

Translated by Greg Gorsuch
Part 12

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

OF THE

PENINSULA WAR,

FROM 1807 TO 1814,

SERVING AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE JOURNALS OF THE SIEGES MADE
OR SUSTAINED BY THE FRENCH IN THIS WAR.

CAMPAIGN OF 1812

I

This campaign did not begin under favorable auspices. Lord Wellington found himself at the head of a large and seasoned army; and, after his successes in Portugal, one would expect to see him take the offensive in Spain, where the stubborn efforts of the inhabitants were beginning to tire the impetuous ardor of the French soldiers. The state of the Peninsula required reinforcements; but Russia was arming secretly, and Napoleon, accustomed to victory, believed he could sustain two wars at once at opposite ends of Europe. He believed, it is true, since Blake had been captured in Valencia with his army, that Spain, now only a few bands, would soon be pacified. King Joseph even hoped to be able to come to an agreement with the Cortes assembled at Cadiz, which appeared to have a great desire to throw off the yoke of the English. Indeed, when he proposed to them that they accept, with a few slight modifications, the very liberal constitution they had decreed, they sent commissioners to Madrid to negotiate. But the events that occurred, and the supremacy the English achieved through their victories, soon caused all negotiations to break off.

Lord Wellington had only created a diversion on the Guadiana to draw attention from an attack he was planning against Ciudad-Rodrigo. He had noticed that this place was abandoned to itself with a weak garrison; he was aware of the very widespread dispersion of Marmont's army, which had not counted on a Winter campaign, and he had been informed of General Montbrun's expedition to Alicante, and of the departure of part of the troops of the Army of the North for Navarre and Biscay. Taking advantage of all these favorable circumstances, he put his troops in motion on 4 January and appeared on the 7th in sight of Ciudad-Rodrigo. As he had made all his siege preparations in advance and in the greatest secrecy, he began his operations against this place on the 8th. (*See the account of the defense, Volume IV.*) Ciudad-Rodrigo was taken by assault during the night of January 19th to 20th, after twelve days of open trenches. The garrison, pursued from house to house, retreated to the cathedral and was taken prisoner. The enemy lost 1,500 men in this siege, more than half of them on the night of the assault.

Marshal Marmont had arrived at Valladolid on January 13th with a division to take command of the troops from General Dorsenne, who, according to the new organization ordered by the Emperor, were to form part of the Army of Portugal, and to support this general in escorting a convoy destined for Ciudad-Rodrigo, whose garrison was also to be relieved. It was not until the evening of the 15th that he learned that the English were besieging this place. The troops at his disposal, including those of General Dorsenne, totaled twenty-two thousand men. These forces becoming insufficient against the entire army of Lord Wellington, he called upon the division of Brenier, which had remained in the Tagus valley, and ordered General Bonet to evacuate Asturias to join him. For his part, General Dorsenne forced a division of the Guard's tirailleurs, which was still in Valladolid, back by forced marches. All these troops were to form an army of forty thousand men; but they could not be assembled until February 1st, and as early as January 23rd, Marmont learned of the fall of Ciudad-Rodrigo. Wanting to ascertain whether the English were marching against him, he detached a strong reconnaissance force to Tamames; but Lord Wellington, always very cautious, had already resumed his former positions at Fuenteguinaldo, temporarily leaving a division at Ciudad-Rodrigo to put the place in a state of defense. The Emperor, angered by the loss of Ciudad Rodrigo, blamed both Marshal Marmont and General Dorsenne¹.

Marshal Marmont had no doubt that Lord Wellington intended to soon head for Badajoz, and consequently, he prepared to move towards the Tagus. He even ordered General Montbrun, returning to Toledo from his expedition to Alicante, to stop at Talavera, and formed a corps of three divisions, which he placed under the command of General Foy to march immediately to the aid of the Army of the South. But soon after, an order from the Emperor instructed him to gather all his forces at Salamanca to create a diversion into Portugal via the Beira River². Marshal Soult also received orders to reinforce General Drouet's corps, which was on the Guadiana River³. Marmont, foreseeing the futility of a movement through the Beira, protested against the order he had been given⁴; but forced to obey, although later blamed for this very act⁵, he withdrew all his troops from the Tagus Valley, minus Foy's division, which remained at Talavera to scout the right bank of the river and protect the Almaraz bridge, while waiting for the central army to direct a division in that direction. General Bonet, who had already arrived at Valladolid, had to return to Asturias to prevent the enemy from spreading along the coast into the rear of the French armies.

Lord Wellington, having nothing more to fear from the Army of Portugal, which had allowed its siege equipment to be taken from Ciudad-Rodrigo, and which, finding itself without support and without stores, was unable to undertake anything serious in Portugal, decided to move with all his forces into the Alentejo against the Army of the South: acting thus, as in the preceding campaigns, sometimes against one and sometimes against the other of the two French armies which opposed it. He surrendered Ciudad Rodrigo to the Spaniards; and, leaving only an infantry division and a cavalry brigade under observation on the Águeda, he set out with the mass of his troops. He crossed the Tagus on 9 March at Villa Velha; and, on the 11th, he

¹ See supporting documents, nos. 87, 88, and 89.

² See supporting documents, nos. 90 and 91.

³ See supporting documents, no. 92.

⁴ See supporting documents, no. 93.

⁵ See supporting documents, nos. 94 and 95.

established his headquarters at Elvas, where he had already secretly made all his siege preparations. He left on 16 March with forty-five thousand men and arrived the same day to invest Badajoz. The siege began immediately afterward. (*See the account of the defense, Volume IV.*) General Graham went to observe Santa Martha with three infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades, while General Hill occupied Mérida with two infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades.

Badajoz was taken by escalade during the night of 6-7 April, after a twenty-one-day siege. General Philippon, the Governor, managed to withdraw with about fifty men and a portion of his staff to Fort San Cristobal, beyond the Guadiana Bridge, where he capitulated the next day. The English lost more than five thousand men killed or wounded in this siege, including three thousand six hundred on the night of the assault alone. The garrison, five thousand strong, had thirteen hundred men disabled.

Marshal Soult had set out from Seville on March 31st with his reserves to reinforce the Fifth Corps, which had taken up positions at Fuenteovejuna and Belalcázar. He emerged via Guadalcanal, drove back the enemy, and occupied Fuente del Maestro and Villabé on the Guadaira River on April 7th. He was on the march the next day to advance on Santa Martha when he learned from some cavalymen who had escaped from Badajoz that the fortress had just fallen. Too weak to risk a battle, no longer having any hope of being rescued by the three divisions of the Army of Portugal that Marshal Marmont had informed him of in February, and worried about the movements the Spanish were already making in Andalusia, he retraced his steps and returned to Seville. The Fifth Corps remained on Guadalcanal to defend the Sierra Morena passes.

Marshal Marmont, having gathered with great difficulty fifteen days' worth of supplies, left Salamanca on April 1st and moved on to Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, which he had invested. He then advanced into Portugal as far as Castelo Branco, which he occupied on the 12th, after driving out the enemy, who burned immense stores there. His plan was to destroy the fine pontoon bridge the English had across the Tagus at Villa Velha, or, depending on circumstances, to break out from there to cooperate in the liberation of Badajoz, by threatening Lord Wellington's line of retreat. Had this movement been coordinated with Marshal Soult, it would have been very wise; but isolated, it would have produced nothing. On hearing that Badajoz had fallen, and that his adversary was returning to the Tagus, Marmont moved closer to his depots on the Tormes, so as not to expose his army to perishing, or to being dispersed for lack of food.

