

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume II

The Baden Contingent – Chapter 5 Part II

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CHAPTER V

CAMPAIGN OF 1813

WEISSENFELS. -- LÜTZEN. -- BAUTZEN. -- WURSCHEN.
DENNEWITZ. -- LEIPZIG.

Battle of Leipzig. -- First day (16 October).

On the main part of the battlefield, the small division of General Marchand, formed of the 1st Brigade of Baden and the Brigade of Hesse-Darmstadt, remained in reserve at Holzhausen and only took a small part in the combats of that day.

To the west of Leipzig, on the contrary, the 4th Corps (Bertrand) defended the suburb of Lindenau; he was supported by the division of General Margaron, where the 2nd Brigade of Baden was deployed. The forty Austrian cannons put in battery by Gyulay cruelly tested the Baden: the four companies of the 2nd Regiment (Captain von Bode) lost almost all their officers and had 246 men killed or wounded.

Report of General Bertrand (4th Corps) to the Chief of Staff.

In the suburbs of Leipzig, 16 October.

"...We were attacked at Lindenau by an Austrian corps commanded by General Lichtenstein, reunited with Prussians and Russians... We had several disassembled pieces; we would have 34 to 35 pieces, since today we had 33 pieces of the 4th Corps, 12 of the corps of the Duke of Padoue, 4 of the Baden: in all 49 pieces..."¹

The Duke of Padoue handed the command of the city of Leipzig to General von Hochberg. A few moments later, the Duke of Bassano charged him to arrest the Bavarian General Raglovich, his king having passed to the side of the Coalition.

"...I had no pleasure in this news, -- says the Count von Hochberg, in his "*Memories*," -- for I foresaw that the Duchy of Baden would soon follow the example of Bavaria. I warned General Raglovich of the order I had received, adding that I hoped not to meet him. I did not see him again until the 20th of October, in the antechamber of the Emperor Alexander, among the other generals prisoners..."²

On the 17th of October, before daybreak, the Württembergers of General von Franquemont were relieved of their post at the Gate of Halle, and the Poles of Dombrowski of that which they held at the Löhr-Garten; on this last point, the Baden Major von Holzling made a sortie with fifty men of the light battalion to disengage the Poles, and he pierced with his sword a Russian officer whose scarf he brought back.

¹Pelet, *Campaign of 1813*, page 261.

²*Denkwürdigkeiten*, page 113.

Second day (18 October).

The Emperor sends Nansouty with the Guard cavalry and twenty pieces of cannon to the left flank of Bülow, while the divisions of Delmas and Durutte and light cavalry of Beurmann (10th Hussars and Baden Dragoons) rushed to the Prussian columns. The enemy, charged on all sides, retired; but Delmas received death fighting at the forefront of his division. The 10th Hussars and the Baden Dragoons remarked upon and were noticed "even by the Guard cavalry."³

The Baden Regiment of Dragoons had already taken part in the campaign of 1809; it formed a brigade in 1813 with the 10th Hussars, under General Beurmann (Light Cavalry of the 3rd Corps, Ney). It had participated in the battles of Lützen, Bautzen, Katzbach and several other battles. Very experienced on the battlefields and in small operations, it only counted 200 horses at the time of the Battle of Leipzig and had no further engagements. Sent 19 October to Lindenau, it was the last troop that crossed the Elster Bridge before the explosion. It was held in high esteem in the French army. A chivalrous scene took place at the moment when the Emperor allowed them to leave the French army and return to its country: the officer corps of the two regiments who had fraternally campaigned together met to take leave of each other. General Beurmann spoke a vibrant address and assured the Baden dragoons of his gratitude for their brave and loyal service. The colonel of the 10th Hussars, surrounded by all his officers, addressed the most cordial farewell to the Baden, and ended with these words:



1813. — LE GÉNÉRAL MARGARON
Commandant le corps d'observation de Leipzig (3).
(D'après la *France militaire*.)

1813. -- GENERAL MARGARON
Commander of the Observation Corps of Leipzig.⁴
(According to *Military France*.)

³Pelet, *Campaign of 1813*, page 305.

