

## The Napoleon Series

### A Polish Officer in Spain, 1808 to 1812: the Memoirs of Captain Józef Rudnicki

Translated by Mark Tadeusz Łałowski

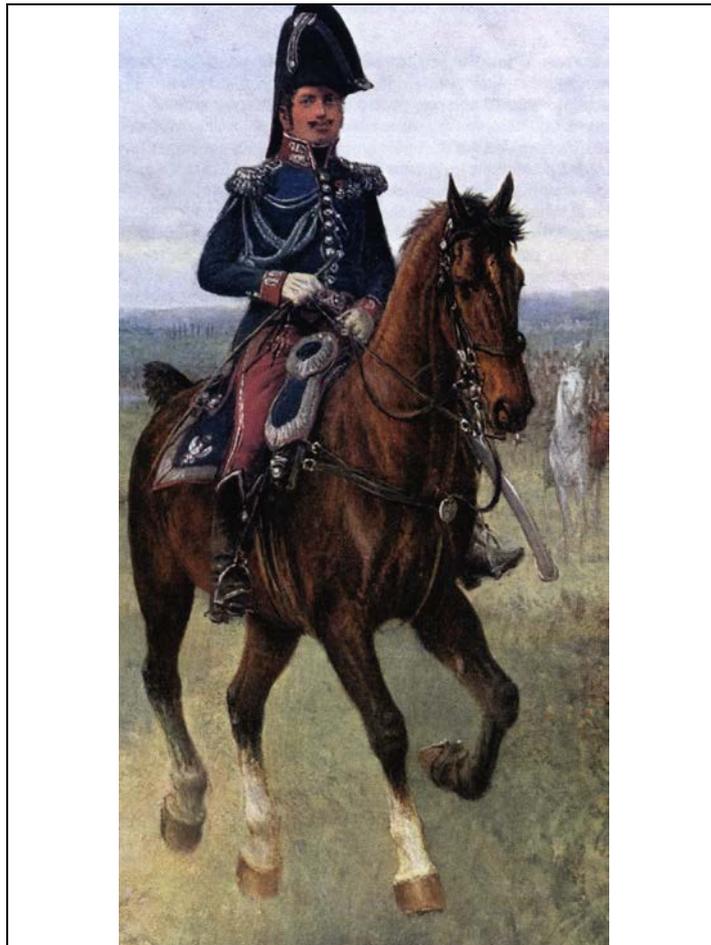
Edited by [Jonathan North](#)



**Best Archival Paper**

*This account is an extract from the memoirs of Józef Rudnicki, published in Vilnius; 1862 (Pamiętniki Józefa Rudnickiego, which appeared in "Pismo Zbiorowe Wileńskie na rok 1862").*

*Rudnicki (1782-1849) was a captain who served in Peninsular War between 1809 and 1812, initially as an adjutant-major but later promoted to captain. His unit was the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw and he fought at Mora, Consuegra, Ciudad Real, Talavera de la Reina, Toledo, Almonacid, Ocaña, Malaga, Ronda and Jerez de la Frontera. He later took part in the invasion of Russia in 1812, the German campaign of 1813 and the final campaign in France in 1814.*



**Polish Adjutant from Jan Chelminsk's *L'Armee du Duche de Varsovie* (published 1913).**

*In the process of translating these recollections some topographic names have been corrected, as well as the names of the Spanish commanders mentioned in the text. In many places the first names of officers have been added in square parentheses. Obvious errors have been noted by the same means. The translation into English was undertaken by Marek Tadeusz Łałowski in May, 2017, with Jonathan North editing the text.*

Following the successful campaign of 1806 and 1807 [in Poland and East Prussia] we returned to Warsaw in September, 1807. The city of Płock had been assigned for the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> remained in Warsaw. After staying here for some weeks I had myself transfer to the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, where I hoped that I might be promoted to adjutant in the battalion. This took place on 13 October, 1807 and I achieved the rank of adjutant-major. In April 1808, the commander of the regiment, Colonel Feliks Potocki, received orders to transfer his regiment to Warsaw and when we arrived there we heard rumours that we would then be directed on to Küstrin in Prussia. In fact, not long after, Marshal Davout raised the question with Colonel Potocki as to whether he might be willing to serve abroad if such an order came from Napoleon. He answered in the affirmative, noting that he would do so in any place deemed necessary for Polish interests. As we were preparing for departure, we received orders to march to Spain rather than to Prussia. Since I was ill at that time I only began my journey, along with a small party of a few NCOs and 106 privates, on 9<sup>th</sup> of September.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment marched through Prussia, Saxony, the countries of the Confederation of Rhine, and into Sedan in France. From there, with Rudnicki following on, they passed down to Bayonne and the Franco-Spanish border. Rudnicki's detachment was there in October 1808.

After eight days spent in Biarritz, we then set out [in October] for Saint-Jean de Luz, a town still in France, and, after crossing the bridge over the small stream [Bidassoa] that marked the frontier, we arrived at Irun, the first city in Spain. On the following day we reached Tolosa, a city located in the Basque province, where they speak the Basque language and which is so difficult that even the Spanish cannot understand it. We had by now already perceived a great change here from all the other countries we had seen so far. In the first place, the city of Tolosa is really filthy, the streets are so narrow that only two horses can walk abreast at the same time, and although the houses are constructed out of stone, no particular beauty can be discerned, indeed every window has iron bars over it, so it resembles not so much a town but rather the most secure of prisons. The residents of this province say that they all belong to the oldest noble houses of Spain, those which had enjoyed particular privileges in the country.

It was from here that we started to cross the Pyrenees Mountains, some of the highest in Europe; indeed, they are so high that they are often hidden in the clouds and on the peaks of these precipitous rocks there lies frozen snow which the sun never melts. Huge rock formations, dominating steep ravines, threaten real destruction at every moment; within these outcrops, where wild pale-yellow goats bound over cliffs with lightning speed, man gets a sense of the true power of Nature,

giving a sensation of the greatest pleasure. Two of the mountains, the first Mont Perdu, the second Maladeta, rise above sea level by 1,700 fathoms and although we would have to march a few miles along these winding slopes, we were not dismayed as the paved road was wide and there were the most charming views of occasional cottages and gardens, dotted along the peaks of the rocky hills. The bends in the course of the road were such that, looking from above, it seemed as if some people were going forwards when others were coming back, yet all were actually progressing to the same point. Throughout such a mountainous passage nothing proved vexing other than the unbearable squeal of the local carts with their wooden axles and this intolerable noise can be heard from a distance of miles.

Having eventually climbed to the summit of Mount Mont Perdu, and having descended the other side, we found ourselves on the rolling plains leading to the city of Vitoria. From that point onwards, the people begin to speak Castilian or authentic Spanish. Vitoria is a relatively large city, but as with Tolosa the streets are far too narrow. During the very hot season, which rules here mercilessly from March to October, the people drape canvases from the roof of one side of the street to another in order to shield the inhabitants from the heat of the sun. I arrived here on the day of a festival, and so had the opportunity to observe, with some considerable astonishment, the idyllic pastimes of the Spaniards. The bourgeoisie and peasants select the oldest member of their family and have them sit in the doorway of the house, and they take the next, third or fourth person between their legs, and unembarrassed by the strangers passing by, start to comb their long hair. This performance begins at midday and continues until darkness falls.

From Vitoria, and marching through the city of Miranda, where the Ebro, the largest river in Spain, flows, we reached the city of Burgos. This town, although built in an ancient style, boasted larger houses and squares and lies by the River Arlazon. A month ago [on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1808], under the same walls, Napoleon fought a battle against the English army [in fact the battle was fought between the French troops commanded by Jean Bessières and the Spanish of Joachim Blake and the Conde Belveder], commanded by General Wellesley. After the battle, won, as usual by the French, Napoleon ordered his guards to surround the city cathedral and thus prevented the men of the line from destroying this venerable and holy shrine. This cathedral is abundantly rich, and in addition, it has one of the rarest and most famous organs in the world. The great altar contains an image of the Lord Jesus made of mosaic, and recognized by the cognoscenti as being a masterpiece. This church is of such a scale that several thousand people can be comfortably accommodated therein. Some Poles from the Imperial Guard of Wincenty Krasiński visited the famous Pantheon, which lies half a mile from and, to which, during the previous campaign, a French general named Thiébault had transferred the remains of the celebrated hero El Cid and his wife, bringing them from the Benedictine monastery of St. Peter de Cordoba.

