

The Napoleon Series

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

Translated by [Greg Gorsuch](#)

THE
REGIMENT OF THE SAXON DUCHIES

CHAPTER VI

CAMPAIGN OF 1813

IV. -- Defense of Danzig.

THE GARRISON OF THE TOWN.

The Emperor ordered the General of Division, Count Rapp, to defend the town of Danzig. The aide-de-camp of the Emperor would immortalize the defense of this city, just as Marshal Lefebvre has previously made memorable its attack, siege and conquest.



1813. — LE GÉNÉRAL RAPP
Gouverneur de Danzig (1).
(D'après A. Tardieu.)

1813. -- GENERAL RAPP Governor of Danzig.¹

¹RAPP (Jean, Count), born at Colmar in 1772, died at Rheinweiler (Grand Duchy of Baden) in 1821. Entered voluntarily in 1788 in the chasseurs à cheval; served the armies of Rhine, Moselle, and Egypt; the aide-de-camp of Dessaix, then of Bonaparte, commanded the Mamluk of the Guard; Brigadier General in 1804, General of Division

(After A. Tardieu.)

The enthusiastic bravery and gallant chivalry of Rapp had a very direct effect on the morale of the garrison: he knew how to excite his soldiers, and every time he told them about military honor, the Poles and Italians, the French as well as the Germans answer him with unanimous cheers.

He had 30,000 men, a good artillery; he had food for a year, so he would hold on a year, and when his last piece of biscuit was eaten, when he had lost 19,000 men by illness or wounds, he would ask the stupefied besieger for the honors of the war. One would not dare to refuse him.

In 13 January 1813, the 10th Corps of the Grand Army formed the garrison of the town:

Commander and governor...	General Rapp.
Chief of Staff...	Colonel d'Héricourt.
Artillery Commander...	Brigade General Lépin.
Engineer Commander...	General of Division (de) Campredon.

7th DIVISION. -- General GRANDJEAN.

		Battalions.	Officers.	Men.
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<i>Radziwill Brigade</i>	Polish 5 th Regiment	3	80	1,497
	Polish 11 th Regiment	3	70	1,680
<i>Bachelu Brigade</i>	Polish 10 th Regiment	3	83	1,609
	Westphalian 1 st Regiment	2	46	888
	Bavarian 13 th Regiment	2	42	950

This division did not take part in the retreat from Russia.

30th DIVISION. -- General HEUDELET.

It was composed of 17 detached battalions, from French regiments. These battalions were grouped in provisional Demi-brigades.

<i>Husson Brigade</i>	7 th and 8 th Provisional Demi-brigades.
<i>Breissand Brigade</i>	1 st and 6 th -- --
<i>Gault Brigade</i>	9 th and 17 th -- --

33th DIVISION. -- General DESTREÉS.

		Battalions.	Officers.	Men.
		--	--	--
<i>Rozarello Brigade</i>	Neapolitan Royal Guard		1	58
	Neapolitan 5 th Regiment	2	33	1,055
	Neapolitan 6 th Regiment	2	33	1,059
	Neapolitan 7 th Regiment	2	21	861

in 1805. Appointed Governor of Danzig in 1807, after taking this position Marshal Lefebvre. Count of the Empire in 1809; He distinguished himself in 1812 in Smolensk, Moskowa, Maloyaroslavets, and defended Danzig heroically against the Allies in 1813. Joined the Emperor during the Hundred Days and was in charge of the command of the Army of the Rhine. Rallied with the Bourbons in 1817, was named peer of France in 1819.

The Neapolitan Royal Guard had almost entirely succumbed in Russia.

34th DIVISION. -- General FRANCESCHI.

This was the former Princely Division. The weakness of most of its regiments testifies to the considerable voids created by the last campaign and the retreat from Vilnius to Kowno. General Bachelu would take the place of General Franceschi after the death of the latter; Brigadier General Devilliers was attached to this division.

