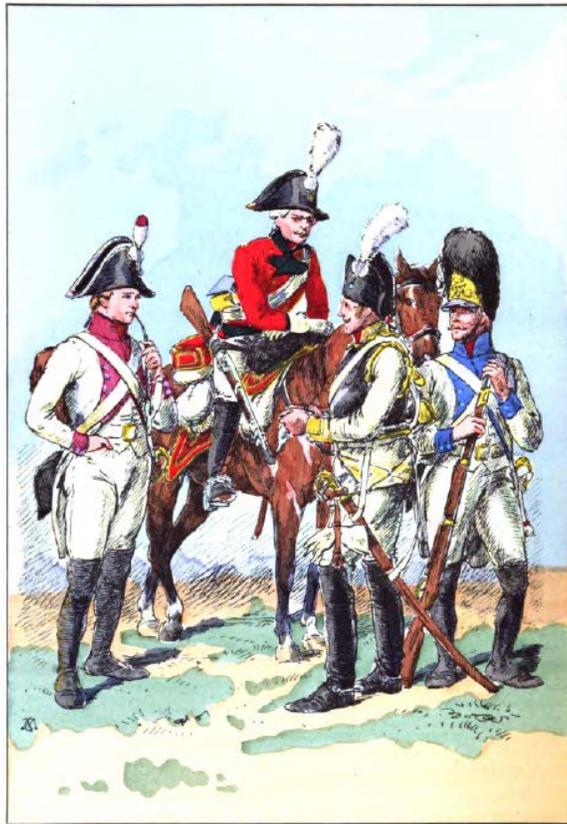


The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume III the Saxons in Our Ranks Chapter One Part I: Campaign of 1806 – 1807

By Commandant Sauzey

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UNIFORMES SAXONS — 1806-1807

Cheval-léger du régiment du Prince Albrecht
Fusilier du rég' de Niesemeuschel Grenadier du rég' de Bevilaqua
Cuirassier de Hochtitzski

SAXON UNIFORMS -- 1806-1807

Prince Albrecht Regiment Light Horse
Fusilier of the Niesemeuschel Regiment Grenadier of the Regiment of Bevilaqua
Hochtitzski's Cuirassier

THE
SAXONS IN OUR RANKS

FIRST CHAPTER

CAMPAIGN OF 1806-1807

During the campaign of 1806-1807, the Saxon army fought in the Prussian ranks before entering ours. Saxony did not yet count in the Confederate States of the Rhine in the spring of 1806: the Prussian influence and the 200,000 men of the Hohenzollern Monarchy kept the Elector of Saxony in the orbit of Prussia. At the time of the events of the autumn, in 1806, the Elector Frederick Augustus, a naturally timid Prince timid and little warlike, was clever enough not to formally conclude an alliance with his powerful Prussian neighbor. But Napoleon was far away, and the Prussian troops were about to enter Saxony. Willy-nilly, the Saxons had to join the Prussians; the unfortunate Elector, meanwhile, wrote to the Emperor, assuring him of his pacific sentiments, and promising him not to allow his troops to go beyond the limits of the Electorate...

The study of the official documents makes it possible to appreciate the diplomatic precautions which Napoleon insisted upon keeping with Saxony; if the Saxon troops were severely beaten in the Prussian ranks, the Emperor gave them an honorable exit, which was to dispose them at a speedy meeting with his victorious legions.

The Emperor to the Prince-Primate.

Saint-Cloud, 13 August 1806.

"...I have an obligation to protect the states of the Confederation... I know that your Highness would have preferred that the Confederation embrace all the states of the German Empire; but how can Sweden, Prussia, and Austria enter it? As for Hesse and Saxony, I have been able to do nothing but what I have done, to leave them full and complete freedom. It is good that they should know that they are perfectly free, that no power will be in the case of forcing their hands, and that they are masters of following without reserve the interest of their sovereignty. But as long as these princes testify directly or indirectly to the desire to be part of Confederation, you can put them, in my name, safe from any fear of resentment from anyone. I did not show my intentions to my cabinet; my ministers to these princes have received no instruction, so much is it in my will to leave them complete and absolute freedom..."

