

# The Napoleon Series

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

By Commandant Sauzey

Translated by [Greg Gorsuch](#)

### CHAPTER III

#### CAMPAIGN OF 1812<sup>1</sup>

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##### 15. -- MARCH OF THE COLUMN OF THE GENERAL VON GABLENTZ ON KRAKOW.

The column of General von Gablentz column included the 1<sup>st</sup> Light Infantry Regiment, the regiments of "Polentz" Hussars and Light Horse, the horse battery of Roth, 3 squadrons of uhlans and Polish Cossacks and 1 battalion of the French 133<sup>rd</sup> Line Regiment. It arrived on the 13<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon at Skarzew and could not take part in the battle of Kalisch (Kalisz).

After joining part of the brigade of Maury (Durutte Division) and those of the light cavalry of the "Polentz" Regiment who had joined his column after the battle of Borków, General von Gablentz first intended to march on Kalisz. But the roads leading to it were occupied by the enemy who was trying to form on the right flank of the column. General von Gablentz had no idea of the intentions of the general-in-chief; Second Lieutenant Reichard, whom he had sent to headquarters, had not returned. He decided to go in the direction of Brzezcie, to cross the Prosna on the ice at Grabow. The 14-hour march he executed was atrocious: the weather had eased, and the roads, covered with snow and ice, were practically impassable. For long hours the troop had to go through the marshes with water up to the hips.

After having crossed the Prosna at Grabow, the General thought, on arriving at Schildberg (Ostrzeszów), that he could join the army corps by Mittewald or Wartemberg. Major von Watzdorf, of the General Staff, sent to search for headquarters on the 14<sup>th</sup>, had finally found General Reynier at Kobylin, and had received the order "not to violate the Prussian neutral territory; General Gablentz before, if he could not join the army corps, join Prince Poniatowski at Saloniki, -- and then at Radomsk the Austrian corps."

The troops had suffered terribly in the marches of the preceding two days; on 15 February, the seven squadrons of hussars were melted into one combined squadron; the "Lecoq" regiment had only 17 officers and 382 men in the ranks; the horse battery, 3 officers and 70 men.

General von Gablentz decided to meet as quickly as possible with the Austrian troops. An 11-day march took him from Schildberg to Kraków (Krakow) -- by Kempen, Bolastowice, and Czenstochow: Prince Poniatowski, who had joined the column with the remains of the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, stopped on this last point.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Saxon troops found at Krakow, until the middle of April 1813, the most hospitable welcome of the inhabitants and the Austrian corps; the latter had been commanded since the 18<sup>th</sup> of February by the Field-Lieutenant of Frimont, Prince von Schwarzenberg having been recalled to Vienna on the wish of the Emperor of Austria.

Under the title of "Latest services rendered to his Allies by the Auxiliary", General Stutterheim, Chief of Staff of the Austrian Corps, expressed himself in the following terms about the Battle of Kalisz:

"We learned with sadness, in our positions behind the Pilica, the misfortune which happened to our brave companions in arms on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, a misfortune which they could so easily have avoided."<sup>2</sup>

"In consequence of the fatal combat of Kalisch, the General von Gablentz, cut off from the 7<sup>th</sup> Corps with the Saxon cavalry and some infantry, came under the protection of the Austrian corps; his troops found in Krakow an absolute tranquility, until they were ordered to return to their country."

#### 16. -- BACK TO SAXONY.

In its retreat, the 7<sup>th</sup> Corps had reached Kobylin on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, and Glogau on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Posen and Lissa were occupied by the Russian troops, and it was feared that the enemy would intercept them at the point of Schlichtingsheim, where the roads of Glogau, Lissa, and Fraustadt meet.

But the Saxons managed without further combat to cross the Oder, and for the first time since long months were put in cantonments on the left bank of this river.



Cracovie.

(D'après la *France militaire*.)

Kraków.

(After *Military France*.)

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February the march was resumed on Fraustadt and Sprottau, and on 4 March the Saxons arrived at Bautzen.

