers (Weimar).
1 company of fusiliers (Hildburghausen).

Total: 25 officers; 910 NCOs and soldiers.

General total: General staff and minor staff ...	70 men.
-- 1 st Battalion.....	785 --
-- 2 nd Battalion.....	790 --
-- Light Battalion.....	910 --
	<hr/>
	2,555 men.

If we add to this the number of men who arrived at Stralsund on 10 August with the 28 forges for the regiment, and the reinforcement detachment that reached the corps on 3 December, we can see that the Federal contributions were fulfilled: they imposed indeed to all Duchies a contribution of 2,800 soldiers.

On the 23rd of March, Major-General Carra-Saint-Cyr made a great review of the regiment: he declared himself satisfied with the appearance of the troop, but found fault with its equipment; he demanded that the soldiers have three pairs of shoes, two of them on the bag; he also wanted everyone to have the camping bag, which could be used for sleeping at the bivouac as well as for carrying out distributions.

The report of this review was sent to the Emperor, as is apparent from the following report by Berthier:¹

GRAND ARMÉE. Paris, 29 March 1812.

--
CHIEF OF STAFF.
--:--

Report to H.M. the Emperor and King.

Sire,

General Carra-Saint-Cyr relates to me that he has passed in review the 4th Regiment of the Princely Division; he found them 2,307 men under arms: it misses 400 men to complete its manpower. Men are generally in good shape and appear to be animated by a good spirit; that of chiefs and officers leaves nothing to be desired; almost all the number of the regiment are absolutely new; instruction is vigorously pursued, the colonel is active and zealous, and there is much in common among the contingents composing this regiment. The fusils are good and of French caliber; 44 are missing and will be replaced. The clothing, which is of different shapes and colors, is in good condition; the equipment is fine, but every soldier has only two pairs of shoes. General Carra-Saint-Cyr would like each soldier to have two pairs in the bag and one on his feet.

He also reports that the colonel, the battalion commanders and all the officers expressed the greatest desire to obtain from your Majesty a flag, assuring them that they would be worthy of this mark of confidence by the manner in which they defend it.

The Prince of Wagram and Neufchâtel,
Major General:

ALEXANDRE.

History does not tell us how much satisfaction was given to the wishes of the officers of the Saxon Duchies

¹National Archives, A. F. ^{IV}, 1642. -- *Historical and Military Curiosities*, no. 106, October 1901.

Regiment, and if the Emperor granted them this flag. It is very probable that the regiment of the Duchies did not obtain this desired emblem. Napoleon never wishing to give them to the foreign regiments who were fighting in the ranks of his army.

Still, it is possible that the major-general, or the adroit Carra-Saint-Cyr, wished to flatter the Emperor by inventing this history of the flag; for there is no trace of a demand of this nature in the memoirs of the officers of the Saxon contingent, nor in those of Lieutenant Jacobs, nor in the very detailed relation of the campaign of 1812 left us by Weimar Doctor Geissler.

The agenda of 24 March placed the duchies regiment in the 2nd Brigade of the Princely Division with the 6th Regiment (contingents of Schwarzburg-Waldeck-Reuss); General Anthing commanded the brigade; born at Gotha, he had formerly served in the troop corps which the Duke of Gotha maintained in the pay of Holland, and he was a compatriot for the soldiers of the 4th Regiment of the Rhine.

The regimental training ground was located between Hamburg and Altona. The customs service ruthlessly watched the English colonial goods to prevent their penetration into the city; but the inhabitants of the country, all of whom were used to smugglers, knew how to use the presence of the Saxon regiment in their best interests; during the breaks of the maneuver, the soldiers let the peasants stuff them with contraband goods; the bags, the shakos, the cartridge cases, the cannons, even the fusils, were filled with chocolate, coffee, colors, spices ... and all this went to Hamburg, when the regiment was safely returning to its quarters, under the beard of the douaniers ...

We have seen above that the light battalion had formed of a company of carabineers; this measure was intended to bring more uniformity to the three battalions of the regiment, the first two battalions of each having a company of grenadiers. The carabineer company received orange epaulettes, with the shako cord and the plume of the same color. At the same time, the white and narrow breeches of the Gotha contingent were replaced by wide blue-cloth trousers with a red band.

In the meantime, on the 18th of May, the Light Battalion of Weimar-Hildburghausen, received the order to proceed to Bremen for garrison duty; and, 15 days later, the rest of the regiment was directed to Swedish Pomerania; it reached Stralsund on 10 June, by Ratzeburg, Wismar, and Rostock.

Placed on the Napoleon Series: December 2017