

Translated by Greg Gorsuch
Part 13

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

II

In May, war with Russia seemed inevitable. Napoleon was forced to withdraw some of his troops from Spain. General Dorsenne returned to France with ten thousand men of the Imperial Guard. The Army of the North was now composed only of the divisions of Abbé, Vandermaesen, and Dumoustier, together comprising seventeen thousand infantry and fifteen hundred cavalry. General Caffarelli took command and was tasked with occupying Biscay and Navarre, where the bands of Mendizabál and Mina were making communications more difficult every day. General Reille left Catalonia, where he was joined by the Palombini Division, drawn from the Kingdom of Valencia. The Armies of the South, the Center, and Portugal found themselves weakened by two dragoon divisions, twelve thousand men from the best cadres, and a certain number of elite soldiers destined to recruit the Imperial Old Guard. Six Polish regiments, which were part of the Armies of the South and Aragon, were also forced to join the Grand Army of Germany, under the command of General Chłopicki. The total strength of the French troops in Spain was reduced to 216,000 men present under arms.

Lord Wellington, on the other hand, received reinforcements that brought his army to 50,000 men and enabled him to take the offensive with advantage, especially given the numerical strength of his cavalry. Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz offered him two strongholds in the north and south of Spain. Lisbon, covered by the lines of Torres Vedras, was an excellent depot, from where he could easily supply his stores via the Douro and Tagus rivers, without requiring a considerable number of pack animals for transport. Finally, master of all his movements and the choice of his attack, he could bring the mass of his forces to bear on the point he wished to strike; while the French, scattered over a line of nearly two hundred leagues, from Cadiz on their left to Oviedo and Gijon on their right, had neither support points nor stores over this distance. Reduced to living only on marauding and daily contributions in an exhausted country, they could not remain united for long in a large mass; moreover, their line of communication, which extended from Bayonne to Cadiz, was under attack on all sides and was constantly disturbed by guerrillas. Although with forces much smaller than those of King Joseph, Lord Wellington

therefore found himself in a much better situation. To take better advantage of his position, he decided to carry his attack to the north, in order to directly threaten the main road to Bayonne. On 12 June, he crossed the Águeda and marched on Salamanca. At the same time, an English fleet of six ships of the line, nine frigates and six brigs, appeared on the coasts of Biscay, and landed some troops there. Another fleet of seven ships and sixteen frigates or corvettes, having on board seven thousand Englishmen from the army of Sicily, threatened the coasts of Catalonia and the Kingdom of Valencia.

As the English approached, Marshal Marmont withdrew his posts. He evacuated Salamanca on 17 June, leaving for the defense of the Tormes bridge, seven hundred men and twenty-four guns in Fort Saint-Vincent and in the redoubts of San-Gaitanis and La Merced. Then, going up the Tormes, he took up position on the heights of Aldearrubia near Huerta, two and a half leagues above the city. Lord Wellington forded the river and came to camp with his entire army on the heights of San-Christobal, which form a very fine position, one league in front of Salamanca. He immediately laid siege to Fort Saint-Vincent and the neighboring redoubts. (*See the account of the defense, Volume IV.*) Marmont, having gathered part of his troops, approached the English line on the 20th. He captured the villages of Castellanos and Moriscos, located at the foot of the San Christobal Heights; but having no hope of forcing the enemy into their formidable positions, he returned on the 22nd to the heights of Aldearrubia.

The garrison of Fort Saint-Vincent put up a very fine defense. It held the enemy back for ten days and caused them to lose more than six hundred men. On June 27th, a violent fire, started by shells and red-hot cannonballs from the English, set the fort's buildings ablaze, forcing the governor to surrender. Marmont, not yet having received the reinforcements that were to be sent to him from the Army of the North and the Army of the Center¹, withdrew behind the Douro, where he took up position on July 2nd, occupying the fortified bridges of Zamora, Toro, and Tordesillas. He was joined on the 8th by General Bonet's division, which had received orders to evacuate Asturias. For his part, Lord Wellington attracted several Spanish corps, ten thousand Portuguese militia men, commanded by General Silveira, and ordered Castaños, who was in Galicia with fifteen or twenty thousand Spaniards, to advance up the Douro Valley by the Benavente road to outflank the French army.

Marshal Marmont was at the head of forty thousand men. General Caffarelli, after having been held up for some time by the demonstrations of the English on the coast of Biscay, was gathering ten thousand men at Vitoria to join him, and already fifteen hundred cavalymen and twenty pieces of cannon had arrived at Burgos. Moreover, King Joseph, after having vainly asked Marshals Soult and Marmont for help², had called from Aragon the Palombini Division, and had set out with the Army of the Center, fourteen thousand strong, by Villacastin and Arévalo, to reinforce the army of Portugal on the Douro. But, consumed by the desire for glory, and aiming to defeat Lord Wellington single-handedly, Marmont, without further delay, wanted to resume the offensive, and conceived the bold plan of cutting off the Anglo-Portuguese army, which was almost twice his own, from its communications with Ciudad-Rodrigo. After having maneuvered for several days towards Toro to deceive his adversary, he emerged on July 17th by the bridge of Tordesillas, attacked two English divisions which were in position on his passage, and pursued

¹ See supporting documents, nos. 98 and 99.

² See supporting documents, nos. 100, 101, and 102.

them to the Guareña, a river which flows in a very steep valley of which the Anglo-Portuguese army occupied the opposite bank. Continuing to march on the left, he went up the Guareña, crossed the Tormes at Huerta on the evening of July 21st, and came to take up position on the heights of Calvarrasa de Arriba, at the mouth of considerable woods. Lord Wellington had first withdrawn under Salamanca in the position of San-Christobal; but as soon as he learned that Marmont had moved to the right bank of the Tormes, he crossed the river at the Salamanca bridge and took up position on the morning of the 22nd at the village of Arapiles, occupying one of the two hillocks that give the village its name. He sent a column to capture the other hillock, located 500 meters further, at the very moment when General Bonet, who commanded the French vanguard, was establishing himself there.

