

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume III the Saxons in Our Ranks Chapter Three Part IV: Campaign of 1812

By Commandant Sauzey

Translated by [Greg Gorsuch](#)

CHAPTER III

CAMPAIGN OF 1812¹

6. -- EVENTS FROM 28 JULY TO 10 AUGUST. -- MEETING OF SAXONS WITH THE AUSTRIAN CORPS. -- COMBAT OF PRUZHANY.

The news of the events of Kobryn, sent by General Reynier, arrived at the Austrian headquarters at Nieswicz on the 30th of July. The Prince von Schwarzenberg, without asking for or awaiting orders, immediately set out on Slonim.

Berthier stopped the march on Minsk, a march which was no longer possible, considering the new state of affairs in the theater of war in the south; the Emperor approved the decision of the Chief of Staff of the Grand Army, while pointing out to him:

"...That it was difficult to explain that the enemy had employed veteran troops to a diversion on the rear of the army, when it would have been enough for 8,000 to 9,000 men of second rate troops."

Reynier had begun his retreat on Slonim on the night 28 July. After an almost uninterrupted march, he arrived on the 29th at Sielec. The 7th Corps had crossed fourteen miles in forty-two hours, in a torrid temperature.

The Saxon troops, continually harassed by Cossack detachments who yielded the ground as soon as they were attacked, arrived on the evening of the 30th near Ruzhany and established themselves defensively on the heights to the south of this locality.

Captain Krug von Nidda III was sent on reconnaissance to Pruzhany, with 60 light horse of the regiment "Polentz". Attacked during his operation by enemy Cossacks and hussars, the weak Saxon detachment was taken after a fight in which it lost six dead and thirty-five wounded: the captain and a lieutenant were among them. Only one horseman could escape and bring news of this misfortune.

At Ruzhany, the uhlans regiment -- of which 3 squadrons had been captured at Kobryn -- was reformed to 2 squadrons with 250 horses together, under the command of Major von Seydlitz. An infantry battalion was also formed with the two companies of the "Niesemeuschel" regiment which had been sent from Kobryn to Pruzhany before the fight; all the detachments and convalescents of the regiments of the Klengel Brigade were entered there; this battalion was placed with the battalion of grenadiers of Brause, under the orders of Colonel von Ryssel, who had hitherto held the post of chief of staff of the 1st Division.

Finally, on 1 August, the 7th Corps reached Slonim, where the Austrian advance guard arrived on the 3rd.

¹ This chapter is based on the excellent work of M. Lieutenant-Colonel Exner: *Der Antheil der Königlich Sächsischen Armee am Feldzuge Gegen Russland 1812* (Leipzig, Dunker and Humblot, 1896). -- We have followed the same divisions in material, and we have happily followed the rich contribution made by the Saxon Archives of War in this part of our national history.

"The meeting of the two corps at Slonim" -- says General Baron Stutterheim, chief of staff of the Austrian Corps in his manuscript memoirs -- "filled everyone with joy; Saxons and Austrians fraternized in the streets. The first were happy to have been rescued; others to have been able to help them. Yet (adds the good *Ally*), it was for the defense of a cause which was indifferent to them all. From that moment there reigned among the German troops a great common sentiment of friendship, confidence, and fraternity."²

On the 2nd of August, the Prince von Schwarzenberg received the following order:

"The Emperor, Monsieur le Prince, puts under your command the 7th Corps of the army commanded by General Reynier. The intention of His Majesty is that you rally this corps, that you march against Tormasov and Kaminski, and that you give battle. You must follow them everywhere until you have overcome them."

Berthier wrote at the same time to Reynier:

"The intention of the Emperor, General, is that the 7th Corps and the Austrian corps march against Tormasov and Kaminski to fight and follow them until they have been defeated. I advise you that His Majesty has given the command of these two army corps, united to General Prince Schwarzenberg. Immediately place yourself in correspondence with him, and execute the dispositions that he will be in the case of prescribing to the 7th Corps."



LE PRINCE DE SCHWARTZENBERG
Commandant le corps auxiliaire autrichien.
(D'après la *France militaire*.)

THE PRINCE VON SCHWARZENBERG
Commander Austrian Auxiliary Corps.
(According to *Military France*.)

² Was this, for the Saxons, the beginning of this friendship which so tragically affirmed itself for us on the battlefield of Leipzig?