From Burgos, marching through various small towns and villages, we reached the large city of Valladolid. It is situated by the Pisuerga River, in the province of Old Castile, and has a population of 30,000. Formerly the Castilian kings resided here in the castle, and this was still in good condition. Valladolid is a city of great beauty; the public places have considerable space, and the riches of the churches are greatly esteemed. It is the busiest and most commercial centre en route from central France

to central Spain, meaning to the capital of Madrid. There are enormous warehouse of wool from the finest merino sheep, places visited by English and French merchants who negotiate for it. The same merchants bring produce of their own manufacture from their respective countries in order to sell to the Spanish market at enhanced profits. This system is entirely due to the innate sluggishness of the local population, because the country itself, despite possessing everything people may need in order to enjoy a good life, is hampered by a complete lack of industriousness and therefore willingly sends millions of piasters to foreign lands for goods which she herself might possess, and that even in excess.

I was to be billeted in the house of one of the town's more eminent citizens, a man named Don Antonio Diaz de Rivera. Knowing that the Poles are good Christians, he invited me to supper and upon arriving in the salon, I found a large number of members of his family and the priest whom they called Majordomus. In this country every family endeavours to maintain one such majordomus, a person who acts as an adviser and a teacher of the Catholic religion. As soon as the table had been laid out, the priest approached it and blessed the dishes, then took his place next to the beautiful daughter of the master of the house. For the first dish we were served *gaspacio*, a cold soup made of water, crushed garlic, cucumber and chopped white bread; for the second, a dish called *la-ola* or *ola-podrida* was served. It had been stewed in a large cauldron and consisted of beef, mutton and pork, chicken, sausages, peas and all kinds of vegetables, as well as olive oil, and various spices. Personally, however, the range of delicious jams, candied fruits, cakes, and all sorts of sweets was the most welcome in my starving stomach. The reason why all dishes make use of oil in this country is that butter here is virtually unknown, it occasionally reaching the ports having travelled from the Netherlands and England by being stuffed inside beef and veal intestines, and then sold by inches or yards.

After two days' rest, we marched into the mountains of Somosierra, and arrived at the city of Segovia. The city is not particularly large, but beautifully situated on a high rock. On the highest summit lies a castle which is called *Oleazar*, from beneath which run streams of water tumbling over cascades, rushing and producing an astonishing noise. Segovia was built by the Romans or Celtic Iber tribe and was then dubbed *Segubia*. It contains narrow, winding streets, spread along the banks of two rivers, the *Erie* and *Clamores*. On the first river there stands the beautiful building of the Mint, which produces the most expensive of coins. The entire city is devoid of wells, but an aqueduct built by the Romans runs through the very centre. It was built of ashlar stones with lead joints; it is three thousand paces long and there are 177 arches. Along the top of this aqueduct there flows the healthiest water coursing through tin gutters, and originating from distant mountains. These gutters are then connected to downpipes in the arcades, by which means fresh water is provided for every household in the city. The outstanding castle of *Oleazar*, is in itself worth seeing for once kings lived here, although today it serves as a prison for political prisoners and once was most famously the place of incarceration of *Gil Blas*.

From there we proceeded through the mountains of Somosierra which extend as far as the *Sierra Morena* some 30 Polish miles [one Polish mile equals to 7.146 km] from here. In these mountains snow and ice rarely melts, making the local climate most uncomfortable. During the day in the flat plains, the sun is so intense that it burns the body of a man and it is difficult to breathe, but at night it is so cold that without

suitable clothing it's really difficult to withstand. Having passed through these great icy mountains and through some smaller towns and villages, we finally arrived in the capital city of Madrid.

Madrid is a noble city most beautifully built. It stands on a picturesque plain which is crossed by the Manzanares River and lies almost in the middle of the entire kingdom, ringed by surrounding mountains. From whichever direction one enters the city, one notices the wide avenues with planted trees. Some streets are wider, with town houses of three or four storeys. The royal palace, which lies on the banks of the Manzanares River, and although built according to old-fashion taste, can easily be recognized as belonging to the Catholic kings due to its extensive construction. It was restored during the reign of Charles III in 1734. In this edifice, besides a plethora of wonderful rooms, there is a throne room called Los Reinos, in which there are mirrors of such great size that none similar can be found in any European capital. The stairs to this residential palace, and the corridors and atria, are all decorated with paintings by famous masters, such as Rubens, Correggio and others. In the middle of this complex there exists a pavilion called the Armeria, in which the swords of the most famous knights are displayed, including those of Pelagius, Roland, El Cid and Francis I, who had fought at Pavia. It still contains a lot of arrows, old siege machines, ancient rifles, and early muskets.

Madrid has 133 churches and monasteries, the largest and most magnificent of them being the Church of the Virgin Mary, known as Nuestra Señora de Atocha. There are also several barracks built with brick walls, the largest one being converted from the royal palace and today known as the Bon-Retiro. Behind the barracks is located a garden containing the statue of the Spanish king Philip II, this is cast in bronze, with the monarch clad in Roman robes with lace cuffs sitting astride a rearing horse. All the details, like the reins, the front of the tunic or the saddle cloth are of exceptional quality; it is just a pity that such a beautiful statue has been positioned in such an inconvenient and secretive place. The barracks themselves could easily accommodate several regiments of troops but the outer wings have been taken over by a porcelain factory. The building lies along a street called the Prado; it is a public avenue with trees planted on either side of the pedestrian alleys and with an alabaster fountain furnished with 17 figurines. Every evening, one can see several thousand people from all classes of society out strolling whilst along each side one can also see some carriages and horses being ridden. In my opinion the carriages here are rather old-fashioned, with six or eight mules harnessed to each vehicle. These mules are covered with nets, and their heads adorned with bows and feathers, from which the guards could identify the rank of the owner. Between the first pair of mules there runs a man in livery holding the mules' harness in his hands.

Here in Madrid only the nobility dress in the style used in other capitals, the middle and the lower class can be recognized by the following costume: the burghers wear red coats with collars, and wear hats that have brims that are so wide they look like the largest of sieves Poles use to separate grain. The priests walk abroad in such hats, too. The artisans and the labourers wear Capuchin colour coats, whilst on their heads they have caps called which are called monteris, decorated with black tassels. The majority hide their long hair in colourful nets and each of them makes use of a red or green sash at the waist. The shoes are fastened and good quality leather garters reach up to the knees, and these are fastened with silver convex buttons.

The women here are all beautiful, because in addition to their shapely figures, their legs are petite, and they have pale complexions whilst their hair and eyes are like black ebony. When in town or attending church they dress in the style of a nun, each with a veiled face whilst, as is the case the world over, the prettier faces have lighter and more transparent veils. The Spanish woman will never acknowledge anyone, unless she meets a friend. In such a situation she will then move her fan in her hand several times, thus indicating a warm welcome.

Whilst the women here are generally shapely, in terms of height they are slightly smaller than those of other provinces and despite stringent rules imposed by religion these madrileñas (as they are called by Spaniards) are rather wanton, sometimes exceedingly so.

As for men, their faces are darker, rather olive, serious and yet rather polite, they never forget to say to visitors or travellers: Dios guarda a Usted, Vaia Usted con Dios, Caballero; which, respectively, means: "Let God protect you" and "Let God be with you, Sir".

Men demonstrate a particular politeness when smoking. Should they encounter someone who does not actually smoke, they inquire: "Would it please you to smoke?". If one does not wish to smoke, then one responds with the words: gracias, no me gusta fumar ahora which means "thank you, I do not want to smoke now". If he does wish to smoke, the man who invited him to do so takes the cigar immediately from his mouth and the cigar is passed from mouth to mouth several times. Even ladies from the upper class smoke cigars, they are wrapped in delicate straw called Pakitas.

It became clear to me that each day at 7 o'clock in the evening, the church bells start ringing. On this signal the whole of Madrid, which consists of 13 parishes and a population of 160,000, ceases all activity. Coach drivers stop their horses, labourers stop working, and each pedestrian out on the street stops still, removes his cap or hat and chants an evening prayer called la Oracion. After finishing the prayer, he turns to the others in the street and bowing to them bids them a good evening.