These hillocks became the pivot of the two armies throughout the day of 22 July. Marshal Marmont had his right on the Calvarrasa plateau, covered by a large ravine and defended by the infantry divisions of Foy and Ferey and the dragoon division of General Boyer (Pierre). The divisions of Clauzel, Sarrut, Maucune, and Brenier were assembled in a mass in the center, behind the hillock of Arapiles, occupied by General Bonet; on the left, the Thomières Division, flanked by a division of light cavalry under General Curto, occupied another steep plateau where twenty cannons were placed. Marshal Marmont, always preoccupied with the idea of cutting off the enemy's retreat to Ciudad Rodrigo, wanted to seize the peak of Miranda, located half a mile to his extreme left, in order to then advance to Santo Tomé de Rozados, on the road to Tamames. The Thomières Division was charged with this attack; it was to be supported by the divisions of Brenier and Maucune and by light cavalry of General Curto. Such a flanking movement, made in the presence of the enemy, who from the morning had been assembling all his forces behind the village of Arapiles, was very dangerous. Nevertheless, Thomières' division reached the peak of Miranda; but the other two were not yet in line when Marshal Marmont was wounded and forced to leave the battlefield. The enemy, seizing the favorable moment, emerged from the village of Arapiles and destroyed part of Brenier's division, which, having imprudently engaged some troops at the entrance to this village, had stopped to support them; it crushed Thomières' division, drove back the division of Maucune, which managed with difficulty to free itself, and arrived on the flank of our position, which it was simultaneously attacking from the front. General Thomières was killed; disorder spread to the troops in the center; General Bonet, whose seniority called him to command the army, was himself wounded. The army was already in disarray when General Clauzel took command. He rallied the left and the center on the right, took up position on the heights behind Arriba, and, by this skillful maneuver, he saved the army. The enemy continued his attacks but was repulsed; night put an end to the fighting. The French troops retreated in disorder to Alba de Tormes, leaving on the battlefield nearly nine thousand men killed, wounded or prisoners, and eleven pieces of cannon. The enemy's loss was estimated at five thousand men.

The Battle of the Arapiles, or Salamanca, as the English call it, was fought at the wrong time. For a month, Lord Wellington had been unable to force the French army to fight; and it was at the moment when reinforcements were arriving from the center and the north that Marshal Marmont risked the fate of Spain in a battle against an army almost twice his own. This unforgivable error had the most serious consequences. The very next day, the Army of Portugal, hotly pursued, continued its retreat by the main road to Valladolid; its rearguard was cut down by the English cavalry and lost nine hundred men. That same evening, fifteen hundred cavalymen

and twenty cannons arrived, sent by General Caffarelli, who himself was marching towards Burgos. It was learned that King Joseph, who was advancing with the Army of the Center, was only two days' march away due to the imprudence of Marshal Marmont; these reinforcements arrived too late³.

The Army of Portugal continued its retreat towards Valladolid. King Joseph, still hoping to link up with it, maneuvered towards Segovia; but he soon had to abandon his plan. The enemy occupied Valladolid on 30 July, and the Army of Portugal withdrew to Burgos. Lord Wellington, leaving two divisions for observation on the Douro, fell back on Segovia on 5 August, in order to reach Madrid. King Joseph approached the capital to protect it. He gained some advantages against the vanguard of the English army; but too weak to risk a general assault, he was forced, on 11 August, to evacuate Madrid, where he left seventeen hundred men to guard the Retiro River, and he retreated to Toledo behind the Tagus. His army, encumbered by more than twelve thousand Spaniards, compromised in his cause, and a multitude of carriages and baggage, was unable to defend itself. The King headed for Valencia on 16 August to rejoin the Army of Aragon.

Lord Wellington entered Madrid on 12 August with thirty thousand men. The intoxication with which he was received soon gave way to other feelings when he struck the city with a heavy contribution. He immediately attacked the Retiro River. This post, fortified for two years to serve as a depot, had three enclosures: the first was formed by the palace itself, the museum and the park wall; the second consisted of nine bastioned earthen fronts, preceded by a palisade ditch; the third, forming a redoubt, was an eight-pointed star fort, built of earth, in the middle of which was a large square building called *the China*, which had served as a porcelain factory. Much too considerable for the garrison they were to defend, these works were not safe from a surprise attack. The English forced the first enclosure on the night of 13 August. They cut the aqueduct which supplied water to the garrison; and, during the day of the 14th, they were preparing to scale the second enclosure and the star fort, when the Governor capitulated, not daring to wait for the result of the assault. The capture of the Retiro delivered to the enemy one hundred and eighty cannons, twenty thousand fusils, and rich magazines.

The abandonment of Madrid and the whole of New Castile was not the last consequence of the loss of the Battle of Arapiles. Marshal Soult was forced to evacuate Andalusia⁴. On 25 August, he lifted the blockade of Cadiz, and having gathered his army at Granada and Jaen, he retreated through the Kingdom of Murcia, skirting the mountains. The Army of the South, organized since February into six infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, was fifty thousand men strong, seven thousand horses and seventy-two cannons: it dragged in its wake three thousand sick and a large quantity of baggage. It arrived unmolested on 19 September at Almanza in the Kingdom of Valencia, where it joined forces with the army of King Joseph and that of Marshal Suchet. This Marshal had managed to create immense resources in Valencia through his good administration, which were very useful in reorganizing the armies of the South and the Center, which were in complete destitution. It took nothing less than this concentration of forces to force Lord Wellington to return to Portugal.

³ See supporting documents, nos. 103 and 104.

⁴ See supporting documents, no. 105.

General Clauzel had not been followed in the direction of Burgos. His army had lost eleven thousand five hundred and ninety men killed, wounded, or captured, both at the Battle of the Arapiles and in the retreat, and more than fifteen thousand soldiers had broken away to engage in raiding. He did, however, manage to rally some of the lost men; and, in the first days of August, he found himself at the command of twenty thousand infantry, two thousand cavalry, and fifty cannons. He then resumed the offensive, reoccupied Valladolid⁵, and on 10 August, detached General Foy with two divisions to relieve Astorga, where General Rémond was besieged with twelve hundred men by the Spanish Army of Galicia. General Foy arrived at the moment when this place had just capitulated due to lack of supplies, after sixty-seven days of blockade or siege. He withdrew the French garrisons that had been left in the forts of Toro and Zamora.

Lord Wellington, awakened by the offensive attitude of this army, which he had long believed incapable of undertaking anything, left Madrid on September 1st to march on Valladolid, leaving three divisions on the Tagus to observe, which were soon reinforced by General Hill's corps coming from Extremadura. General Clauzel evacuated Valladolid on September 7th and retreated to Burgos. Lord Wellington, who was following closely behind him, was joined on the 14th by the Spanish Army of Galicia, about fifteen thousand men strong under the command of Castaños. On the 17th, General Clauzel, who had been reinforced by General Caffarelli, who had arrived with eight thousand men from the Army of the North, remained in position in front of Burgos. On the morning of the 18th, he continued his retreat, leaving two thousand men in the castle of Burgos under the command of General Dubreton, and withdrew to Briviesca where he halted in a strong position. Soon after, General Souham, returning from leave, rejoined the Army of Portugal. Finding himself senior in rank to General Clauzel, he assumed command. Lord Wellington occupied the city of Burgos on the 18th, and instead of pursuing the remnants of the Army of Portugal to the bitter end, he undertook the siege of the castle. (*See the account of the defense, Volume IV.*)

General Dubreton thwarted all the enemy's attacks and held them for over a month beneath the walls of Burgos. This fine defense cost Lord Wellington precious time and the fruits of the Battle of the Arapiles. General Souham took advantage of this time to rebuild his army and gather supplies. He received ten thousand five hundred reinforcements and thirteen hundred horses from France; he was joined by nine thousand five hundred infantry, thirteen hundred cavalry, and sixteen cannons from the Army of the North, and thus found himself at the command of forty-one thousand men. On 17 October, he set out to relieve Burgos.