Lord Wellington, by taking Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz, was in a position to take the offensive with advantage in Spain, either to the north or to the south. To better ensure the success of his operations, he also wanted to cut the communication that Marshals Soult and Marmont maintained by means of the pontoon bridge established on the Tagus at Almaraz. General Hill, who was at Almendralejo, was charged with this operation. He set out on 12 May with fifteen thousand men, sixteen guns, ladders and provisions. The Almaraz bridge was covered on the left bank by the Lugar Nuevo bridgehead, a bastioned square, surrounded by a crenellated wall four feet thick, where a large munitions depot had been formed. In front of this redoubt, and to protect it from a dangerous command, was Fort Napoleon, a kind of semicircular earthen redoubt, capable of accommodating a garrison of 450 men, and protected at the gorge by a

square redoubt enclosing a masonry tower. Even further forward, and a league away from the Tagus, Fort Miravete had been built on the mountain bordering the left bank of the river, in the gorges crossed by the Trujillo road, the only practicable passage for artillery. Finally, on the right bank of the Tagus, the bridge was covered by a lunette, and by Fort Ragusa, built on a hillock 100 meters from the river. All these works were armed with eighteen cannons and guarded by a battalion of the Fourth Foreign Regiment, three companies of the Sixth- and Thirty-ninth-Line Regiments, a company of sappers, and about twenty gunners.

The enemy appeared on May 18th on the mountain of Miravete and succeeded in surrounding the fort located there by climbing the rocks of Manaderos. It descended during the night towards the river with a column of infantry; and, at daybreak, two thousand men scaled Fort Napoleon, and seized the work, the redoubt and the tower. The soldiers of the foreign battalion, who were guarding the bridgehead of Lugar-Nuevo, fled even before being attacked; and, in the general terror, the commander of the fort of Ragusa, by a signal act of cowardice, withdrew with his troop to Naval-Moral. General Hill had the bridge and the munitions burned and returned to Badajoz. On hearing of this event, General Foy, who was at Talavera with his division, went to Almaraz; but the bridge and the munitions depot no longer existed and the enemy had disappeared.

In Biscay and Navarre, the bands made renewed efforts to intercept communications⁶ and seize grain and livestock. General Dorsenne left Burgos on 12 March and went to Pamplona to pursue Mina. The famine was causing such havoc throughout Spain that there was even a shortage of grain to sow the land. The commanders-in-chief who commanded in Andalusia, La Mancha, Catalonia, and Old Castile wrote to the Major General to order wheat from France.

In the Kingdom of Valencia, Marshal Suchet had taken his troops beyond the Júcar. On 19 January, Habert's division captured Dénia without a fight, a small maritime town protected by a fort in fairly good condition, where sixty-six guns were found. The division of Harispe and the cavalry brigade of General Delort were tasked with observing the Spanish army of Murcia. They occupied Alcoy, Castella, the small fort of Ibi, and carried out reconnaissance under the walls of Alicante. The capture of this town and Cartagena would have placed in our hands the last two points where the war was being fueled in this part of Spain and would have allowed Marshal Suchet to link up with the Fourth Corps, which had a column at Lorca; but yellow fever was wreaking havoc in Murcia. Unable to advance without danger, Marshal Suchet remained on the defensive. The town of Saint-Philippe was fortified, and a pontoon bridge, covered by fortifications, was built near Almería on the Júcar. Since the small town of Peniscola still hindered communications in the rear, Marshal Suchet detached General Severoli with five battalions to capture it. (*See the account of this siege, Volume IV.*)

In Catalonia, General Lacy had replaced the Marquis of Campoverde in command of the Spanish army. Around the middle of January, hoping to create a diversion in favor of Valencia, he advanced against Tarragona with twelve thousand Catalans, at the same time as two English ships approached the city to bombard it. General Maurice Mathieu, Governor of Barcelona, having been reinforced by the division of Lamarque, went to the aid of the town with eight thousand men and camped at Villafranca on 22 January. As he approached, General Lacy took

⁶ See supporting documents, no. 96.

up position on the heights of Altafulla. General Maurice Mathieu attacked him on the 24th, forcing him to withdraw with a loss of two thousand men, killed, wounded, or prisoners, and that of his entire artillery. The garrison of Tarragona, which simultaneously sortied, advanced as far as Reus, where it seized the enemy's stores. General Reille had also been detached from Valencia with his division and that of General Severoli to relieve Tarragona; but the enemy had already withdrawn when he appeared in sight of this place. He remained responsible for covering Lower Catalonia.

During General Maurice Mathieu's expedition, General Decaen created a diversion at Olot in Upper Catalonia against the Spanish bands commanded by Sarsfield. His troops then took up positions on the seashore, to cut off all communication between the insurgents and the English. General Quesnel occupied Puigcerdà with a division, to be master of the high valleys of Catalonia, where the bands had until then found an impenetrable refuge.

By Imperial decree, Catalonia was reunited with the French Empire and divided into four prefectures, under the direction of the Intendants Chauvelin and Gérando, State Councilors⁷. Major works were undertaken there to facilitate the movements of the armies and the communications of Barcelona with France. Since the beginning of the war, the great road known as the Marine Road, which runs along the coast to the area around Girona, had been cut by the enemy, and the fire of the English ships prevented its repair; a new one was built, out of cannon range, from Montgat to Calella, over a length of ten leagues. A road was also opened from Figueres to Olot, to bypass the defiles of Castellfollit, so famous since the War of Succession. Two other roads were opened from Palamós to Girona, and a third was begun from the latter place to Figueres via Pals, across the often submerged plain that lies between the Grand Canal and the Ter. New fortified posts were established to guard communications, including the Capuchin convent, which, located on a hill in Mataró, was twice besieged by the Spanish troops of Lacy and Milans, reinforced by the English, who landed heavy artillery. The Catalans' exasperation was at its peak, and they employed every means to sate their revenge. In Barcelona and Hostalrich, they poisoned the flour and wheat intended for our soldiers, as well as the fountains and cisterns where we drew water; in Lleida, they succeeded in blowing up the town's powder magazine.

⁷ See supporting documents, no. 97.

No. 87.

*Letter from Marshal Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, to Prince
Berthier, Major General.*

Valladolid, 6 February 1812.

Monseigneur,

I have received the letter that Your Highness did me the honor of writing on 23 January. The one I addressed to him on 13 January responds to the reproaches leveled at me, and will, I hope, vindicate me in the mind of His Majesty. If my movement on Valencia was not as prompt as it could have been, the fault is certainly not mine. I did not give any counter orders nor hesitate in the dispositions to be taken; and, if I was later forced to send other troops to General Montbrun, there was no other cause than the failure to execute the dispositions concerning the Army of the Center. On 13 December, I received the order to move; on the 15th, General Montbrun made his dispositions; on the 17th, he was on the march with seven thousand men and six cannons; on the 22nd, he was at Tarancón. Your Majesty's letter of 21 November, of which I am returning a duplicate, states formally and verbatim that the Emperor's intention was for a corps of twelve thousand men, composed of troops from the Army of Portugal and the Army of the Center, to march on Valencia. General Montbrun's duty was therefore to wait at Tarancón for the troops that the Army of the Center was to provide him, and which were still behind. Five or six days were lost, because no dispositions had been made for the Army of the Center, whose entire troops were reduced to almost nothing. I then received the official news that General D'Armagnac had orders from the King not to march, and not to join the column that I had detached. In order for General Montbrun to have twelve thousand men, it was therefore necessary, in accordance with the Emperor's intention, to send him other troops from the Army of Portugal. Then, General Montbrun's orders were to march on Requena if it was practicable; but he became certain that it was impossible to march with vehicles, either by the Cuenca road or by that of Tarazona, and that there was obstacle upon obstacle by these communications, not to mention the total lack of provisions for men and horses. If he had taken one of these communications, he would not have been able to have with him either a cartridge or a cannon; and he headed via Albacete, the only route left to him. I have therefore nothing to reproach myself for. I did everything in my power to carry out the Emperor's orders; and I confess that I am deeply distressed to see that the Emperor supposes that anything in the world can balance in my mind the interests of his service. I believed myself to be the last man who could be the object of such an accusation.

