

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume IV The Regiment of the Saxon Duchies – Chapter Four Part IV

By Commandant Sauzey

Translated by [Greg Gorsuch](#)

THE
REGIMENT OF THE SAXON DUCHIES

CHAPTER IV

IN SPAIN (1810-1811)

IV. -- The garrisons of Hostalrich and Girona. The return.

After the short but glorious and bloody expedition of Manresa, the regiment of the Duchies remained in Barcelona until 10 April, occupied in repairing its armament, its equipment and especially its shoes. It was at this time that Napoleon made the proclamation of announcing the reunion of Catalonia with France; celebrating this event: there was a general review of the whole garrison, bursts of cannon fired from all the forts, a great military mass at the cathedral, oaths taken by all the civil or religious authorities, illuminations of all the buildings public.

As a longer stay in Barcelona only rapidly diminished the limited resources of this city, Augereau decided to return to Girona with the 7th Corps; he left the regiment of Wurzburg and that of Nassau in Barcelona to reinforce the garrison, and left on 11 April with about 12,000 men, taking with him the detachment previously charged with the occupation of Valls and Reuss, having to abandon these two points under the pressure of the Spanish General O'Donnel; the link with Suchet could not therefore have been made.

The 7th Corps arrived at Girona on the 14th of April. After four days in bivouac in a nearby forest, the Saxon regiment moved to Ponte-Mayor, a devastated village half an hour from the town, which its inhabitants had abandoned. It was in this locality that the contingents of the Duchies were joined by the important reinforcements sent to them from Germany, the arrival of which would at last bring relief to light the numbers so terribly diminished for a month by the combats, fatigues and diseases .

Major Bunau brought, on 29 April, 16 officers and 334 men from Gotha from which he departed on 17 February; Major von Bose arrived the same day with 2 officers and 81 men from Meiningen; on 5 May, it was Major von Germar who rejoined forces with 300 soldiers and 7 officers from Weimar, at the same time as Captain Münck with 1 officer and 100 soldiers from Hildburghausen. These last two detachments had left the depots 25 and 26 February; Major Hoffmann, who left Coburg on 2 March, arrived at Ponte-Mayor on 10 May with 4 officers and 239 men. Subsequently, the Gotha contingent was further strengthened by 112 men with 2 officers (16 June), and Coburg by 53 soldiers (5 September). In all, a force of 32 officers and 1,219 men came to complete the two battalions of the regiment: the light battalion had only 4 officers and 120 men; the reinforcements of Gotha and Meiningen had left about 40 patients in the hospitals, and in Speyer nearly lost two-thirds of their force by desertion... But the conspiracy of the soldiers was thwarted, and their blow disappointed.

The regiment underwent a new formation:

Battalion of the Line. -- Major von BUNAU (of Gotha).

1 company of grenadiers from Gotha.....
4 companies from Gotha..... } 819 men.
2 companies from Meiningen.....

Light battalion. -- Major von GERMAR (of Weimar).

3 companies from Weimar.....
2 companies from Cobourg..... } 773 men.
1 company from Hildburghausen.....

Major Knauth left the command of the light battalion to take that of Fort of Montjouy (Castillo Montjuich), in Barcelona.

Reinforcements had also reached the 5th and 6th Regiments of the Rhine, and the former "Battalion of Princes" existing in the Army of Catalonia had been disbanded and divided into the two regiments mentioned above.

Jacobs relates that about this time French cuirassiers, confined in a convent near the lodgings of Colonel von Egloffstein, made a macabre discovery: they discovered in the subterranean vaults of this convent, dungeons where 18 unfortunate monks had been walled up; some of the corpses were reduced to skeletons, and fell into dust, but others, on the contrary, were as dried up and in a state of almost complete preservation; all had their hands tied and provided with a rosary; next to each one, a plate-board bore the name of the victim and a date, that of the embalming; the most recent date was 1807. These convicts of the Inquisition were visited by the Saxon officers who noted that they had still found on certain faces the signs of terror and despair.

Dissatisfied with the failure of Augereau, the Emperor had relieved him of his command and replaced at the head of the 7th Corps, and as governor-general of Catalonia, Marshal Macdonald; the latter arrived at Girona with his Chief of Staff, General Guilleminot, on the 15th of May, and next day reviewed the 4th Regiment of the Rhine.

After an accurate account of the situation, Macdonald reorganized the 7th corps (37,500 men) composed then as follows:

French Division Frère (10,000 men);
Italian -- Severoli (9,000 men);
Italian -- Pignetti;
Franco-German Division Verdier;
German -- Rouyer;
Brigade of cavalry of Delort (2,000 men).