Elsewhere, Marshal Soult had left Almanza on 3 October and was advancing on the Tagus by the Alicante-Madrid road with the Army of the South, about forty-five thousand strong, while the Army of the Center, twelve thousand strong, was marching from Valencia in the same direction via Requena and Cuenca. These movements prompted the retreat of the Anglo-Portuguese army. Lord Wellington raised the siege of Burgos on 22 October, and retreated to the Tormes, successively blowing up the bridges of the Carrion, the Pisuerga and the Douro. He was closely followed by General Souham, whose advance guard had several brilliant successes, and caused them to lose 4,500 men, including 2,000 prisoners. The French army entered Valladolid on 29 October; it forced the Douro River at Tordesillas and extended its right as far as Toro and

⁵ See supporting documents, no. 106.

Zamora. General Souham, wishing to avoid a general action, halted on the Douro to await the arrival of the armies of the South and Center.

Marshal Soult, on leaving Almanza with the Army of the South, had ordered General Drouet, commander of the right wing, to besiege the fort of Chinchilla, which, situated on a junction of the main road and defended by two hundred and forty men, greatly hindered the passage. This fort, built on the summit of an almost sheer rock, was surrounded by an ancient wall, preceded by a large ditch cut into the rock; its stronghold was a large tower twenty-seven meters high. On 3 October, the Saint-Pol Brigade captured the town, which was located at the foot of the fort on the slope of the rock, and which was surrounded by a wall. After five days of work, they succeeded in opening a breach in the fort's enclosure, and in making a ramp of fascines to descend into the ditch. They were preparing to launch an assault when lightning struck the tower serving as a redoubt, killing eight Spaniards and wounding forty, including the Governor, who decided to capitulate. The fort was dismantled, and General Drouet continued his march on Aranjuez.

At the end of October, the two armies of the South and the Center arrived on the Tagus. General Hill, not hoping to be able to defend this river, which was then fordable, hastily retreated to Alba de Tormes, where he supported the right of Lord Wellington, posted on the Tormes at Salamanca. Madrid was occupied by the French on November 2nd; and on the 10th, Marshal Soult arrived in sight of Alba de Tormes, from where he established communication with the Army of Portugal, which had advanced as far as Anaya de Alba. With the Spanish occupying the Alba fort, which defended the Tormes bridge, the French troops crossed the ford below the city and established themselves on the 14th near Mozarbez. Lord Wellington had taken the strong position of Arapiles. He had only sixty thousand men left, while the three French armies combined offered a force of ninety-five thousand men. The opportunity was favorable for delivering a decisive battle. Marshal Soult, by directing a corps to Tamames, could outpace the enemy at San Muñoz, where the road to Ciudad Rodrigo crosses the Huebra, which, bordered by marshes on both banks, forms a defile difficult to cross, and then, with the mass of his troops, attack the Anglo-Portuguese army head-on. But, fearing that the roads were poor, he preferred not to divide his forces. On the 15th, he approached Salamanca.

The sight of the Arapiles battlefield and the proximity of the enemy excited the ardor of the French soldiers; they loudly demanded combat, and were already accusing their leaders of being slow, when several explosions were heard from the direction of Salamanca, announcing that the Anglo-Portuguese army was beginning its retreat. A few hours of daylight remained, and that was enough to crush the enemy, who were marching within cannon range, presenting their flank to the French line. The signal for the attack was about to be given when a thick fog, which had reigned since morning, suddenly turned into a terrible storm, the likes of which had never been seen before. The rain, falling in torrents, soon turned the battlefield into an inextricable quagmire. The ever-increasing darkness soon increased the horror of the scene and made it impossible for the French troops to act. Lord Wellington, master of the two roads to Ciudad Rodrigo, managed to withdraw behind the Águeda, where he took up quarters. The French vanguard stopped only a league from Ciudad Rodrigo, and picked up a large quantity of baggage, abandoned carriages, and four thousand prisoners, among whom was Lord Paget, commanding the English First Division. After the long and arduous marches they had just made,

the three French armies needed rest; they took up quarters between the Douro and the Tagus. King Joseph returned to his capital, and Marshal Soult established his headquarters at Toledo, with his right wing at Salamanca, which he occupied with two divisions. Command of the Army of the South was given to General Gazan, that of the Army of Portugal was given to General Reille, and General Drouet had that of the Army of the Center.

At the time when Lord Wellington was taking the offensive against Marshal Marmont, the English, united with the Spanish, were leading an attack against Marshal Suchet in the Kingdom of Valencia. Twelve thousand men of the Army of Murcia, under the command of Joseph O'Donnell, brother of the Count of La Bisbal, advanced on July 21st on Castella, in front of Alicante, where General Delort was stationed with an advance guard of about three thousand infantry and twelve hundred cavalry. The fleet that was to land at Alicante, the English army of Sicily, commanded by General Maitland, an army of seven thousand men, and reinforced by five thousand Spaniards taken from Majorca, appeared at the same time at the mouth of the Júcar. General Delort gathered his troops and overthrew O'Donnell's columns. The Spanish lost 500 men killed, 2,800 prisoners, 10,000 fusils, three flags, two cannons, and several caissons. Upon hearing the news of this rout, General Maitland did not dare leave Alicante, where he and his troops had landed.

After the departure of the Armies of the South and Center, Marshal Suchet had to repel further attempts by the Anglo-Spanish army. On 5 October, twelve-hundred English troops, under the command of General Donkin, landed with artillery near the fort of Dénia, east of Alicante; they were repulsed and forced to re-embark. To prevent larger attacks, Marshal Suchet marched with three divisions against the enemy army stationed in front of Alicante; but the English held their ground under the guns of the fortress; and, after various engagements, the French troops returned to their quarters. Marshal Suchet began new works to fortify his positions, mainly at Mogente, on the main road from Alicante to Alcoy, and also on the seaward side.