I had the honor of informing you that Lord Wellington had made a detachment on the left bank of the Tagus, and that everything seemed to indicate that he intended to lay siege to Badajoz. The necessity of putting myself in a position to go to the relief of this place made me stop the two divisions commanded by General Montbrun in the valley of the Tagus, so that today there are three divisions beyond the mountains. One division, which is in the province of Avila, occupies all the important debouchments, and links the troops of the valley of the Tagus with those which are on this side of the mountains. Finally, four divisions guard the frontier at the same time, the line of the Tormes, that of the Esla and of the Órbigo, making the communication

from Burgos to Madrid, providing the forces necessary to levy contributions in the interior of the country, and to build stores. These four divisions are indispensable in this expanse of country. By assembling promptly on the Douro, they would present a respectable force in the event that the four English divisions, which remained on the Côa, made a movement on Salamanca, to create a diversion in favor of the siege of Badajoz, which I suppose must be undertaken. I must also foresee the case where the whole English army would assemble promptly on the Côa, and march on the Tormes, without my having been warned of its assembly; something which could well happen, because I am not placed in a way to be well informed of its movements. Having then to experience a lot of difficulty in rallying my left, whose arrival in the current position will always be slow and difficult, I had decided to suspend the reoccupation of Asturias until the return of one of the three divisions which are on the Tagus. However powerful the motives for leaving these three divisions in this position for some time longer, I find myself forced to recall one to replace the one that will, in accordance with the Emperor's orders, be given up to the Army of the North. I will not even be able to reoccupy Asturias until circumstances allow me to dispose of one of the two divisions that remain in the Tagus Valley. The division I have designated is that of General Bonet, which, occupying the province of Leon, is more likely than any other to be given up to Burgos; I will make every effort to accelerate its movement.

I have no troops from the Army of the North, and everything that belongs to it has already been sent, with the exception of the Thirty-first Regiment of Horse Chasseurs, which is marching: I never allow myself to retain troops that are not intended for me.

Your Highness informs me that, according to the new arrangements made, the Army of the North would be able to support me with two divisions, if the enemy marched against me. I doubt that His Majesty's intentions will be fulfilled in this regard, and I do not count on it at all. I believe I am justified in fearing that the troops that will be sent will be long in coming, and will be reduced to a small number. Apart from the delays that inevitably arise from a concerted operation, it takes so much time here to carry orders and assemble troops, that I doubt that they can be of much help for the essential moment. If His Majesty wants me to have new forces at my disposal in a given case, it would be necessary for them to be at my command, and for me to know where to get them; because, if you calculate the current number of my troops, and the territory that I cannot avoid occupying, and which was formerly the responsibility of the Army of the North, I am much weaker than before.

I have the honor to be, etc.

Signed: MARSHAL DUKE OF RAGUSA.

No. 88.

*Letter from Prince Berthier, Major General, to General
Count Dorsenne, Commander of the Army of the North.*

Paris, 11 February 1812.

The division of Caffarelli must have arrived in Navarre; the Guard must have returned to Burgos. The Emperor needs his Guard. It is therefore essential that the Guard horse be dismissed without delay; that the initial orders given, both for the Fourth Infantry Regiment and for the two thousand men, be carried out, and that the rest of the Guard also prepare to return.

The Emperor was very displeased with your negligence in the affairs of Ciudad Rodrigo. How could you not have news of that place twice a week? What were you doing with the fine Souham Division? It is a singular way of waging war, and His Majesty will not allow me to conceal from you that the shame of the event falls upon you. It would fall upon General Thiébault, if that general could not claim that he had no forces, while the Souham Division, fully available, was doing nothing. This humiliating failure can only be attributed to your lack of preparedness and the lack of action you have taken.

Signed: ALEXANDRE.

No. 89.

*Letter from General Count Dorsenne, Commander of the Army
of the North, to Prince Berthier, Major General.*

Burgos, 23 February 1812.

Monseigneur,

If Your Highness, before writing me your letter of February 11th, had deigned to have my reports of February 15th, 16th, and 23rd presented to you, you would have seen that I am wrongly blamed for the Rodrigo affairs. I had not asked General Barrié to give me news of him twice a week, but every day. His letters and mine were intercepted; should I be blamed for this? I knew, and I reported to Your Highness, that the supplies would soon run out. I immediately sacrificed everything to prepare a resupply; and when the Duke of Ragusa asked me to help him in this operation, I had the satisfaction of replying that everything had already been done. His Excellency arrived in Valladolid on January 10th and immediately took command of the Souham and Bonet divisions; I was therefore unable to dispose of the former. His first aide-de-camp had been sent to Salamanca on the 7th to announce that the Marshal was taking possession of the Sixth and Seventh Governorships. He returned to him on the 14th and announced nothing new from Rodrigo. On the 15th, His Excellency learned at ten o'clock in the evening, through a note from General Thiébault, that the English were besieging this place; on the 18th, it had been taken.

Your Highness will note that no direct report was given to me on these events; it was the Duke of Ragusa who received them and communicated them to me. General Thiébault believed he was no longer under my command; I will not even point out to Your Highness that I had no one available when the Marshal asked me to assist him. Forced to return by forced marches the Fusiliers of the Guard and the tirailleurs division of Burgos, these troops were given up at Toro before the Army of Portugal could assemble, such was my diligence; but neither the Duke of Ragusa nor I should have expected that Rodrigo would only hold out for four days. Moreover, when I learned, on 21 December, of the movement of the Army of Portugal towards Valencia, I warned Your Highness and His Excellency of the misfortunes that could result; and my forebodings have been only too well realized.

All these facts cannot be denied; they are known to the army and to the Duke of Ragusa. I am strong in my conscience, and I reproach myself for nothing.

I cannot help but express to you, My Lord, how much your letter fills me with bitterness. Nor can I bear the thought of being accused in this matter, which had nothing to do with me, since the defense of Rodrigo was part of the instructions received from the Duke of Ragusa on December 13th, and, moreover, once reunited with him, *I was under his orders*, as Your Highness had instructed.

I beg you, Monseigneur, to communicate my letter to the Emperor; and if His Majesty does not change his initial thoughts about me, I earnestly request Your Highness to request my recall, for it would be impossible for me to remain in Spain with the conviction that I have not fulfilled His intentions, I who have always been His slave.

I impatiently await Your Highness's kindness, that you deign to reply to this dispatch.

I am, with the deepest respect, etc.

Signed: Count DORSENNE.

No. 90.

*Letter from Prince Berthier, Major General, to Marshal
Marmont, Duke of Ragusa.*

Paris, 11 February 1812.

The Emperor regrets, Duke, that with Souham's division and the three other divisions you had assembled, you did not return to Salamanca to see what was happening. This would have given the English much to think about, and you could have been useful at Ciudad Rodrigo.

The way to rescue the Army of the South in the position you find yourself in is to place your headquarters in Salamanca, concentrate your army there by detaching only one division to the Tagus, reoccupy Asturias, and force the enemy to remain in Almeida and in the north, through

fear of an invasion. You could even push troops against Ciudad Rodrigo if you have the necessary siege artillery (it is attached to Your Honor), take this place, or, if the lack of supplies or artillery forced you to postpone this operation until the harvest, you could at least make an incursion into Portugal and advance on the Douro and Almeida. This threat would contain the enemy.

The Army of the South is very strong; the Army of Valencia, which today has its outposts on Alicante, is clearing its left.

The position you must take must therefore be offensive from Salamanca to Almeida. As long as the English know you are gathered in force at Salamanca, they will make no move; but if you go in person to Valladolid, if your troops are sent to lose in the rear, if especially your cavalry is not ready after the rainy season, you will expose all of northern Spain to catastrophe. It is essential to reoccupy Asturias, because it takes more men to guard the edge of the plain as far as Biscay than to guard Asturias.

Since the English have divided themselves into two forces, one to the south and the other to you, they are not strong, and you must be much stronger than they are. The letter I wrote to you, which you received on 13 December, told you what you must do. Threaten the English; and if you believe you cannot retake Ciudad Rodrigo for the time being, repair the roads leading to Almeida, fortify Salamanca, gather your siege equipment, send large detachments to Ciudad Rodrigo. This will contain the English, will not tire your troops, and will have far fewer disadvantages than spreading yourself out further, as you propose. I assume that General Montbrun has arrived, and that you have finally assembled your army.

The capture of Valencia has greatly strengthened the Army of the South, and you must assume the English are fools to believe they are capable of marching on Badajoz while leaving you at Salamanca, that is, by letting you reach Lisbon before them. They will march south if, through poorly calculated measures, you detach two or three divisions to the Tagus; by doing so, you reassure them and tell them that you intend to do nothing against them, and respect the defensive position and their initiative.