The two generals-in-chief thus concerted themselves in view of their common offensive. They agreed to march south, to cross the marshy country of Iasolda on three roads, and to attack the enemy wherever they might find them. On 8 August, the two corps were to arrive on the Malech-Pruzhany line.

The 7th Corps, marching to the right wing by Sokolow and Podorosk, reached Wilkowyje on 7 August. The vanguard, with General von Gablentz, had pushed further south; it was attacked at night by the enemy cavalry, but it withdrew after a short engagement.

Reynier had no information on the enemy; it took him sixteen hours to connect with the Austrian corps, so he remained at Wilkowyje on the 8th and 9th of August, awaiting indications from Schwarzenberg, who had just been again ordered to march to the enemy, and to hunt Volhynia.

Hearing that the Austrian corps had repulsed the detachments of the generals Chaplits and Chowensky on the 8th of August, and that the right of the Austrians had gone to Pruzhany, Reynier decided on the 10th of August to attack the enemy he had in front of him.

The corps then marched on Pruzhany. The Russian corps of Lambert was there, with 8,000 men -- mostly horsemen -- and 12 cannons. After a fierce artillery fire, the Saxon 2nd Division started the fight. Reynier and Lecoq personally led the Saxon cavalry, reunited against the enemy's left wing, while Trautenberg's Austrian division advanced against the Russian right, with Kienmayer's regiment of hussars at the head. General Lambert, who was obliged to retire, was pursued by the Trautenberg division, which succeeded after a short fight in seizing the important defile of Kozebrod on the evening of 10 August.

The Saxons had 3 officers and 47 men killed or wounded: Lieutenant Busch, of the train of the horse battery (right arm carried off by a cannonball), Captain von Taubenhaim, of the hussars, and Captain Watzdorff, of the staff.

General von Watzdorff, attached to the imperial headquarters, wrote on 10 August from Vilna to the Saxon Minister of War of Cerrini:

"The squadron commander von Wanneval, General Reynier's aide-de-camp, was here to demand the reinforcement of the cavalry of the 7th Army Corps. The Emperor refused. Colonel von Langenau writes that the cavalry of this corps is insufficient to cover the marches, the enemy having a cavalry at least five times higher; while the situation is much better since the junction with the Austrian corps at Slonim; so that the best spirit and the best good will prevails among troops of all arms."

7. -- BATTLE OF PODDUBNY (OR GORODECZNA), 12 AUGUST.

After the battle of Pruzhany, General Lambert had withdrawn, by the road of Kobryn, to Gorodeczna (Gorodishche). The commander-in-chief of the Russians, General Tormasov, had taken up his position with the bulk of his forces, and intended to set out again in the northward direction to resume his offensive; despite the sending of strong detachments to Chomsk and Brest, the Russians still had, in addition to their advance corps, those of Generals Markov and Kaminski (the latter replacing the sick Prince Scherbatov), in all 40,000 men: Russian reports only claim 18,500 men.

General Tormasov decided, on hearing of the arrival of the two enemy corps in the direction of Kobryn, to wait for their attack on a strong position he chose on the Gorodeczna, a small tributary of Murawiec. On his front and on his left flank extended swamps, which could only be crossed on two long and difficult roads, and of a very small width. To the north and west, the slightly hilly terrain dominated the defiles, had an extended range, and had well-covered sites for the reserves.

On the 11th of August the Saxon corps advanced as far as Zhabinka and the Austrian corps as far as Gorodeczna. In the course of the night Major Melzsch, with the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Light Infantry Regiment, occupied the forest north of Kiwatice.

Reynier remarked that the difficulties of a frontal attack would prevent him from being decisive, and that the enemy's left had to be turned. The Prince von Schwarzenberg shared this opinion, and gave to the 7th Corps the

