

# The Napoleon Series

## The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume III the Saxons in Our Ranks Chapter Two Part II: Campaign of 1809

By Commandant Sauzey

Translated by [Greg Gorsuch](#)

### CHAPTER II

#### CAMPAIGN OF 1809

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SITUATION OF THE 9<sup>th</sup> CORPS ON JULY 1<sup>st</sup>.

*French DUPAS Division.*

5<sup>th</sup> Light.  
19<sup>th</sup> Line.  
Artillery.

*Saxon 1<sup>st</sup> Division.*

VON ZERSCHWITZ, Lieutenant-General;  
VON HARTITESCH, Major-General;  
VON BOXBERG, Major-General;  
VON GERSDORF, Colonel, Chief of Staff;  
VON GUTSCHMID, Major-General.

*Adjutants and Aides-de-Camp.*

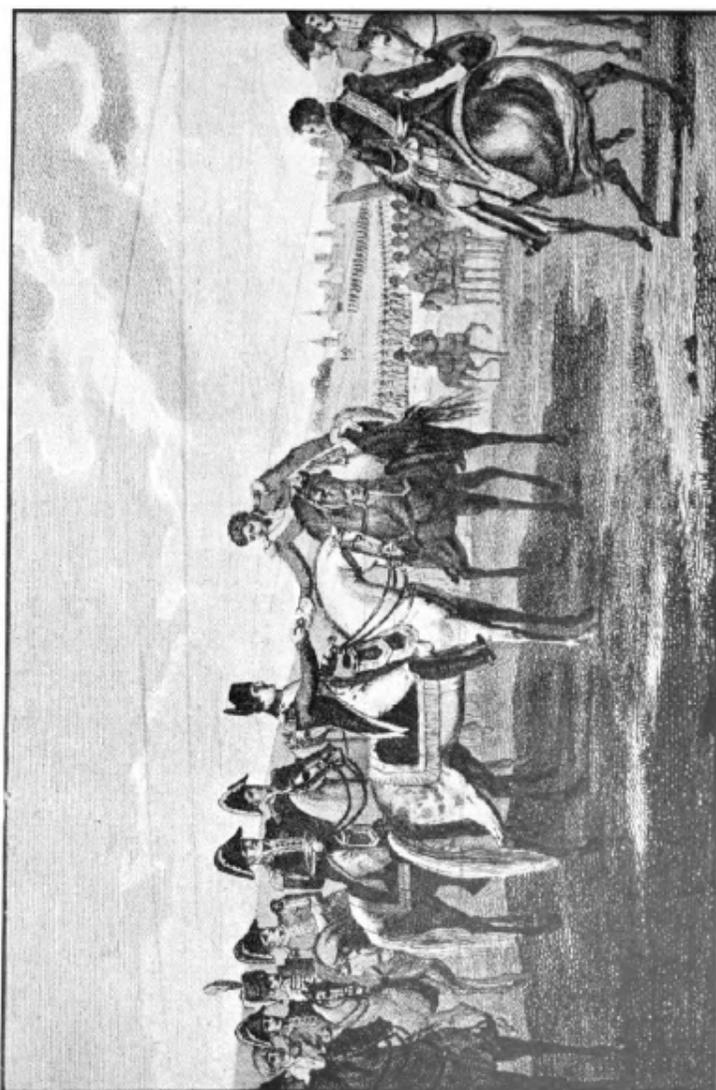
Prince VON WEIMAR, Major;  
VON CARLOWITZ, Captain;  
VON HARTITESCH, Second-Lieutenant;  
VON SCHREIBERSCHOFFEN, Second-Lieutenant;  
VON GERSTERBERG, Lieutenant;  
HASTER, Second-Lieutenant;  
WAGNER, Second-Lieutenant;  
VON MARSCHALL, Second-Lieutenant:

Battalion of Guards Grenadiers, VON WARNSDORF...	1 bn.	582 m.
Battalion of Grenadiers, VON BOSE...	1 bn.	592 m.
Battalion of Grenadiers, VON HACKE...	1 bn.	573 m.
Regiment of the King...	2 bn.	1,176 m.
Regiment of Dyherrn, VON ROMES...	1 bn.	529 m.
Regiment of Prince Antoine...	2 bn.	1,120 m.
Regiment of Prince Maximilian...	2 bn.	1,190 m.
Regiment of Prince Frederick...	2 bn.	1,181 m.
Life Guards, VON HARTMANN...	2 sq.	384 m.

