

The Napoleon Series

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

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THE
REGIMENT OF THE SAXON DUCHIES

CHAPTER VI

CAMPAIGN OF 1813

III. -- Defense of Magdeburg.

During the first part of the siege, the Duchies regiment was actively employed in the service of garrison that were in the town. But the besieged were aware of the setbacks that hit the French army; since the successive failures of Marshal Oudinot and Marshal Ney at Großbeeren and Jüterbock, Saxony had to be evacuated and the great battle of Leipzig decided the general retreat of the army of the Emperor Napoleon. The Confederation of the Rhine cracked and dissolved: the Royal Saxon army had passed into the ranks of the Coalition, Bavaria separated from France, all Germany rising against the one she greeted the day before still calling him "Savior" and of "Protector" Also, desertion became considerable among the soldiers of the Duchies Regiment; at the end of October, the detachments sent to external work were reduced by half. General Le Marois, governor of Magdeburg, resolved to put an end to this disturbing state of affairs. On 12 November, the Duchies regiment received the order of to go, unarmed, in a capote and a garrison cap, in front of the governor's house: it then had 361 men, plus 164 soldiers in the hospitals. General Le Marois himself drove the regiment to the advanced works and, having arrived there, had the Saxons choose to return immediately to their homes, or return to the town to serve there now as a good and loyal soldiers; the first alternative is accepted unanimously. Sitting, the whole troop up to and including the sergeant-majors laid down their coats; then French horsemen accompany him to the most advanced posts of the town, where it abandoned them. The weapons and equipment left in the barracks were seized by the French military authority to best serve the defense of the place.

As for the officers, they returned to the city with the governor who proposed to take a command of their rank in a French regiment, or to return to their peerage, under oath not to serve for a year against France ... All gave their word, left Magdeburg on the 15th of November, and returned to Gotha on the 25th of the same month.



1813. — LE GÉNÉRAL LEMAROIS
Gouverneur de Magdebourg (1).
(D'après l'*Album* de Carle Vernet.)

1813. -- THE GENERAL LEMAROIS Governor of Magdeburg.¹
(From the *Album* of Carie Vernet.)

Colonel von Münch did not leave the service of France without bearing a good certificate: this is indeed the letter addressed to him by his Brigadier General, the Westphalian General von Langenschwarz, before the departure of Magdeburg:

I express my satisfaction to Colonel von Münch and all the officers under his command belonging to the contingents of the Duchies of Gotha, Coburg and Meiningen, who left from Magdeburg on their word not to serve against France and her allies during one year and one day, this measure being necessitated by the desertion of the greater part of their soldiers. During their stay in the town, and during all the time when I had the honor of having them under my command, they showed themselves full of bravery, filled with honor, and fulfilled their duty with zeal; they gained the esteem of the general governor and their other chiefs. It is regrettable to see such a good corps of officers dissolved for some time, after their conscientious but useless efforts to stop the desertion of their troops.

Magdeburg, 13 November 1813.

Brigadier General,
Baron von Langenschwarz.

The intrepid Le Marois continued to defend the place, which he returned to the Allies only on 25 May 1814: he came out with the military honors, his garrison, and all his guns.

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¹LEMAROIS (Jean-Léonard-François, Count), born in Briquibec (Manche) in 1776, died in Paris in 1836. Came from the School of Mars. Aide-de-camp of Bonaparte. It is mentioned at Arcole, Lodi, Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena; Division General. Illustrious at the defense of Magdeburg in 1813; kept this fortress in France until the 2nd of May, 1814. Peer of France at the Cent Jours (Hundred Days). Retired at the second Restoration and scratched from the Peerage.