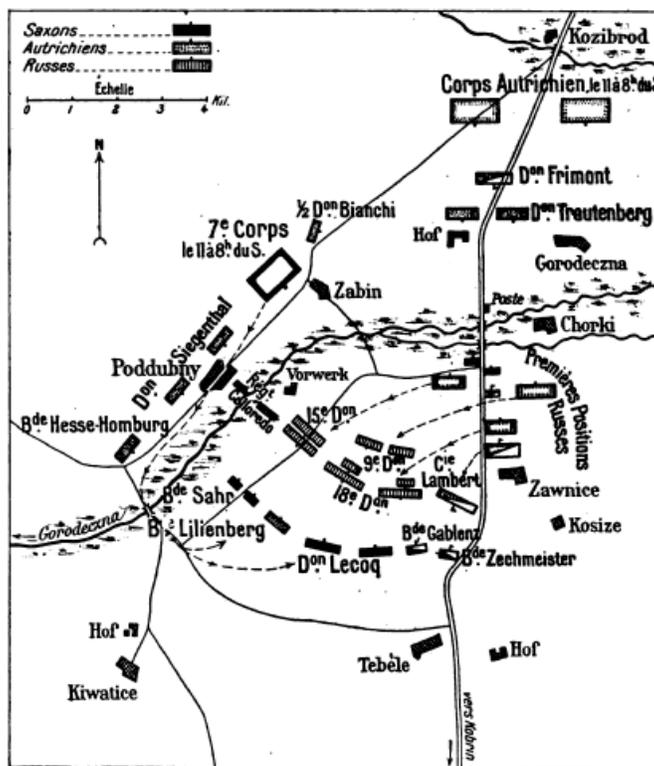
Austrian cavalry brigade of Zechmeister (2 regiments of light horse), the brigade of Lilienberg, and a little later, 2 regiments of hussars. On the Prince's orders, the Austrian colonel Count de Latour joined Reynier's staff.

The Saxon corps left his Zhabinka position at 8:30, without being seen by the enemy; he left the forest at 9:30, and could first engage on the heights south-east of Poddubny only with the brigade of Sahr (2nd Regiment of light infantry and grenadier battalions of Anger and Spiegel); these heights were occupied. The line of battle of this brigade was prolonged adroitly, half an hour later, by the 1st Division of infantry marching on a single line, and on the right of which were placed the Saxon cavalry of General von Gablentz and the Austrian brigade of Zechmeister.

Meanwhile, the Austrian Division Trautenberg, followed by the Frimont cavalry division, embarked on the defiles south of Gorodeczna and the Siegenlhal division left Poddubny.

Markov's corps formed at first the left of the Russian army; he came, by a change of front executed under a violent fire of artillery, to oppose the Saxon corps which arrived on the line Poddubny-Zawnice. General Tormasov sent all the available troops successively to this part of the field of battle; he ended up leaving on the road to Gorodeczna only one infantry regiment and one regiment of dragoons, with six guns: these troops kept their positions despite the repeated attacks of the Trautenberg Division.

On the left wing, the Sahr Brigade was violently engaged against the Russian 15th Division, which was much greater in number. The 2nd Light Infantry Regiment was attacked several times by the Russian dragoons; this regiment was advancing, under a violent fire, in dispersed order and on open ground, having the two battalions of Anger and Spiegel grenadiers formed in squares at its wings: it lost there, in a short time, 7 officers and 360 men.



Croquis de la bataille de Poddubny, le 12 août 1812, à 4 heures du soir.

(D'après Exner.)

Sketch of the Battle of Poddubny, 12 August 1812, at 4 o'clock in the evening.

(According to Exner.)

General Funck, commander of the 2nd Division, says in his report on the battle:

"I can not sufficiently praise the courageous efforts and the fine countenance of the 2nd Light Regiment, which forced the enemy's cavalry to first stop, and then to retreat."

The Austrian infantry brigade of Lilienberg was intercalated between the Sahr brigade and the Lecoq division; to the extreme right where the cavalry was found; Russian cavalry, in great numbers, marched many time against the regiments of generals von Gablentz and von Zechmeister; from there, by maneuvers and from opportune attacks, they managed to keep their post: the light horse regiments of "Polentz" (Saxons) and "O' Reilly (Austrians) were distinguished especially.

The fight remained indecisive, until the entrance on the line of the Austrian infantry regiment of "Colloredo" led to the decisive phase. Having found a point of passage through the marsh to the east of Poddubny; on the order of Prince Schwarzenberg, the regiment was moved to march on the right of the enemy. The Austrian report on the battle expresses itself thusly:

"It was only after incredible efforts, with water up to the hips, holding their guns and cartridges in the air, that the men managed to cross the marsh. At the same time, the Sahr Brigade, supported by the Austrian infantry regiment "Alvintzky", resumed the offensive: the enemy was finally overthrown."