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<sup>2</sup> The Austrian general does not dare to add: by doing, like us, defecting pure and simple

## 17. -- SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS ON THE THEATER OF WAR IN THE SOUTH.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Corps, which had left Saxony for Lublin and Warsaw, was to first form the right wing of the Grand Army. But circumstances gave them another mission: to relieve the detachments of the Austrian Auxiliary Corps left at Nieswiecz, on the Brest-Pinsk line, it had to settle on Murawiec and Pina, thus covering the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and opposing at the same time the enterprises of the enemy in Volhynia against the rear of the Grand Army. This mission, the 7<sup>th</sup> Corps could not thoroughly fill, given its weakness, before the superiority of an enemy that Napoleon described as "scum of which there is no need to take into account."

On 27 July, in Kobryn, the brigade of Klengel surrounded by the Russians was made a prisoner of war. Reynier then led his corps towards Slonim, to make his junction with the Austrians: these, without waiting for orders, had come to the aid of the Saxons on learning of the catastrophe of Kobryn.

The two corps united under the command of Schwarzenberg resumed the offensive against Tormasov; the Russian army, after its failure Poddubny, retired to Lutsk and the line of the Styr, where it awaited the reinforcements of Admiral Chichagov: the latter, after the peace concluded in Bucharest between Russia and Turkey, brought his army on the Styr.

Schwarzenberg had followed the Russians through the swamps of Podolia to Kowel, Holowy and Kuselin; he was forced to return to Brest, and then to Lesna and Drohiczyn. After new fighting and a 7<sup>th</sup> Corps moving out of its line of operation on Biala, the Saxons and Austrians reinforced by a brigade of the French 32<sup>nd</sup> Division (Durutte) remain until 28 October on their positions, while Admiral Chichagov leaving the corps from Essen and Sacken at Brest and Kaminiec, marched on the Berezina with the rest of his army.

Schwarzenberg hoped to be able to oppose this movement: he fell back to Slonim. The 7<sup>th</sup> Corps marched through Rudnia, and the Austrians went there directly. The struggle of Wołkowysk, which lasted several days, enabled the Austrians to reach the rear of the Russians and obtain success; but it became impossible to continue the march begun in the direction of the Russian army, which was on the Berezina.

The two commanders-in-chief thus confined themselves to a new offensive against General Sacken's troops in the swamps of Podolia. Their movements presented the greatest difficulties. On reaching the Murawiec line, both corps learned of the disaster of the Grand Army and had only to withdraw to the Vistula and Narew. From Warsaw, the 7<sup>th</sup> Corps marched on Kalisz, and the Austrians retreated behind the Pilica as a result of a special armistice they had made with the Russians.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, the Saxon troops delivered at Kalisz their last combat in this campaign: the corps placed to the east of the city were jostled and forced to retire. The remains of the Saxon Corps and the Durutte Division which joined it reached Bautzen at the beginning of March, 1813. The column of General von Gablentz, cut off from the 7<sup>th</sup> Corps, meets with the Austrians at Kraków.

During this campaign, the Saxons took part in 20 battles or fights. It was not the superiority of the Russians that prevented the final success, but the general situation of the country, the excessive severity of the winter, the defeats of the French Grand Army, the incredible difficulties of supplying Poland and Volhynia. The Austrian and Saxon allied corps marched and fought by cementing their confraternity of arms; they showed their bravery and endurance before the enemy, and withstood indescribable fatigues together.

### **V. -- The Thielmann Brigade in 1812.**

#### 1. -- MARCH TO THE BUG. -- FORMATION OF THE 4<sup>th</sup> CORPS OF CAVALRY.

On the orders of the general headquarters, the Thielmann Brigade was removed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 1812 from the 7<sup>th</sup> Corps and entered the composition of the 4<sup>th</sup> Reserve Cavalry Corps. This corps was thus constituted:

<i>Commander in Chief</i> .....	General Division Count LATOUR-MAUBOURG.
<i>Chief of Staff</i> .....	Colonel SERRON.
<i>Detached to the headquarters by the Saxon Brigade</i> .....	Sub-Lieutenant von BINDERMANN, of the Life Guards; and after 8 September, Sub-Lieutenant von BURKERSRODA

*4<sup>th</sup> Light Cavalry Division.* -- Commander: Polish General of Divisional ROZNIIEKY.  
 28<sup>th</sup> Light Brigade: 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> Polish Lancers, each with 4 squadrons.  
 29<sup>th</sup> Light Brigade: 3<sup>rd</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> Polish Lancers, each with 4 squadrons.  
 2 horse batteries, each with 6 pieces.<sup>3</sup>

*7<sup>th</sup> Division of Cuirassiers.* -- Commander: Major General von LORGE; Ordinance Officer for the Saxon Brigade: Sub Lieutenant von Schlieben, of the Zastrow Cuirassier Regiment.