⁴Margaron Pierre, (baron), born in Lyon in 1765; died in Paris in 1824. Began as captain in a free company incorporated in 1792 in the Legion of the Ardennes; battalion commander in 1792, commander of the Legion in 1793, brigade commander of the 1st Cavalry Regiment in year III; wounded at Novi and at Fossano (year VII); he was distinguished at Verona, in the year IX, where with 200 horses he supported the fight against a large body of enemy light cavalry, intercepting them, pushing them back and capturing 100 horses.

Brigadier General in the year XI and commander of the Legion of Honor in the year XII; wounded twice at Austerlitz, where he was part of the 2nd Corps (Soult).

"Although we may soon meet us as enemies, as long as I command the 10th, no regimental hussar will ever draw his sword against a Baden dragoon!.... "5

The Austrian corps of Gyulay having been repulsed from Lindenau by the 4th Corps, the road of Lützen became free for the French: from October 18th, the Baden half battery as well as all the luggage of the 2nd Brigade were directed on Weissenfels, and the army retreat began...

Third day (19 October).

The forces at the disposal of General von Hochberg, commanding the city of Leipzig, were reduced to two Baden battalions and an Italian battalion together forming about 1,000 men, plus 1,200 Saxons who were specially charged with guarding their king.

The glorious mission of protecting the retreat of the army was left to the 8th, 2nd and 7th Corps; these troops were established in the suburbs. The Baden then retreated little by little on the banks of the Pleiße and the Elster; the gate of Halle received a post of 100 men; those of Grimma, St. Peter and Ranstadt, posts of 50 men each; the Italian battalion was placed at the theater and the rest of the Baden reserve, on the market place; no artillery was available.

The gate of Halle was forced by the Army of Silesia, after a strong resistance.⁶ The 1st Baden Brigade and the Hessians of the Marchand Division fought with bravery in the suburb of Grimma, where Marshal Macdonald animated his troops by his presence; the latter sent the 1st Brigade of Baden to the St. Peter Gate; but the 3rd Regiment had scarcely crossed the gate of Grimma to recall it, when the enemy assaulted and captured that gate; the Baden immediately retraced their steps and returned to the gate with the help of a squadron of French cuirassiers and another squadron of Polish lancers. While the 1st Battalion of the 3rd Regiment advanced along the esplanade, they were fired on from the walls.

The French military writers unanimously accuse the Baden of having delivered to the Allies the St. Peter's Gate and having fired on our troops from the ramparts.

"...The custody of the Leipzig compound was entrusted to the Saxons and Baden, the latter, who held the Saint Peter gate, deliver it to the allies. These filled the city..."⁷

"...Baden and Saxons, from the height of the walls of the city, where we had left, signaled their conversion by discharging their arms against us,⁸ ...etc."

On the other hand, the history of the battalion of light infantry Baden tells that the officer who commanded the gate of Saint Peter, overwhelmed by the Russians and Prussians, threw himself with his men to swim in the Pleiße and arrived thus on the other side.⁹

Army of Portugal; Leira, taker of Thomar; Évora, where he pierced the enemy line with the 86th Infantry Regiment and took three cannons; Vimeiro.

Made Baron of the Empire; general of division in 1813.

Accepted as an inspector general during the Hundred Days; was non-active at the second Restoration; reinstated in 1816 as Inspector General of the Gendarmerie.

⁵*Denkwürdigkeiten*, page 112, and *History of the Dragoon Regiment of Freystedt*.

⁶*Denkwürdigkeiten*, page 117.

⁷Pelet, *Campaign of 1813*, page 318.

⁸Fain, *Manuscript of 1813*, page 447.

⁹*Denkwürdigkeiten*, page 117.

In short order, the gate of Halle was occupied by the Russians and that of Grimma by the Prussians... The fusillade of the coalition forces produces a great disorder near the bridge, and it was then that the sapper charged with setting fire to the mine prepared to blow up an arch of the bridge, determined the catastrophe and settled the loss of all we still had in Leipzig...