Spain has a population of more than eleven million: from this number, one must surely deduct a million beggars who do nothing save giving false testimony of faith, accompanied by the out-of-tune strumming of their guitars as they serenade the passers-by in an attempt to extract from them any undeserved reward. The most energetic dances of the nation are the Bolero, Fandango and the Sorongo. When they dance, they do not touch the hands of the women, but they walk away from each other, jumping on their toes, and with their hands holding golden tassels with castanets, clicking to the rhythm of the music. In such dances, especially in the Bolero, the most appreciated skill is to rhythmically tap the floor with their heels, and just as the dancing couple is about to fall into an embrace, the music suddenly ceases; considerable skill is then required to remain in the same position until that time the music starts again.

Madrid has 23 public squares in addition to some smaller ones; the largest of these is called Plaza del Sol (Sun Square), the second Plaza Major (Main Square) and the

third Plaza de la Cebada (Barley Square). When chatting and smoking the Spaniards usually elect to meet in the very early hours and on the Sun Square. There are 15 gates leading into the town. The Alcala and Toledo gates are the best in terms of their architectural appearance; and, after visiting them, I approached the delightful Toledo bridge over the River Manzanares, constructed by Philip II. This bridge is made of granite ashlar stone, and the expense of building it must have been considerable.

As far as religion is concerned, other than Catholicism, no other faith is tolerated here by the government. The nobility is full of false pride to the highest degree, and as it rarely speaks any foreign languages their knowledge is almost entirely limited to remembering the names of their ancestors and familiarity with some excerpts from the Scriptures. The host, where I was staying, was once a Spanish Grandee. There were formerly three classes of Grantees in this country. The first were not required to take off their hats, even if in the throne room and in the presence of their monarch; the second had to remove their hats when speaking to the king; and the third always had to present themselves bareheaded.

After eight days of rest, I left for Toledo and as I travelled along the road from Madrid to Toledo, the wind was so strong that one could barely keep on one's feet. This wind carried a good deal of fine dust which was very harmful to the eyes. I arrived in Toledo on 11 February 1809 and there I encountered a small Polish division under the command of the General of Division, and French Count [Jean-Baptiste Cyrus de] Valence, which consisted of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Infantry. They were commanded respectively by the following colonels: Count Felix Potocki, [Maciej] Sobolewski, and Prince Antoni Sułkowski. A company of artillery and sappers was under captain [Antoni] Kamiński, and there was the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Lancers under Colonel Antoni Konopka. These regiments were incorporated into IV Corps of the great French army, under the command of General [Horace] Sébastiani. Thus, at last, after the completion of my five-month odyssey, I joined the regiment in which I was to serve as adjutant-major.

The city of Toledo is located on the right bank of the Tagus [Tajo] River and built on a rocky outcrop some 10 miles from Madrid. There are almost as many churches as there are private houses. Since the bells are constantly ringing and one hears much chanting during church processions, it is hard to get a moment of peace. While I was staying at the house of the canon, Don Pedro Ximenes, I asked him why there are so many churches and priests in the city. "Do not be surprised", he replied, "that only 10% of the houses belong to the private population and that 90% is owned by priests, a number considerably reduced since before. During the reign of Philip II, there were 58 archbishops, 680 bishops, 11,000 male and female monks, 31,000 ordinary priests, 200,000 clerics and over 400,000 monks and nuns in our country. Therefore, if those numbers had not been reduced, then there would not be a single private house in this rather sizable town."

I did not find the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Toledo, but only the second. The first battalion, in which I was the adjutant-major, had already marched for the Kingdom of Leon. However, due to the fact that I was accompanied by more than a hundred soldiers of the first battalion brought from the hospital, and I found a

hundred more here, Colonel Potocki suggested that I assume command of this provisional company unit until both battalions could be united.

From then on, with more than two hundred troops, I began to fight in the land of Gonzalo de Córdoba and El Cid. The Spanish General [Francisco] Venegas, with his corps 12,000 strong, was approaching Toledo. At that moment our corps marched out against the enemy, and on 20 February 1809 a battle began at the village of Mora. The Spaniards were defeated and fled to the town of Consuegra and when they were repulsed from there with great loss, the French fell on the city as the enemy fled and began raping and plundering.

Here I looked on at the misfortune that war visited upon the inhabitants, the blood of defenceless citizens was spilt, and a number of atrocities committed in homes and monasteries already consigned to the flames. The French soldiers are usually very brave, but showed little discipline, and could easily sack a town in just a few hours.

The brave colonel [Cyprian] Godebski was right when in his poem "Grenadier" he wrote the following verse [during his service in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Polish Legion in Italy]:

"The man is bigger who joins two human tribes,  
Than one who a thousand cities turns to steppe;  
The one better, whose hands grow green in beautiful groves,  
Than the other, who paints fields with human blood,  
And the one who wipes a tear from an orphan's eye  
Is greater than those who cause fearful man to cry."

As our forces were too weak, we fell back to Toledo, but then the French regiments of our corps combined with us, and we immediately set off against our enemy following the same road to Consuegra and Ciudad-Real. When we reached that city we found the Spanish corps waiting for us in a good position and with a greater number of troops. However, due to the sound dispositions made by General Sébastiani the Spaniards were beaten and routed after a four-hour battle on 27 March 1809. They retreated in the greatest disorder to the city of Almagro, the residence of the senior prioress of the Calatrava female order, and indeed further on to Santa Cruz [de Mudela] and to the Sierra Morena mountains.

Pursuing them night and day, we took a large number of prisoners, plenty of ammunition and their baggage train. After pushing them deep into the Sierra Morena Mountains and being confident that the enemy would not be able to resume their operations in the near future, we were directed from the village of Elvizi in order to march into the province of La Mancha. Our division had paused in the village of Manzanares, on the stream of the same name. Usually in Spain the villages are really big with solid stone houses of several floors and really quite spacious, therefore it was quite possible for the whole of our division to stay in one place with each officer occupying a fairly decent house. We remained there undisturbed for three months.

This is a province of beautiful rolling plains, but no mountains. To shield the grain in the fields from the scorching sun there are wells at every thousand paces and these have big wheels from which buckets draw water and tip them into reservoirs. This is done by donkeys which walk round and round for many hours without complaining. In

addition, the peasants have planted olive trees at intervals of 40 paces and these confer the double benefit of acting as sun shades and producing a crop used for oil. In Spain, no other cereal is sown save for barley and wheat. Barley is used for feeding horses and mules, and wheat to bake bread, as everywhere else.

In the province of La Mancha red wine can be obtained in great abundance; the strongest one being produced near the town of Valdepeñas. That one is so pure that by pouring it onto a fire, it burns as if it were spirits.

Some months later in this same Valdepeñas, Captain [Mateusz] Zdziennicki assumed command of this post with one company of infantry from Major [Ignacy] Bronisz and ten dragoons. Having learned that a few thousand Spaniards were approaching the town, he marched out boldly with his small force to meet the enemy. However, shortly after finding out that it would be impossible to best the enemy in the open field, he retired to the village of Alaurin. All the houses were locked, and a number of brigands were already firing from the centre of the village. At that moment, the brave captain commanded the soldiers to blow down the door of one of the houses and occupy it. The soldiers took up their positions inside this solid building, firing from the windows. The brigands had already occupied the market place and made several attempts to capture the house, but the troops obeyed the orders of their commander, fired volleys and hit dozens of the attacking men. Seeing that they were unable to obtain possession from the Poles by means of an ordinary siege, the Spaniards sent in a large body of men carrying combustible materials in order to set the house on fire that night. Although they succeeded in igniting the fire, the heroic captain broke through the wall to the neighbouring house and recommenced his successful defence. Meanwhile, the governor of Málaga had learned that the Spanish had been attacking Captain Zdziennicki's company and sent his cavalry there. The Spaniards did not wait for an unfortunate outcome and promptly escaped to the mountains. The Polish commander, who had endured 48 hours of enemy pressure, was rewarded with the cross of the Legion of Honour.