I repeat: the Emperor's instructions are that you do not leave Salamanca, that you reoccupy Asturias, that your army rely on the position of Salamanca, and that you threaten the English from there.

Signed: ALEXANDRE.

No. 91.

*Letter from Prince Berthier, Major General, to Marshal
Marmont, Duke of Ragusa.*

Paris, 18 February 1812.

Monsieur le Duc, I have just placed before the Emperor your letters of 29 January, 4 and 6 February. His Majesty is not satisfied with the direction you are giving to the war; you have superiority over the enemy, and instead of taking the initiative, you continually receive it. You are moving and tiring your forces; this is not the art of war. When General Hill, with fifteen thousand men, marches against the Army of the South, it is the luckiest thing that can happen to you; this army is strong enough and well organized enough to fear nothing from the English army, even if it had assembled four or five divisions.

Today the enemy assumes that you are going to lay siege to Ciudad Rodrigo; he is approaching General Hill from his right, so that he can bring them to him with great marches and give battle to you, united, if you wish to retake Ciudad Rodrigo. It is therefore up to Marshal the Duke of Dalmatia to keep twenty thousand men on the Guadiana and prevent him from making this move, and, if Hill crosses the Tagus, to follow him, or to the Alentejo. You have received a copy of the letter that the Emperor ordered me to write to the Duke of Dalmatia on the 10th of this month, in response to his request to move troops south. It was you, Marshal, who should have written to him to ask him to move a large force to the Guadiana, to keep General Hill in the south, and prevent him from joining forces with Lord Wellington.

The capture of Ciudad Rodrigo is a setback for you, and the English know enough about French honor to understand that this success could become an affront to them, and that instead of improving their position, the occupation of Ciudad Rodrigo forces them to defend this city; and from then on, they give you control of the battlefield, since you force them to come to the aid of this place and to fight in a position so far from the sea. The result of this advantage can only be delayed until the harvest. Then you will be in a position to lay siege to Ciudad Rodrigo; the enemy will march there and will be ashamed to see you retake this place.

The movement of General Hill on the Tagus was made in the belief that, as soon as you learned of the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo, you would have gathered your troops to march quickly on this place, invest it, and take advantage of the first moment when the breach had not been repaired, and when there could still be no supplies. Having missed this opportunity, he will have everything prepared for the month of May.

The true route to Lisbon is from the north; *the enemy, having considerable stores and hospitals there, can only withdraw to this capital very slowly*; and if, in Prince Essling's attack, he withdrew quickly, it was because he had prepared for this movement; he therefore has a great interest in preventing you from penetrating into Portugal. The situation of Prince Essling before Lisbon was, for England and Portugal, a great calamity. I can only repeat the Emperor's orders to you: take up your headquarters at Salamanca; work diligently to fortify this city; put six thousand troops and six thousand peasants to work there; assemble a new siege equipage there to

serve in arming the city; assemble supplies there; have the enemy outposts firing their rifles every day; place two strong vanguards, one threatening Ciudad Rodrigo, the other Almeida; threaten the other directions on the Portuguese border; send troops to ravage some villages; and finally, employ everything that can keep the enemy on the alert. Have the road to Porto and the one to Almeida repaired; keep your army assembled near Toro, Benavente, and Salamanca. The province of Avila even has good stretches where resources will be found.

In this situation, which is as simple as it is formidable, you rest your troops, form stores, and, with well-planned demonstrations that put your outposts in a position to fire daily fusil shots at the enemy, you will have a *barricade* on the English, who will only be able to observe you.

You must have your vanguards take prisoners every day, and in all directions that threaten the enemy; this is the only effective way to get news; there is no other.

The Emperor orders me to give the order to the Duke of Dalmatia to always have a corps of twenty thousand men with twenty cannons, composed of his best troops, either on Mérida, to engage General Hill and contain him on the left bank of the Tagus, or on Badajoz, moving towards the Alentejo and thus forcing him to approach Elvas. This operation is all the more important because, if it did not take place, General Hill could join forces with Lord Wellington to attack you. It would be insane to think that Lord Wellington could ever recall Hill's division to him, as long as the Duke of Dalmatia is making demonstrations. Lord Wellington can therefore only attack you with his corps, and, if he marched towards you, you would gather seven divisions at Salamanca, with all your artillery and cavalry; that would give you fifty thousand men. I say seven divisions, because you should never count on that of the Asturias. Then this division would receive orders to march forward to threaten Galicia and contain the Spanish corps on that side. Supported by Salamanca, with as much artillery and ammunition as you wish, your army, fifty thousand strong, is unassailable, even if General Hill were united with Lord Wellington. It would be unassailable, not by thirty-five thousand English (which is basically the total the English have in Portugal, not including the Portuguese), but by seventy thousand English. A chosen camp, an assured retreat to the fortress, and abundant cannons and ammunition, are an advantage you appreciate only too well. However, as you observe, I suppose that Hill has joined the English army and that Wellington is much stronger than he is; in that case, the northern army would arrive with its cavalry and two divisions, you would be reinforced every day, and victory would be assured.

But, once the resolution is made, it must be kept. There are no *ifs* or *buts*. You must choose your position below Salamanca, be victorious, or perish with the French army on the battlefield of your choice.

As you are the strongest, it is important to have the initiative, avoid carrying out fortified camp operations, which are purely defensive and would warn the enemy. It will be enough to reconnoiter the positions and work hard at the site. If we adopt a tightly fortified system and don't allow for too much development, in six weeks we can have a good position that will protect your headquarters, your stores, and your hospitals from any enemy surprise, and which can serve as a stronghold for your army corps to receive the battle, or as a starting point for marching on Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, when the time comes.

I told you that you should only count on seven divisions; Bonet's division must return immediately to Asturias. Whether you are considering the preservation of all the provinces to the north, or whether you are considering a retreat, without Asturias, which ensures possession of the mountains, neither Salamanca, nor Burgos, nor even Vitoria, are tenable. If, after a lost battle, it was necessary to evacuate, the Asturias division should not even then be recalled to you; but, falling back in order to your right, it would support your retreat; and, when you were at Burgos, it would be at Reynosa to cover you on that side; otherwise, favored by landings on all points of the coast, the enemy, from the beginning of your retreat, would fire rifles at you on Mondragon and Vitoria. Besides, you do not only have to fight against Lord Wellington; you also have to contain the enemy body that is in Galicia, and, at the moment when you march on the enemy, the Asturias division will contain Galicia and save the presence of a division in Astorga.

I repeat, it is up to the Army of the South to have a corps of twenty thousand men to hold in check part of Lord Wellington's army on the left bank of the Tagus. It is therefore not up to you, Mr. Duke, to disperse yourself in favor of the Duke of Dalmatia's army.

When you took command of your army, it had just suffered a setback by its retreat from Portugal. That country was ravaged; the enemy's hospitals and stores were in Lisbon; your troops were tired, disgusted by forced marches, without artillery, without carts; Badajoz had been under attack for a long time; a battle in the south had not been able to lift the siege of that place. What were you supposed to do then? Move on Almeida to threaten Lisbon? No, because your army had no artillery, no baggage, and it was tired. The enemy, in that position, would not have believed this threat; he would have let you approach as far as Coimbra, would have taken Badajoz, and then come at you. So, at that time, you did what had to be done; you marched quickly to the aid of Badajoz; the enemy had a barricade on you, and the art of war was to commit yourself to it. The siege was lifted, and the enemy returned to Portugal: that was what had to be done. Since then, Marshal, you have returned to the north; Lord Wellington has moved back to the true defensive point of the country, and since that time you have been in confrontation.

If, after having pushed Lord Wellington beyond Ciudad Rodrigo, you had remained in the province of Salamanca, with your vanguards facing Portugal, Lord Wellington would not have moved; but you moved for no reason to the Tagus. The English believed that you were preparing to enter the Alentejo to join forces with the Duke of Dalmatia and lay siege to Elvas; they maneuvered accordingly and remained vigilant when your move toward Valencia made it clear to them that they had nothing to fear.