*1<sup>st</sup> Brigade* (20<sup>th</sup> of heavy cavalry of the Grande Armée). -- Commander: General THIELMANN.

1<sup>st</sup> Aide-de-camp: Captain Count von SEYDEWITZ, Life Guards.

2<sup>nd</sup> Aide-de-camp: Lieutenant von MINCKVITZ, of the Zastrow Cuirassier Regiment.

1<sup>st</sup> Officer of Ordnance: Sub lieutenant von SCHRECKENSTEIN, from the Zastrow Cuirassier Regiment.

2<sup>nd</sup> Officer of Ordnance: Second Lieutenant GOIEJEWSKY, from the Polish 14<sup>th</sup> Cuirassier Regiment.

*Life Guard Regiment.* -- Colonel von LEYSER; as of 8 September, Major von BRANDENSTEIN, then Captain von HELDREICH.

*Zastrow Cuirassiers Regiment.* -- Colonel GRUNENWALD; since his death on 21 June, until 8 September, Colonel TRUTZSCHLER, then Major von NEHRHOFF.

*Polish 14<sup>th</sup> Cuirassier Regiment.* -- Colonel MALACHOWSKY (2 squadrons).

*2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade* (21<sup>st</sup> of heavy cavalry of the Grande Armée). -- Commander: Major General LEPEL.

*Westphalian 1<sup>st</sup> Cuirassiers.*

-- 2<sup>nd</sup> --

2 horse batteries (HILLER Saxon battery, and a Westphalian battery).

In all: 46 squadrons and 24 cannons.

A staffing situation at the end of April gives the Thielmann Brigade: 73 officers; 1,236 men; 1,210 horses.

The HILLER battery counted: 4 officers; 171 men and 221 horses.

There is no justification in the documents of the campaign for the rumor that General Thielmann had exercised the command of his brigade in such a remarkable manner that it had been known in the Emperor's entourage of the attention was on him. Napoleon simply wished to strengthen the weak cavalry of his main army with regiments borrowed from the allied contingents. The 4 corps of the cavalry reserve under Murat's command together numbered 224 squadrons with 42,000 cavalry.

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<sup>3</sup> The divisioning of the Polish cavalry given by Lieutenant Colonel Exner is incorrect; the situations of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps made it possible to restore it.

The 28<sup>th</sup> Brigade did not take part in the battle of the Moskowa; it had been left at Mohilev, on the rear of the army, to assure communications and to keep (open) the lines of march.

Shortly after 13 April, when the brigade arrived in Warsaw, it began to be difficult to feed men and horses. All requests and proposals made to the higher authority remained without result. The horses were obliged to given stalks of wheat still green.

The brigade remained until 2 June in the neighborhood of Warsaw, often changing cantonments and exercising service in the field. At this date it began her march towards the Bug and reached, on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Kaluszcyn. It was there that the Polish 14<sup>th</sup> Cuirassier Regiment entered the composition of the brigade: this regiment included only 2 squadrons, or 300 horses; but the horsemen were chosen men of good appearance, riding remarkably on horseback and commanded by excellent officers.

Throughout the course of the campaign, the best comradeship reigned between the Saxon and Polish officers.

## 2. -- EVENTS UNTIL 6 SEPTEMBER.

On 19 June, the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps, now complete, crossed the Bug. From that day until the end of the campaign, the Saxon regiments camped regularly, without spending a single night in cantonments. The corps followed the march of the right wing of the Grand Army, commanded by King Jerome of Westphalia, and reached Nowogródek (Navahrudak) on 3 July, after having crossed the Niemen on 1 July at Ostfow and Grodno. From that moment on, the stages were difficult and painful for both men and horses because of poor road conditions and continual changes of direction.

Without meeting the enemy, who were slowly retiring, they reached beyond Mohilev and Jelna. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, the brigade assembled at the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps encamped near Ostrog: the corps of the right wing had joined the Grand Army and had been under the command of Marshal Davout, since the departure of King Jerome.