The Sontag Battery had contributed to the result by the good direction of its fire and its moving forward in the halts. The night brought an end of the fight which had almost lasted ten hours.

"The troops," -- said the general Lecoq in his report to the King of Saxony -- "had fought with order, calm and bravery; they were broken by heat, fatigue and hunger."

In his report of 14 August to Major General Berthier, Prince von Schwarzenberg said:

"The highest praise is due to General Reynier and the Saxon troops who fought under his command. It is to this general and his troops that I must attribute mainly the glory of the day of the twelfth. The task of turning the left of the enemy having fallen to him, he had been able to procure with the greatest activity all information on how to achieve this goal. He had at last executed the attack with the calm and vigor that must be expected of so distinguished a chief of the army."

The *Journal of Prague* published in September 1812 told the official (report) of the battle:

"The Prince von Schwarzenberg can not sufficiently praise the glance and skillful disposition of Major-General Reynier, as well as the courage and vigor of the Saxon troops; although inferior in number to the Austrian troops of the auxiliary corps, they must share with these last the glory of success."

The losses of the Saxons at the battle of 12 August came to:

| | |
|---------|---------------------|
| killed | 3 officers, 166 men |
| wounded | 16 -- 644 -- |
| missing | 1 -- 50 -- |

Five guns were dismounted, including three in the Roth Battery.

The Austrian corps lost 43 officers and 1,300 men, the Russians approximately 3,000 men.

Both parties claimed victory for the battle of Poddubny. But the next morning, the Saxons and Austrians occupied the field of battle, while the Russians had abandoned their positions: they had retired, during the night, by the road of Kobryn.

8. -- OFFENSIVE IN VOLHYNIA. -- BACK ON THE BUG.

On the 13th of August, at the first light of day, one saw the retreat of the Russians on Kobryn. Schwarzenberg and Reynier resolved to follow them to the south. It was only by the orderly offensive of the two army corps, and by

pressing the Russians in their retreat, that new attempts against the main line of communications of the Grand Army could be prevented.

The two corps arrived on 13 August at 5 o'clock in the evening in front of Kobryn. Tormasov reached the same day the city of Dyvin.

When the 1st Squadron of hussars, which formed the vanguard, arrived at the gates of Kobryn, Russian soldiers burned the bridge over Murawiec. Reynier asked for 20 volunteers under Second Lieutenant Grobstich to extinguish the fire; these brave men were able to remove a box of powder which was already in the midst of the flames, and thus saved the bridge from complete destruction.

After a day's rest, the Austrian corps marched on Dyvin and the Saxon corps on Brest; the latter had to take the road to Luboml, by Rudnia and Orchemo.

Tormasov had continued his retreat by the road from Kovel to the environs of Lutsk and the banks of the Styr, to await the arrival of his reinforcements.

On the 22nd of August, the 7th Corps was in Szak; on the 25th, at Luboml. On that day, in the afternoon, the outposts of the regiment of hussars were driven back by the enemy; but some battalions having advanced to support the hussars, the Russian dragoons retreated to Kovel.

In the marches and cantonments, the columns were constantly disturbed by the Cossacks and the Bashkirs, who never expected to attack, but disturbed and delayed the movements of the troops.

"In the marches as in the combats," -- wrote General Lecoq to the King of Saxony, -- "we feel painfully the weakness and the exhaustion of our cavalry."

Small detachments had been sent during the march, on the right flank, to scout the side of the Bug. In the Włodowa forest, large supplies of food fell into the hands of General von Gablentz; the Russians, who had assembled them there, had abandoned them when they retired. At Opalin, the Captain von François, of the 1st Regiment of Light Infantry, attacked with 27 jäger and 13 hussars by 200 Cossacks and Bashkirs, managed to gain a wood already occupied by Russian dragoons; he managed to break through and withdraw without loss to Szak, while killing five men of the enemy and wounding 27 of them.

The march through the swampy region of Priepet presented the greatest difficulties, because of the poor condition of the roads which were even destroyed in places. Troops often had to travel long distances in water and mud. The enemy and the fleeing inhabitants had left behind a real desert. The villages were burned, the fountains destroyed; the supplies that were missing were not found, the convoys not being able to follow the columns in the swamps of Podolia. The trains and artillery park of the 7th Corps had to take the road to Włodowa, on the left bank of the Bug.

