

# The Napoleon Series

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

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Translated by [Greg Gorsuch](#)

THE  
REGIMENT OF THE SAXON DUCHIES

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### CHAPTER V

#### THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN (1812)

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#### II. -- Occupation of Swedish Pomerania.

The Emperor Napoleon had summoned to Saxony the sovereigns of his feudatories or his allies. Accompanied by Empress Marie-Louise, he left Saint-Cloud on 9 May; saluted at Mainz by the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, at Aschaffenburg by the King of Württemberg and the Grand Duke of Baden, at Freyberg by the King and Queen of Saxony, the Imperial couple found at Dresden the reigning princes of Saxony -Weimar, of Saxe-Coburg, of Dessau, Queen of Westphalia and the Grand Duke of Würzburg, Emperor and Empress of Austria, and finally the King of Prussia himself.

It was during his stay in the Saxon capital that Napoleon regulated the complicated movements of the immense mass of men he was going to cast on Russia.

Corps of armies growing hour by hour, a formidable artillery, convoys without number were moving towards the points which have been assigned to them. Marshal Victor, with the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps, was charged with guarding the country between the Rhine and the Vistula; he had a division in Berlin, another (the Princely Division) in Hamburg; his instructions were laid down in the letter written by the Emperor to the Chief of Staff, 23 April:

"During the month of May, the Duke of Bellune has no other operation to do than to organize his corps to contain Prussia, and to supervise the country between the Vistula and the Rhine. It has been determined by me to decide that he would carry his headquarters to Berlin, and to place under his command not only the troops of the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps, but also the garrisons of Stettin, Custrin (Kostrzyn nad Odrą), and Glogau (Głogów), the Princely Division, one brigade occupying Hamburg and the other Berlin, the garrison of Magdeburg (Westphalians) and all remaining troops in the kingdom of Westphalia ... "

It is under the protection of this army of occupation that the battle corps advanced towards the Russian frontiers; but an enemy diversion was to be feared in the north, for Sweden and England had a part with Russia; Charles XIII of Sweden and his heir apparent Charles-Jean (the former Marshal Bernadotte) after the occupation by French troops of Swedish Pomerania and the disarmament of the German regiments that the Emperor had the garrisons of the North Sea and the Baltic strengthened, and he sent the Duchies Regiment to Stralsund.

General of Division Morand was governor of Swedish Pomerania, which had been occupied since the beginning of 1812; he received the Saxon regiment at Stralsund, finding that it presented itself well, but had not yet reached the

last degree of perfection; the conclusion of this inspection was that the Duchies regiment must now spend seven to eight hours a day on the training ground. Colonel von Egloffstein took the functions of commander of the town of Stralsund.

On 25 June, the light battalion arrived from Bremen where it had been detached, and two days later the two battalions of the regiment were sent, the 2<sup>nd</sup> to Greifswald and Wolgast, and the 1<sup>st</sup> to Rügen in the southern part of the island.

The commander of Rügen was then Colonel Schoenberg, of Hesse-Darmstadt; at his command, the company of fusiliers from Coburg (Captain von Alvensleben) would immediately occupied the peninsula of Mönchgut, threatened by the Swedes whose two transports were already in sight; on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, a fleet of nine ships crossed in front of Rügen; on 2 July, under the protection of several frigates and gunboats, 400 Swedes landed near Mönchgut. The company of Cobourg, warned by its outposts, reunited immediately and went into line deployed against the Swedes; the fire of the enemy ships was useless, and soon the Swedes retired, regain their boats and then their vessels. Two English warships arrived the evening of this fight; revived by this reinforcement, the Swedes tried a new landing, executed in the middle of the night; but this operation was prevented by the Cobourg posts which they found on the same beach chosen for their landing.

During this time the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, sent from Greifswald and Wolgast to the islands of Usedom and Wollin, occupied the towns of Swinemunde, Wolin, Kamień, and the coasts; all these movements were done only at the cost of painful fatigues. By the end of July the regiment had nearly 250 sick soldiers.

Marshal Augereau then organized, under the name of the 11<sup>th</sup> Corps, a reserve corps for the Grande Armée composed of the following divisions:

	Men.
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Division Heudelet, at Hamburg.....	15,000
-- Morand, in Pomeranian.....	9,500
-- Durutte, at Berlin.....	10,500
-- Destrées (Neapolitan), at Danzig.....	7,500
-- Loison, at Königsberg.....	11,500
Brigade of cavalry Cavaignac.	