It seems impossible not to recognize here a direct invitation to the Elector of Saxony and the undisguised desire to see him one day accede to Confederation.

After the arming of Prussia, the Emperor wished to make the violation of the territory of Saxony a cause for the opening of hostilities.

Memorandum from the Emperor to M. de Laforest, Minister of France at Berlin.

Saint-Cloud, 12 September 1806.

"As much prudence, good manners, and reasoning as to bring Prussia to disarm, so much will you be imperious, demanding, if the Prussian troops should enter Saxony and force it to arm against me. You will declare to M. de Haugwitz, in advance and in the form of a conversation, that if this happens, you are ordered to ask for your passports, and that from that moment the war will be declared. You will inform, by an extraordinary courier, the

Marshal Berthier so that the troops put themselves in order; and if, indeed, after your entreaties, Prussia persists in occupying Saxony, you will leave Berlin."

Note for a dispatch to M. Durand, Minister of France in Saxony.

Saint-Cloud, 12 September 1806.

"Inform my minister at Dresden of the inconsistency and the madness of the arming of Prussia; that my intention is not to allow the territory of Saxony to be violated; that he must explain it in this sense with the cabinet of Dresden; that I shall not suffer that, whether Saxony wishes to declare itself an independent, Kingdom of Saxony, by uniting the princes of its House with its crown, whether it wishes to be part of the Confederation of the Rhine or that of the North, be influenced in any way; but what I ask is that it should not make any armament, that the Prussians do not enter its territory, because at the first entry into Saxony, M. de Laforest has orders to leave Berlin and the war is declared ; that he himself will make it clear that he can look upon this event only as an act of hostility of Saxony against France; that in the present circumstances he must speak with great gentleness, let go of captivating Saxony, and if asked for advice, say that Saxony must be independent under the protection of France, Austria, Russia and Prussia; to reunite with her the princes of her house, and declare itself the kingdom of Saxony; that it will have 2,600,000 inhabitants and that it will be as considerable as the kingdom of Sweden."

"He must put nothing in writing but speak gently; because after everything, I do not attach to these affairs a major importance; that I'm very interested in Saxony, that the Prussians do not enter Saxony. The Dresden cabinet must tell the Prussian cabinet that the French Minister has declared that if Saxony were to arm and receive the Prussians as her house, the Emperor would look upon it as a statement of war."

NAPOLEON.

The prospect of a crown was very likely to make Elector Frederick Augustus reflect and to make him consider the advantages of a French alliance.

The Emperor to M. de Talleyrand.

Saint-Cloud, 13 September 1806.

"...Bring me tomorrow the project of a circular to be written to the Kings of Bavaria, Württemberg, and the other Confederate princes, to inform them of the state of the question. You will make everything revolve on the independence of Saxony. I think you have to send for the Minister of Saxony to ask him if he has anything to tell you."

The Emperor to the Chief of Staff.

(Same date.)

"I ordered my minister in Berlin to leave on the spot if Prussia invaded Saxony. At the first rumblings of that you will come back... you will immediately warn the allied courts that, Prussia having invaded Saxony, I ordered my ministers to withdraw, having guaranteed the independence of Saxony... My determined resolve is to not to let Saxony be invaded any more than I would allowed Bavaria to be invaded."

"When I say the invasion of Saxony, I do not mean the occupation of a few cantons, but the occupation of the province; you will know it moreover by the departure of Laforest and Durand."

Four days after the receipt of this letter by Berthier, M. de Laforest was leaving Berlin.

It is by a report of Bernadotte to the Chief of Staff that we learned of the official meeting of the Saxon army with the Prussian troops:

Anspach, 18 September 1806.