At this moment, Your Highness, your position is simple and clear; consequently, it does not require any clever deliberations. Position your army so that in four marches your troops can assemble and mass on Salamanca; have your headquarters there; let your orders and dispositions announce to the enemy that the heavy artillery is arriving at Salamanca, that you are forming stores there, and that everything is in an offensive position. Have the enemy continually conduct petty warfare with the enemy posts. In this state, you are in control of all English movements. If Lord Wellington heads for Badajoz, let him go; immediately reunite your army and march

straight to Almeida; push parties towards Coimbra, and be assured that Lord Wellington will quickly return to you. But the English have too much skill to commit such a mistake. It wasn't the sending of four or five thousand men to Valencia that prompted their move to seize Ciudad Rodrigo, it was the useless march you made with a large part of your artillery and cavalry; it was the dispersal of your army.

Write to the Duke of Dalmatia, and ask the King to write to him as well, so that he carries out the imperative orders I give him to send a force of twenty thousand men to the Guadiana, to force General Hill to remain on the left bank of the Tagus.

So, Marshal, stop thinking about going south, and march straight towards Portugal if Lord Wellington makes the mistake of moving to the left bank of the Tagus.

General Caffarelli's division must have arrived in Navarre: His Majesty even orders that an Italian division come to reinforce the Army of the North. Communicate with the Duke of Albuféra in Valencia so that he can march with his forces to support Madrid, if necessary. Take advantage of the moment your troops are assembling to organize and establish order in the north. Work day and night to fortify Salamanca; bring in large guns; rebuild the siege equipment; and finally, build up stores of supplies.

You will feel, Marshal, that by following these instructions and deploying all appropriate activity to carry them out, you will hold the enemy in check; London itself will tremble at the prospect of a battle and the invasion of Portugal, so feared by the English. And finally, at harvest time, you will find yourself in a perfect position to invest Ciudad Rodrigo and retake this place from under the noses of the English, or to give them battle, which would be desirable, for, beaten so far from the sea, they would be lost, and Portugal conquered. The artillery that would arrive to arm Salamanca would be used for Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo.

By receiving the initiative instead of giving it, by thinking only of the Army of the South, which has no need of you since it is eighty thousand men strong, the best troops in Europe, by having concerns for the countries not under your command, and by abandoning Asturias and the provinces that concern you, any failure you might experience would be a calamity that would be *felt throughout all of Spain*. A failure of the Army of the South would lead it to Madrid or Valencia and would not be of the same nature.

I repeat, you are in a position to maintain control over Lord Wellington by placing your headquarters at Salamanca, occupying this position in force, and conducting strong reconnaissance on the debouchments. I could only repeat what I have already explained to you above.

If Badajoz were surrounded by only two or three English divisions, the Duke of Dalmatia could break it; but then, a weakened Lord Wellington would enable you to advance into the interior of Portugal; which would provide more effective relief to Badajoz than any other operation. But when, by the new dispositions of the Emperor, which obliged him to renounce for this year the expedition to Portugal, in view of the turn that the general affairs of Europe were taking, His Majesty ordered you to go to Valladolid with your army, and that you arrived unexpectedly at

Salamanca, the English, who calculated well that these movements could not have been made in consequence of theirs, were attracted; and if from the 17th to the 18th, with the thirty thousand men that you had in hand, you had marched swiftly without giving battle, but pretending to want to, the enemy, who was disconcerted by your arrival, was resolved to raise the siege of Ciudad-Rodrigo. Hill prevented you in fact from going to Salamanca and Ciudad-Rodrigo with twenty-five thousand men? It is an operation that could even be carried out with nine or ten thousand men, taking up positions without engaging, and returning to Salamanca if the enemy presented too many forces. War is a profession of position, and twelve thousand men are never engaged when they do not want to be, even more so thirty thousand, and especially when these thirty thousand men were followed by other troops. But the past is irremediable.

I give orders that everything possible be provided to you to complete your artillery and arm Salamanca. Twenty-four hours after receiving this letter, the Emperor believes that you will leave for Salamanca, barring any unforeseen events; that you will assign one advance guard to occupy the exits to Ciudad Rodrigo, and another to those to Almeida; that you will have at least one division's worth of supplies in your possession; that you will return the cavalry and artillery that are in the Tagus Division; that you will send Bonet's Division back to the Asturias, and consequently, you will not assign a division to the Army of the North, because it will be reinforced by the Palombini Division.

However, since this movement will be sudden, it must be given time to take effect, and it can only be eight days after you have arrived in Salamanca and these dispositions have been made that their effect on the enemy will be felt. Only then will you be able to completely evacuate the Tagus. In the meantime, it seems to the Emperor that a single infantry division at this point is sufficient. The King will send at least three thousand infantry and twelve hundred cavalry to support this division.

Above all, gather your cavalry, which you do not have too many of and which you so desperately need. When you see that your offensive movement has produced its effect, you will withdraw from the Tagus, first one brigade, and then another; but at the same time, you will increase your offensive displays so that everything shows that you are waiting for the first waves to enter Portugal.

Signed: ALEXANDRE.

No. 92.

*Letter from Prince Berthier, Major General, to Marshal
Soult, Duke of Dalmatia.*

Paris, 19 February 1812.

The Emperor, His Majesty the Duke, is not satisfied that Hill's division has remained so long in Mérida. Today, the English appear to be changing their plans: they are concentrating their troops in order to advance on Ciudad Rodrigo, should the Duke of Ragusa lay siege to that place. The order from the Emperor, His Majesty the Marshal, is that General Drouet, with a corps of twenty thousand men, including four thousand cavalry and forty cannons, be assembled to operate either from Mérida or Badajoz, in such a way as to hold General Hill in check with a similar corps of twenty thousand men from the enemy army, forcing him to remain on the left bank of the Tagus, and thereby preventing him from undertaking anything, either in the north against the Army of Portugal or against Madrid.

The Duke of Ragusa has orders to centralize his army on Salamanca; to have two divisions in observation, one on Ciudad-Rodrigo, one on the direction of Almeida; to fire fusils every day with the enemy outposts; and finally, to assemble to enter Portugal quickly, if Lord Wellington makes the mistake of moving to the left bank of the Tagus, which the Emperor regards as a madness that he will never dare to do. Lord Wellington knows that you have eighty thousand men, and more than seventy thousand present under arms, the day you have gathered your resources. The principal enemy, Marshal, is the English. Mahy and Ballesteros, who are at Alicante and Gibraltar, do not have fifteen thousand men, and the Duke of Albuféra holds part of them in check. The capture of Valencia has therefore singularly improved your position. The Emperor's order is for you to form General Drouet's corps with your best infantry and cavalry, for these twenty thousand men to enter the Alentejo, and if the English establish themselves in front of you, you will thus hold them in check.

It is you, Duke, who must guard the entire left bank of the Tagus.

It is very important that you attempt to communicate with the Duke of Albuféra, so that this Marshal may be promptly informed of the movements of the English.

The Emperor wonders, Duke, how it is possible that six thousand English and four or five thousand Portuguese captured the stores at Mérida, advanced as far as the entrances to Andalusia, and remained there for a month, all in the face of your army, eighty thousand strong and composed of the best troops in the world, capable of fielding more than sixty thousand men present under arms and a cavalry so superior in number.

The diversion that the Army of Portugal must create in your favor, Duke, consists of taking the offensive from its position at Salamanca, and not of marching on Mérida in a parallel movement, obeying the initiative given by the enemy.

Devote your full attention and the greatest diligence to executing the Emperor's order to immediately form the corps of twenty thousand men composed of the best troops in your army. His Majesty imperatively commands you to this disposition.

This order brooks no delay, and the Emperor is angry that such a fine army is having no impact on the English.

Signed: ALEXANDRE.

No. 93.

*Letter from Marshal Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, to Prince
Berthier, Major General.*

Valladolid, 26 February 1812.

