

The Napoleon Series

The Duchy of Arenberg and the Dukes and Princes Who Fought during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815: Arenberg, Ernest-Engelbert-Louis-Marie-Ludwig-Maria-Franz, Prince of

By [Daniel Clarke](#)

The elaborately christened Ernest-Engelbert-Louis-Marie-Ludwig-Maria-Franz, Prince of Arenberg—commonly found as simply Ernest-Engelbert d’Arenberg, or Prince d’Arenberg—was born in Paris on May 25, 1777. He was the son of Auguste-Marie-Raymond a Prince of Arenberg and the Count of La Marck (1753-1833), and his wife Marie-Françoise-Augustine-Ursule le Danois, Marquise de Cernay. Ernest-Engelbert first married in 1800 to Maria Theresia Philippina Josephine Antonia Friederike, Countess of Windisch-Grätz (Graetz), and later in life, in 1842, to Sophie Caroline Marie, Princess of Auersperg. Each of the marriages produced a daughter.

Little is known of Ernest-Engelbert’s life until the early 1790s, when, along with his father and mother, he fled from Paris with the Austrian ambassador to Brussels in late 1791. Here his father, who had been a noble member of the Constitutional Assembly (Assemblée Constituante) and a confidant of Honoré Gabriel Riquet de Mirabeau, worked to try and save Queen Marie Antoinette from execution during 1792-1793. When the French invaded Belgium and the Netherlands the next year they left for Vienna, the capital of the Austrian Empire. It was here that Ernest-Engelbert decided to take an active part in the fight against France, and was commissioned an Unterleutnant (2nd Lieutenant) in the 33rd Line Infantry Regiment, Graf Sztaray, in October 1794. With his regiment it seems he may have served in one of the two battalions that took part in the Engagement of Mannheim on October 18, 1795, and later the Battle of Mainz on October 29. The next year his major service would have been taking part in the Battle of Würzburg on September 3, 1796.

In June 1796 he had become a lieutenant, and a year later he transferred to the 39th Line Infantry Regiment, Graf Nadasdy, as a “capitaine-lieutenant”. Ernest-Engelbert saw his next service with his regiment in Italy in 1799, where he fought at the Battles of Magnano (April 5), Tidone Creek (June 17), and of the Trebbia (June 18-20). In the winter of 1799-1800 he transferred to one of the newer regiments in the Austrian army, the 63rd Line Infantry Regiment, Erzherzog Joseph Franz, with the rank of major. He fought once again in northern Italy during 1800, and took part in the Battle of Marengo on June 14. Here his regiment was in General Major Ludwig Dominik Wolf de la Marselle’s (1747-1804) brigade, and took a major part in the fighting when it was ordered to attack Marengo village across the small Fontanone Creek. Of the regiments that made the attack sometime before 11am, the 63rd Line Infantry Regiment was the only one to get men across the creek and hold a small bridgehead. Wolf de la Marselle then deployed his brigade’s artillery battery to bombard the

French formations opposite. The Austrians brought up other batteries to bombard the French lines and also continued with their attacks across the creek, which meant that at around 2pm the French retreated from Marengo and Ernest-Engelbert entered the village. Due to the intermingling of units it took sometime to organise a pursuit, but Wolf de la Marselle's brigade was the fourth in the column that set off after the French, behind a Grenadier brigade and two other line infantry brigades. When contact was made with the re-formed French the Grenadiers and the following brigade of General Major Franz Xaver Johann Nepomuk Graf Saint-Julien und Walsee (1756-1836), were halted by Marmont's artillery battery and a cavalry charge. The cavalry so disordered and demoralised the first Austrian regiments in the column that they retreated. This panic then spread to the following units, including Ernest-Engelbert's, and the whole fled back through Marengo and over the Bormida River into the fortified town of Alessandria.

After the campaign of 1800 Ernest-Engelbert remained with his regiment until June 1802, when he transferred to the 28th Line Infantry Regiment, Freiherr von Frelich. About a year later, however, he quit the service of Austria and took the opportunity to return to Belgium, when Napoleon offered those who had fled during the revolution the opportunity to return to their homes. Ernest-Engelbert was one of those who did take the opportunity offered to them, and in an article in the *Annuaire de Législation Française* from October 1803 it announces that he became a French citizen and renounced the titles his father held in Germany (that of Count of La Marck). He had to give up his claims to his father's title, as his father did not return to Belgium, and remained in Austria, an enemy of France, throughout the rest of the Napoleonic Wars. In contrast it seems Ernest-Engelbert lived a peaceful civilian life throughout the rest of the conflict around Brussels.

However, when the Allies pushed the French out of Belgium in 1814, Ernest-Engelbert was quickly commissioned to the rank of Colonel by the provisional government. With this rank he went to Bruges to take up command of the 1st Régiment de Chasseurs-à-Pied Infantry. Eventually this regiment would consist of two battalions and totalled about 1,500 men by mid-1814, when it was mostly fully organised; although it still had no real uniform, and the only equipment it had was the muskets purchased by the provisional government from Britain. Sometime later a more experienced lieutenant colonel was appointed to the regiment to help Ernest-Engelbert with its training. But soon after this appointment he left the regiment, and in June he was named as the commander of the 3rd Region—Belgium having been divided into four military regions—which consisted of the old French departments of Lys and Escaut (Scheldt), with his headquarters in Ghent.

Ernest-Engelbert remained the commander of the 3rd Region for a few months, before he was promoted to *Generaal Majoor* at the end of 1814. After his promotion he did not hold another active command in the Dutch-Belgian army, or take part in the Waterloo Campaign. His only significant action in 1815 was to attend the Duchess of Richmond's ball along with his father and nephew, Duke Prosper-Louis (1785-1861) of Arenberg.

Once the Napoleonic Wars were over Ernest-Engelbert's life becomes as obscure as it was before the 1790s. After his first wife died he re-married again in 1842, and in the later years of his life he was clearly struggling with his health, as he died in the spa town of Wiesbaden, Duchy of Nassau, on November 20, 1857.¹

Placed on the Napoleon Series: February 2018

¹ Smith, Digby, *The Greenhill Napoleonic Wars Data Book*, London, Greenhill Books, 1998, page 107, 121-122; Wrede, Alphons Freiherr von, *Geschichte der K. und K. Wehrmacht*, Volume I, Vienna, L. W. Seidel & Sohn, 1898, pages 352-358, 393-400, 502-506; Arnold, James R., *Marengo and Hohenlinden: Napoleon's Rise to Power*, Barnsley, Pen & Sword Military, 2005, pages 143-157, 161-183; "Annuaire de Législation Française: Corps de Droit Français", *Civil, Commercial et Criminel*, Volume III, Paris, Garnery, 1811, page 34; Pawly, Ronald, *Wellington's Belgian Allies 1815*, Men-At-Arms Series, London, Osprey Publishing, 2001, pages 3-7; de Bas, Francois, *La Campagne de 1815 aux Pays-Bas d'après les Rapports Officiels Neerlandais, Volume I: Quatre Bras*, Brussels, Albert DeWit, 1908, pages 120-121, 129-140; de Bas, Francois, *La Campagne de 1815 aux Pays-Bas d'après les Rapports Officiels Neerlandais, Volume III: Annexes et Notes*, Brussels, Albert DeWit, 1908, page 11