Just before the first battalion united with the rest of the regiment, Second Lieutenant [Józef] Pęczkowski was marching to join us from the city of Toledo but he was attacked by the brigands (as everybody called the Spanish insurgents) in the town of Consuegra and there he was shamelessly assassinated. He was the first officer from the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment to lose his life not on the battlefield, but in a cowardly attack. After our three-month stay in Manzanares, we were then ordered to fall back behind the river Guadiana, where the 1st Battalion joined us. About then our colonel, Feliks Potocki, left Spain and hastily returned to Poland with Lieutenant-Colonel [Maciej] Wierzbiński then assuming command. The English army, led by General Wellesley, had assembled in the province of Salamanca and it was the intention of Marshal Victor to fight them. The overall command of the corps was, however, now under Marshal [Jean-Baptiste] Jourdan. The British troops had occupied good positions near the town of Talavera de la Reina and there, on 27 July 1809, the French army fought a bloody and fierce battle. Our division, which had raced forwards to participate, only reached Talavera on 28 July.

This city lies on the river Tagus. Advancing over the bridge, we immediately received orders directing us to march into the midst of the fierce fighting. However, the French commissary officer attached to the Polish division objected to this order, because the

Polish troops had not yet received their ration of biscuit held in the army's wagons. At the request of the commissary officer, the king's [King Joseph Bonaparte] aide-de-camp then turned to the German division formed of soldiers from Hesse and Baden and these were sent into battle instead of us. After receiving our provisions we began to ascend the heights in columns and from there we encountered the English troops and artillery and observed the flight of the German division, the remains of which fell back in our direction. We maintained our position on the heights, and here, under arms, held firm until nightfall. On that day, the commissary and the biscuits saved our division, which would probably have been destroyed like that of the Germans by the overpowering strength of the enemy. Regarding the overall strategic plan, Marshal Victor should have waited to be united with Soult's, Ney's and Sébastiani's troops, but he preferred to act on his own initiative and so on 27 and 28 July, as those reinforcements had not arrived to aid the offensive, our forces lost the battle.

We also lost 10,000 soldiers and many more wounded, who fell into enemy hands when we were forced to retreat. The victorious English general, Wellesley, was created Viscount Wellington of Talavera. Our withdrawal was actually caused not from having lost the battle, but due to our receiving information that the Spanish general Venegas was advancing on Madrid with 30,000 troops. General Sébastiani retired to the city of Aranjuez with his entire corps, but as he did so he ordered our commander [Cyprian] Zdzitowiecki to keep my battalion in Toledo in order to defend the bridge over the river Tagus. We therefore returned to that town without meeting any resistance, and blocked the town gates with boulders placing one company at each gate in order to keep watch. On the following day, 3 August 1809, the Spanish corps under the command of General Venegas arrived in front of the town, but seeing it heavily fortified and manned not only by our battalion but also by another from the 7<sup>th</sup> Polish Regiment, he began to call us for surrender, promising the most favourable conditions of capitulation. Such a proposal was unacceptable, as we were ready to defend the bridge to the last man. The siege of the town, heavily bombarded by the enemy, lasted from 3 August 3 to 9 August and, during this time, General Sébastiani destroyed the bridges over the River Tagus near Aranjuez, and through the judicious positioning of his troops prevented the large Spanish army from marching on the capital of the country towards the capital of the country. [sic]

The cessation of all commerce and receipt of supplies of food to the city, though only for six days, caused great disquiet to the citizenry and to the clergy, and they asked that the town surrender. But that was not to be, for on the night of 9 August, a squadron of Polish cavalry appeared at the town gate. The commander of the corps sent orders that at the first glimmer of dawn the gates were to be opened and our troops should issue forth to attack the enemy. Our soldiers immediately removed the obstacles from the gates and attacked the enemy, who, whilst pulling back for two hours in order to combine with their main body, continued on to the town of Almonacid [de Toledo]. Our corps had been dispersed before this, now came together and on the next day 11 August, at dawn, the bloody and memorable battle started, a battle marked with loss of so many my brave compatriots.

The fire of the artillery, the screaming of horses, the cries of troopers combined with sound of the trumpets summoning men to battle, bore witness to a fierce and bloody struggle. Up until 9 o'clock in the morning our division, commanded by the French General Werlé was positioned before a small forest. We were then ordered to seize

some heights occupied by the artillery and some of the Spanish army's regular troops. We advanced rapidly and, despite the intense fire, reached the first hill and pushed the enemy from this position; however, insatiable death, having taken over a dozen of our officers, deprived us of another brave and highly talented commander, Colonel [Maciej] Sobolewski, of the 7<sup>th</sup> line Infantry Regiment. He was hit in the chest by a musket ball and, falling to the ground, he uttered these last words to his comrades in arms:

“It is nothing my children, forwards! Forwards! I shall die quite happy if I see you as victors on this rock.”

Like the lions on the hunt, we fell on the Spaniards with our bayonets and became masters of this most important position. Colonel Sobolewski saw us reach the top of the rocks, and expired a little later.

Kantorbery Tymowski's poem was most apt:

“The man not bent by fighting, untouched in virtue,  
Led Polish troops at the Almonacid battle;  
His mere hand outweighed the scales of victory  
And mortal life passed to immortal glory. “

Before evening, the Spanish army was smashed with the remnants hurriedly withdrawing in disorder. However, it was not successful for Marshal Victor had barred its route, took its rear guard and all its artillery, along with 4,000 prisoners, not counting the wounded. In our division the following officers were killed in the battle:

Second Lieutenant Kleniewski from the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

Colonel Sobolewski; Major Łuba; Captain Wiśniewski; lieutenants Sielski, Tomicki and Gajewski; and second lieutenants Wilkoterski and Urbanowski from the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

Major Sielski; captains Zalewski, Stoblewski; and Lieutenant Gurzyński from the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

Fortunately we survived, but what was the reward we received from the Duchy of Warsaw for our victory here? To replace those officers killed in battle, others were sent from Poland, thus depriving us of the promotions we had earned through the spilling of our blood. The French attributed the victory to their own efforts, they were decorated with crosses, they were promoted. For us there was not even a mention, let alone praise, in the public papers.

For the following two months we manoeuvred in the province of La Mancha, around Toledo. Once our battalion stopped in the town of Tembleque, and I was billeted in the house of the parish priest. I instructed the soldier who cooked the food to prepare some chicken broth for the meal, but since he spoke only a little Spanish only, he determined to try his best with just a few words and more gestures. He took a large knife in his hand, went to the kitchen and ordered the cook to give him the hen, gesturing that he wanted to slaughter it and then cook it for the broth. The Spanish

woman saw the knife in his hand and, when she heard the soldier's request in his broken Spanish, screamed and called for help. Hearing that unbearable noise, I ran out of my room and asked the reason behind her wailing. It appeared that my man had asked for kura, what is Polish for hen, although galina in Spanish. It just so happened that the name of the priest was Cura (pronounced Kura in Polish) and the cook thought that my soldier intended to slaughter her master. She was really frightened having learned from her compatriots that the Poles ate people alive like barbarians. After my heated explanation she started to weep, to smile, to express her thanks and to prepare a good dinner not only of broth but with good wine, too.

Whilst we were at Tembleque and the town of la Guardia, the Spanish central council in Cádiz, with the help of England, decided to raise and organize an additional 80,000 fresh troops, and these, when formed, were entrusted to General [Juan Carlos de] Areizaga. He began his operations by advancing from the provinces of Andalusia and Extremadura and, inevitably, facing such a large concentration, we had to pull back to Ocaña for the third time. That evening we just had started to position the sentries around the town, when at 11 o'clock we were ordered to recall our men and withdraw to the city of Aranjuez. We carried this out as intended, although one small outpost under Second Lieutenant [Jan] Meyer, a single NCO, and 12 soldiers must have been overlooked by Adjutant-Major Kalisz in the darkness of the night. Lieutenant Meyer remained fearlessly at his post by the main road, and at the approach of the enemy's cavalry, he shouted with his impressive voice: Halt! Who goes there? The Spanish cavalry refused to proceed and reported back to their superiors that the French were still in possession of the town, and so, until the dawn of the following day, the enemy army remained motionless. When our lieutenant saw that he was isolated, and was probably forgotten, he and his people quickly ran through the streets of Ocaña and safely returned to our corps. This incident, on the one hand, brought pride to Lieutenant Meyer whilst, on the other, shamed the enemy's cavalry as it allowed 15 soldiers to keep at bay such a large army.

The city of Aranjuez is about four and a half miles from Madrid. It was built in a modern and rather beautiful style and served as the summer residence of the Spanish kings. Two of the palaces built for those kings by the River Tagus [Tajo] were very expensive, and inside I saw a great deal of fine and exquisite artefacts. The Roman road from Madrid to Aranjuez had been restored in the reign of Ferdinand VI, apparently each mile of this road cost three million real.