Carabineers, LECKMANN...	2 sq.	226 m.
Light Horse of Prince Clement, VON KLEIST...	4 sq.	526 m.
Light Horse of Prince Albrecht...	1 sq.	189 m.
Hussars, VON LEBKOWITZ...	3 sq.	393 m.
Artillery...		286 m.

*Saxon 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.*

POLENTZ, Lieutenant-General;  
 VON LECOQ, Major-General;  
 VON ZESCHAU, Major-General;  
 VON STEINDEL, Colonel, Chief of Staff;  
 VON FEILITZCK, Major-General.



L'EMPEREUR DÉCORE LE GÉNÉRAL DE POLENTZ  
 (D'après les *Fastes de la Nation française*).

THE EMPEROR DECORATING GENERAL VON POLENTZ  
 (After the *Works of the French Nation*).

*Adjutants and Aides-de-Camp.*

VON KOPPEN, Second-Lieutenant;  
VON OBSCHELWITZ, Second-Lieutenant;  
VON LANDSBERG, Second-Lieutenant;  
VON LANGENBAU, Second-Lieutenant;  
Count VON HAPSGARSEN, Captain;  
VON FEILITZCK, Second-Lieutenant.

Regiment of Prince Clement...	2 bn.	1,159 m.
Regiment of Low...	2 bn.	1,169 m.
Regiment of Cerrini...	2 bn.	1,179 m.
Battalion of Grenadiers, VON RADELOF...	1 bn.	583 m.
Battalion of Grenadiers, VON WINKELMANN...	1 bn.	579 m.
Regiment of Niesemeuschel...	2 bn.	1,195 m.
Regiment of Obschelwitz...	1 bn.	572 m.
Cuirassiers of the Guard, PETRIKOWSKI...	4 sq.	600 m.
Light Horse of Prince Jean, VON ENGELS...	4 sq.	589 m.
Artillery...		286 m.
Saxon artillery park, BIRBAUM, Major...		975 m.

The total number of Saxon troops was 17,765 men, divided into 23 battalions and 20 squadrons:

The infantry numbered...	13,331 men.
The cavalry...	2,857 --
The artillery...	1,547 --

Except for two battalions placed at the command of Reynier for the defense of the Island of Lobau and placed, one in reserve, the other at the great bridge of the Danube, the whole corps of Bernadotte crossed the river on 3 July at 11:30 in the evening, immediately after Oudinot, Masséna and Davout.

He placed himself in the second line, on the far left; the Guard, Marmont, Wrede were in the center and the Army of Italy on the right. In each corps, a division made the left, the center and the right.

**Battle of Wagram (5 and 6 July 1809).**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, at about 10 o'clock in the morning, the Saxons came to stand near Davout, which was on Rutzendorf.

When all the corps of the 2<sup>nd</sup> line had arrived, the Emperor carried the whole army forward; it was half-past twelve: the general direction of the center was on Wagram.

While Masséna marched on Essling and Davout on Neusiedel (Markgrafneusiedl), Oudinot moved on Baumersdorf, and Bernadotte with his two Saxon divisions and the Dupas Division, on Rahsdorf (Rassdorf).

In order to cover the deployment of the Army of Italy, which entered at that moment into the 1<sup>st</sup> line, the Emperor sends the Dupas Division on the road to Baumersdorf. The Saxons had passed Rassdorf, the left flank of which was threatened by an offensive movement of the Austrians: Gérard preceded the enemy and charged them at the head of the Saxon cavalry, it took a flag and 500 men, the Saxon Light Horse "Prince Albrecht" crushed in this engagement the regiment of cuirassiers of the same name in the service of Austria. The Dupas Division joined at this moment Bernadotte's right.

Towards evening Napoleon attempted to separate the two Austrian masses, which seemed to retreat in two divergent directions, over Neusiedel and Stammersdorf. The Saxons had reached Aderklaa.