On 29 August the Austrians entered Kovel after a fight at Wyswa; -- and the Saxons arrived at Turysk.

The enemy having destroyed all the bridges on the Tura, and the material necessary for the passage not being yet in place, the troops benefited from a few days of a much needed rest after the marches they had just made. A large number of men were suffering from dysentery and fever in hospitals where everything was lacking.

The Saxon corps, on the Tura, had only 268 officers and 8,511 combatants.

The enemy, two marches away, occupied a strong position on the Styr, covered by swamps on its front and on its two flanks.

At the end of August Schwarzenberg received a final order from the Imperial headquarters at Smolensk: he was charged with containing in Volhynia the army of Tormasov and the other enemy troops, so that they could not find themselves in the same position to attempt anything against the Grand Army. All connections ceased, from that moment, between the Imperial army and Schwarzenberg: he had to address his reports -- always unanswered -- to Maret, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was staying at Vilna.

To cover and observe the great road of Lutsk leading into the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, the Saxon corps went on 4 September to Kuselin. The vanguard -- the cavalry and the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Light Infantry Regiment -- with the General von Gablentz, took position at Lorczyń, while the brigade of Sahr remained in reserve at Makowiczy. The troops were installed in barracks. The Polish General Kozinsky, with 4,000 men, including a single regular regiment of infantry, was on the right of the Saxons, occupying the country south of the road; it was recalled to Zamosc at the end of September.

The Austrians had formed a camp at Holowy, near the Styr.

General Lecoq wrote on 18 September to the King of Saxony:

"Our situation has changed little; the sick and the wounded are better, the diseases are diminishing, the provisions are good, our most sensible losses are in horses: more than a thousand have disappeared since our departure from Saxony; but we can find many to replace them by requisitions in Volhynia."

The corps remained at Kuselin and Holowy until 23 September. At this point the news reached that the largest part of the Russian Army of Moldavia, available since peace with Turkey, was marching on Dubno and Lutsk to reinforce the 3rd Army of the West.

Reconnaissances were immediately directed to the Russian positions of the Styr. A patrol of 15 hussars with the Lieutenant von Mangoldt, escorting an engineer captain sent for observation on the Styr, was attacked; the 2 officers and 8 hussars remained in the hands of the Russians.

The superiority of the Russians in cavalry preventing the sending of small detachments, they wished to organize strong mobile columns; the Austrian General von Zechmeister commanded one, formed of the Light Horse Regiment "O'Reilly", 62 Saxon hussars (Major Czetriz), 41 light horse of the regiment of "Polentz" and 300 Polish horses. Departing in the direction of Polonka, surprised at Nieswiecz on 20 September by 600 Cossacks, 300 hussars and 300 dragoons under the command of General Lambert, this column was dispersed, 3 Saxon officers with 40 men, 20 Poles and 92 Austrian light horse remained prisoners.

Meanwhile, the Army of Moldavia, commanded by Admiral Chichagov and counting 30,000 men in 5 divisions, had arrived on the Styr. Schwarzenberg felt that he could not wait on his position for the attack of an enemy so superior in strength.

On the 24th of September, the two corps joined together, retiring on the Bug. The Saxon corps, constantly pressed and attacked by the Russians, arrived on the 28th at Luboml, and on the 30th at Opalin. On the 1st of October, the 7th Corps executed at Orchowetz the passage of the Bug in the immediate vicinity of the enemy, and arrived at Korzary. Captain Brueck and his pontoons distinguished themselves.

"This passage was a remarkable maneuver, a masterpiece from the strategic and tactical point of view," -- says General von Holtzendorff, in his *History of Saxon Light Infantry*.

In order to succeed, Reynier counted on the courage and the cold intrepidity of the troops. Close by an enemy two times greater in number and whose first echelons were barely three hundred paces from him, the 7th Corps executed the passage of the Bug with the same calm as if it had maneuvered on an exercise ground. General Lecoq, wishing to honor the conduct of the light infantry in this circumstance, authorized them to wear the mustache now like the grenadiers.

The Saxon corps had suffered little loss during the retreat on the Bug. On 1 October, at Opalin, a post of 35 men of the 1st Light Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant von Heinecken, who had not been ordered to withdraw in time, was captured by the Russians: only two men could escape.