General von Hochberg, appreciating the gravity of the situation, wanted to gather his troops: he sent to the 1st Brigade (General Stockhorn), who is still fighting in the suburbs outside the Gate of Saint-Peter, the order to enter immediately in the city: it was his own aide-de-camp, Major Pfnor, that was in charge of this mission.

"General von Stockhorn, in receiving this order, wished to refer it to his divisional, General Marchand, but he could not find him; the Chief of Staff, Adjutant-Commander Richard, to whom he expounded, put himself at the head of the 1st Regiment and led him to the Market Place. As for the 3rd Regiment (Grossherzog), it was at that moment strongly engaged outside the city and could not follow the movement; cornered at the Pleiße, as well as the half-battery, it underwent serious losses, and all that was not thrown in the water was made prisoner by the enemy."¹⁰

The Italian battalion abandoned the theater; Baden posts fell back, fighting, on the market place... Swedish artillery fired on the Baden troops at short distance... At this moment, an émigré, Count de Noailles, sent by the Prince of Sweden, Bernadotte, as a parliamentarian to the King of Saxony, offered General Hochberg to stop the shedding of blood: the latter accepted and the fire ceased immediately; the Baden rested on their arms, the Saxons did the same; it was 10 o'clock in the morning.

With the exception of the regiment of dragoons and a half battery, the whole contingent of Baden was a prisoner of war.

We give here, in its entirety, the report sent on the next day, 20 October, to the Grand Duke of Baden, by his son, General von Hochberg, on the events of the three days of the battle of Leipzig.¹¹

*Report of Lieutenant General Count W. von Hochberg
to the Grand Duke Charles of Baden.*

Leipzig, 20 October 1813.

"I must, as a subject, give an account to your Royal Highness, that the day yesterday was at once remarkable and sad for the contingent of your Highness, since it entailed our complete dissolution. Only the artillery and the dragoons of Freystedt, who had already left here, as well as all the baggage of the division, are still likely to exist at the present time, but all the infantry have been taken prisoner."

"Already by my last report, and by the letter of General Schaeffer, which have been communicated to your Royal Highness, your Royal Highness will have learned of the sad situation of the French army, whose condition has been constantly deteriorating since that moment; every day the lack of food became greater; the bad weather, the continual marches and bivouacs had extremely fatigued the army and gradually brought about its complete demoralization. To this was added that the enemy surrounded them on all sides with his light cavalry, preventing any possibility of circulation for the convoys, made difficult the communications of a body to the other kidnapping every day a crowd of prisoners and couriers, for everything that deviated to the right or to the left of the highway was taken. It was in this state of affairs that the Emperor approached the city of Leipzig with his weakened and discouraged army; he fought several days in the neighborhood to make his way, but was everywhere repulsed with disadvantage and suffered considerable losses. On the evening of the 18th, he finally seemed to think of a definitive retreat; he had the bulk of his baggage and artillery defile on the road to Lützen, and finally followed on the 19th, about 10 o'clock in the morning, with what remained of his Guard. To cover his retreat and defend the city, only the Poles, Marshal Macdonald's corps and a part of Augereau's corps remained behind. The troops from your Royal Highness's 1st Brigade were also found in and outside the suburbs; in the city itself there were only the remains of our 2nd Brigade, of which four companies of my regiment lost up to 80 men in combat from the 16th at Lindenau, a

¹⁰*Denkwürdigkeiten*, page 119, according to General von Stockhorn's Manuscript.

¹¹*Denkwürdigkeiten*, page 234.