Oudinot, Bernadotte, and Eugene attacked the Rußbach line. This operation, which began very late, lacked organization and failed, despite the energy and valor of the Lamarque Division of the Army of Italy, and the Dupas Division of the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps.

The horse artillery of the Guard had come to settle in the midst of Bernadotte's corps between the Saxons and the Dupas Division, and covered the Austrian masses with bullets; but night was coming, and the offensive movement of Dupas and Lamarque had not been supported by the Saxons. These two divisions had to retake the Rußbach, after a very brilliant fight.

Dupas, in this engagement, had prolonged himself to his left, in the hope of binding himself to the two Saxon divisions; attacked by Bellegarde, struck down by the Austrian artillery, he maintained himself until night; his losses were considerable; among the troops attached to his division, the Saxon battalion of Radelof *disappeared* in the last charge (this expression is that of the report of General Dupas: "Was it the beginning of the defections on the field of battle?" adds the general Pelet). There remained only 43 men from another Saxon battalion, that of Melsch, who fought valiantly.



Wagram.  
(D'après la France militaire.)

Wagram.  
(After *Military France*.)

What had the two Saxon divisions done on this memorable evening? Charged with attacking Wagram, they took and repudiated the village several times; finally they were driven out in disorder, and in the confusion of their hasty retreat on Aderklaa, the Saxons fired on each other... The Saxon generals, themselves, admitted that it took a great deal of trouble to rally their troops at midnight near Aderklaa. This last point was even abandoned, and this was one of the capital faults of the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps.

6 July. According to the Emperor's plans for the day of July 6<sup>th</sup>, the attack on the Austrian lines was about to begin again, and Bernadotte was marching on Wagram, when the enemy suddenly took the offensive.

Archduke Charles, taking advantage of the fact that Aderklaa had been abandoned in the night by the Saxons, had massed the corps of Bellegarde there. Masséna attacked it, encouraging the troops by his example; his carriage, harnessed by two white horses, moved him under the most violent fire...

Bernadotte, with his three divisions, advanced in his turn between Aderklaa and Rußbach: but the Saxon infantry let fly... The Saxon fugitives threw themselves in such confusion towards the calash of Masséna, that this one, furious, ordered the charge for them to bring them back to the enemy.

The Archduke personally guided his grenadiers to attack and retake Aderklaa.

Napoleon, seeing the disorder of the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps, ran towards the Saxons: he dismounted in the midst of them, stopped them, reformed them. His presence restored order; but the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps, very weak and demoralized, could no longer be employed in the great maneuver which ended victoriously that day; the Saxon generals of Zerschwitz and Lecoq were among the wounded.

General Pelet, whose hostile feelings for Bernadotte were well known, related that the Emperor, obliged to punish, withdrew from the Prince of Ponte-Corvo his command on the field of battle itself; the day after, he refused to receive the prince, and the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps, dissolved, was distributed among the divisions of the army. The Saxons, now under the orders of Reynier, passed into the army of the Viceroy of Italy. (Letter from the *Major General to Marshal Masséna*, Wolkersdorf, 9 July 1809.)

The war was not over; after the Austrian retreat, the Emperor redoubled his precautions and sent instructions and reinforcements to all points of the theater of operations.



(D'après une gravure de l'époque.)

(After an engraving of the period.)

An order of Schönbrunn, 5 August 1809, charged the Saxons of Reynier to destroy all the works made by the enemy at Marchegg and even the ramparts of the city. They had to supply 500 workers per day to the bridgeheads of Schloss Hof and Angern (Bujanov).

Another order of August 29 employed 1,000 Saxons at the organization of the Neudorf position, near Thébene.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, Junot received the command of an 8<sup>th</sup> Corps of the army, formed by the divisions of Rivaud, Lagrange, Carra-Saint-Cyr and the cavalry division of General Foulcrand. A Bavarian brigade was attached to the Rivaud Division; a Württemberg brigade and a Hessian brigade in the Lagrange division. The Carra-Saint-Cyr Division, comprising the four battalions of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Line, 4,000 Saxons under General Thielmann, and 24 Saxon pieces, meets without delay at Dresden; 2,000 Saxon horse reinforced the 3,000 cavalry of this army corps.