"The agent I have from Sagan, in Silesia, on the borders of Saxony, that the Prince of Hohenlohe commands the Saxon troops united to a corps of Prussians; that Prince Louis-Ferdinand of Prussia commands his vanguard and that these troops go to Dresden where they must pass the Elbe..."

The events continued; the intelligence service of the French army keeps the general staff informed of the movements of the Prusso-Saxons together:

Chief of Staff to the Emperor.

Munich, 19 September 1806.

"...The officer I had sent to Dresden went to Hof; he believes that there could be 7,000 to 8,000 men stationed in this city and the surrounding area..."

Marshal Bernadotte to the Chief of Staff.

"...I sent to Dresden engineer Captain Conche, an educated officer and speaking good German; he will present himself to M. Durand and receive from him all the information possible; he will recommend him to send a letter to your Highness as soon as he has something positive to teach you..."

Finally, on the 21st of September, in a sort of circular addressed to the princes of the Confederation of the Rhine, the Emperor claims for them their quotas by making the following reasons:

The Emperor to the King of Bavaria.

Saint-Cloud, 21 September 1806.

"More than a month ago, Prussia armed, and it is known to all that it is arming for war against France and against the Confederation of the Rhine... Are these armaments intended to force Hesse or Saxony, and the Hanseatic towns, to form bonds which the latter two powers seem unwilling to form?... We have also stated that the princes of the German Empire who were not included in the Confederation of the Rhine were to remain masters of consulting only their interests and proprieties; that they should think of themselves as perfectly free, that we would do nothing for them to enter the Confederation of the Rhine, but that we would not suffer any one to force them to do what would be contrary to their will, their politics, to the interests of their peoples..."

M. de Laforest to Marshal Augereau.

Berlin, 21 September 1806.

"In accordance with the intentions of His Majesty the Emperor and King, I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that the occupation of Saxony by the troops of His Majesty the King of Prussia has put me in the position of asking the Cabinet from Berlin (for) passports to return to France."

The brave Lefebvre was less well informed; he wrote to Berthier from Dinkelsmühl on the same date:

"The General of Division Gazan tells me that it appears from the information he has had that so far no Prussian troops have entered the Electorate of Saxony, that the Saxon troops are concentrated in Dresden and Leipzig...; three emissaries are on the way; I will have taken care to transmit their reports to your Serene Highness as soon as they

reach me."

M. Durand to the Chief of Staff.

Dresden, 22 September 1806.

"I have received from His Imperial Majesty the order to leave Saxony in case the Prussian troops invaded his territory and to give notice of my departure to your Serene Highness."

"The invasion of Saxony by the Prussian troops being effected since the 6th of this month, and having become more general since this point... I warned the Electoral Ministry that I was going to leave Dresden; I am waiting for my passports; and unless I receive orders contrary to those transmitted to me, I shall be gone the day after tomorrow, September 24th, to return to France."

Marshal Bernadotte to the Chief of Staff.

Anspach, 23 September 1806.

"A report I receive at the moment tells me that 20,000 Saxons have orders to march for Pirna where they must meet the 60,000 Prussians who gather there

Information on the movements of the Prussian army was not always easy to obtain; the Major General wrote to the Emperor of Munich on 24 September:

"A spy was hanged at Magdeburg; all travelers were removed from the points where the army meets; I do not think that the officers whom I sent to Saxony could do the reconnaissance I ordered them to do; they have spies in their wake."

The French General Staff soon learned by a note from Captain Beaulieu, coming from Berlin, that it was no longer at Pirna, but at Münchberg and Hof, that the Saxon army was to join the Prussians.

In reuniting the Saxon troops with his army, the King of Prussia had engaged with the Elector of Saxony to cover the Electorate and to let the Saxons act as a separate and autonomous body; the following letter shows that things did not go this way:

M. Durand to the Chief of Staff.

Dresden, 24 September 1806.