After being brigaded with the French 113<sup>th</sup> Line Regiment, a body almost entirely recruited by Italians and commanded by Colonel Martini, the Duchies Regiment (1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and Light Battalion) departed from Stralsund on 14 September, headed on Stettin, the one of the three fortresses of the Oder that 10,000 French occupied since the peace of Tilsit. It arrives there on the 21<sup>st</sup>; two days later, Colonel von Egloffstein passed a review to which the governor of the place, General Liébert, attended from his window. After the parade by the company deployed, General Liébert called to him the colonel and complimented him to command a regiment "so beautiful and so well exercised": -- "It was," said Geissler, "the result of torrents of sweat poured on the exercise grounds in Hamburg and Stralsund ..."

Starting on September 24<sup>th</sup> from Stettin, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and the Light Battalion made, on the 25<sup>th</sup>, their junction with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion coming from the islands of Wollin and Usedom. The entire regiment between 7 October in Danzig, the famous fortress, "key of the Vistula and the door of Poland." This is where the colonel received the following order:

GREAT ARMÉE.  
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GOVERNMENT  
OF DANZIG.

*Itinerary to be followed by 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Confederation of the Rhine, commanded by Colonel von Egloffstein, leaving Danzig on 10 October for Smolensk.*

- The 10<sup>th</sup> of October..... Dirschau. (Tczew)  
11..... Marienburg. (Malbork)  
12..... Elbing. (Elbląg)  
13..... Braunsberg. (Braniewo)  
14..... Brandenburg. (Ushakovo)  
15..... Königsberg. (Kaliningrad)  
resting the 16<sup>th</sup> of October.
- The 17<sup>th</sup> of October..... Tapiau. (Gvardeysk)  
18..... Labiau. (Polessk)  
19..... Melanken.  
20..... Tilsit. (Sovetsk)  
resting the 21<sup>st</sup> of October.
- The 22<sup>nd</sup> of October..... Lenken.  
23..... Johannsburg. (Pisz)  
24..... Blogostowienstowa.  
25..... Nikiti.  
26..... Kowno. (Kaunas)  
resting the 27<sup>th</sup> of October.
- The 28<sup>th</sup> of October..... Roumchichki.  
29..... Jismoroni.  
30..... Eve.  
31..... Vilnius.  
resting the 1<sup>st</sup> of November.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> of November... Mietnika. (Medininkai)  
3..... Ochmiana (Ashmyany).  
4..... Smorghoni. (Smorgon)  
5..... Malotetchino. (Maladzyechna)  
6..... Radochkowitschi. (Radoshkovichi)  
7..... Minsk.  
resting the 8<sup>th</sup> of November.
- The 9<sup>th</sup> of November... Smolewitschi. (Smolevichi)  
10..... Borisov. (Barysaw)  
11..... Natscha.  
12..... Bobr.  
13..... Kocanow.  
14..... Orsha.  
resting the 15<sup>th</sup> of November.
- The 16<sup>th</sup> of November... Doubrowna. (Dubrovno)  
17..... Liadoni. (Lyady)  
18..... Krasnoi. (Krasnyy)  
19..... Koritnia and Loukerchtino.  
20..... Smolensk.