The Austrians reached Szak on 30 September and had settled in the vicinity of this locality on a good defensive position, with its front and two flanks covered by the marshes and ponds of the source of the Pripet. At the news that the Saxon corps was withdrawing on Władowa, Schwarzenberg followed this movement by the Bianchi and

Trautenberg Divisions, while the Siegenthal Division took possession of the Ratno defiles, to keep them for as long as possible, and then retreated to Murawiec. .

Eight regiments of Russian cavalry tried in vain to disturb the passage of the Bug: they were received by the grapeshot and the fire of some battalions of infantry deployed.

On 3 October, the Saxon and Austrian corps were assembled at Brest and Murawiec.

9. POSITIONS AND BATTLES OF THE SAXON AND AUSTRIAN CORPS ON THE MURAWIEC AND THE LESNA.

In accordance with the orders he had received, Schwarzenberg, on his positions at Brest and the Murawiec, thought to cover Warsaw and Vilna, while maintaining his connection with the Grand Army. The two corps remained motionless until 10 October. The Saxons defended the left of the line, near Brest; the Austrians occupied the heights between the fortified town and the village of Wyzkulki.

Tomasov had been given command of the 2nd Army of the West. Admiral Chichagov, who had replaced him at the head of Volhynia's troops formed into a 3rd Army of the West, had been instructed to drive the Saxon and Austrian corps out of Russian territory, and to move on the lines of communication of the French Grande Armée.

Reinforcements had carried the 3rd Army of the West, divided into 7 small corps, by the force of:

102 battalions,
113 squadrons,
16 Cossack regiments,
192 cannons;

that is: 90,000 men; it was more than double the combined strength of the Austrian Corps and the Saxon Corps.

The Russians at first attacked without success the left of the line of the Murawiec, defended by the Saxons and a part of the Austrian corps; the engagements took place in the Wyczulki forest and the Tryszin farm. But the chief generals felt that they should not remain longer on this position, the left of which was already overwhelmed by the Russians; the two corps retreated in the night of 11 October, behind the Lesna.

This river, which flows into the Bug, 2 miles below Brest, is only 10 to 15 paces wide; but its marshy banks allow it to be crossed only on bridges.

On the right wing, the 2nd Saxon Division stood near Terebun; the division had met on the heights of Skoki; between the two was the cavalry of General von Gablentz. The occupation and defense of the Kliniki bridges was entrusted to the 1st Light Infantry Regiment; these bridges had been broken, but not entirely destroyed.

On the 11th of October, at about ten o'clock, the enemy, who had found the position of Brest evacuated, opened a violent fire of artillery. Clouds of horsemen spread over the left bank of the Lesna and engaged the fight with the 1st Light Infantry Regiment. Shortly after, the Russian eiger and grenadiers crossed the Kliniki bridge, after repairing it in haste. Captain von Sperl threw himself upon the enemy with a part of his company, while on his right Major von Metsch, who found there the death of the brave men, led the 4th company, with crossed bayonets; the enemy was jostled across the bridge, after heavy efforts and heavy losses. It was at this moment, in the midst of the fire of the musketry, that the regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel Egidy, was mortally wounded.

"The fusils," says the report on this combat, "were so exhausted that they could no longer be held; ammunition was running out, and it had to be taken from the cartridge pouches of the Liebenau Grenadier Battalion, which was coming in support."

In the evening, this battalion relieved the regiment, which had lost three officers and 65 men on the banks of the Lesna. The death of the two senior officers who had campaigned in 1809 on the Danube with the two battalions of light infantry created at that time, was strongly felt by the Saxon army.

On the other points of the line, the fight was limited to a fierce cannonade.

The total loss of the Saxons was 3 officers and 101 men. The Russians had lost more than 100 dead and 105 prisoners.

10. -- BATTLE OF BIALA (18 OCTOBER).

In spite of the tactical success of the fight of 11 October, Schwarzenberg and Reynier decided to abandon the position of the Lesna, which was no longer tenable before the superiority of the enemy and could easily be turned. They marched northwest on Drohiczyn, to cover Warsaw and Vilna and to get closer to the main line of communications of the Grand Army. The enemy followed them closely and even attacked the Austrian rearguard on the 14th at Moszan.