"...I am definitely leaving today... The march of the Prussian troops making up the army of the Prince von Hohenlohe is now only carried out from Dresden to Freyberg. The Prince von Hohenlohe has employed his stay at Dresden to render the mobilization of the Saxon troops more prompt and complete, which, in spite of the positive will which the Elector had announced to keep them united to act as a separate body, and to be employed only for the protection of Saxony, (they) are now entirely at the disposal of the Prussian general and will from one moment to another disseminated according to his desire and the interest of his court..."

If Marshal Lefebvre initially sent insufficient information, he was now echoing the most extraordinary sensational news:

Marshal Lefebvre to the Chief of Staff.

Dinkelsmühl, 21 September 1806.

"...Preparations continue in Saxony with a lot of activity; all the soldiers on six month furlough have joined; it is

even a question of organizing in this electorate and Hesse a mass levy of young people aged 18 to 28..."

Extract from Marshal Bernadotte's reports to the Chief of Staff.

Anspach, 25 September 1806.

"...There is a camp in the vicinity of Hof which must contain 60,000 to 70,000 men, including the Saxons; the troops must to have arrived, it is said, for the 27th...; an estimate of 120,00 to 130,000 men the Prussian and Saxon troops that are returned or must travel between Halle, Leipzig and Dresden..."

In the interesting report made by the battalion commander Guilleminot sent to Dresden by the Prince of Neufchâtel, we find the first symptoms of the bad mood which the Saxon troops showed, seeing themselves engaged in this impolitic war, and under the orders of Prussian generals:

Würzburg, 29 September 1806.

"The Saxon army decidedly makes common cause with the Prussians. Prince Hohenlohe gives them direct orders. He has scattered the troops among his own; a few Saxon battalions are, however, arranged in echelon between Plauen and Chemnitz... The spirit of the Saxon army is not well disposed; some young people desire war; but the old generals and the officers do not ask for it; all seem rather dissatisfied with the incorporation of their army with that of the Prussians."

In the meantime, the Emperor arrived at the army and took the command of the troops; war, however, was not declared, but the movements and gatherings of the Prussians become so disturbing to our divisions, that they were obliged to act on their side:

The Chief of Staff to Marshal Sault.

Würzburg, 5 October 1806.

"The troops of His Majesty the King of Prussia having entered Saxony and are threatening our flanks, the occupation of Bayreuth becomes necessary to support our right; it is therefore only a defensive position; you will, however, remove the arms of King Prussia everywhere, but without scandal or outrage."

"If the Prussian army sends you parliamentarians to find out why you are entering the territory of the King of Prussia, you will answer: "Why did you return to the territory of the country of Saxony?" You will tell them that you have orders to commit no hostility, but to occupy the whole country of Bayreuth, which is necessary to support our right, which the Prussian army gatherings seem to threaten."

"At the moment of entering the country of Bayreuth, you will make an order of the day which will not be printed, in which one will recommend the good discipline and other things of use, and in which one will say that we march to occupy the country of Bayreuth, in order to keep our right that would turn the Prussian army and that, wherever it would like to oppose it, you rely on the courage of your troops to have good reason..."

The opposing troops would come into contact; it was no longer gatherings that were reported to the General Staff, but marches and counter marches:

General Werlé to General Drouet.

Steinwiesen, 5 October 1806.

"...Travelers assured me that about 600 Saxons, as many infantry as cavalry, had slept the other night in Saalburg and that yesterday they had taken the direction of Saalfeld... Merchants coming from the fair at Leipzig assured that the day before yesterday at noon they had seen near Gera a column composed of infantry, cavalry, and nearly 300 ammunition carriages. They could not determine the number of troops, but they noticed that this column had taken

an hour to defile. They were Saxon troops... Almost all the troops on the march appeared to be coming from the interior and heading to Naumburg and Saalfeld..."

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