The hatred of the fanatic populations of the old Russian territory was extraordinary: the villages were usually empty of inhabitants, often burned, and provided little resources to the troops. In spite of the fatigues of the marches and the lack of food -- (the commissariat did not give any more, and the regiments had to get grain and vegetables by sending detachments far enough in the country, during the stages) -- the Saxon regiments had struck General Latour-Maubourg by their good behavior: barely 200 men were missing from each regiment, due to illness, and had been installed at the Mohilev depot.

## 3. -- SHORT SUMMARY OF THE BATTLE OF MOSKOWA (7 SEPTEMBER 1812).

Suspending its retreat on Moscow, the Russian army under the command of Marshal Prince Kutuzov had stopped at Borodino. It wanted, two marches west of the old capital of the Czars, and straddling the Smolensk road, to fight the French army commanded by Napoleon in person. Its position had been well chosen, covered on the right by the marshy valley of the Kolotskoe which flowed parallel to the Smolensk road. In the center, a height dominated the neighborhood on the left bank of the stream Semenovsky, south of Borodino. On the eve of the battle, the Russians had built the Rayevsky redoubt, a structure in the shape of a bastion, but of a weak profile; -- the left went to the old Smolensk road.

The terrain between the villages of Utitsy, Shevardino and Semenovsky was slightly hilly and had small hills covered with coppice.

In addition to the Rayevsky Redoubt, a few other works had been built to strengthen the position: the Bagration fleches southwest of Semenovsky, and other entrenchments still at Shevardino. All these works, without external defenses and undressed parapets, were built of earth and did not offer much resistance; but they had great utility as points of support on the Russian position.

Barclay de Tolly, with the 1<sup>st</sup> Army, occupied the right and the Russian center; Bagration was on the left with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army. The reserves were placed between the villages of Kniaskowo and Psarëvo. The defense of Shevardino's advanced position had been entrusted to General Prince Gorchakov, who had 14 battalions and 38 squadrons; it was reinforced by 10 battalions in the day of 5 September.

Napoleon attacked this position on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September with 35,000 men. After a fierce fight, the Russians were rejected on the main position.

On 7 September, the day of the battle, the French army was thus disposed:

-- on the right, the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps (Poniatowski) in the woods west of Utitsy, -- with mission to march on the old Smolensk road;

-- in the center, at Shevardino, Marshal Davout, with 3 divisions; between the village and Kolotskoe, the corps of Ney; behind, that of Junot;

-- near Doronino, the assembled cavalry corps of Nansouty, Montbrun, and Latour-Maubourg;

-- on the left and separated from the center by Kolotskoe, the corps of the Viceroy of Italy.

On a space of one square mile were assembled 250,000 men, 60,000 horses, and 1,200 cannons (130,000 French and 120,000 Russians).

"On the one hand," -- says Bogdanovich (II, p.159) -- "soldiers from the most western and hottest parts of Europe, most of whom had great experience of war gained in many battles and conducted by the greatest general of their time; on the other side, men from all the provinces of the immense empire of the Czars, the Arctic Sea and Siberia, the Urals and the Caucasus, less hardened than their adversaries, but hardened to the sufferings of a campaign, and commanded by a leader in whom Russia had placed all her hope."

Napoleon intended to begin the battle with a crushing fire of artillery on the enemy positions, then to make two main attacks, one on the fleches of Bagration, the other on the Grand Redoubt, and a false attack on Borodino. At the same time, the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps was to leave the old road of Smolensk and march on the fleches of Bagration, while Prince Eugene, after the taking of Borodino, would march from north to south against the Grand Redoubt.

During the battle, Napoleon kept himself at Shevardino and Prince Kutuzov at Gorky: the Russian general had not fortunately chosen his post, because, placed on the right, he was too far from the center and the left where the battle was going to be decided, to be able to receive reports and take useful measures.

The battle began at 6 o'clock in the morning. 600 pieces of cannon, formed in great batteries, began their fire; the divisions of the center rushed upon the fleches of Bagration and those of the Viceroy over Borodino: this village was quickly taken; the position of the fleches carried around 11 o'clock was held, despite three counter attacks from the Russians.