As soon as General Sébastiani, crossed to the left bank of the Tagus he ordered the bridges to be destroyed and then awaited the arrival of the corps under Marshal [Adolphe] Mortier, Duke of Treviso. Our regiment took up a position in front of the royal palace, and having ensured it was secured, each one of the officers set off to find a place suitable to spend the night. Fortunately we were allocated royal apartments with beautiful beds and sofas upholstered in velvet, so we enjoyed a sound and royal sleep that night. However, the arrival of Marshal Mortier meant that some of us were fated to spend an eternal rest in the fields of Ocaña.

As soon as our troops were united, we crossed to the other side of the river and immediately started to skirmish with the enemy. Near Ocaña itself, two Polish squadrons of the 7<sup>th</sup> Lancers, under the command of Captain [Adam] Huppe, passed through an olive grove in order to reconnoitre the enemy's position. Emerging into a

field, they caught sight of the entire Spanish cavalry drawn up and ready for battle. The brave captain did not blink, but with great determination turned to his subordinates and declared: "Forwards with God, follow me!" With pennons fluttering from their lances, the Poles threw themselves against an enemy ten times stronger. The Spanish horses had never seen or heard the sound of the pennons of Polish cavalry, and they took fright, breaking their line. It took a moment to maul them and they were beaten by one of the most capable captains in our history, worthy of being recorded in general annals of the history of cavalry as a man who broke many squadrons of the enemy with his vastly inferior force.

The French General [Antoine Marie] Paris [d'Illins] who supported those brave Poles of Captain Huppe by sending two regiments of hussars to attack and beat the enemy, was killed by some Spanish dragoons on the evening of 18 November whilst pursuing the defeated foe. Captain Huppe, who had chased the enemy with better results, was, on the following day, promoted by Marshal Mortier to the rank of squadron commander and an officer of the Legion of Honour.

The darkness of night put an end to further fighting, but as soon as dawn broke on the morning of 19 November we were ordered to stand to arms. Beneath the city of Ocaña there appeared a mass of 80,000 Spaniards drawn up in formation. On that vast plain, divided only by a great ravine, we saw their priests encouraging soldiers with crucifixes, and heard the constant sound of the pealing of the city bells, no doubt proclaiming that the citizens were praying for a victory over us. On a number of occasions the clergy had circulated pamphlets inciting their compatriots throughout the country, to join the army, with all men between the ages of 14 to 60 enlisting under the sign of the red cross, and thereby declaring religious war, a war which would forgive all sins, as had taken place once upon a time in the Holy Land. The result of this was that we not only had to fight regular armies, but that the entire Spanish nation waged war on us, thereby unnecessarily spilling blood on both sides.

Marshal Mortier commanded three corps and at dawn rode out in front of the columns, issuing orders to an army which stood with banners unfurled as though on parade, as it impatiently awaited the onset of a murderous battle. In the centre there were 60 artillery pieces, and these opened fire at once, thus signalling that battle had commenced. The reserve was under the orders of King Joseph himself. At first, the enemy boldly came on, supported by the heavy fire of their artillery, but our division, advanced to meet them with fixed bayonets. Prince Sułkowski, the commander of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, sought to encourage his compatriots in the heat of the battle and, taking the regimental colour from the hands of the ensign, raised it aloft and cried out: "Boys, this emblem and the eagle that is over your heads, will lead us today to certain victory, follow me, and God will support us!"

The Spaniards, seeing that they could not break the columns marching boldly against them, at first hesitated and then started to fall back. At this moment the French cavalry charged and so began a terrible slaughter. The fighting had begun at 3 o'clock in the morning, and by 4 o'clock in the afternoon we had obtained a decisive victory. The casualties from both sides side reached 12,000 men, and many more were wounded. We took 8,000 prisoners, a number of guns, ammunition, supplies and regimental colours.

Not only did we seize such martial trophies, but an entire theatre troupe attached to their army and travelling from Seville to Madrid, fell into our hands.

As a matter of fact, and as mentioned in Prince Sułkowski's harangue, a white eagle had been seen over the Polish division as it advanced. That was the sign and symbol of Polish victory. Before evening, the prisoners were paraded before King Joseph, declaring, "Long live our righteous monarch Napoleon, to whom we now swear loyalty." They never respected oaths, because when they were incorporated into the regiments of King Joseph and uniformed accordingly, they all deserted to join the insurgents. That is why those loyal to Ferdinand VII, called the actual king of Spain, Joseph, Ferdinand's captain of costumes.

Immediately after the battle, Marshal Mortier's corps advanced into the province of Salamanca, King Joseph returned to Madrid, and, for the fourth time, our troops entered the province of Mancha to pursue the remains of Spanish army. According to the prevalent tradition, the French attributed victory only to themselves; they were given decorations, promotions, rewards and the like. We were left with the sorrow of gazing on at our wounded and dead compatriots. In this battle, in addition to the wounded, the following officers were killed:

Lieutenant Zambrzycki from the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, died in Madrid as a result of his wounds.

Captain Sieraszewski from the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Lieutenant Gałązkiewicz. Adjutant Michalski.

Captain [Urban] Rudnicki from the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Lieutenants Rowiński and Leśniewski.

After routing the remnants of Areizaga's corps and pushing them into the Sierra Morena Mountains, Sébastiani's corps returned to the province of La Mancha. He was being joined by French troops on a daily basis, and when several brigades had been concentrated we were ordered to cross these mountains. The range of the mountains consisted of 20 miles of desolate terrain. When the famous administrator Jan Olavides wanted to populate these rocks he did so at considerable cost, bringing in 6,000 Swabians and Dutchmen who, under the rule of Charles III, founded the town of Carolina. To this day, it is characterized by its cleanliness, wealth and typical German industriousness. The right flank of our army was led by the commander-in-chief of the armies in Spain, Marshal [Nicolas Jean] Soult, Duke of Dalmatia. The centre by King Joseph and the left wing by the commander of the IV Corps, General Sébastiani himself. The coordination between the different units and the precise and prompt fulfilment of the commander-in-chief's orders allowed us to pass through the natural obstacle posed by these mountains and the resistance of an armed enemy. We advanced against the first mountain peak, defended by artillery and numerous Spanish troops, but despite their determined resistance and bloodshed we broke their positions. This success increased the enthusiasm of the army and the desire to enter the most prosperous provinces of Andalusia and Granada. The centre and the right wing of the army marched in parallel and cut communications between enemy units. Owing to such manoeuvres, and to the heavy rains, to which the Spaniards were probably not accustomed, an entire infantry division was taken captive by the

7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Polish cavalry, supported by another French detachment, all without a shot being fired.

For nine days we climbed through rocks strewn with wild rosemary, we made our way along narrow paths fringed with thorns, territory through which armies never traversed. This rocky mountain range stretches down to the cities of Ubeda and Baeza; and, after this difficult march with insufficient food, we at last caught sight of these two cities, spaced only an hour apart from each other. The headquarters of the French army established itself at Baeza whilst our division and the cavalry were ordered to occupy the city of Ubeda. On Christmas Day, 25 December 1809, we three adjutant-majors, two pay-masters, two NCOs and two lancers, set off early in order to reach Ubeda before the arrival of our division in order to arrange accommodation for them in the town.

We were half way to our destination when we spied 20 enemy dragoons riding out towards us. We immediately drew our swords from their scabbards and darted at them, thus forcing them to drop their weapons. It was a lost detachment from their army and its demoralisation stemmed from the continuous series of victories we had gained over them. A single cavalryman escorted them to headquarters whilst we continued on with our ride to the town. Seeing our small formation approach, the municipal council led by an Alcalde (Mayor) came out to greet us and, with great ceremony, we entered the city. As we passed along the streets the windows were flung open on either side and the women waved their colourful handkerchiefs, while the assembled crowd shouted loudly: "Long live the righteous monarch Napoleon!, Long live his family!"

One hour later the whole division entered the city in full dress.

We were allowed to rest here for some days, but whilst here we witnessed with regret the demise of the exhausted Captain [Pius] Kożuchowski, who just a few days previously had been promoted from the rank of captain to that of major in the 7<sup>th</sup> Polish Regiment.