1810. — LE MARÉCHAL MACDONALD
Gouverneur général de la Catalogne (1).

(D'après A. Tardieu.)

1810. -- MARSHAL MACDONALD Governor General of Catalonia.¹ (After A. Tardieu.)

He entrusted to General Baraguey d'Hilliers the government of Upper Catalonia, and gave him 15,500 men: the Neapolitans and the French depots established at Figueres, as well as the Rouyer division (4th, 5th and 6th Regiments of the Rhine) were stationed at Girona, Ponte-Mayor and Medina. On 29 May, leaving at Ponte-Mayor a small depot and a hundred patients, the 4th Regiment departed for Hostalrich where it was to relieve the Italian 6th Regiment; the castle of this town had been abandoned on the night of the 11th to the 12th of May by the 1,200 Spaniards who still defended it, and General Estrada, with the greater part of the latter, pursued by the French and the Italians, had not to be taken prisoner. The link between Barcelona and Girona was therefore regularly assured.

The service at Hostalrich was most painful; perpetual escorts for convoys on Barcelona or Girona, for couriers, for wood gathering, and for water gathering; the correspondence with the brigade and the division was always to be escorted at least by an officer and twenty men; no soldier could leave the town without running the risk of being murdered; and in these continual movements it was necessary to forsake a number of brooks swollen by the rains. To cross the river which ran between Hostalrich and Girona, there was water at the height of the belt; moreover, and as it must be supposed, the service of the place was strictly executed; the regiment had around the town a permanent line of outposts. The heat increased, and with it the number of patients; on 14 July, the Saxon regiment counted in the hospitals:

¹MacDONALD (Jacques-Étienne-Joseph-Alexandre), Duke of Tarante, Marshal and Peer of France. Born in Sedan in 1765, died in Courcelles (Seine-et-Oise) in 1840. -- Served in the Irish regiment of Dillon in 1781. Colonel at Jemappes, Brigadier General in 1795, General of Division in 1796; took the Dutch fleet on the ice, at the Texel. Governor of Rome and Commander in Chief at Naples in 1798. Disgraced for his liaison with Moreau, was recalled to the service in 1809. Taking of Laybach, victory of Raab; Marshal of France after Wagram, and Duke of Tarente. War of Spain in 1810 and 1811. Commanding the 10th Corps of the Grand Army in Russia, 1812, and the 11th Corps in Germany, 1813; stood out at Lützen, Bautzen and Leipzig. Negotiated with the Allies the abdication of Napoleon; created Peer of France at the first Restoration. Commanding the troops of Lyons on the return from the island of Elba, returned to Paris with the princes, and remained aloof during the Hundred Days. Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor from the Second Restoration until 1831.

	Officers.	Men.
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At Ponte-Mayor	3	142
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Marshal Macdonald, for the supply of the 6,000 men of the garrison of Barcelona, organized a large convoy of 300 wagons and 500 head of cattle on the 16th of July, and escorted him by the Brother and Severoli divisions, 900 cavalry and 15 pieces of cannon; arrived at Hostalrich, he assembled the 4th Regiment of the Rhine with this force, and in setting out again on the 17th at 3 o'clock in the morning; the Saxons, making up rearguard with a squadron of dragoons and two guns, left the city two hours later and reached Cardedeu at 9 o'clock in the evening. On the following day, the marching arrangements remained the same, but the Spanish division of General Franco, detached by O'Donnel, attacked the convoy on its right flank between Cardedeu and Granollers; at the same time, the column was assaulted in its center and at its tail. Macdonald turned to face the enemy, pushing his convoy forward; as soon as the wagons crossed the dangerous defile, he broke off the battle leaving the regiment of the Saxon regiment with the French 7th Regiment of the Line at the exit of the defile, and two squadrons of chasseurs à cheval who rejoined later in the afternoon the bulk of the column at Granollers. The march was resumed at 6 o'clock in the evening, and they arrived on the morning of the 19th in Moncada, and finally in the afternoon in Barcelona. During these painful stages, many stragglers and exhausted soldiers had remained behind; certain regiments had lost all cohesion: French, Italians, Germans, traveled confused. The Saxons encamped at Sans, deprived of shelter from the torrid heat of day, and against the freshness of the night; they left on the evening of the 22nd to go with the army corps to Girona, leaving 61 new sick people in Barcelona.

After remaining until 1 August at Fornells, then at Buscara (where it relieved a Neapolitan regiment) the Saxon regiment was itself sent to Girona. On 9 August, it enters with 650 men under arms: 28 officers and 814 men were sick or in hospitals.

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