When Semenovskiy had been taken by Ney, the masses of the French cavalry delivered furious assaults on the Russian battalions:

"The 2<sup>nd</sup> Army" -- say the Russian reports -- "was in disorder as a result of the wounds of its leader Prince Bagration, and many other generals; the fleches, with their artillery, fell into the hands of the enemy."

On the far left and in the center, the fight continued with various outcomes. On the old Smolensk road, after a bloody fight, Prince Poniatowski jostled the Russian divisions that were opposed to him. The first attempts to remove the Rayevskiy Redoubt cost the French 3,000 men. A new attack by the battalions of the Viceroy, supported at the front by three divisions, and on the right flank by the Thielmann Brigade, finally led at 3 o'clock in the evening, the taking of the fulcrum of the Russian center by the French.

The battle was won. The losses were such on both sides, that the victors left the Russians in the second position they had taken, unable to move forward, nor to disturb their retreat. This would have been possible only by having used the Guard, hitherto kept in reserve; but Napoleon did not wish to expose his last strength; if he had done so, the Russian army could have suffered a decisive disaster.

The battle of Moskowa is one of the bloodiest that has ever been delivered. The French lost more than 28,000 men, including 49 generals, -- the Russians, about 44,000 men.

There were only a few prisoners on either side. The assailant had suffered a loss much less than that of his adversary.

#### 4. -- THE BRIGADE THIELMANN AT MOSKOWA.

The cavalry corps of Latour-Maubourg had arrived on the evening of 5 September at Doronino and had bivouacked there. For two days, there had been no distribution: they were short of everything. So the arrival of a convoy of requisition, waited for 8 days by the brigade and commanded by Lieutenant Klengel, was greeted with joy; ample provisions of brandy, flour, and biscuit were found there.

On the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup>, at 8 o'clock, the brigade was ordered to assemble the next day at 4 o'clock in the morning, and to be ready to go to its place of battle. The officers had to be in full dress. At the appointed hour, the regiments were ready to march.

Before the beginning of the fight, the colonels read to the troops the German translation of Napoleon's proclamation:

"Soldiers, -- here it is, this battle that you have so longed for. Henceforth, victory depends on you; it is necessary for us: it will give us abundance, good winter quarters, and a speedy return to the country. -- Conduct yourself as at Austerlitz, Friedland, Vitebsk, Smolensk, and the most remote posterity proudly quotes your conduct that day; -- let it be said of you: he was at this great battle under the walls of Moscow! -- NAPOLEON."

"At the Imperial Camp, on the heights of Borodino, September 7<sup>th</sup> at 2 o'clock in the morning."

On the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, the regiment of the Life Guards numbered 450 men in the rank; -- that of Zastrow, 400 men, and the Polish cuirassiers, 180.

The battle had already begun. King Murat appeared for the first time in front of the brigade's front to salute it. Colonel Leyser left in his "Journal" a curious portrait of the King of Naples:

"He was a superb man, magnificent, with an expressive and distinguished physiognomy, to which was even added something fantastic: he did not leave me with the effect of a comedian. His conduct in battle was not that of a theater king, but of a hero, marching before the troops with unshakable courage and cold contempt for death. We see him that day for the first time -- and I will never forget his image."

At ten o'clock the division of Lorge was ordered to advance forward, in the direction of the village of Semenovskiy; but, half way, it was necessary to take a position to protect a French battery exposed to a violent fire; then the march was resumed against the heights of Semenovskiy, occupied firmly by the Russian infantry and artillery. The village was in flames; the regiments passed through it, sometimes retreating, sometimes advancing, crossing corpses of corps, in the midst of burnt haystacks, cannons and abandoned caissons, to finally reach the southern slopes of the hill.

Only a quick and determined attack could bring success. Three squadrons of the Life Guards preceded by General Thielmann and Colonel von Leyser rushed upon the enemy infantry with all the speed of their horses: they were followed, as a reserve, by the cuirassiers of Zastrow and the 4<sup>th</sup> squadron of the Guards led by Major von Hoyer.