In Catalonia, General Decaen and General Maurice Mathieu agreed to attack Montserrat, which the English Colonel Green was defending with Spanish troops and an Anglo-Catalan Legion. The enemy was strongly entrenched and had as a stronghold a nearly inaccessible fort on the top of the rocks of the Hermitage of Saint-Dimas. The position and the fort were captured on 29 July after the most vigorous attacks. General Decaen had all defenses razed and the buildings set on fire. When the English fleet, carrying the Army of Sicily on board, appeared near Palamós, he hastily returned to Girona, fearing a landing. He then had several encounters in Vic with General Lacy's troops, united with the various bands of Baron de Eroles, of Rovira, of Milans, etc. These bands were so numerous that no fewer than seven to eight thousand men were needed to communicate from Girona with Barcelona and Tarragona⁶.

On the coast of Biscay, the English fleet that Lord Wellington had sent to support Mendizabál's bands and prevent General Caffarelli from coming to the aid of Marshal Marmont, appeared in sight of Santoña on 20 June. On the 24th, some troops landed in the port of Algorta who destroyed the coastal fortifications. On 6 July, it captured Castro-Urdiales, a small place that became very useful for communicating with the insurgents. This fleet was repulsed three times before Guadaíra, twice before Bilbao, and once before Santander, where it had landed troops and

⁶ See supporting documents, no. 107.

attacked the forts built in front of the city. Held back by all these demonstrations, General Caffarelli had only been able to provide limited relief to the Army of Portugal, except in August when he concentrated the Army of the North at Vitoria to advance to Burgos, after evacuating Bilbao and Santander, whose fortifications he blew up. The enemy was then able to move freely along the coast, from La Corunna to Guadaíra, and to completely control the provinces of Santander, Biscay, and part of Gipuzkoa. Santoña found itself blockaded by land and sea, and news of the coast could only be received via San Sebastian. The Minister of War ordered the recapture of Bilbao and the laying of siege to Castro Urdiales. The first of these cities was reoccupied on 27 August. A column communicated with Santoña; but the siege of Castro Urdiales had to be postponed due to lack of resources to undertake it.

General Caffarelli left Vitoria on October 11th, with two infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade, to join the Army of Portugal at Pancorbo and cooperate in that army's offensive against Burgos. Upon his return in November, he set out in pursuit of the Spanish bands, who had taken advantage of his absence to act with renewed vigor. The Dumoustier's division of the Imperial Guard left the Army of the North to return to France. General Palombini's Italian division replaced it and, together with the Aussenac Brigade, remained responsible for covering Biscay.

In Navarre and on the borders of Aragon, Mina spread terror and controlled the country. Generals Abbé, Caffarelli, and Dorsenne had successively made various attempts against him in February and March. But as soon as his bands were pressed too hard, they dispersed, hid their weapons, and mingled with the population; then, at a given signal, they reappeared as if by magic at another point. Such was the success of these maneuvers of Mina to intercept the communications, that several French generals had found it more advantageous to pay him a toll for the convoys than to risk losing everything by wanting to free themselves from them. In the month of May, General Reille having entered Aragon with two divisions, set out in pursuit of him; he defeated him in several encounters, wounded him and killed four hundred of his men. Sometime later, Mina, having been surprised near Huesca by the brigade of General Pannetier, only had time to escape in his shirt by the roof of his house.

No. 98

*Letter from Marshal Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, to
Marshal Jourdan, Major General of His Catholic Majesty.*

Cañizal, 28 June 1812.

M. Marshal, I have received the letter that H. M. did me the honor of writing to me on 18 June. I had the honor of writing to him on the 22nd to inform him of my position. Since that time, it has not improved, since having the right to rely on the assistance promised to me by General Caffarelli, having counted on it, and not having received it, the result has been faulty operations. The assurance that General Caffarelli had given me that troops were on the march to join me, and the suspension of the siege of Salamanca that my presence had occasioned, had persuaded me to suspend my operations against the enemy. On the 26th, in the afternoon, having been informed by the sound of the cannon and by the signals from the town that the siege was being vigorously resumed, I had to, given the danger of this fort, take the decision to act alone; and as, given the strength of the position that the enemy occupied on the right of the Tormes, I could not reasonably act except by the left bank, an operation which, to succeed, could only be undertaken at night, I made my arrangements to march on the evening of the 28th. Unfortunately, during the day of the 27th, a violent fire having set all the buildings of the fort ablaze, and the place being open, the garrison found itself in such a situation that it had to surrender at discretion, at the moment when I had the well-founded hope of delivering it. The operation that I would have carried out on the evening of the 27th, I would have carried out three days earlier, without the promises of help from General Caffarelli; but it would have been impossible for me to deliver such an important battle for Spain before the arrival of powerful, officially announced relief, on which I had the right to count. Despite this unfortunate result, the fort of Salamanca will have, in large part, fulfilled its purpose, since it will have delayed by ten days the enemy's plans, which are nothing less than to drive us out of Spain, and will have given the other armies time to form their detachments, if they want to participate in the northern operations. The commander and the garrison have covered themselves with glory by their vigorous resistance, and the enemy has lost three times more men than we had in the fort. Finally, when we have won a battle against the English, we will easily reoccupy it, because it appears in such an upheaval that it is impossible for the enemy to defend it today. When General Caffarelli's troops have finally joined me, if the enemy does not come to the Douro, I will march on Salamanca. I need this support to fight the enemy with confidence. He is now twelve thousand men stronger than me, not counting the Spanish. General Hill has not joined Lord Wellington; but his arrival is announced as very imminent. It is therefore highly desirable that H. M. send relief through General Trelliard, whom he has informed me of, before the arrival of Count d'Erlon. The affairs of Spain will be decided between the Tormes and the Douro, or on the Douro; everything else is secondary. I will take up position in front of the Douro, while awaiting the means to act offensively.

Signed: MARSHAL DUKE OF RAGUSA.

No. 99

Letter from Marshal Duke of Ragusa to King Joseph.

Rueda, 1 July 1812.

Sire,

I have the honor to address to Your Majesty duplicates of a letter I had the honor of writing to you and of a letter I addressed to Marshal Jourdan.

The capture of the Salamanca fort having changed my position and that of the enemy on the Tormes, I set out on the morning of 28 June to meet my reinforcements. The enemy had prepared their movement; they followed me immediately, however, without anything more than outpost engagements. I took my line of operations through Tordesillas, because it is the shortest line, and I led the army here today, after having detached a division on the lower Douro, in order to defend this river and to cover myself from the movements of the Portuguese corps of Silveira which, it is assured, has crossed the Esla and is in front of Zamora. Tomorrow I will bring the army closer to Tordesillas. It is from this point that I will maneuver to defend the Douro, or that I will take the offensive when reinforcements have joined me. I absolutely need fifteen hundred horse and six or seven thousand more infantry, to be able to operate on the left bank of the Douro with the probability of success. The enemy army has in line nearly fifty thousand men, including five thousand English cavalry, although General Hill has not joined them: it is true that the latter has no more than eight thousand men. I was unable to muster more than thirty-two thousand men. General Caffarelli informed me on 10 June that he was bringing me everything he had available, that is, the cavalry, twenty-two guns, and seven thousand five hundred infantry. By the evening of the 28th, not a single infantryman, cavalryman, or gun had arrived in Valladolid. However, if he can have any legitimate excuse for not sending infantry, he cannot have any for his cavalry, which cannot be of any use to him in the mountains, and for his artillery, which is stationed in Burgos without being of any use to him.