Monseigneur,

I have received the letters you did me the honor of writing on 11 February; the more I have pondered them, the more I have become convinced that, if His Majesty were on the scene, he would view the position of his Army of Portugal from a completely different perspective. Your Highness tells me that I should have concentrated my troops at Salamanca; but he forgets that the Emperor's previous orders were to have three divisions beyond the mountains. If I concentrated the army at Salamanca, it would not be able to survive there for two weeks; and soon a desert, similar to the one separating Rodrigo from Salamanca, would separate Salamanca from Valladolid, which, in the future, would make the army's situation much worse.

The Emperor wants me to make offensive movements against Rodrigo; but His Majesty is unaware that the slightest movement here causes an enormous loss of resources, and especially horses, equivalent to that which would result from a battle, so that these movements must be restricted only to a specific and positive objective, one that promises results. If the army were to move against Rodrigo today, it would not be able to cross the Águeda, because at this time of year that river is not fordable. The army would not be able to remain for three days before Rodrigo, due to lack of supplies. This simple march, which would have no result and would have given the enemy no confidence, because he knows well the absolute impossibility in which we are to undertake anything, this simple march, I say, would cause the loss of five hundred horses and would render the army incapable of making any kind of movement for six weeks, because it would have to disperse to go and form its reserve of provisions, up to twenty and twenty-five leagues away, and that it would have time to gather and prepare them. In the month of April of last year, the Army of Portugal lost almost all its artillery horses and the greater number of its cavalry horses, for having remained for six days between the Côa and the Águeda; however, the season was more advanced and the country less deserted than today. His Majesty thinks that I should not send my troops to get lost in the rear; but did I not have to relieve seven thousand men of the Guard, and the troops of the Army of the North, in the posts they occupied, posts which cannot be abandoned without upsetting the whole country and giving up the means

of living? Your Highness speaks to me of the siege of Rodrigo: if I receive means of transport and a siege crew, this operation will be easy after the harvest; but before and without these means, it is absolutely impossible to think about it. Your Highness tells me that it is my honor to retake this place; it will always be my honor to do everything that will be useful in the service of the Emperor; but I have no wrong to repair here, because certainly the causes of the capture of Rodrigo are completely foreign to me. If circumstances had put this frontier under my orders earlier, I believe I can say with good reason, Rodrigo would still be ours.

Your Highness tells me that if the army were assembled at Salamanca, the English would be foolish to march to Extremadura, leaving me behind and free to go to Lisbon; but they made this plan last May, although the whole army was a short distance from Salamanca, the Army of the North was twice its size today, the more advanced season would have allowed us to keep the horses alive, and we were in control of Rodrigo. They did not believe it possible then that we would undertake this operation, and they were right: will they imagine it today when all the circumstances I have just stated are contrary, and they know the large number of troops that have returned to France? The enemy had so clearly planned to lay siege to Badajoz for a long time that for nearly four months they have established large stores at Campo Major, and I have reported this to Your Highness; he has continued to increase them ever since. He was so determined to make a detachment after the capture of Rodrigo that, although he knew full well that I was on the march with the army to reach the Tormes, and from there the Águeda, he sent two divisions two days after the capture of Rodrigo. The Army of Portugal, in the current state of affairs, not having even an enemy in front of it, could not get beyond the Côa, and the forces Lord Wellington left there are more than sufficient to protect the most advanced village in Portugal from any event. Consequently, no kind of movement in that direction would achieve the goal of saving Badajoz; only dispositions that allow immediate action on this place could impose themselves on the enemy and give hope of achieving the proposed objective.

The Emperor, it seems to me, considers the difficulties of living as nothing; these difficulties are everything, and if they had ceased by the formation of stores, everything the Emperor could order would be executed with punctuality and ease; but we are far from that, and I have nothing to reproach myself for in this regard. I was not in command here three months ago. I wanted to make stores in the valley of the Tagus, and, to this end, I requested a large, fertile territory, within reach, as well as means of transport. The territory was refused me, and the means of transport, granted and always awaited, have received, it seems to me, another destination. I arrived in the north in the month of January, and I did not find a grain of wheat, not a penny in the coffers, but debts everywhere, and the infallible result of the absurd system of administration that had been adopted, a real or artificial shortage of which it is difficult to form a fair idea. In the cantonments, one obtains daily subsistence only with weapons in hand; there is a long way from there to the formation of stores that allow the army to move. We are not two to one in the kind of war that we are waging here with the English. The English army is always assembled and available, because it has a lot of money and a lot of transport. Seven to eight thousand mules are employed for the transport of its provisions; the hay that all the English cavalry eats on the banks of the Côa and the Águeda, comes from England. Let His Majesty judge after that what relation there is between our means and theirs, we who do not have a store that contains four days of provisions for the army, and no means of transport; we who cannot send a requisition with success to the most miserable village, without making a detachment of two hundred men,

and who are forced to scatter ourselves over an enormous distance and to be constantly on the run to subsist. However weak the garrisons of the towns are, one cannot express what difficulty there is in providing them with provisions. Thus, whatever efforts I have made, Valladolid does not yet contain enough food for five days for the two thousand men who are there. This state of things will not change entirely until after the harvest, and with more reasonable principles of administration and more order than have been established until now. By then, the army will be in the most difficult position that can be described, and it would be unjust to expect much from it. Nothing can be done here without time; it is necessary to create its means, to organize them, and for that it is necessary to be at the time of resources; unfortunately I arrive here when they are exhausted. During the Summer and Autumn, a time when the sub-supplies are in accordance with the needs of the troops, all the movements that have taken place have been made in a manner consistent with reason, and the results have proven it; the enemy has been unable to undertake anything. Now that this report no longer exists, I am reduced to fighting against events.

It is possible that His Majesty may not be satisfied with my reasons; but I confess that I cannot conceive of carrying out what has been prescribed without preparing disasters for the future.

If His Majesty judges otherwise, I will earnestly renew my request to appoint a successor to my command, which, then, must be entrusted to better hands.

In the meantime, I am going, in accordance with what I stated in my letter of yesterday, to make every effort to save Badajoz. If I succeed, when appearances indicate that the enemy is abandoning any offensive in the south, I will then withdraw all my troops to Old Castile and reoccupy Asturias. I hope, moreover, that before that time, His Majesty will have relieved me of a burden that is beyond my strength.

I have the honor to be, with respect, etc.

Signed: MARSHAL DUKE OF RAGUSA.

No. 94.

*Letter from Marshal Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, to
Prince Berthier, Major General.*

Valladolid, 2 March 1812.

Monseigneur,

Just as I was mounting my horse to go to Avila, I received the letters that Your Highness did me the honor of writing on 18 and 21 February. His Majesty's orders are so imperative that, whatever the reasons that initially prevented me from complying with them, I believe it is now my duty to do so. Consequently, I order the cavalry, the Fourth Division, and the Sixth Division, which are in the Tagus Valley, to return to Old Castile. I have left only the First Division there, which will also return at the times set by the Emperor, and when it has been relieved by the Army of the Center. But, as it seems clear that the siege of Badajoz was only suspended by the presence of these three divisions, my opinion is that this movement will put this place in peril. I dare hope, at least, that if anything happens to it, I will not be blamed. Your Majesty writes to me that the Emperor finds me too concerned with the interests of others, and not enough with what I am personally charged with. Until now, I had considered it one of my duties imposed by the Emperor to assist the Army of the South, and this duty was formally expressed in twenty of your dispatches and sufficiently reaffirmed by the order I received to leave three divisions in the Tagus Valley. Today, I am freed from this obligation; my position becomes simpler and much better.

The Emperor seems to be placing great confidence in the effect that the demonstrations made to the north will produce on Lord Wellington's mind. I dare to hold a contrary opinion, since this general knows very well that we have no stores and is aware of the immense difficulties that the country presents by its nature and by the lack of supplies.

Lord Wellington knows that the Army of Portugal, without anyone to fight, is not in a position to move at this time of year, and that if it were to advance at the time we are in, it would return in four days, unable to carry out any campaign, and having lost all its horses. I am going to Salamanca. I will do everything in my power to fulfill His Majesty's intentions; but all demonstrations must be limited between the Águeda and the Tormes, and to reconnaissance under the guns of Ciudad Rodrigo; for the Águeda not being fordable, the crossing of this river requires boats that I do not have.