	Battalions.	Officers.	Men.
	--	--	--
French 22 nd Light Regiment	1	12	152
French 3 rd Line Regiment	1	6	73
French 29 th Line Regiment	1	38	367
French 105 th Line Regiment	1	4	54
French 113 th Line Regiment	1	21	272
Regiment of Frankfurt	1	28	181
4 th Regiment of the Rhine (Saxon Duchies)	1	27	288
5 th Regiment of the Rhine (Anhalt-Lippe)	1	32	536
	Battalions.	Officers.	Men.
	--	--	--
6 th Regiment of the Rhine (Schwarzburg-Waldeck-Reuss)	1	22	268

The usable strength of the Germans of the division no longer corresponded to four regiments, they were grouped into only two regiments (3rd and 6th): the command of this "German brigade" is entrusted to Colonel Heeringen, commander of the 6th Regiment of the Rhine .

The four companies of the Duchies Regiment were themselves reduced to two; the surplus officers were to join the depots, but the investment of the town, which became effective since the 18th of January, did not permit their departure; they remained "à la suite".

CAVALRY.--Brigadier General CAVAIGNAC, and General FARINE.

2 provisional regiments of dragoons.
1 mixed regiment.

These bodies were composed of detachments of:

2nd, 5th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 17th, 19th, 20th and 28th Dragoons;
3rd, 6th and 8th Cuirassiers;
3rd, 7th, 11th, 19th, 23rd, 24th and 25th Chasseurs (à Cheval);
7th and 8th Hussars;
9th Polish Lancers.

ARTILLERY.

French artillery: 12 companies on foot;
-- 5 pontoon companies;
-- 1 company of laborers;
-- 1 company of gunsmiths;
-- 3 main battalions of the train.
Bavarian , Württemberg, Saxon Artillery: 3 companies.
Polish Artillery: 2 companies on foot;
-- 1 company on horseback.

ENGINEERS.

2 French companies;
1 Polish company;
1 battalion of Spanish pioneers.

NAVY.

Rear Admiral Dumanoir had at his disposal:

2 crews of flotilla; and
2 battalions of workers.

The numbers on 21 January 1813, the time of the beginning of the blockade, amounted to:

present: officers	1, 380
-- troops	28,095
in hospitals	5,919 ²

FIRST OPERATIONS.

The German brigade, under the orders of Colonel Heeringen, was stationed at the Ohra until the 1st of February, then in the suburb of Schidlitz (Sidelce); its mission was to occupy and defend this suburb and that of Stolzenberg. Captain von Seebach commanded a company of convalescents of the 4th Regiment, to which some Mecklenburgers and Hessians of Darmstadt were assembled. The entire German brigade comprised about 1,000 men.

On 4 February, Colonel Heeringen leaving the 5th Regiment at Stolzenberg, reconnoitered Wonneberg with 230 men and 26 officers; he met there with the 50 men of Captain von Seebach and detached the latter to flank his left, pushing further and seeing all of a sudden, in the area a great number of Cossacks who had hidden themselves in folds of the ground. The colonel wanted to try to reach a neighboring height to form a square, but the soldiers sinking into the snow to the waist and with wet fusils wouldn't leave ... The reconnaissance was taken prisoner in its entirety; Colonel Heeringen, badly wounded, thus fell into the hands of the enemy with several other officers; Major Horadan (of the Frankfurt regiment), thanks to the vigor of his horse, alone escaped the Russians. The company of Captain Seebach, who had lost sight of the bulk of the detachment while passing behind a height, saw him a moment after, already a prisoner, and led away by the Russians. At this sight, the soldiers of Seebach began to say "that all that remained was to surrender, and that the fate of the officers and comrades must be followed."³ But with a quick decision, the captain made the ranks close; he forbade firing without his order, formed his little troop into two platoons, and retired to Wonneberg; soon surrounded by the Cossacks, he halted as soon as they came within reach and thus holds them in respect. He eventually returned to Wonneberg and Schidlitz without losing a single man.