The reports announce that the Portuguese have crossed the Esla, as I had the honor of telling Y. M. earlier. I am also assured that the Army of Galicia has crossed the Órbigo and that Astorga is blockaded. Despite the presence of the enemy on all sides, I am without anxiety for the future and confident of a glorious result, if I receive the reinforcement I have requested, which consists of fifteen hundred horses, six or seven thousand infantrymen and some guns. I therefore dare to beg Y. M., if you can send me your cavalry from the Tagus, to do so in this circumstance. I have preferably posted the bulk of my forces on the upper Douro, because, if I am reduced for some time to defending the Douro, I run no risk of seeing my line of operations compromised, and because this river is of little importance in this part; while, stronger below, it is made even better for defense by the forts that exist there. I hope that in eight days at the latest, after receiving the reinforcements I need, the enemy's plans will have vanished, and I will have returned to Salamanca. If I receive no help, I will be able to combat events, but it will be impossible for me to control them.

I have the honor to be, etc.

Signed: MARSHAL DUKE OF RAGUSA.

No. 100

*Letter from Marshal Soult, Duke of Dalmatia, to King
Joseph.*

Sainte-Marie, 16 July 1812.

Sire,

I have just received the note that Your Majesty did me the honor of writing to me on 6 July. I cannot send the ten thousand men Your Majesty requests to Toledo without simultaneously evacuating Andalusia, where all points are mutually commanding. If Your Majesty had received my reports, you would have seen that Count d'Erlon has been forced by a corps of thirty thousand enemies, commanded by General Hill, to lean against the entrance to Andalusia. I am reinforcing him with all the troops I can command without lifting the siege of Cadiz. I am once again ordering him imperatively to attack the enemy and drive them back beyond the Guadiana; then the Count d'Erlon will establish himself in Mérida and extend his influence to the valley of the Tagus. I came to Sainte-Marie to prepare to lift the siege of Cadiz. I am returning to Seville, from where I will go myself to Extremadura, if my orders are not carried out there. Sire, I am deeply impressed by the situation of Your Majesty and the state of affairs in general; whatever troops I send you, they will never be enough to reestablish them, unless the entire Army of the South marches; then we must completely evacuate Andalusia, and this movement causes the loss of Valencia. We cannot live on the Tagus or in Extremadura. From one position to another we will go as far as the Ebro: this can be avoided. We will be able, by regaining the initiative, to save six thousand sick or wounded whom I may be forced to abandon, as well as two hundred thousand Spaniards who, having declared for Your Majesty, would be lost beyond help. We can also save two thousand guns, the only artillery material currently existing in Spain. A single disposition from Your Majesty can achieve this result, which will shorten the current war by at least six campaigns. I propose to Your Majesty to come yourself to Andalusia with all the troops that you can bring. If the number is considerable, we will be able to increase to twenty-five or thirty thousand men the expeditionary army that will be in Extremadura; thus we will bring the theater of war back to the left bank of the Tagus, and the Army of Portugal, finding itself freed, will be able to get back into line. Whatever happens, Your Majesty would find himself at the head of a fine army, in the event of a battlefield attack, and if we were unfortunate, the worst course of action would be to withdraw to the Army of Aragon to continue the campaign. If Your Majesty does not take this course, I do not see how matters can be resolved, nor how to avoid not only immense losses, but also harming the Emperor's service and damaging the splendor of his arms. I have the honor to repeat to Your Majesty that I cannot make any detachment beyond the Sierra Morena without being in a position to evacuate Andalusia and march with the entire army. I request positive orders from Your Majesty on this matter.

I have the honor to be, etc.

Signed: MARSHAL DUKE OF DALMATIA.

No. 101

*Letter from Marshal Suchet, Duke of Albuféra, to King
Joseph.*

Valencia, 30 June 1812.

Sire,

I had the honor of responding to the letter that Y. M. wrote to me on 29 May, with my dispatches of the 13th and 19th of this month. My position has not changed; the number of sick people has increased, and the bands have temporarily seized Segorbe and Teruel. The day before yesterday and yesterday, your notes of the 18th and 19th reached me; I see with regret that Y. M. persists in not believing the accuracy of my reports. Convinced, however, that Y. M. will decide to take a position on the evacuation of Valencia, I continue to assemble the Third Division; and, in a few days, Brigadier General Lafosse will be returned, with the Eighth Neapolitan Line Regiment, to Cuenca. General Habert, who commands this division, is on leave in Paris; and Division Generals Harispe and Musnier are quite seriously ill. On the 27th, six thousand soldiers were embarked at Alicante on two English vessels, three frigates and several brigs; these troops were replaced in the place by part of those of O'Donnell. All the information that I have collected leads me to believe that this expedition, commanded by the English General Rotch [Major General Andrew Ross], will meet at Majorca with the English Lieutenant General Wirttingham [Major General Samuel Whittingham, Spanish Army], who can dispose of five thousand men and eight hundred horses, all Spanish or German, to then go and disembark in Catalonia, where they have been expected and announced for quite a long time; this expedition is all the more serious because, prepared and directed by Henry O'Donnell, leader of the regency, we must expect that, following his favorite plan, he will seek to bring troops into France, in order to operate a powerful diversion. According to the orders that I had received from the Emperor, and the provisions contained in the dispatch of Y. M. of 23 May, which confirmed them, I had everything ready to go to Catalonia, in order to consult with Generals Decaen and Maurice Mathieu, when your last notes came to suspend my departure, and oblige me to warn these generals that circumstances prevented me from going near them. I thus find myself paralyzed, and unable to do good; because, on the one hand, I do not have enough troops to go and attack the gathering of the Army of Murcia, formed at Aspe, a good military position; on the other, I cannot go to Catalonia; and finally, the help that I could have for Madrid will always be, due to the weakness of my troops, so insignificant, that it will neither be enough to protect the capital, nor change any of the dispositions of the English army, even if I were authorized to evacuate Valencia, which would oblige me to form several garrisons of strongholds, and would not allow me to detach four thousand men. I am well persuaded that the most dangerous enemies of the Emperor in the Peninsula are the English. I am truly impressed with the importance that there would be in being able to send to Y. M. a body of fifteen to twenty thousand men; but when the impossibility of doing so is as demonstrated as it is at this moment, is it not my duty to inform you of the advantage that I see, in the state of things, in preserving our conquests in the Kingdom of Valencia. They assure two points of retreat there, and consequently to the army of the center, if it were momentarily forced to move away from Madrid; they offer to the Army of the South an assured retreat, since, according to the recent successes won by this army, it could, if necessary,