Lord Wellington cannot believe, at this time of year, in an offensive march, due to a lack of prepared stores and supplies for the horses. Nor can he believe in the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, even with the heavy artillery at Salamanca. He knows well that other preparations are necessary, which require time; and, if he wants to lay siege to Badajoz, he has ample means of execution, since his preparations have been made for a long time, and he can return to support Ciudad Rodrigo. Therefore, I very much doubt that my movements will impose much on him.

His Majesty wants our outposts to fire daily with the English; His Majesty is therefore unaware that, by the nature of things and the absolute impossibility of supplies, there are always at least twenty leagues between the English outposts and ours, and that this interval is occupied by guerrillas; so that by detaching many troops they die of hunger, and if we detach few, they are compromised. Therefore, it is only with guerrillas and at a short distance from our lines that we could have dealings.

His Majesty finds that, having superiority over the enemy, I am wrong to leave him the initiative. The Army of Portugal is quite strong enough to defeat the English army, but it is inferior to the latter in terms of operations, due to the shortage of resources. The English army, which has large stores and sufficient means of transport in advance, lives equally well everywhere. The Army of Portugal, without stores, with very little transport, and without money, can only survive by spreading itself thin. It thus finds itself dependent on the places that offer resources and is in no way equipped to maneuver. This state of affairs will last until the harvest.

Since Your Highness reproaches me for having allowed Almeida to be taken, it is possible that you will also reproach me for not having made purchases in Salamanca and Valladolid, when I was not in command there. These reproaches, however painful they may be, will not make me guilty.

Your Highness accuses me of being the cause of the capture of Rodrigo; I believe I have nothing to do with it. Rodrigo was captured because it had too small a garrison, and because the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the North was both unguarded and without foresight. I could not, for my part, keep an eye on this place, since I was separated from it by a mountain range and a desert that a six-month stay of the army had created in the Tagus valley.

The Emperor is astonished that I did not march from the 17th to the 18th with the thirty thousand men I had gathered. I had no troops from the 17th to the 18th; but the troops that were on the march, to relieve those of the Army of the North in their cantonments, had received the necessary orders en route to assemble at Salamanca on the 22nd; these troops numbered only twenty-four thousand men, and could not arrive there sooner. At that time, the place had been taken for four days. Retaking it immediately was impossible, since it could not be blockaded, because the river was not fordable, and I could neither cross it nor prevent Lord Wellington from communicating with the place. Thus, the English army, without being able to be forced to accept battle, would have defended Rodrigo. The Army of Portugal, which, moreover, had neither heavy artillery nor provisions with it to remain maneuvering for long, would therefore have made a painful and destructive march, pointlessly and fruitlessly, using all its resources. The experience of the Spanish Civil War taught me that the great challenge in this country was the preservation of men and resources, and it is to this that I have particularly attached myself.

The Emperor finds that I am tiring my troops with useless marches. No one is more concerned than I am with sparing them from fatigue, and I do not understand that this observation applies to the detachments located in the Tagus Valley, for I did not send them, but was content to stop the troops coming from La Mancha, at the moment when, after the capture of Rodrigo, I learned that on 21 January, Lord Wellington had sent two divisions for Estremadura, considering it one of my duties to assist the south. These dispositions were entirely natural. When General Hill marched

on Mérida, I saw clearly that it was a diversion; and I was so little taken in that, when I went to Salamanca to assist Rodrigo, I left only a thousand men in the Tagus Valley.

His Majesty seems to believe that Lord Wellington has stores a short distance away on the northern frontier: his stores are at Abrantès and Estremadura; his hospitals are in Lisbon, Castelo Branco, and Abrantès; thus, nothing interests him on the Côa. Your Highness says that the true route to Lisbon is from the north: I believe that those who know this country well are convinced of the opposite. As for me, I am convinced that whenever the main army corps takes this direction, we will have all sorts of misfortunes to fear, and that the one we should choose is that of the Alentejo. I deduced the reasons for this in a memorandum I had the honor of sending to you three months ago.

Your Highness speaks of occupying the Almeida and Rodrigo debouchments. The country separating the Águeda and the Tormes is an immense plain, which is passable in all directions; therefore, I do not know what is meant by these outlets. The Emperor blames me for having returned to the Tagus Valley, after having driven Lord Wellington back across the Côa; but it was the Emperor's positive order, who had assigned me no territory other than that of the Tagus Valley. Rodrigo had been occupied by the troops of the Army of the North, and His Majesty had relieved me of the duty of keeping a particular watch over this place. If I had been its master, I would have come to settle in Salamanca: military reason said so, since the enemy was present; the reason for subsistence said the same, since this country offered resources, and the Tagus Valley was exhausted. It would therefore seem just that the Emperor should relieve his generals of all responsibility when they follow his orders literally, or that he should leave them more latitude and power to carry them out.

The Emperor seems to believe that I am not firm in my resolutions; I do not know what could have motivated His Majesty's opinion. When I believed it was worth fighting, I do not know that anything ever changed my determination; and if, here, we never fight, it is because, in truth, this war is in no way like other wars, neither in its nature nor in the circumstances that accompany it and which do not allow it to be conducted otherwise.

The Emperor orders major works in the place of Salamanca. He wants twelve thousand men to be employed in these works. It seems that the Emperor is unaware that we have neither the food to feed them nor the money to pay them, and that we are threatened with the immediate failure of all services in all the places.

It was the northern provinces that provided for the greater part of the needs of the Sixth and Seventh Governments. This situation is worsening in the most appalling way, and it will only change when we have a territory more proportionate to our needs.

As for the stores, their formation is the object of all my efforts and all my concern; but at the time we find ourselves in, this is not an easy thing. If His Majesty increases resources, and if I then manage to gather enough supplies to feed the army for a month, I will believe I have achieved a great result, and it would be very desirable if they could be preserved for the time when it is necessary to fight the enemy seriously, and not for mere demonstrations.

I am writing to the Duke of Albuféra to inform him of the current situation, and I am ordering General Bonet to return immediately to Asturias via the Leitariegos Pass, which will give his movement an offensive air against Galicia. I realize the full importance of the occupation of Asturias, and I intended to send troops there immediately.

My Lord, it only remains for me to express to Your Highness the sorrow I feel at the way in which the Emperor appreciates the efforts I constantly make here for the good of his service. Since His Majesty attributes the capture of Almeida to me, I do not know how I could protect myself from any kind of accusation.

I have the honor to be, etc.

Signed: MARSHAL DUKE OF RAGUSA.

No. 95.

*Letter from Prince Berthier, Major General, to Marshal
Marmont, Duke of Ragusa.*

Paris, 16 April 1812.

I have placed before the Emperor, Marshal, your letters of 22 and 25 March.

In my dispatches of 18 and 20 February, I prescribed the necessary measures to seize the initiative and give the war a character befitting the glory of French arms, removing from it the current hesitation and fluctuation, which are already the sign of a defeated army. But, instead of studying and seeking to grasp the spirit of the general instructions given to you, you have taken pleasure in not understanding them, and in taking precisely the opposite view of their spirit. These instructions are reasoned and justified. Like all instructions from a government, they were given three hundred leagues apart and six weeks apart; they assumed you in relation to the enemy, and prescribed you to contain him and to oblige the greater part of his army to remain in the north, by concentrating your headquarters in Salamanca, and by firing fusil shots every day under Ciudad-Rodrigo and under Almeida. These instructions told you: if, in this state of things, the enemy remains in front of you with less than five divisions, march towards him, follow him in the rear; his hospitals and stores being between Lisbon and the Côa, he will not be able to evacuate them so quickly that you cannot reach him. I added that, in this state of affairs, it was absurd to think that the English general could abandon the entire north to attack a place he was threatening...

(There is a gap in the original document here.)

The Emperor recommends that you assist the King, and do yourselves, out of attachment to his person and the glory of his arms, everything possible to prevent forty thousand English from spoiling all the affairs of Spain; which will inevitably happen, if the commanders of the various

corps are not animated by that zeal for glory and that patriotism which alone overcome obstacles, and prevent the public interest from ever being sacrificed to one's whims and any passions.