Shortly afterwards, we set off for the town of Jaen and, after a little skirmish with the enemy, occupied this town. General Sébastiani left the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment there and then fought the enemy near the city of Alcala la Real, beating them and pushing the Spaniards back towards Granada. Alcala la Real, quite a large and beautifully built city, lies on the River Genil, in very fertile country abundant in good wine. Upon arriving in the town of Santa-Fe (holy faith), we saw that the Spanish had taken the direction of the city of Málaga, but our troops remained here in order to prepare to capture the great city of Granada.

The town of Santa-Fe lies on the Genil River, about one and a half hours ride from Granada, and was founded by the King of Castile, Ferdinand, and his wife Isabella, in memory of the Spanish army besieging Granada in the year 1491. Ferdinand had besieged the capital of the Moors for nine months; eventually forcing their king, called Abouabdoulah, to surrender a town that had been under Moorish rule for 782 years. As soon as our army deployed before the city, the governor came out accompanied by a large number of civic dignitaries and presented our commander-in-chief with the keys to the city on a silver tray. Our repeated victories enabled us to enter this

ancient city, once occupied by the Moors, without a shot being fired and to the accompaniment of music and the cheerful cries of the inhabitants: "Long live King Joseph-Napoleon".

We managed to remain here for some days and during this time we sought out information on the city as well as on the famous rulers of the Moorish palace, known as the Alhambra. Anybody who sees it can easily perceive the wealth and might of those African monarchs. The city of Granada lies at the foot of the mountain range called the Sierra-Nevada, by the two rivers of Genil and Darro. It was formerly the capital of the kingdom of Granada, it is now a sizable city and has over 60,000 inhabitants. It is divided into four districts, the first being Granada, the second Alhambra, the third Albaicin, and the fourth Antie Voruole [Realejo]. In the first district lies the wonderful cathedral where Ferdinand and his wife Isabella are buried. The city is built on a broad, elevated plateau; the streets are mostly narrow and winding as is usually the case in Spain, and many of the houses are built in the Moorish style. The suburbs and their surroundings are of exceptional beauty. On one side, where the Cartama mountains are located, there are a number of streams which flow down through the orange groves to the public fountains. On the other side, on a dominating hill, there stands a palace which can be dubbed the 8<sup>th</sup> miracle of the world. It was erected under the rule of a Moorish king called Alhambra and the palace received his name. In Arabic it means the 'red palace'. A dozen of our officers managed to take a guided tour of this wonderful Moorish edifice. The road from the city to the palace was once planted with trees and entry is possible from the northern side by the so called Court Gate.

When leaving this exquisite palace one can stroll down a long promenade running through wonderful gardens with oranges, lemons, pomegranates and figs and enjoy a panorama of the town from above. Close to Granada there are the Alpujaras mountains, from which, on a good day, one can see the fortress of Gibraltar and the shores of Africa, about 30 miles distant. When we returned to the city, we found the corps all ready to march. General Sébastiani left part of his army in Granada whilst the rest of the corps advanced towards the cities of Loja and Antequera. There is a famous source of mineral water at Antequera known as the Fuente de la Piedra, the water from which apparently heals gallstones. The enemy pulled back further, reaching the walls of the port of Málaga. Having marched through another range of rather high mountains, we came before the city at noon and saw the Spanish drawn up in front of Málaga ready for battle. Our troops began to advance in narrow columns, and after a dozen cannon shots, the Spaniards withdrew in to the town in disorder.

Several Polish and French infantry battalions serving as a vanguard cleared the way for the corps to enter the city, but a few drunken Spaniards secreted themselves in some corners and streets, and shot at us from the houses in order to prevent us from reaching the centre. The voltigeurs finally advanced with the bayonet, brushing the enemy troops aside and clearing the way for the main body. As was customary the French, as soon as they entered the city of Málaga, began to rob, rape and demonstrate how lawless they could be. Such criminal and inhumane atrocities lasted from 7 o'clock in the evening until 4 o'clock in the morning and one could see soldiers holding torches running through the streets and hear the groans and wailing of the populace as their children were killed that night. The French had also stormed

the convents, letting the nuns out, and thoroughly inebriated, dancing with them around huge bonfires set up in the middle of a large square. In a word, this beautiful and rich town had given way to the utmost anarchy for a period of nine hours. By then I was completely exhausted from riding backwards and forwards with orders to the battalion reserve stationed a quarter of a mile from the city, and so, after midnight, when I finally returned to Malaga, I sought out a quiet corner where I might spend an hour resting peacefully. The street I entered with two of my grenadiers was filled with soldiers plundering houses that had already been looted, so I decided to go further on. Just as I was about to, I heard the voice of an elderly Spaniard begging for his life. I entered the house and found an old man on his knees; he was no longer able to offer money to the drunken soldiers and they had determined to kill him. I immediately ordered the two grenadiers who formed my escort to throw the drunkards from the house, then secured the doors having saved the innocent occupant from certain death. I rested two hours before the trumpets and drums summoned the soldiers back to the ranks. I hurried to the main square and found that the commander-in-chief had summoned fresh troops kept outside the city to enter and conduct patrols, arresting any drunken soldiers and restoring order. Before this considerable numbers of the city's inhabitants had escaped to various ships in the port. After the restoration of tranquillity and order in the city, they returned back to their homes, and among them were the wife and children of the old man I had saved and stayed with during my first night in this town. The following evening the old man, and owner of the house where I had been officially billeted, Don Juan-Pedro Paganino, invited me for a good dinner. Talk at the table was restricted to recounting tales of yesterday's robbery, the host mentioning that he had been visited seven times by various gangs of soldiers, and each time they had demanded money or other valuables. He then added that "It was precisely when I was most in danger of losing my life that this (pointing at me) saviour came to my rescue and saved a life so dear to you, too." The tears of the wife and the children, stemming from the delight they felt, was already sufficient enough reward for me, but at the end of the dinner, a porcelain plate covered with a white cloth was placed on the table. The host, with great modesty, asked me to accept it. Thinking that the plate was covered in order to keep some baked chestnuts warm, I accepted, but my astonishment was considerable when I lifted the cloth and saw not chestnuts but a plate full of gold pieces. I pushed it away to the centre of the table without showing the slightest concern, and began to carefully explain his error. I made it clear that doing my duty was not to be rewarded with gold and that perhaps he had been told tales about Polish people, and had thought to buy my attention. Astonished and embarrassed, and after begging thousand times for forgiveness, he told me that he had been told to deal this way with the French. All disagreements were put to bed by the drinking of a bottle of 60-year-old Málaga wine, our friendship strengthened and my resentment forgotten.

The city of Malaga is ideal for commercial purposes. The harbour and the fishing port are impressive, the population stands at over 36,000, there are 25 churches and the wonderful cathedral is the jewel of the city. The Mediterranean is so calm in these parts that the smallest boat can sail here at all times unless during a storm. The inhabitants of this region are lively, cheerful, and due to the fact that here live representatives from many different nations, they are more enlightened than the others. The small theatre is nice, and tastefully decorated; the players are good, and the dancers are so perfect that if they cared to visit foreign countries and so develop

their taste then they might become the leading dancers in Europe. On some heights on the Granada side of the city stands a well-fortified castle, although the Spaniards did not defend it at our entrance to Malaga. The castle had been built and dubbed Gibraltaro during the reign of the Moors. The terrain around the fortress was covered with vineyards and lime, orange and lemon groves.

Lieutenant Colonel [Maciej] Wierzbiński, who had been summoned to Poland, transferred command of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment to Lieutenant Colonel [Cyprian] Zdzitowiecki. He was proud to command this unit until Colonel [Tadeusz] Woliński arrived from Poland and was imposed upon us. The new arrival took command of the regiment, and tried his best to get rid of Colonel Zdzitowiecki, since he, falsely, considered him to be his enemy. He eventually succeeded and Colonel Zdzitowiecki, the only officer we really cared for, was sent to France, taking over command of the Polish depot at Bordeaux.

Throughout the 18 months of service we spent in Málaga, we were sent out on various military expeditions, but always returning to Málaga. These operations cost us the following officers from our division:

From the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment - Lieutenant Gizler killed in Velez-Málaga.  
Lieutenant Kraśnik killed at Gaucin.

From the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment - Lieutenant Madaliński killed in the mountains of Ronda.

From the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment - Major Jasiński and Lieutenant Larose, both killed at Utrera.  
Captain Górski and Lieutenant Kamiński killed in the mountains of Ronda.