in four days, give a hand to the Army of Aragon. I am informed that General Caffarelli has marched on Valladolid, and that the Palombini Division has surely joined the Army of the North. I am assured that fifteen thousand men, of which all the third battalions are part, have entered by Bayonne to relieve the posts of this army. Marshal Marmont is therefore in a position to reunite the greater part of the Army of Portugal; and I doubt that, in the present state of England, Lord Wellington would dare to risk a battle. He has too much to lose, and the French army too much glory to acquire, to engage so far from his ships. I persist in believing that his action is aimed at removing all the grain from the Kingdom of Leon, and to force Your Majesty, through his great movement, to evacuate Andalusia, or any other point. But even supposing, which I am far from believing, that the English come to a battle and win, my arguments in this case only gain more force, since Valencia is the point that can ensure the retreat of the other armies. Firmly convinced that any detachment of the Army of Aragon must compromise the fate of the provinces of Valencia and Catalonia, without bringing about any effective change in the position of the Army of the Center, I am persuaded, Sire, that the most appropriate course to take is to order myself to act according to the instructions of 24 April, which I had the honor to send you, and which you confirmed to me in your letter of 23 May, by maintaining a post at Cuenca and a detachment at Requena. I could gather five to six thousand men, rallying all my posts, to drive the army away from Murcia, or move quickly, with fifteen hundred men, to Catalonia, to prevent, if there is time, the harm that the enemy landings will not fail to do.

Sire, I devote every moment of my life to serving the Emperor well. You should not be surprised if I have religiously executed his orders in the government of the provinces he has placed under my command. I have ensured that discipline among the troops, morality and order in the country and in the army, are maintained. From the moment Your Majesty ordered me to send troops to Cuenca, I made known to him, I had to make known to him, my regrets at seeing the departure of a corps whose absence was essentially detrimental to the service of the army. I also had to communicate to Y. M. the declarations that I addressed to the Emperor, on 25 March and 27 April, on the impossibility of forming any detachment on Madrid. From the moment Y. M. asked me for fusils, I hastened to send him a thousand; already two hundred horses have been purchased for your troops; three million out of ten, from the extraordinary contribution of Valencia, have been paid into your treasury; finally, Sire, I have neglected no opportunity to demonstrate to you the ardent desire I had to support you in everything for the interests of the Emperor and the glory of his arms. I see with deep regret that I have not gained your trust. In this position, I find myself in the unpleasant necessity of urging Y. M. to ask the Emperor to give me a successor, who, more fortunate than I, can be trusted in his relations with Your Majesty, and sufficiently deserve your esteem, not to be tasked with setting the extraordinary example of leaving a vast command where his presence is indispensable, to go twenty steps from his headquarters with twelve hundred men.

I am, etc.

Signed: MARSHAL DUKE OF ALBUFERA.

No. 102

Letter from King Joseph to the Duke of Feltre, Minister of War.

Madrid, 18 July 1812.

Duke, I have just received news that the Palombini Division is complying with the orders I gave it. I eagerly await its arrival to come to the aid of the Army of Portugal.

I have ordered the troops of the Army of Aragon, who are in the province of Cuenca, to join me; but so far I cannot yet expect them to arrive. However, I will leave without them as soon as the Italian Division arrives. The few troops of the Army of the Center are assembled near Madrid. The cavalry should be at Navalcarnero tomorrow. All the central provinces have been evacuated, including the positions of Somosierra, Beiträge, etc. I would not have been reduced to these unfortunate extremities, if the Commander-in-chief of the Army of the North had obeyed the orders that I have so often given him, to assist the Army of Portugal at all costs, by temporarily abandoning the points which require garrisons, as I have just done. I repeat to you, M. Duke, if the Emperor does not find the means to make the generals of the Armies of the North, of Aragon and of the South obey me, Spain is lost, and with it the French army. I have already sent word to you, and I repeat it again, because circumstances are becoming more serious every day, that the generals who think only of their provinces, and not of the whole of the operations, be relieved of all command, for the example of their successors; that they may have no other instructions than that of obeying me; or that the Emperor does not condemn me to be a helpless witness to the dishonor of his arms and the loss of this country. I therefore confirm everything I have already written to you in my letter of yesterday on this subject.

Signed: JOSEPH.

No. 103

*Letter from Marshal Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, to King
Joseph.*

Arévalo, 25 July 1812.

Sire,

I have the honor to report to Y. M. the events that have transpired up to my arrival on the Douro, and the reasons that brought me there. Having increased my artillery and cavalry, and General Bonet's division having joined me, I set about resuming the offensive. On the 17th of this month, after maneuvering for four or five days on my right in the direction of Toro, to deceive the enemy, I emerged by the Tordesillas bridge and arrived without difficulty on the Rueda plateau. The same day, the army camped at Nava del Rey. On the 18th, having surprised the enemy's advance guard at Torrecilla de la Orden, I pushed them back vigorously and forced them to retreat more than three leagues, with great haste and the greatest danger, constantly under my cannon. That day I arrived on the banks of the Guareña, where the enemy took up position. The strength of this position having prevented me from attacking them, I maneuvered to effect the crossing of this river, which took place on the 20th. The enemy, who had followed my movement, tried to seize the plateaus that made my operation safe; but they could not succeed, and we maneuvered constantly under each other's guns. This type of operation is the only one that suits the English, who have a particular talent for taking up positions, and who must be thwarted as much as possible, by preventing them from establishing themselves there before fighting. On the 20th, the enemy moved towards the strong position of San-Christobal in front of Salamanca. On the 21st, I crossed the Tormes, after having seized the post of Alba. The army positioned itself between Alba de Tormes and Salamanca at the head of the woods. During the night of the 21st to the 22nd, the English army crossed the Tormes, and took up position opposite me, three-quarters of a league away. I went to reconnoiter it at daybreak, and I spent the morning making arrangements, first with a view to a good defensive position, and then with a view to attacking, if circumstances led me to hope for advantages. After the arrangements I had made, everything seemed to point to the most favorable chances. I believed it necessary to occupy a plateau on our left which would complete our defensive position, and which at the same time would be very useful in the event that we took an offensive action, which I had almost decided to do. I had this plateau occupied by the Fifth Division and the horse artillery reserve, with formal orders not to advance beyond it. As it was possible that the enemy, believing us to be masters of this plateau, would decide to attack it before I had time to gather all our resources, I ordered two divisions to move closer together to be able to support the Fifth there. General Maucune drove out the English detachment which occupied the heights, and overthrew it. Until then we had had nothing but successes, and everything indicated that they would be complete. I judged that it was necessary to quickly bring in new troops to act vigorously on the point where General Maucune was located, and to prevent the enemy, who was gathering his forces, from standing up to him. I immediately gathered all those within my reach, and I was busy leading them and taking command of this part of the line, when, by a cruel fatality, and at the moment when my presence was most necessary, a shot from a grapeshot cannon knocked me down, shattering my right arm and causing two large wounds in my side, which put me in no condition