suburb which the Austrians attacked with vigor; the officers were wounded (one of whom, Freiberg's lieutenant, died the next day), 96 non-commissioned officers and soldiers were killed and 150 wounded. As a consequence the brigade numbered only about 4,000 men; of these 800 men were on duty outside the city, and about 200 remained in reserve. It was in this situation that Leipzig was attacked on all sides; the suburbs were quickly taken, and one of the gates, which the French fugitives broke down themselves, was occupied by the enemy. At this moment a Russian parliamentarian came to the King of Saxony and assured him, in the name of his Emperor, respect and security; this venerable sovereign had been left there by the Emperor Napoleon. The rest of his troops were left at his disposal, that is to say 1,200 to 1,500 men, and he was entrusted to the magnanimity of the Allied powers. Until that moment, the Duke of Padoue had commanded in the city. At the news that the enemy had captured the suburbs and was about to enter the city, he sent me to take the defensive measures; I left him then and I had hardly arrived in the street, when a Russian general (the same one who had been sent in the city, towards the king, as parliamentary) jumped on me with several Russian and Prussian jäger, and summoned me to surrender.¹² In this situation I had nothing left to do but to defer to this summons, if I did not want to sacrifice my troops without necessity, since already all retreat was cut off and the Emperor himself had had several bridges destroyed behind him. So I quietly put the had my troops ground their arms who were in the market square, I had those who still fought here and there gathered in the streets and I sent to General von Stockhorn who had been detached with his regiment outside the Gate of Saint Peter, whose retreat was already cut off, the order to rally me, which he could happily execute with his regiment. The regiment of your Royal Highness was already strongly engaged with the enemy; few men could return to the city; all the rest were taken, wounded, killed, or thrown into the water. All those who came to the city and the market square have kept their weapons and have been treated so far with respect and distinction."

"After the town had been occupied, I received orders to march the troops before its walls and to bring them to the place assigned to them to bivouac. I was at once conducted to the Crown Prince of Sweden, who probably directed this attack. The latter received me very well and promised to treat me with consideration and to the satisfaction of Your Royal Highness."

"Later on also came Emperor Alexander, Emperor Francis, and the King of Prussia. I went immediately to His Majesty the Emperor of Russia, but that evening I could only speak to His Imperial Highness the Grand Duke Constantine. His Majesty granted me an audience for this morning, at 9 o'clock. At this audience His Majesty received me very graciously, he expressed to me his solicitude as he granted me permission to send General Schaeffer and Major von Holzling to their house and promised me that until new order our troops would not be transported, His Majesty hoping that soon we would march together. This is our situation. General Schaeffer will further explain it in greater detail to your Royal Highness, and ask him in my name for a prompt and gracious decision, as well as the sending of bills of exchange, as we have the most urgent need of money, and that I have already engaged in my personal name for the sum of 7,000 florins."

"I have just received the news that we must be unarmed tomorrow and transported to the environs of Berlin. Our soldiers, because of the difficulty of the circumstances, have for two days been suffering from a great lack of food; but from tomorrow the regular distributions will be resumed. Herewith your Royal Highness will receive a summary of the bodies; it is as accurate as possible."

The Lieutenant General, Count von HOCHBERG.

General von Hochberg, whom the Allies thought it could welcome as a friend because of his title of son of the Grand Duke of Baden, gloriously persisted in handing over his sword and did not want to give up the rank of prisoner.¹³

He asked General Volkonsky, Chief of Staff of the Emperor Alexander, a location to deposit the arms, flags and supplies of the Baden, so that they could take them back if the Grand Duke of Baden entered the coalition; but he was told that the Baden troops being at the disposal of the King of Prussia, he was to address General Adjutant von Thiele, who would take the orders of his prince.

¹² He was the Swedish parliamentarian, the Count de Noailles, as General von Hochberg himself reported in his later notes.

¹³ *Manuscript of 1813*, page 448.

*Lieutenant General Count von Hochberg to the Chief of Staff
of Emperor Alexander, General Prince Volkonsky.*

Leipzig, 20 October 1813.

"My General, the situation of the Grand Duchy of Baden, my country, not allowing, because of its proximity to France, that its troops, whom I have the honor to command, seem to have passed through the in the ranks of the Allied army, I take the liberty of praying Your Excellency to have us disarmed while waiting for circumstances to permit His Highness the Grand Duke, my sovereign, to declare himself."

"I will also ask Your Excellency to have us assigned a house where we can lay down our arms, flags, military instruments, etc., and keep them there, so that if His Royal Highness the Grand Duke allows us to join the common cause, we are in a position to respond on the spot. At the same time, I pray that officers and non-commissioned officers are allowed their épées and swords, so that they are in a position to maintain discipline, and that they are given permission to keep their equipment could have saved."