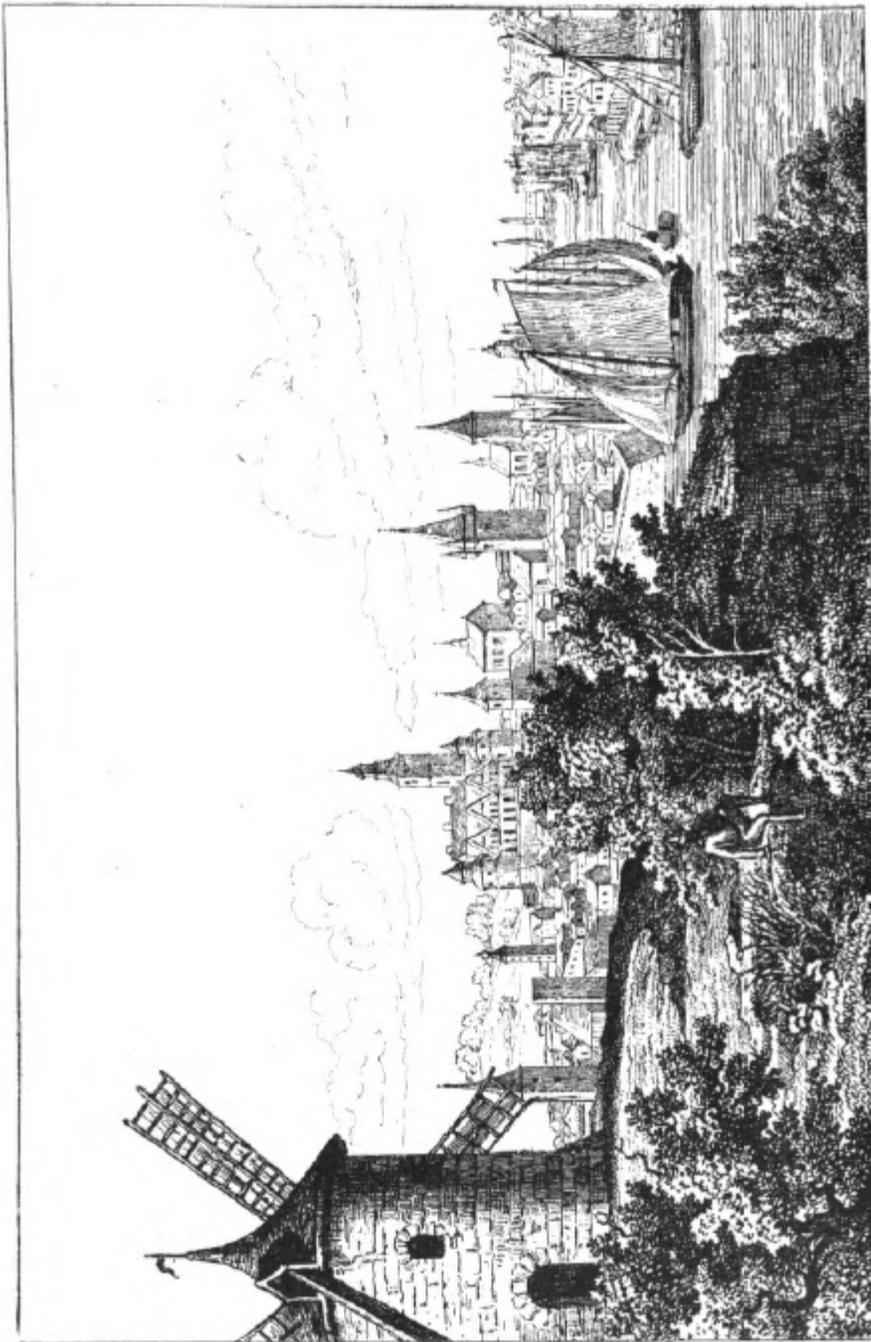
Danzig, 9 October 1812.

*The Adjutant Commander, Chief of the General Staff of the Government:*

HÉRICOURT.

Identical copy:

Colonel von EGLOFFSTEIN.



Königsberg.

Königsberg.

The regiment of the Duchies thus left Danzig on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October in execution of the order above; it crossed the Vistula on a pontoon bridge and arrived at Königsberg on the 15<sup>th</sup>; but the Saxon regiment was detained in this last town by its governor, General Loison, instead of continuing the march prescribed on Smolensk.

For the new orders had just arrived for the training at Königsberg, under the orders of this general officer, of a strong reserve division destined to join the Grand Armée. This division included 17 infantry battalions:

- 4 battalions of the 29<sup>th</sup> Line;
- 2 -- the 113<sup>th</sup> Line;
- 1 -- the 3<sup>rd</sup> Line;
- 1 -- of the 103<sup>th</sup> Line;
- 2 -- the Frankfurt Regiment;
- The Saxon Duchies Regiment;
- The 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Confederation of the Rhine;
- The 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Confederation of the Rhine;

plus, 4 squadrons of Neapolitan dragoons and hussars of the guard of King Murat and some French artillery companies; in total, 20,000 men.

General Loison passed on November 1<sup>st</sup> a great review of this division: he made maneuver and evolve the troops; then there was a parade, sounding clarions and flapping flags; the general was happy: the regiments have distinguished themselves by their excellent appearance.

During its stay at Königsberg, the Duchies regiment had quarrels and feuds with the Neapolitan cavalry. One day, there was between men of both corps a real street fight in which a sergeant of Cobourg was killed by a knife stab; a Saxon patrol arrived and, threatened in turn, had to fire: five Neapolitans were killed in the square and several others escaped with serious injuries.

Finally, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, the regiment set out for Vilnius: it left in the town a small depot of 110 men of various contingents, and had about 400 patients in the hospitals of Hamburg, Stralsund, Stettin, and Königsberg.

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