to maintain command. The anarchy which followed this accident prevented the measures which I had ordered from being followed (which contributed to prolonging it was that General Bonet, to whom the command fell as the most senior divisional general, was also wounded a few moments after me), so that General Maucune, after having had very fine successes, overwhelmed by the number of the enemy, was obliged to withdraw. The troops which came to his aid, not having a united front, were also forced to withdraw, after having performed prodigies of valor. Finally, Sire, after three hours of fighting, the troops abandoned the battlefield. General Clauzel, who commands the army, thought it necessary to recross the Tormes, and must take up position on the right bank of the Douro. The state in which I find myself forces me to give only a very brief account to Y. M.; when I can, I will have the honor of entering into greater detail with you on this event, which retraces with rare energy the caprices of fortune, and the exchange of the most flattering hopes for the saddest facts. The army has to regret the loss of a good number of officers of all ranks. Generals Ferey, Thomières, and Desgraviers perished; General Bonet had his thigh pierced by a bullet; General Maine was wounded, as was General Clauzel, but the latter's wound was minor. Our loss is estimated at nearly five thousand men. The English loss must be infinitely greater; it is difficult to express the damage our artillery inflicted on them.

I have, etc.

Signed: MARSHAL DUKE OF RAGUSA.

No. 104

*Letter from the Duke of Feltre, Minister of War, to Marshal
Marmont, Duke of Ragusa.*

Paris, 14 November 1812.

Marshal, when, on 18 August, I had the honor of replying to the letters that Y. Exc. had addressed to me through his Aide-de-camp, Mr. Fabvier, to provide me with details relating to the battle of 22 July, I took care to inform you that it was up to the Emperor to judge everything relating to this matter, on which I had conveyed to him everything you had addressed to me. His Majesty, in replying to me, made known to me his way of seeing and judging matters, and ordered me on this occasion to put various questions to you, to which the Emperor demands a categorical answer from you. If I have delayed until now in addressing these questions to you, it was to await your recovery, and to conform in this to the intentions of H. E. M.; now I have only to fulfill the duty his orders have imposed on me towards you.

The Emperor, in his examination of your operations, started from a principle that you cannot ignore: that you must consider the King as your Commander-in-chief, and that since your movements are subordinate to the general system adopted by H. C. M., you must always take his orders before undertaking operations that deviate from this system. Placed by a series of general dispositions at Salamanca, it was quite simple to defend yourself there if you were attacked, but you could not move several marches from this point without notifying your Commander-in-chief. I cannot conceal from you, Marshal, that the Emperor regards your manner of acting in

the indicated case as formal insubordination and disobedience to his orders. However, you have done even more: you left your defensive position on the Douro, where you could have been helped by reinforcements from Madrid, to take the offensive against the enemy, without waiting for the King's orders, nor for the help he was able to send you. No doubt, you thought that they were useless to you; and the hope of success that you believed you could achieve alone led you to act without waiting for reinforcements, of which the King's proximity gave you the certainty. But this is precisely what the Emperor condemns, since you allowed yourself to give battle without being authorized to do so, and you have thereby compromised the glory of French arms and the service of the Emperor. If, at least, in deciding to take the risk of a battle, you had done what depended on you to ensure its success, one might suppose that you feared letting a favorable opportunity slip away; but, through unexplained haste, you did not even want to wait for the cavalry support of the Army of the North, which was so important to you, and of which you were certain, by delaying the battle for only two days. This conduct, so difficult to understand, made all the more impression on the Emperor, since H. M. searched in vain in your report for the motives that led you to act. He found nothing there that would have informed her of the true state of affairs; and, as he wishes to be enlightened in this regard, he demands from you a precise and categorical answer to the following questions:

Why did you not inform the King that you had evacuated Salamanca by several marches, and ask his orders on the course you should take?

Why did you abandon your defensive position on the Douro and switch from the defensive to the offensive, without waiting for the reinforcements you had requested?

Why did you allow yourself to give battle without orders from your Commander-in-chief?

Finally, why didn't you delay for at least two days to secure the support of the cavalry you knew was on the march?

I invite you, Marshal, to send me an answer to these questions as soon as possible, so that I can place them before the Emperor. I earnestly desire that it be of a nature to satisfy him and that it provide him with the explanations he needs to lessen the painful impression that events must have necessarily made on his mind.

Yours faithfully, etc.

Signed: DUKE OF FELTRE.

No. 105

Letter from King Joseph to Marshal Soult, Duke of Dalmatia.

Segovia, 29 July 1812.

Marshal, my letter of the 6th of this month informed you that the Army of Portugal had withdrawn on the 1st to the right bank of the Douro, and that the army was present on the left bank. The assistance I had requested from the Army of the North had not arrived, and at the same time, I was very worried about the movements of General Hill, who, having before him, on the 3rd of this month, only eleven thousand men from Count d'Erlon's corps, could easily have made a detachment of eighteen to twenty thousand men against Madrid.

In such difficult circumstances, I ordered you, on the 7th of this month, to send a force of ten thousand men to Toledo, and at the same time I gave orders to reunite the troops of the Army of the Center, maintaining garrisons only in Madrid and Toledo.

As soon as this reunification was effected, I left Madrid on the 21st of this month with fourteen thousand men, with the intention of facilitating the crossing of the Douro for the Army of Portugal and then joining them to risk a decisive battle.

But Marshal Marmont had already determined to cross this river on the 18th, and I learned of his movement at Villacastin on the 24th. I directed my march based on this information, in the hope of joining the Army of Portugal before it came to a general engagement.

Unfortunately, it was too late; Marshal Marmont, following the English army, which had retreated towards Salamanca, had crossed the Tormes River to attack the enemy's rear and forced them to fight. The incident took place on the 22nd. Marshal Marmont was wounded and forced to hand over command to General Clauzel. Several generals were killed or wounded, and the army recrossed the Tormes River after suffering greatly.