"The enemy," -- said Colonel von Leyser -- "waited for us at 40 or 50 steps with much assurance, and then received us by a salvo: but the horses were in the charge, spurs tight, fiery will, and honor and glory awaited us in the line of the Russians; we arrived and jostled everything. In this terrible melee, some infantrymen were still firing; their fire only stopped when they were overwhelmed. An enemy battery was taken too, and its cannons driven backwards. The land was covered with Russians: we did not ask for a quarter, and we did not give it. The squadrons of the Life Guards were, as often happens in similar circumstances, mixed into each other, and the cavalry of the 4<sup>th</sup> Squadron, instead of following very compact, were scattered. The cuirassiers of Zastrow had done the same. The hill barely

climbed, everyone rushed into battle: none of these brave people wanted to stay behind: they all threw themselves on each other and it was urgent to restore order."

While the brigade was assembling, a regiment of Russian dragoons sent to collect the infantry who were rapidly withdrawing, appeared before the front. To prevent its attack, it had to charge again... Counting on the Westphalian cuirassier regiments who stood a little behind to support their attack, the Life Guards marched against the enemy line which was advancing slowly: with exhaustion of the horses, this line was overthrown and forced to retire.

Seeking for his regiment, in a fold of ground, a shelter against the artillery fire of the Russians, Colonel von Leyser, accompanied only by Major von Hoyer, the aide-de-camp von Feilitzsch, and some horsemen; -- saw at a short distance a high-ranking Russian officer with his chief of staff. The little troop marched on these Russians, moving further and further from the regiment; it suddenly found itself before a squadron of enemy cuirassiers; for a moment the Saxons took these cuirassiers for those of Zastrow, their comrades of the brigade, because of the similarity of the uniforms; the colonel and his companions realized too late their error and sought vainly to get off: surrounded by the enemy horsemen, the colonel and major, seriously wounded, were thrown off their horses: the first was taken and the second sabered.

The squadrons of the Life Guards had suffered more than the cuirassiers of Zastrow in this second engagement; the regiments had lost a quarter of their strength: 7 officers were killed, 8 wounded.

Nearly all the officers, -- as well as the generals Latour-Maubourg and Thielmann, -- had had several horses killed under them, and were distinguished by their intrepidity. The cavalrymen themselves received the compliments of the French officers for their brilliant conduct.

General Latour-Maubourg had said before the battle to Life Guard, whose cuirasses had remained in Warsaw: "Your cuirasses have not arrived, but the regiment does not need them to support its reputation for honor."

Colonel von Leyser makes the following portrait of Latour-Maubourg:

"He was the Bayard of the army; the nobility of his spirit, his coolness in the face of death, his place always at the head of the troops in the attack--all this made him a "soldier." The care he took of the needs of others, and his behavior, made him a "man" in the highest sense of the word. He remained, under a deadly fire, beside his slain horse, giving his orders with the coldest scorn of death, until another horse could be brought to him."

While fighting continued on the other parts of the battlefield, the division of Lorge was gathering north-west of Semenovskiy. New Russian masses appeared on the front and their fire required a change of position. Thielmann's brigade, which had gone to the left, was ordered at about two o'clock to seize the Rayevskiy Redoubt, against which the French and Italian battalions had already made a useless attack.

The regiments immediately set out to conquer -- with the battalions which were also advancing -- this point of support of the enemy's line of battle. The squadrons left at a pace as rapid as the exhaustion of the horses allowed, some in line, others in column, -- and went on the left face and the throat of the redoubt. They were received by a violent fire of musketry and grape shot. The right wing of the Life Guards, preceded by the brigade adjutant officer Lieutenant Minckwitz, arrived first in the redoubt, crossing its shallow ditches and its upset parapets: the valiant defenders of the work were cut down and forced to abandon it; the Captain von Pilsach then rallied small detachments of cuirassiers of Zastrow into the redoubt.

But the Russian masses advanced again to regain this point of support: Thielmann marched against them, with his squadrons rallied in haste and supported by a part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps of Cavalry. An obstinate combat was fought at this moment in the south and west of the work, and the victory seemed to be in favor of the Russians: but a French infantry regiment was approaching at a rapid pace and taking possession of the redoubt in which were still some cuirassiers of Zastrow; finally the battalions of Ney arrived, and the position remained definitively conquered.