The two Saxon divisions of the former 9<sup>th</sup> Corps were encamped, one on the heights near Pressburg, the other on the hills of Neudorf; they began to bivouac on 19 September.

All the corps received reinforcements: assigned to Passau, among the troops who are awaiting orders, reported 376 men and 634 horses of the Saxon artillery train, with 114 infantrymen of the same nation, coming from Saxony. (*Report of the Major General to the Emperor, Schönbrunn, 7 October 1809.*)

Finally, after the signing of the Peace of Vienna, the Saxons placed under Davout's command first occupied the Austrian capital; after the evacuation of Vienna, they were sent to Sankt Pölten; then, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, to Linz.

The disgrace of Bernadotte is one of the most striking features of this period; examination of the official documents drawn from the Emperor's correspondence enables us to appreciate, in this circumstance, how much the Saxon troops were not very brilliant during the campaign.

At the end of July an order of the day from Bernadotte to the Saxons was printed in the *Frankfurt Gazette*; the Emperor, outraged, made the order of the next day;

#### *Plan of the Day.*

Schönbrunn, 6 August 1809.

"His Majesty testified his dissatisfaction to Marshal Prince de Ponte Corvo for his order of the day dated from Leopoldau, 7 July, which was inserted at the same time, in almost every newspaper, in the following terms:"

"Saxons, on the day of 5 July, 7,000 to 8,000 of you had pierced the center of the enemy army and moved to Deutsch-Wagram in spite of the efforts of 40,000 men supported by 50 cannons. You fought until midnight and bivouacked in the middle of the Austrian lines. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, at the break of day, you restarted the fight with the same perseverance and in the middle of the ravages of the enemy artillery. Your living columns had remained motionless as brass. The Great Napoleon has seen your dedication. He counts on you as among his brave men. --Saxons, the fortune of a soldier is to fulfill his duties, you have worthily made yours."

*"The Marshal of the Empire commanding the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps. Signed: BERNADOTTE.*

"from the Bivouac of Leopoldau, 7 July 1809."

"Independent of who His Majesty has commanding his army, in person, it was to him alone that it belonged to distribute the degree of glory which each deserves."

"His Majesty owed the success of his arms to the French troops and not to any stranger. The Prince de Ponte-Corvo's plan of the day in giving false pretensions to at least mediocre troops is contrary to the truth, to politics, to national honor."

"...The corps of the Prince of Ponte-Corvo did not remain motionless like brass: it was first to beat the retreat. His Majesty was obliged to have it covered by the corps of the Viceroy, by the Broussier and Lamarque Divisions commanded by Marshal Macdonald, by the cavalry division under the orders of General Nansouty, and by part of the cavalry of the Guard. It was to these troops that the praise that the Prince of Ponte Corvo is attributed to him is due."

"His Majesty wishes this testimony of his displeasure to serve as an example for no Marshal to attribute to himself the glory which belongs to others. His Majesty, however, orders that the present plan of the day, which might afflict the Saxon army, though the soldiers are well aware that they do not deserve the praise they are given, will only be sent to the marshals commanding the corps of army and the minister secretary of state."

NAPOLEON.

The Emperor did not stop there; the Minister of War received the following letter:

*The Emperor to the Minister of War.*

Schönbrunn, 29 July 1809.

"If you have the opportunity to see the Prince of Ponte-Corvo, show him my dissatisfaction with the ridiculous plan of the day he has had printed in all the newspapers, all the more misplaced as he has worn me throughout the day with complaints about the Saxons. This agenda also contains falsehoods. It was General Oudinot who took Wagram on the 6<sup>th</sup> at noon; the Prince of Ponte-Corvo could not take it. It is no more true that the Saxons have broken down the center of the enemy on the 5<sup>th</sup>. They had not fired a shot. In general, I'm glad you know that the Prince of Ponte-Corvo did not always do well in this campaign... The truth is that this granite column has constantly been routed."

NAPOLEON.

The Saxon command had been fatal to Bernadotte; the Emperor's secret orders of the day were to make him take a long step in the way of renouncing patriotic sentiments, and perhaps determining his reversal, betrayal... and his fortune.

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Placed on the Napoleon Series: March 2019