Confirmation of my appointment to the rank of captain arrived from Warsaw on 10 November. My host complimented me on account of this promotion, although he had always been most attentive from the very beginning of my arrival here and each time I was desirous of buying something the sellers answered simply: "Toma usted si lo gusta, es pagado" (please accept if you like, because it has been paid for already).

The governor of Málaga Province, the commander of the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Colonel Sułkowski, had been ordered to return to Poland and he had been replaced by Colonel [Jean-Baptiste] Berton of the staff. A little later he was informed that a commander of guerrillas, a certain Valdivia, had severed all communication with our commander-in-chief Marshal Soult, and that no courier could reach us from Seville, where the marshal was stationed. In this situation, Colonel Berton gathered all the troops from the city and the province of Málaga and quickly set out against the enemy. After a few small skirmishes, we took the city of Ronda, the main nest of brigands, from which the guerrillas ran away, hiding in the most inaccessible mountains. Valdivia himself, with his cavalry mounted on mules, knew that Málaga had been stripped of French forces and so marched day and night and finally reoccupied the city, exacting great contributions and taking hostages, mostly the wives of prominent city officials.

As soon as General Sébastiani heard that a band of brigands had taken the city of Málaga, he immediately sent several cavalry regiments there and advised us to return to Malaga as soon as possible. The French cavalry entered the city and cut

down a large number of armed guerrillas and forced their commander Valdivia to flee. The hostages were released, and, on our return to the city, came the restoration of calm and safety, with balls and other social gatherings recommencing.

At this time, Captain [Franciszek] Młokosiewicz of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment with one hundred and fifty men, received orders to seize and defend, if necessary, the Spanish fortress of Fuengirola. This small castle lies between Málaga and Gibraltar on the Mediterranean coast, 8 miles distant from Málaga. The English had learned that only a small number of Polish soldiers occupied this position, and that under this fortress could prove useful to smuggle supplies into the country. They therefore despatched General [Andrew] Blayney with four thousand troops and six cannon (besides Spanish brigands) to attack and seize Fuengirola. At dawn on 14 October 1810 they bombarded this fortress from the sea and from the shore and several times summoned Captain Młokosiewicz to surrender. The brave captain repeatedly rejected such proposals and barred access to the castle. At sunset, when the dark night prevented the mounting of an assault, and when the shooting fell silent, the English fell into a deep sleep by the shore.

Lieutenant Eustachy Chełmicki of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment had with his tiny detachment been positioned at an observation post in the town of Mijas about a mile away from Fuengirola. In order to find out whether the castle has been taken, especially as he had not heard any shots that night, and wishing, if at all possible, to come to the assistance of Captain Młokosiewicz, he determined to advance. Sending a report to the governor of Malaga, he then took his men along the stony and narrow path, across which the water from the mountains flowed into the valley below, in order to get as close as possible to the fortress. In the darkness of night he passed through the midst of the sleeping English troops and then stood beneath the walls of Fuengirola. His detachment of 60 brave soldiers united with Młokosiewicz's garrison before dawn. The following day, namely 15 October, this brave lieutenant, leading 90 volunteers with fixed bayonets, attacked a British battery of six guns and a formidable battalion under the command of Lord Blayney himself. With his natural courage he attacked the battery and seized it and a young sergeant, [Józef] Zakrzewski, along with a few soldiers, quickly turned the enemy guns around and opened fire killing the enemy with their own shot. In addition, the one of our regiment's battalion commanders, Ignacy Bronisz, came up from his position in the town of Alhaurin to Mijas, and saw that the troops of Młokosiewicz and Chełmicki were in grave danger. He immediately advanced with 200 soldiers from the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Duchy of Warsaw and 80 French dragoons from the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment and came to the support of the troops of Captain Młokosiewicz and Lieutenant Chełmicki. Together they contributed much to complete victory on that day.

In addition to the many dead, wounded and drowned Englishmen, the brave Poles took General Lord Blayney and a dozen or so officers prisoner, as well as over 400 soldiers and six guns.

The following Polish officers were rewarded: Major Bronisz, Captain Młokosiewicz, lieutenants [Wojciech] Osiecki and [Fryderyk] Petit, decorated with the cross of the Legion of Honour. Lieutenant Chełmicki, who was wounded but who had shown great bravery in the battle, was promoted to the rank of captain and received the cross of the Legion of Honour, too.

As mentioned before, we returned to Malaga from our expedition among the mountains of Gibraltar [Serrania de Ronda]. One day, being on duty, I had to go with one sapper to the regimental barracks after midnight when we were assaulted by eight brigands coming out of an alleyway. The sapper took his axe, I took my pistol, but seeing the armed men boldly rushing at us I resolved to alert our guard, and fired a shot which would be heard in the barracks. As my soldiers issued out, the bandits began to run away and scattered down various streets. Only one of them however was seen by my sergeant, and he, armed with a bayonet, caught the man alive. I had him taken to the barracks and from there under strong escort he was sent to the local authorities. The first Alcalde [Mayor of the City], having interrogated him on where he was from and what band he belonged to, then complied with the government laws which stated that any bandit caught with weapons in his hands should be punished immediately.

With each expedition, I saw the war conducted from two particular points of view. Firstly, whilst the soldiers fought with ardour, seeking nothing but glory, those who supplied us, the quartermasters, commissaries and those extracting requisitions put pressure on the administrative officers to impose contributions on innocent citizens. Then there was a party on the other side who sought to stir the minds of the quiet Spaniards in order to lead them to extremism, to send their wives and children to inaccessible places, and place themselves, armed, among the rocks and remote pathways, where they spilled our blood for the crimes of those disobedient and evil criminals.

The Spanish General [Francisco] Ballesteros, having collected up to 6,000 regular troops and a large number of insurgents and partisans, seized the city of Ronda and its surroundings, thus endangering the entire province of Málaga. In response, Marshal Soult sent a division under General [Nicolas] Godinot from Seville, and ordered our 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment to leave Málaga, and to march along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in order to attack the enemy near the town of Marbella. As the inhabitants of Málaga learned that we would be quitting the garrison for good, we were warmly sent on our way and bid farewell with fraternal tears. My departure from the home and family of Don Juan Paganino was most touching; when I mounted my horse he blessed my future with his arms folded like a dead man.

The 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Polish Regiments now replaced us in the garrison of the city of Granada and its environs.

After two days of marching we arrived in the city of Marbella, where we joined with the 32<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of Light Infantry and proceeded marching to the town of Jimenes de la Frontera, the enemy pulling back to Gibraltar. We were to meet with the division sent from Seville at a point some four miles from Gibraltar, but either due to the difficulties encountered on their march, or to the sluggishness of their troops, they did not arrive on the specified day. The local population abandoned their houses and took shelter behind Ballesteros. We passed the night without being disturbed, but before dawn, unable to wait any longer, we determined to march towards Gibraltar. No soon had our columns left the town, than the Spaniards immediately attacked us and tried to surround our flank. As heavy firing commenced, the French general commanding our brigade ordered Lieutenant Colonel Woliński to attack the enemy's

centre with our regiment and thus pave our way through to the mountains. Only to the perseverance of our veteran soldiers allowed us to break the Spanish position and take the first thorny hill. We made our way through this dense brushwood, a place where humans had never previously set foot, warmly pursued by the Spaniards. But they paid in blood for every position. When they attacked Captain Zdziennicki's company, Colonel Woliński, who had grown rather confused, led forward in support a small number of voltigeurs commanded by Captain [Bonifacy] Radzimiński, against an enemy six times more numerous, and by this unnecessary act of courage, Radzimiński lost his life and he himself was taken prisoner. Finally, after a treacherous march along remote paths, guided by Spanish prisoners of war, we reached the main road to Jerez de la Frontera and that morning entered the town of Arcos [de la Frontera] where we met a French garrison. During this skirmish we lost Captain Radzimiński, several wounded Polish and French officers and more than 200 soldiers [at Ximena de la Frontera; 25 September 1811].

The city of Arcos lies on a very high mountain, at the bottom of which flows the river Gvadalete. From there we marched to the city of Medina-Sidonia, where we finally joined with the much anticipated French division. After only a few days of rest and enjoying the rare sight of a beautiful landscape, we were ordered to return towards fortress of Gibraltar, and there learnt that General Ballesteros had withdrawn into that place, being afraid to fight us on the plains. After another difficult and tiring march we occupied the city of San-Roque two hours' distant from Gibraltar. Our vanguard, along with the light cavalry, climbed a hill, called Morelia, which was nearest to the fortress, whilst the main body was drawn up in a field called the Campo de Gibraltar.