Hearing that General Essen had crossed the Bug in Brest with his corps and that a detachment of 4,000 Cossacks had advanced to Sielec, the Austro-Saxon corps left Drohiczyn a few days later to resume the offensive. On 17 October, the Saxons arrived on the Biala and took position near the village of the same name, facing Brest. The vanguard, with the General von Gablentz, established himself at the mill of Biala, and sent some detachments of cavalry to reconnoiter the dispositions of the enemy on the side of Zalestes and Brest; in one of these reconnaissances Lieutenant-Colonel von Lindenau, with a detachment of hussars, was fortunate enough to take from the enemy, near the village of Zalestes, a convoy of 30 cars of flour with his escort. Strong Austrian and Saxon cavalry parties, sent in all directions to hunt the Cossacks and cut off their retreat, made more than 500 prisoners.

On the 18th, the vanguard, who was marching on the road to Brest, fell on the enemy near the Biala. Major von Seydlitz, at the head of the vanguard with a squadron of hussars, had just reached the village of Woskrenize and was driving back 3 enemy squadrons, when he was assaulted frontally and on both flanks by a large cavalry and forced to retreat to Biala; but Lieutenant von Reizenstein, with 30 hussars, falling on the right flank of the Russians, stopped their pursuit. The vanguard took position at the Kosula mill, half an hour from the village of Biala, and north of the high road.

General Reynier immediately advanced with the 1st, then the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Light Infantry Regiment, soon supported by the combined battalion of Bose and a company of grenadiers of the Anger battalion: he occupied the roads of the marsh where the Biala flows. while 3 Saxon batteries, in an excellent position, opened fire on the enemy columns on the march: they stopped.

While this battle was fought on the front, the Bianchi Division engaged to the left of the Saxons. A path leading to the right flank of the enemy had been discovered near the Kosula mill. Prince von Schwarzenberg immediately directed a battalion of the regiment "Prince Esterhazy" joined to 2 companies of the Saxon 2nd Light Regiment, under the direction of the Austrian General von Latour. This detachment strongly attacked the Russians at their right wing; the Saxon jäger, with the Lieutenant von Zychlinski, seized a cannon of 12. (The 13 jäger who made this catch received a gratuity of 20 Thalers for each of the 6 horses which harnessed this gun). After a short engagement, General von Latour was forced to retreat, and a few Russian battalions seized the mill again.

To drive them out, General Lecoq advanced the brigade of Sleindel. For their part, the Bianchi Division and the Saxon jäger renewed the attack, so that General Essen was compelled to retire to Brest. The Russian cavalry wanted to cover the retreat. The regiments of General von Gablentz marched against them, supported by the Austrian brigade Lichtenstein.

The enemy had sustained sensible losses, especially by the fire of the Saxon batteries. Night put an end to the fight, in which the Saxons lost 9 officers and 187 men.

General Lecoq wrote to the King of Saxony:

"Your Majesty's troops have made more than 100 prisoners in the Biala fight, but have been severely tested themselves. I am told, among the killed, Major von Trotha, of the Polentz Regiment..."

The Austrian report says:

"The Saxons have achieved complete success, and killed many people of the enemy."

In his plan of the day of 19 October, General Reynier expresses himself as follows:

"The general-in-chief is again obliged to testify to the troops all his satisfaction for their conduct in the battles of La'na and Biala. The 1st Light Infantry Regiment, the Liebenau Grenadier Battalion, the "Prince Clement" and "Frederick Augustus" Regiments of General Lecoq's Division and most of General Funck's division had the opportunity to distinguish themselves in these matters; all have done so to a high degree, and the general-in-chief points it out to the whole army."

"Despite the superiority of the enemy, the Saxon troops overtook them in all engagements. A few more days of effort, to let in the important reinforcements we are waiting for, and the enemy will be put back in the unfortunate state he once was."

"The general-in-chief has remarked in all combats that the light infantry is accustomed, by bravery, to go to the enemy without covering itself regularly: he therefore orders to let these brave men know that they have to show more wisdom in pursuing the enemy."

The enemy was not pursued: the two generals in chief resolved to take a flank position near Drohiczyn, to cover Warsaw and Vilna. The two corps met there on 20 October.

Placed on the Napoleon Series: May 2019