

## The Napoleon Series

### Officers of the Anhalt Duchies who Fought in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815: Möbes, Christoph

By [Daniel Clarke](#)

Christoph Möbes, or Moebes, was most probably born in the late 1770s or early 1780s in the Principality of Anhalt-Dessau. Beyond this little could be found about his early life. But, it is probable that he joined the Anhalt-Dessau Jägerkorps in the early 1800s.

The first real information we have about Möbes is that he was a Feldwebel (Sergeant) in the 2nd Company of the Anhalt Battalion, before it was sent to fight in Spain at the beginning of 1810. As such he would have taken part in the 1806 war against Prussia and in 1809 against Austria. During the latter campaign he would have fought at the engagements of Oberau (Franzensfeste) on August 4, and just over a week later, on August 13, in the skirmishes around Hall (Hall in Tirol) in the Tyrol region with the 5th (Anhalt-Lippe) Rheinbund Infantry Regiment of general Marie-Francois Rouyer's (1765-1824) division. Möbes would have been in Vienna at the end of September to be reviewed by Napoleon himself on the 23rd, before going with his regiment back along the River Danube toward Germany in October.

However, he would not spend the winter in his own home, as the regiment and division were ordered to Spain. Möbes crossed the Pyrennes into Catalonia, Spain, at the beginning of March 1810 and the division headed for Girona. Here it became part of the VII Corps of Maréchal Augereau. After a few days the corps marched south to Barcelona to the relief of a division under general Souham. It was at this time Möbes got a promotion to Unterleutnant (2nd Lieutenant), and was transferred to the 1st Company of the battalion. By the end of March he and the regiment were part of the garrison at Manresa, protecting the supply line of the corps as it advanced south to the fortress at Tarragona. On April 5, after some initial skirmishing during the previous few days, a Spanish detachment from the fortress sent to attack the Allied supply route swooped on the garrison. After some fighting the two German regiments had to withdraw east toward Barcelona, with the local Somatènes hunting them at every step. Möbes was probably lucky to escape being killed, wounded or captured near Matorell, a few miles from Barcelona, where 250 men of the Anhalt Battalion were captured or killed.

After this harsh introduction to military life in the Peninsula, the division retreated back to Girona along with the rest of the corps. In the area surrounding the city, the Germans were given the task of hunting down the local guerrillas and garrisoning important villages such as La Bisbal, Sant Feliu de Guixols and Palamós, the latter two on the coast. But, at some point, Captain Barth, the commander of the 1st Company of the battalion, was ordered back to Girona as part of its garrison or to form a depot company for the sick in the military hospital. Möbes was one of those officers who became attached to this company, and as such he escaped the Battle of La Bisbal on September 14, where most

of the regiment was captured. Due to these circumstances what men of the Anhalt and Lippe battalions who remained in Spain were attached to the 6th (Schwarzburg-Reuss-Waldeck) Rheinbund Infantry Regiment, until withdrawn back to the Anhalt Duchies in the spring of 1811. It was during these months of campaigning and reorganisation back home, that Möbes was given his promotion to Premierleutnant (1st Lieutenant), and later, possibly while he was under siege in Danzig (Gdansk, Poland), to the rank of Captain.

With his new rank Möbes was given command of the Anhalt-Dessau-Köthen Landwehr Battalion in February 1814, after Danzig had surrendered and he was allowed to return home as the Anhalt Duchies were now allied against France. Given barely a few weeks to train his unit—two of the four companies of which were led by Lieutenants—he was ordered to The Netherlands to join the 3rd German Corps. His Landwehr became the second battalion of what would be known as the Anhalt-Dessau-Köthen Infantry Regiment, commanded as a whole by Colonel Georg Hoppe (1783-1833). The whole arrived in Brussels, Belgium, in early March, the city having been abandoned by the French force in the area. After some marching and counter-marching, the regiment was sent to the city of Tournai in the last days of the month to join another small German contingent as part of the garrison. Here, on March 31 and April 1, French General de Division Nicolas-Joseph Maison (1771-1840), who commanded all French forces in the region, bombarded and sent skirmishers against the city walls in order to distract the Allies while he withdrew from Belgium to Lille in France. This small engagement was Möbes's only active part in the campaign before Napoleon abdicated not long afterwards.

With the abdication of Napoleon in April 1814 and the release of officers who were taken prisoner in 1810 at the Battle of La Bisbal, a reorganisation occurred of the armed forces of the Anhalt Duchies. It seems that Möbes was removed from command of the Landwehr and given a company to lead in the four-company, regular Anhalt-Dessau-Köthen Infantry Battalion. So, when Napoleon returned from Elba in early 1815 and the Anhalt Duchies mobilised for war once again, Möbes fought with the regular battalion as part of the Thuringian Brigade. He led the 2nd Company of the battalion and took part in the sieges, or more accurately blockades, of the fortresses of Mézières and Charleville in northern France from July until September. With the end of the Napoleonic Wars there is little information about the continuing military career of Christoph Möbes.<sup>1</sup>

Placed on the Napoleon Series: October 2017

---

<sup>1</sup> Rawkins, W. J., *Armies of the Confederation of the Rhine, The Rheinbund Contingents 1806-1813, Part 2: Anhalt, Lippe, Reuss, Schwarzburg, Waldeck, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Oldenburg & Frankfurt*, <http://www.thehistorybookman.webeden.co.uk>, pages 12-15, 20; Nafziger, George F, *The Armies of Germany and the Confederation of the Rhine, 1792-1815, Volume I*, Privately published, 1993, pages, 6-7; Gill, John H., *With Eagles to Glory: Napoleon and his German Allies in the 1809 Campaign*, Barnsley, Frontline Books, an imprint of Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2011, pages 388-394, 397-400, 402-405; Zeidler, L., *Der Spanische Feldzug des Bataillons Anhalt im Jahre 1810*, Zerbst, Germany, Friedrich Romer, 1844, pages 3-18, 27, 84, 153; Oman, Sir Charles, *A History of the Peninsular War, Volume III: September 1809 to December 1810*, London, Greenhill Books, 1996, pages 290-297; Sañudo, Juan, *Anhalt-Lippe Infanteria Regimiento No 5, No 1,116, Base de Datos sobre las Unidades Militares eb la Guerra de la Independencia Española CD-ROM*, Ministerio de Defensa, 2007; Nafziger, George, *The End of Empire: Napoleon's 1814 Campaign*, Solihull, UK, Helion & Co., 2015, pages 61-62, 368-369; Bucher, Ludwig Ferdinand, *Der Feldzug des Dritten Deutschen Armeekorps in Flandern*, Leipzig, Hermann Costenoble, 1854, pages 57-58, 96-97, 207-211