The Spanish general had retreated with his corps to the gates of the fortress, but the English had forbidden him to enter. Their batteries however protected his troops, and attacking them therefore appeared to be entirely impossible. From the hill of Morelia we could see not only the world's most prominent fortress, but also the African city of Ceuta, across the straits. Gibraltar is located on Spanish soil, but was taken by the English in the year 1783, and until now remains in their power.

It proved impossible to lure General Ballesteros out of the fortress, moreover, when the lack of food began to be acutely felt, after staying here for 10 days, we began our retreat to the cities of Arcos, Medina-Sidonia and Utrera, finally reaching the great city of Seville. General Godinot reported to Marshal Soult's headquarters in order to present details of the expedition. The Marshal was already aware that the expedition had been unsuccessful, and that it was the fault of the sickly general. He began to berate him, telling him that he would report him to his monarch, blaming him entirely for the loss of so many people. Godinot returned to his quarters, wrote his will, took a firearm from his sentry and blew his brains out.

We were allowed to rest here for seven days, during which time I tried to visit this the greatest city of all Spain. In the eyes of the Spanish it was deemed the most beautiful, the best, the richest city as they say: "Whomever God loves, he lets him dwell in Seville, and whoever has not seen this city, he can not say anything of the beauty of other cities." Their pride is inflated in this respect, because although Seville is a city of great beauty and greatness, it has narrow and winding streets, which make it much crowded and deformed.

The population of the city now numbers up to 150,000. The river Guadalquivir, in which it is claimed that silver and even gold nuggets can be found, flows through the centre of the city. The stone bridge on this river is sturdy and tastefully built. The largest and most beautiful suburb is called Trajana. Amongst many churches, there is also a cathedral, which is famous from its ancient and wonderful architecture and its huge size. It is 240 feet long and 150 wide, with nine gates leading to it, 80 stained glass windows and 82 beautifully adorned altars, costing millions of reales. Murillo's painting of St. Anthony of Padua, is more than beautiful. The priests here told me that in the course of six hours, up to five hundred masses were being celebrated.

On the highest tower of the cathedral, in a place where a cross usually stands, there is a statue representing the Faith. It holds a palm branch in one hand and a flag in the other. It is called Giralda and it indicates direction of the wind, too. After the basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, the cathedral of Seville is the largest of all Christian churches in the world.

The great promenade, named Almeida, is adorned with two statues; Hercules and Julius Caesar, who was a great rebuildier of this city. Besides, three beautiful fountains decorate this public walkway. Seville was built by the Phoenicians and they called it Hispalis. I saw here an aqueduct named Los Canos de Carmona, six leagues long and built under the reign of the Moors. Owing to frequent and long wars, lack of income in the treasury, it is however not kept in order.

Of the 150,000 inhabitants of Seville, at least 30,000 are priests, who, in addition to frequent church services, continue to walk along all the streets to meet people and greet them with the words: "Ave Maria!" The answer for that should be: "Purissima sin pecado!" (most pure without sin).

Our regiment finally received orders to march in order to escort the considerable number of ammunition trains being sent up to the frontier fortress of Badajoz.

I thought that in the province of Andalusia, especially around the cities of Seville, Cordoba and Malaga, the architectural style of the houses differed from the other regions, largely because one can still perceive a Moorish taste. The public roads, which were laid out not so very long ago, are fine and bring honour to this province. However, once having left the main road, the smaller roads appear to have lots of holes, missing stones and are very narrow, which shows that no carts or carriages make use of them. This province possesses, in addition to all the needs for life and clothing, wonderful horses with such smooth coats so that it seems as if they were covered with the finest velvet. Moreover, they have the liveliness of the Arab and the unequivocal skill of knowing the voice of their master. The Spanish, however, take all journeys on donkeys, for the following reasons: first, that animal only slightly bends its knee when it walks, which means they do not shake their rider; secondly, they are more resistant to hardship and heavy burdens and live on a moderate amount of food, for a handful of barley straw may suffice for the daily ration of this diligent animal. Ladies travel on them too, and sit sideways on a special saddle, which has a comfortable seat and a parasol to protect them from sunburn. These caravans are ridiculous, but very comfortable. Not many people here travel for pleasure, rarely venturing abroad, and not even visiting their own provinces, for they only travel when their monarch call them to the capital.

We were glad to be transporting ammunition through the Province of Extremadura. After arriving at the village of Albuera, we examined the position of Marshal Soult who had defeated the Spanish [Allied] army under the command of General Lord Beresford, Castaños, Ballesteros and Blake there. In that battle the Polish 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Lancers revealed their martial skill and prowess. After a further four hours' march we arrived at the fortress of Badajoz. This fortress is located near the river Guadiana, on the very border of the Portuguese kingdom. Here we began a most tedious garrison service that wore our soldiers out and caused some to die. Lack of food was such that the officers were only issued a soldier's ration daily. After spending two months on this rigorous service, during which we were sent on frequent forays to Portugal in order to search for food, a courier arrived from Seville with orders for us to leave this garrison and move to the city of Zafra. He also gave us the most fortunate news that we were destined to march to our mother country. With such haste we went to say goodbye to general [Armand] Philippon, the governor of the fortress, and how fast the regiment was ready to march. Only someone who, like us, had quit his native land, could believe it. After receiving this order, we were drawn up, ready, behind the fortress ramparts in just two hours. The wounded and the sick absconded from the hospital and joined us in order to see our homeland again.

Thus, in such a way we terminated four years of bloody battles and unbearable travail in a country where every trace of armed Poles would now disappear, except few Polish prisoners left in captivity.

The Polish proverb "cold, hungry and far from home" aptly fitted our departure from Badajoz. We had gone six miles and could not find any food in this province. At last we reached Zafra. Fortunately there, in charge of French garrison, was the Polish General Ludwik Mateusz Dembowski who as soon as we arrived brought food to the hungry soldiers, and then invited the entire corps of officers for dinner as his compatriots. We remained here for 30 days, when General Dembowski got an order to dispatch us as quickly as possible to Madrid. On announcing this order, he told us that he had clearly been informed that all the Polish regiments in Spain would return to their homeland, and that he would have been the happiest man alive if he could have come with us to our native land. In a few months time, we learned that his desire could have been fulfilled, since he evidently received an order to go to Poland, but his destiny decreed otherwise. In the city of Burgos, so close to the French border, he fell out with the commander of that city and then a duel ended his life.

We now marched quickly through various towns and arrived at the city of Jerez. Its surroundings are famous for the wine of that name, the colour of which is so white that the wine cannot be distinguished from water. After several further days of marching through La Mancha, we arrived in Madrid. In this capital we were given a thousand prisoners who were to be escorted to France. Behind us came the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Colonel [Michał] Cichocki, followed by the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Colonel [Paweł] Tremo.

After a difficult and hungry march through Castille and Navarre, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Regiments happily arrived in France. The 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment was near the French border in the passes of the Pyrenees and close to the Salinas village, when [on 9 April 1812] it was attacked by the insurgents of general [Francisco] Mina. A quick assault and

shooting from all sides by the superior number of Spanish troops forced the 7<sup>th</sup> to retreat to a small blockhouse from which the French kept watch on the road. Then they had formed regular columns fixed bayonets and charged the ravines occupied by the guerrillas, in spite of considerable losses. In addition to the Spanish prisoners liberated by General Mina, two Polish officers were killed: Lieutenants [Wincenty] Sztabowski and [Franciszek] Dembowski. A few other officers were taken captive, and altogether the Poles lost 136 non-commissioned officers and soldiers in this action.

In Bayonne the Spanish prisoners were taken from us and we raced through Bordeaux to the city of Sedan. There at last came the reunification of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Regiments with the units of artillery and sappers, all under the command of General [Jean-Baptiste] Girard. After marching through various French cities, then German, at the beginning of June 1812 we entered the city of Mainz on the Rhine River and going further almost without rest, we finally reached Berlin. At that time, the Marshal of France, [Claude] Victor, duc de Bellune, was commander of the IX Corps of the Grand Army, and our division was incorporated into that corps [for the campaign in Russia].