Upon returning from Poland, His Majesty will go to Spain; he hopes to have nothing but praise to give to what you have done, and that you will once again have earned his esteem.

Signed: ALEXANDRE.

No. 96.

*Letter from General Count Dorsenne, Commander of the
Army of the North, to Prince Berthier, Major General.*

Burgos, 19 February 1812.

My Lord,

I have the honor to send Your Highness a copy of the decree issued by Mina on 14 December⁸. I had been informed of the existence of this inflammatory document without being able to obtain it. I learn with indignation that this leader is enforcing its provisions with the utmost rigor, which is striking terror and consternation among the inhabitants of Navarre. This cruel and bloodthirsty man exerts his influence throughout the north of Spain, where public opinion is becoming worse by the day. I refrain from commenting on the contents of this decree to Your Highness; you will easily judge the consequences.

Worried about being deprived of news from Navarre, I sent emissaries there at a price to obtain information. Reliable reports inform me that two of them were seized near Pamplona and hanged immediately.

Your Highness may think that I can and must march in person to take action against Mina and bring justice. If such were your opinion, I dare to believe that, based on the observations I am about to present, you would be convinced that other means than those at my disposal must be deployed to achieve a satisfactory result. It is my duty to draw your particular attention to the truly pressing need to take measures aimed at the pacification of the country, the dispersal of the bands, and their extinction.

The past has shown us that major operations carried out in Navarre by experienced generals did not produce the expected effect. Today, Monsignor, it would be impolitic to undertake operations against the bands if we are not certain of exterminating them.

I still know nothing of General Caffarelli's progress. I must assume that the time of his arrival in Navarre will naturally have been the time of the lifting of the blockade of Pamplona; but I believe he will have no serious dealings with Mina, because the latter will shelter himself from his pursuit.

⁸ See supporting documents, no. 85.

I beg Your Highness to note that I consider the complete destruction of this leader's band almost impossible, because as soon as he sees himself closely surrounded, he will dissolve his forces, taking advantage of the intelligence he has in the country. But I believe it is urgent and indispensable to first reduce him to this extremity, which would cause him to lose many men and diminish the number of his supporters. This initial success must be considered for nothing if it is not immediately followed by the permanent occupation of the country; without this, our authority is ignored, and the bands, after the troops' departure, reorganize once again.

If, in order to act against Mina and the other guerrilla leaders, we must reunite our forces, abandoning communications and key points, we will never succeed in destroying them, because, driven from one province, they rush into another. This system exposes us to running out of everything and to revolutionizing the inhabitants of the evacuated districts. I therefore believe that, given the current situation, it would be disastrous to compromise the Emperor's arms through fruitless attempts. Having not yet received either Bonet's division or the Thirty-first Chasseurs and not being able to dispose of the Guard corps at this time without having to fear considerably increasing the number of their sick, I have no real means of marching against Mina.

In my letter of the 7th of this month, which I ask Your Highness to send back, I explained my situation to you. You will see that instead of nineteen thousand five hundred men who will form the entire force of my command, I would need at least thirty thousand, composed of good troops trained to fatigue. I would also need available money (an irresistible argument in all countries), unlimited time, and above all, considerable latitude. With these resources, My Lord, I would not deplete any important post, and, in this scenario, I would be able to direct my expedition against Mina by investing Navarre in the following manner:

1. By leaving the cordon of troops occupying the Baztan Valley.
2. By maintaining the main road from Irun to Miranda, so as not to fear that Mina would be tempted to cross it through the practicable outlets.
3. By militarily guarding the banks of the Ebro, occupying the river crossings from Miranda to just above Tudela.
4. By directing a strong column from Tudela which, going up the Aragon River, would extend as far as Sangüesa and even Ochagavia.
5. Finally, by personally advancing from Logroño, with several columns, to the main assembly at Mina.

From then on, I force him to try to escape; and if, as is likely, he learns of some of my dispositions, all that remains is for him to hastily disband his corps and consider his own safety. In that case, I am convinced that with my reserve, I will be able to surprise some of his detachments and throw others into my observation lines.

With Mina's dispersal accomplished, I do not consider my purpose fulfilled. Navarre must be freed from it and the inhabitants must be proven that this brigand is no longer formidable. Consequently, occupying the boundaries I have just drawn so as to have troops firmly established there is necessary. I therefore take possession of the country and march with my reserve force to make myself feared and respected.

Your Highness is no less convinced than I am of the urgency of stripping Mina of the influence he enjoys in Navarre and of preserving free communications in a country where there are establishments of the utmost importance for the service of the imperial armies in Spain.

I sum up to you, Monseigneur. It is time, to prevent great evils, to restore tranquility in the north of Spain; brigandage is ruining this beautiful territory and increasing the number of our enemies. I aspire to give the Emperor new proof of my devotion; But, Your Highness knows, I lack the means to achieve the result: for I would not believe I would satisfy His Majesty if I went to Navarre and finished nothing. I repeat to Your Highness, to change the situation of affairs, I need troops, money, time, and a great deal of latitude.

I beg Your Highness to take into consideration the contents of this dispatch, as well as that of my letter of this month, and to deign to inform me of the Emperor's further intentions through the aide-de-camp I have the honor of sending him.

I am, with the deepest respect, etc.

Signed: COUNT DORSENNE.

No. 97.

*Imperial decree for the division of Catalonia
into departments.*

At the Tuileries Palace, 26 January 1812.

Napoleon, Emperor of the French, King of Italy, Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine, Mediator of the Swiss Confederation, we have decreed and do decree the following:

1st ARTICLE. The territory of Catalonia is divided into four departments:

1st That of Ter. -- Girona, capital.

2nd That of Montserrat. --Barcelona, capital.

3rd That of the Bouches de l'Èbre. --Lerida, capital.

4th That of Segre. --Puigcerdà, capital.

ART. II. The Ter department will have three districts or sub-prefectures: Girona, Figueres, Vic.

The district of Girona will be formed by the part of the Corregimiento of Girona, located south of the Fluvià.

The district of Figueres will be formed by the part of the Corregimiento of Girona, located to the north, between the Fluvià and the borders of France.

The district of Vic will be formed by the Corregimiento of Vic in its entirety and by the territory of Rivas, bordering on the borders of France.

ART. III. The Montserrat Department will have three districts: Barcelona, Villafranca, Manresa.

The district of Barcelona will be formed by the Corregimiento of Mataró and the portion of the territory of Barcelona located to the left of the Llobregat River.

The district of Villafranca will be formed by the Corregimiento of Villafranca and the portion of the territory of Barcelona located to the right of the Llobregat River.

The district of Manresa will be formed by part of this Corregimiento, which will be bordered to the north and northwest by the Tardell and Est rivers.

ART. IV. The Department of the Bocas del Ebro will have four districts: Lleida, Tortosa, Tarragona, and Cervera.

The district of Lleida will be composed of the Corregimiento of Lleida and the border of the country between Fraga, Mequinenza, and the Nonaspe River.

The district of Tortosa will be composed of the Corregimiento of Tortosa and the small territory of Nonaspe and Favara.

The district of Tarragona will be composed of the Corregimiento de Tarragona.

The district of Cervera will be made up of the southern part of this Corregimiento, limited to the north by Llobregat.

ART. V. The Segre Department will have three districts Puigcerdà, Talarn, Solsona.

The district of Puigcerdà will be composed of the Corregimiento of Puigcerdà and the valley of Andorra, minus the territory of Rivas, united in the Department of Ter.

The district of Talarn will be composed of the Corregimiento de Talarn.

The district of Solsona will consist of the northern part of the Cervera Corregimiento, beyond the Llobregat River, and the upper Llobregat Valley north of the Est River.

ART. VI. The Aran Valley, located on the northern slopes of the Pyrenees, and where the sources of the Garonne are located, is united with the department of Haute-Garonne.

ART. VII. Our ministers are responsible, each in their respective areas, for the execution of this decree.

Signed: NAPOLEÓN.