"I avail myself of this opportunity to remind your Excellency of the promise which he has deigned to make to me, to give me passports for General Schaeffer and for the aide-de-camp of the Grand Duke, Major von Holzing, who both were simply on mission, and that I would send to Karlsruhe in accordance with the promise of His Majesty the Emperor."

"Accept the assurance of my highest consideration."

*The Lieutenant General, commanding the troops of Baden, Count von HOCHBERG.*¹⁴

Reply to the previous letter:

Leipzig, 20 October 1813.

"Count, I have the honor to inform Your Excellency, in reply to the letter you have done me the honor to write to me concerning your quarters, that, as the Baden troops are made available to the King of Prussia, it is to the Major von Thiele, attached to His Majesty the King, that your Excellency should address you."

"As for the rest, Monsieur Count, be assured of my assurance of consideration."

*The Imperial Chief of Staff. Prince VOLKONSKY.*¹⁵

General von Hochberg relates that on the 20th of October he saw Bernadotte, Prince of Sweden, who asked him in great detail about the events of the preceding days, and seemed particularly interested in the news that the Emperor Napoleon had left Leipzig only very shortly before the taking of the city: he asked the General whether it would not have been possible for him to make the Emperor prisoner at that moment, to which the Baden General replied that it would have been perfectly possible for him, but that it would have been an unworthy action on his part.

An order of the day of the Prince von Schwarzenberg to his army, dated 19 October, said that a Baden regiment had passed to the Allies during the Battle of Leipzig and turned its arms against the French: General von Hochberg protested immediately, in a letter of 22 October, addressed to the Prince von Schwarzenberg, asking for this rectification, which was not granted to him.

The King of Prussia gave the Baden a delay of three weeks to await the declaration of the Grand Duke, during which time they would be kept in Prussia as prisoners of war. After this delay, if the declaration of the Grand Duke had not occurred, they would be allowed to enter the service of Prussia.

Consequently, on the 22nd of October, the two Baden infantry brigades, with a total strength of 2,300 men, were

¹⁴*Denkwürdigkeiten*, page 236.

¹⁵*Denkwürdigkeiten*, page 237

directed by Dessau and Brandenburg to Neu-Ruppin, where they were kept in captivity. On the 16th of November, the Prussian General Tauentzien declared to the Baden that the three weeks allowed for receiving the answer of the Grand Duke of Baden having passed, they had to enter the service of Prussia, without which he was ordered to conduct them into captivity in Russia. General von Hochberg repulsed this proposal with dignity, pointing out that military duty required him to wait for the instructions and orders of his sovereign.

It was in vain that the English bullies tried to enlist the Baden in the Anglo-German Legion which was organized at that moment; neither the lure of a high salary nor the prospect of deportation to Russia shook the strength of the Baden: the solicitations were rejected.

Finally, on 25 November, the Grand Duke announced that he was joining the coalition:

Order of the Grand Duke Charles of Baden to the Baden Corps.

Karlsruhe, 20 November 1813.

"I inform my army corps, which has always held to my complete satisfaction and at all times a courageous conduct, and lately, calm and reasonable, that I have been called to leave the alliance of France and to embrace the cause of Germany with the high allied powers. Previously, my valiant soldiers have covered themselves with immortal laurels: it is a pledge for me that, now that it is in the interest of Germany, everyone will fulfill his duty with joy."

"All those who in previous campaigns have received the Legion of Honor and, consequently, French pensions and endowments, are guaranteed in their possession."

"The entire corps will immediately proceed to Karlsruhe and environs to await further orders for a new organization."

CHARLES.¹⁶

The Baden were free: they ceased to be in the service of France and were on the contrary fighting in the ranks of our enemies, in 1814 and in 1815.

It is still General Hochberg who would command them: he will lead them in 1814 to besiege Phalsbourg and Landau, under the orders of Wittgenstein; and in 1815, with an Austrian division, he made the siege of Huningue so gloriously defended by General Barbanègre.

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¹⁶*Denkwürdigkeiten*, page 247.