

# The Napoleon Series

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

By Commandant Sauzey

Translated by [Greg Gorsuch](#)

THE  
REGIMENT OF THE SAXON DUCHIES

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CHAPTER VI

CAMPAIGN OF 1813

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### I. -- The new quotas of the Duchies.

The unfortunate events of 1812 had made the enemies of France hope that the Emperor Napoleon, after the destruction of the Grande Armée, deprived of the Prussian alliance, uncertain of the alliance of Austria, would become an easy opponent to tame; while England pays her gold on the continent, 100,000 Russians occupied Prussia, Poland, and Saxony, 120,000 Prussians were under arms, and Austria concentrated 200,000 soldiers with whom she prepared to play a decisive game.

But the Emperor had raised a new army out of the ground: while Prince Eugène held its head against the invading columns with the 40,000 old soldiers who escaped the disasters of the Russian retreat, 200,000 young conscripts, led by Napoleon, advanced to the plains of Saxony. The princes of the Confederation of the Rhine have been ordered to put new contingents in the field and these formations are organized little by little.

Our allies of the Rhine lost their beautiful enthusiasm of 1809 and 1812; the last campaign had on their minds the most deplorable effect; the populations were worked upon by secret societies, the officers circumvented by the Prussian promises; one spoke of the "liberty of Germany", of the "liberation of the Homeland." Many already carried in them the germ of defection; at the first opportunity, this seed would rise and they would abandon our cause.

The governments of the Duchies of Saxony, ordered to reconstitute their federal contingents, organized at Gotha and at Altenburg reserve companies which soon enlarged themselves with soldiers from the Königsberg depot, which had been directed to Berlin, and then to the Duchies. Many Saxons, taken prisoner by the Russians during the retreat and who the inhabitants of Poland had been able to help escape, increased, also the units in formation; in March 1813 a battalion of march provided by all the Duchies was at the disposal of the French military authorities.

A Gotha company stationed at Altenburg and commanded by Captain Grafendorf, being threatened at the beginning of April by the approach of the Coalitionists, was pulled back on Gotha; it was soon ordered to go to Schwarzhausen in the Thüringer Wald (Thuringian Forest), where two other companies from Weimar and a company from Meiningen went at the same time: the battalion thus formed was under the orders of Major Lynker of Weimar.

The great enemy army, which had assembled near Dresden and was already advancing as far as Hoff and Plauen, had thrown into Thuringia numerous scouts, who, on the 12 April, took near Gotha a secretary of the French

legation.<sup>1</sup> The next day, the Prussian cavalry Captain Pinto, at the head of a detachment of hussars, appeared unannounced, "as had been agreed," before the battalion of the Duchies, which had gone out for a maneuver; Major Lynker, without any hesitation, without the shadow of an attempt at resistance, surrendered as a prisoner of war with his whole battalion; the Saxons were driven to Altenburg, where the headquarters of Blücher were; Lynker agreed to serve Prussia, and all his troops did as he, except for the First Lieutenant von Wangenheim, who returned to his home after committing himself on his honor not to serve during this campaign against the Prussia and her Allies -- and the Fourier Lossius, from Gotha's company, who refused to make any arrangement, managed to escape and return to Gotha.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, the battalion of Saxon Duchies arrived at Dresden, to which the Prussians had surrendered their arms at Altenburg; this battalion defiled with drums beating in front of the King of Prussia's hotel and had the "honor" of being reviewed by the two Allied sovereigns.<sup>2</sup> And during this time the Emperor Napoleon, passing through Weimar, was going there to greet the reigning Duchess whom he had already seen in 1806, after Jena. As for the Duke of Weimar, he had come to meet the Emperor when he had left Erfurt and had made a point of driving him to Ekartsberg, where he was held for dinner and from which he would not retire again until evening ...<sup>3</sup>

Soon the victories of Weißenfels, Lützen, Bautzen, and Wurschen cleared the whole left bank of the Elbe; but the armistice, which lasted from June 4 to August 10, unfortunately allowed the coalition forces to consolidate their alliance, to persuade Austria to join the coalition and thus to double their resources and the number of their soldiers.

During the armistice, the Saxon Duchies had to form new units to replace those whose defection had strongly irritated the Emperor. At Gotha, two companies were first organized; but the absolute want of officers obliged them to give the command to old retired soldiers who were recalled to the service, and to place there all newly promoted officers; among these was the old Fourier Lossius, promoted to second lieutenant. Saxe-Gotha needed to furnish six companies; the organization was marching along slowly, and then the order arrived, at the beginning of August, to leave for Leipzig; it was necessary to complete the companies in a hurry with 267 recruits who were sent out without having been trained and before being dressed. It was a complete regiment of three battalions which the Duchies were to furnish. This body, commanded by Colonel von Münch, was organized at Jena from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of August; it consisted at this moment:

- 6 companies from Gotha;
- 2 companies from Meiningen;
- 1 company from Coburg;
- 5 companies from Weimar-Hildburghausen.

Battalions are uniformly set to five companies; the second battalion provisionally included only four, one of the companies of Cobourg having not yet arrived. The first battalion (Gotha) was commanded by Major von Kirchbach (of Gotha); this officer -- like Colonel von Münch himself -- was recently promoted; the second battalion (Cobourg and Meiningen) was under the command Captain von Ludwig; the third battalion (Weimar-Hildburghausen) was led by Major Wolfskehl.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, the Duchies Regiment left Jena, by Crossen and Pegau, for Leipzig; from there going, by Halle and Bernburg, to Magdeburg. Conscripts arrived at Pegau for the companies of Gotha-Altenburg; they were not dressed and it is only upon arrival in Magdeburg that uniforms would be given to them. During the first days of this march, the desertions were numerous: 62 men disappeared, from the 1,069 contingent of Gotha ... "The spirit of the soldier," -- said Jacobs,-- "had become quite hostile to France since the dispatch to Spain of the German contingents; the disasters of the Russian retreat had further increased the bad dispositions, which were no longer hidden."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Fain, *Manuscript of 1818*, Volume II, page 320.

<sup>2</sup>Odeleben, page 112.

<sup>3</sup>Fain, *Manuscript of 1813*, Volume II, pages 334-337.

<sup>4</sup>Jacobs, *Geschichte der Feldzüge 1807-1815*.

Arrived on 19 August at Magdeburg, the regiment was immediately reviewed by General Lemarois (Le Marois), governor of the city. The latter did not let them stay there to exercise its recruits, a certain number of whom had not yet touched their clothing; the next day he sent him to the camp established under the walls of the fortress, a camp where General Girard was assembling a division intended to reinforce the French Army of the North, commanded by Marshal Oudinot.

Two grenadier companies were taken from the six fusilier companies of Gotha, and each company was put on the footing of 140 men; the surplus was used to form a depot of 176 men left at Magdeburg, as well as the third battalion (light infantry of Weimar-Hildburghausen); this last battalion was provisionally attached to another regiment of the garrison.

The battalions had resumed the old formation of five companies; they had no baggage carriages, as the battalions of 1812 did, but only packhorses. The companies of Meiningen, Weimar, and Hildburghausen were commanded by lieutenants, in consideration of the officers of these contingents, prisoners in Russia, or stranded in Danzig; those of Gotha were by captains "to avoid oversight from the French military authority ..." The Saxon Duchies Regiment was to have no more musicians.

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