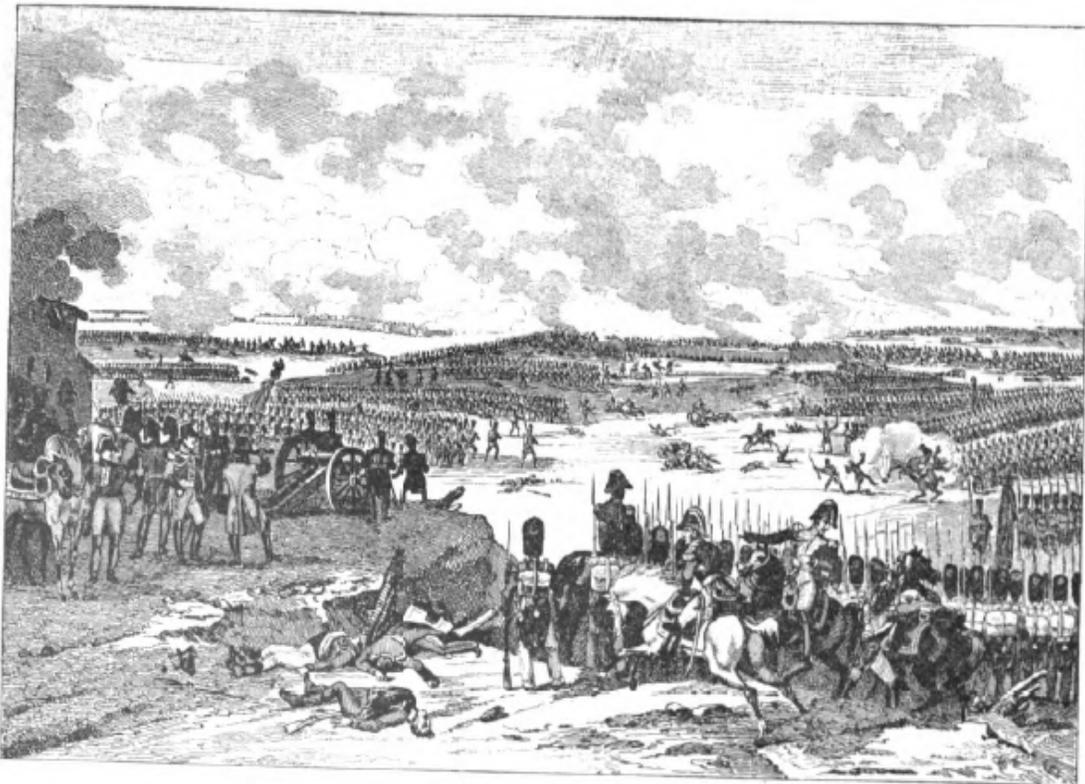
It was at 4 o'clock in the evening that the fight took place on this part of the battlefield. Each of the Saxon regiments had only 40 files in line... The losses, as officers, had been enormous during this phase of the battle; killed were: Captain von Seydewitz, Aide-de-Camp of Thielmann, who had wanted to be put on horseback, although very ill; --

Lieutenant-Colonel Selmnitz, -- Captain Oertzen, -- 4 lieutenants; -- wounded: the Majors von Kolberg, Berge, the Captains von Konig, Tietz, Hennig and 3 lieutenants of the Life Guards; the Majors von Weltzien, Altenfels, the Captain von Schlieben and five lieutenants of the Zastrow Cuirassiers.

The horse battery Hiller had not worked with the brigade, but with the other batteries of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Corps; it fired 600 shots and lost 12 men and 23 horses.

Thielmann's brigade, which had fought or remained under fire for twelve hours, was ordered in the evening to search for a bivouac spot; men and horses were exhausted; it settled near Shevardino.

The situation of the wounded was lamentable. The next morning they were carried to the big ambulances on the banks of the Koloch', where they spent two days without shelter, without refreshments, and almost without care. When the brigade resumed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, its march forward, General Thielmann charged Lieutenant Scheffel, an energetic officer, wounded himself, with the surgeon Hafter, to supervise the wounded Saxons. The wounded were transported to the barn of a largely burned farm, and six days later to a former convent.



**Bataille de la Moskowa.**  
(D'après la *France militaire*.)

Battle of the Moskowa.  
(After *Military France*.)

*Report of General Thielmann to the King of Saxony.*

At the bivouac, between Mojaïsk and Moscow, 11 September 1812. (Arrived at Dresden, 2 October.)