This unfortunate affair costs 256 killed or prisoners to the German brigade, whose strength became so small that it was relieved by a French battalion to return it to the town. At the end of February it had only 500 men under arms, but 800 in hospitals: the 4th Regiment was reduced to a single company (under the captain of Seebach). The German brigade formed only one battalion which took the name of "Battalion of Europe", because of the 23 sovereign states whose soldiers formed its ranks ... and its command was entrusted to Colonel von Egloffstein, with Lieutenant-Colonel Hoppe (5th Regiment of the Rhine) as deputy.

²General Campredon: *Defense of Danzig*.

³ Jacobs, page 271.

On 5 March, the Russians made a general attack on the western front of the town, from the Ohra to Altschottland (Stary Szkoty): their leader, General Lewis, seized these two points, Schidlitz and Langfuhr (Wrzeszcz); while all these villages were the scene of bloody fighting, the garrison took up arms and came to support the troops engaged; the German battalion took and retired three times Ohra, where Colonel Egloffstein was wounded; finally, in the evening, all the posts taken from the besieged were reoccupied by them. The success would certainly have been more difficult if the Russians had not dispersed to plunder the distilleries of the suburbs: they got intoxicated in numbers and many of them, drunk-dead or half-drunk, were taken prisoner and brought into the town.

In the middle of April supplies were already more sparingly distributed. One began to eat horse; as for fish, there was always have plenty of that.

THE GREAT REVIEW OF 18 APRIL.

On the occasion of Easter, General Rapp gave the Russians a spectacle they were far from expecting: he left the city with 6,000 men and puts them between the two lines of the outposts to review them ; the Russians ran to arms and could not realize the peaceful attitude of the French. On the express order of the governor, no fusil was charged, any more than the pieces of the Polish battery which accompanied our troops: in the case where the enemy would have made an attack, it was to receive it "with the bayonet". All the non-employed officers attended this review, on foot or on horseback. When the general had passed in front of the front, the troops marched to the shouts of "Long live the Emperor!" And then returned to the place.

We must not forget the great confidence in themselves that a ceremony of this nature could give the soldiers of the garrison: this audacious review, under the very beard and nose of the Russians, raised them in their own eyes and exalted their courage deeply.

"And what a sight," adds Captain Jacobs, "what an inconceivable variety of uniforms! On the right of the line, a platoon of the Imperial Guard; then the detachments of the 7th Division (Grandjean), composed of Poles, Bavarians and Westphalians; those of the 30th Division (Heudelet), formed of French troops; further, those of the 33rd (Destrées), comprising three Neapolitan regiments; finally, the detachments of the 34th Division, with Germans of all the powers of the Confederation of the Rhine. We must add some fractions of Spanish pioneers including a battalion was in the town, some platoons of French dragoons and cuirassiers and Polish light horse: one would then have the colorful picture of a grand review in Danzig during the siege of 1813!"⁴

The old Loison division, commanded by General Marchand at the departure from Königsberg, was then commanded by General Franceschi, the latter having died of typhus which had made more than 16,000 casualties in the town, General Devilliers took command in March until the armistice (10 June); from that time, the division was under the orders of General Bachelu, promoted to divisional (general).

⁴ Jacobs, page 276.



1813. — LE GÉNÉRAL BACHELU
Commandant la 34^e division (1).

1813. -- THE GENERAL BACHELU
Commander of the 34th Division.⁵

THE ARMISTICE. -- THE CROSSES.

On 9 June, the garrison made a big sortie. Around noon, at the height of the battle, General Rapp rode the whole line of battle, announcing to the troops a great victory of Emperor Napoleon at Bautzen and the march of the French army on the Oder. As a result of this fight, which costs the besieged 6 officers and 210 men killed, 19 officers and 427 wounded, the 34th Division was honorably mentioned in the plan of the day where a special mention is made of the brilliant Colonel Egloffstein.