"If I am happy enough to place at your Majesty's feet, by the porter, Lieutenant von Schreckenstein, my report on a glorious day for Your Majesty's arms, I also have the deep sorrow of informing him of the death of many brave."

"The enemy had taken a very strong position nine versts from Mojaïsk. September 7<sup>th</sup> was the day of the great battle. I was with my brigade at the center of the French army, in front of the Imperial Guard, and received the order to attack with the Life Guards. The terrain was very difficult, covered with houses and ricks in flames. I could only pass by column squadrons. The Life Guards guards behaved with remarkable "bravery". The Zastrow Regiment and the Polish 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment at my command followed in the same formation. An enemy square was broken. Attacked at this moment in our flank by a very superior enemy cavalry, our losses were considerable, but we remained nevertheless on our position, supported by the French cavalry which arrived behind us. It was the key to the first enemy line we had just taken. The Russian center presented a great high redoubt on a large excavation of the ground. After a terrible cannonade during which we remained two hours under the fire of the gunfire of 60 guns, I received the order to take the great redoubt. This was done. Here again I was again taken in by a superior enemy cavalry; but the French infantry, who arrived at the pace of charge, supported me and occupied the redoubt; 10 pieces of 12 were taken there and the battle was decided there. The enemy retreated; we did two more charges against the infantry. More than 1,000 cannons thundered on both sides."

"The loss of the enemy was considerable, ours was less, because the Russian cavalry has never had the upper hand: it amounted to 41 officers and about 500 men killed or wounded."

"I deeply regret the loss of Colonel Leyser, Captain Count Seydewitz, and Adjutant of the Life Guards, Freilitzsch. The first was really, literally, the head of the column of his regiment."<sup>4</sup>

"Without speaking of myself, but only of the troops under my command, I can assure your Majesty that the bravery of his regiments has attracted the attention of the whole French army. I have on this subject to make proposals of decorations."

"I very humbly ask your Majesty to attribute the order of Saint-Henry and the gold medal to the soldiers whose list I send to him, and I ask him, in addition, twelve silver medals for each regiment, and three for the artillery: these medals would be given, on the designation of the corps of officers, as a reward to the bravest horsemen."

"If time did not fail me, I could cite to Your Majesty a quantity of traits of individual courage. Almost all the officers had their horse killed under them. Lieutenant Rermann, wounded, had, in addition to his two own horses, four cuirassier horses killed under him. Major von Nehrhoff successively lost four horses."

"For me, I was happy enough to get by with a killed horse and a contusion on the side produced by a grapeshot ball (biscailen)."

"Lieutenant von Schreckenstein may give a live account of additional information on the recent events and the fatigues of this campaign."

"I am, with the deepest respect, -- of Your Majesty, -- most humble and most faithfully obedient

Jean-Adolphe Thielmann. Lieutenant General."

General von Watzdorf, on his part, wrote from Vilna on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September to the Saxon Minister of War Cerrini:

"I receive the news that the Saxon cavalry under the command of General Thielmann has taken a glorious share in the battle of Moskowa. What this cavalry has done surpasses all that can be claimed from an excellent cavalry, and the Marshal Duke of Reggio, to whom I have related it yesterday, was in the greatest admiration; but he found that it

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<sup>4</sup> Untranslatable play on words: Oberst-Oberster.

had cost a great deal, and I could only read with much pain the list of names of the Saxon officers lost, killed, or wounded in this memorable battle."

The awards were as follows: 18 officers received the Knight's Cross of the Order of Saint Henry, 9 NCOs and a cuirassier the Gold Medal, and 25 NCOs and horsemen the Silver Medal.

The brigade adjutant 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Minckwitz was promoted to captain off tour "for entering first in the redoubt, after passing over the infantry which filled the pit, and jumped on the parapet."

The day after the battle, when more than 100 men who disappeared during the fight had rejoined, it was possible to make an exact account of the losses suffered by the regiments: here is the detail in killed and wounded:

	Officers.	Men.	Horses.
	--	--	--
Staff of the			
Brigade.....	1	"	2
Life Guard Regiment.....	18	214	227
Zastrow Cuirassier Regiment.....	18	219	240
Horse			
Battery.....	"	12	23

The Polish 14<sup>th</sup> Cuirassier Regiment had lost two-thirds of its strength, 7 officers and 107 men.

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