The next day, 10 June, an orderly officer of the Emperor (Captain von Plantat) brought to Danzig the news of the conclusion of an armistice and numerous rewards for the defenders of the town: 10 officer crosses and 100 Knights of the Legion of Honor; the governor received the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Union, Colonel von Egloffstein the cross of an Officer of the Legion of Honor and a non-commissioned officer from Weimar that of Knight.

The armistice lasted until 19 August. It was during this time that Rapp organized, with the redundant officers, the two battalions of the "Regiment of the King of Rome", and with the commissary workers, the pay office and the military police, the battalion qualified as "Rice-Bread-Salt" by the troops of the garrison: this last battalion was charged with providing service in the interior of the town.

Finally, on 29 August, the 34th Division delivered its last serious fight. The enemy attacked Langfuhr: Rapp, with the greater part of the garrison, left the town and spread out on the Russian lines between Wonneberg and Langfuhr, the 34th Division in the center. The latter did not spare themselves and the "Battalion of Europe", by taking two redoubts from the Russians, lost two officers and 36 men: the brave Colonel von Egloffstein was also wounded in this affair.

⁵BACHELU (Gilbert-Désiré-Joseph), born at Dôle in 1777. In 1794 he entered the School of Engineering at Metz. Captain in 1795, made with Moreau the campaign of the Rhine. Appointed battalion commander by Kléber at the headquarters in Cairo. Sent to Santo Domingo with General Leclerc, as Colonel of Engineering. Chief of Staff of Engineering at the Boulogne Camp, from 1803 to 1805; at that moment took command of the regiment of infantry of the line; Holland campaign with Marmont; brigadier general in 1809, campaign of 1812 as general of division; employed at Danzig until the surrender of the town; command in 1815 the 1st Division of the 2nd Corps (Reille), and fought at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo. Exiled by the Bourbon government, not to return to France until 1817.

THE. CAPITULATION. -- THE RETURN.

The bombardment of the city began on 9 October; on the night of the 1st to the 2nd of November, it led to the burning of the stores with provisions of the town; the besieged, already rigorously rationed, then had to be satisfied with the meat of killed or dead horses and almost inedible bread made with half-burned wheat flour.

Attempts by the enemy to corrupt them were almost without effect: of the 1,017 men who deserted, especially during the last months of the siege, there were only 287 Germans of the Devilliers Brigade and among them only 3 Saxons of the Regiment Duchies: "The soldiers of Rapp were proud to belong to the garrison of Danzig."⁶

Finally, on the 27th of November, at 9 o'clock in the evening, the cannons were suddenly silent: the governor had just concluded an armistice, and two days later the capitulation was signed. The food was completely exhausted, half of the city was falling into ruins, and the dissolution of the Confederation of the Rhine made it difficult to keep in our ranks the German troops who were still fighting against it. The terms of the capitulation stipulated that the garrison should leave the place with the honors of war and that all the French troops would return freely to France: Emperor Alexander did not ratify these honorable conditions, so justified by the unshakable courage of the besieged; the French troops left the city on 12 December to be taken as prisoners of war to the interior of Russia ...

The next day, the Germans, in their turn, came out of the town, with arms and baggage, newly dressed on the existing stores, with a hood on them and another rolled on the bag. Contemporaries are unanimous in noting the feelings of regret which they expressed when they separated from their French companions in glory and misfortune.⁷

Headed first to Berlin where they arrive on 31 January 1814, our former allies of Saxon Duchies were then set out for Thuringia: 4 officers, 5 NCOs and 17 soldiers return to Weimar on 14 February⁸ and, on 16th, 55 men return to Gotha: it was all that war, sickness, or captivity had spared from the Duchies of Saxony, who had loyally and bravely served under the French eagles during the dramatic campaign of 1812 in Russia, and during one of the most memorable sieges from the period of the first Empire.

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⁶Jacobs, page 283.

⁷See the quote from Bernays, in *The Frankfurt Regiment*, by Captain Sauzey, page 93.

⁸Knötel, *Uniformenkunde*, I, no. 42.