These details were given to me in a letter from Marshal Marmont, which reached me on the 25th at Blascosancho, where I had advanced, intending to effect my junction the next day. At the same time, I received one from General Clauzel, much more alarming, according to which I could no longer *doubt that the Army of Portugal, judging itself incapable of resuming the offensive, had no other course to take than to recross the Douro, to reach Valladolid before the English*; General Clauzel added *that he would only remain on the Douro if Lord Wellington marched on Madrid*.

Indeed, the army withdrew on the 25th to Olmedo; I then had nothing else to do, in closing in on Madrid in short increments, but to try, through the movements of my cavalry, to slow the enemy's pursuit, and I succeeded in this by attracting a corps of twenty thousand men, who advanced along the Villacastin road to the Voltoya bridge.

However, new letters from Marshal Duke of Ragusa and General Clauzel persuaded me to move on Segovia. Both wrote to me that the enemy's pursuit was less intense; that they wished to be

able to join me, and I believed it my duty, by this move, to facilitate their means of doing so as far as depended on me; but I do not yet know if this junction will be able to take place, my positive intention being to in no case compromise my communications with Madrid and Andalusia, and I also do not know if General Clauzel will want to abandon the defense of the north to come and join me.

The English are today at Olmedo, and I do not know what side General Clauzel will have decided on. In the meantime, I will waste no time in informing you of the current state of affairs and giving you formal orders to evacuate Andalusia and march, with all your forces, to Toledo. This is the only way to restore order, and the details I have gone into regarding the events that have just taken place will easily convince you that it is the only resource left to us.

Signed: JOSEPH.

No. 106

*Letter from General Clauzel, Commander of the
Army of Portugal, to the Duke of Feltre, Minister of War.*

Valladolid, 18 August 1812.

Monsignor,

I have moved the entire army closer to the Douro. The difficulties in maintaining its position there are almost insurmountable; all the inhabitants are in flight, and the numerous guerrilla bands are forcibly driving them away. Thus, the farmer, initially murdered by our soldiers, is punished, imprisoned, or deported by the guerrillas if he remains in the vicinity of the French army. As a result, the army is forced to go and gather supplies in front of the enemy and is always short of everything; consequently, any movement becomes impossible. Our position in the middle of Castile is exactly the same as the one we found ourselves in Portugal, a position that caused our ruin there. However, I managed to stop the first disturbances. More than fifty soldiers were tried by the provost court and executed: the example had a positive effect. The officers, even the senior officers, were convinced by experience that the punishments would also reach them if they themselves did not stop and punish the disturbances they tolerated, which had produced an abominable spirit in the army. Since then, I have had the satisfaction of seeing the army marching in good order, the inhabitants and their homes respected, and much less looting than before.

The army has twenty thousand infantry, eighteen hundred horses, fifty guns, and one and a half million infantry cartridges. I despair that four or five thousand marauders will return to us, who followed the convoy from Andalusia to Burgos and Vitoria, murdering and pillaging everywhere, and wanting to go to France. As the army is not strong enough and well enough recovered to carry it immediately to the left bank of the Douro and in the direction of Madrid; as I am in a hurry to resupply Astorga and Zamora; as there is no danger in making a detachment to save the garrisons of these places, I detach two divisions for this operation. I know that the Army of

Galicia is returning in haste to its mountains; I hope that we will arrive in time at Astorga, whose garrison has been without provisions for several days. The divisions that I detach will be back on the 26th at the latest, and consequently before those that the enemy could send back from Madrid to the Douro are within range of Valladolid. By this time, the King will undoubtedly have received the help that he expects from the armies of the South and of Aragon. I will put myself in a position to follow the movements of the enemy and to meet with the King, when the armies enter into operation; or to place myself in the rear of the English army in the mountains of Avila, if I see this army closely followed by the King's army, and that I am not exposed to being engaged alone with the united forces of the enemy. If the English army does not leave Madrid until the King's armies approach, it is to be believed that General Wellington will then take his direction by Avila, the Valle Amblés, the Puerto de Villatoro, Piedrahita, and the Puente del Congosto. If this is so, I hope to cause losses to the enemy before he recrosses the Tormes. If the enemy returns with his whole army towards me, I will hold my position, although always at a short distance from him, so as to have no check to experience. Your Excellency can be persuaded that I will neglect nothing, during the time that my command lasts, to restore order to the army, and put it as soon as possible in a state of fighting; But I confess that it is a task beyond my strength, and very difficult even for those who are well-versed in commanding armies.

It is likely that the English entered Madrid on the 12th. It is reported that His Majesty had made preparations to leave the capital. There is a corps of ten thousand men, English and Portuguese, near the Douro, under observation, supported by other troops near the Guadarama. I am not counting the guerrilla bands they have at their disposal. Twelve hundred English cavalry are on the Douro. General Anson, who commands them, has his headquarters in Tudela. I am going to have him cross back to the left bank of the Douro.

I have the honor, etc.

Signed: BARON CLAUZEL.

No. 107

*Letter from General Decaen, Commander of the Army of
Catalonia, to Marshal Suchet, Duke of Albuféra.*

Barcelona, 14 September 1812.

I have just been informed, by a letter from Tarragona, dated the 12th of this month, that an emissary, who brought me one from Y. Exc., has been arrested. I regret this all the more because I am eager to have direct news from Y. Exc.

Fortunately, to alleviate the inexpressible anxiety I feel about what is happening beyond the Ebro, General Bertolotti, commander at Tarragona, has given me the satisfaction of learning that you were kind enough to inform him that H. M., having given you command of the Army of the Center, you would find yourself in a position to act, and that Prince Essling was arriving in Spain at the head of thirty thousand men.

The unfortunate events that have just occurred have had an extraordinary impact on Catalonia.

All manner of means are employed to exasperate people's minds. Recruitment is being carried out; arms are being taken up; taxes are being levied; oaths are being made to the new constitution; a price is being placed on the head of every French soldier through widely circulated proclamations; rewards are being promised to those who force them to desert; quantities of arms, munitions, clothing, and provisions are being received from the English; finally, the enemy leaders are taking every advantage of the critical circumstances, and of the fact that I have no active forces to oppose their maneuvers of uprising. Things have reached the point that I could not now go beyond the Llobregat, without having at least a force of seven to eight thousand men; because, without this number, one would be very exposed to compromise, since it would undoubtedly happen that the organized forces of the enemy, which are increasing every day, would be joined by masses of peasants, as in the early days of the Catalan War; and I am so unable to gather this force of seven to eight thousand men, that I see myself in the necessity of immediately taking the resolution to leave the place of Barcelona to itself, which will entail the painful obligation of abandoning Mataró, as well as the posts fortified for nearly a year, for the ease of communications. I dread this extremity all the more because it would not only mean losing all the fruits of the expenses incurred, as well as the losses of men and the fatigue experienced, but would also demonstrate to the enemy a weakness of means that would excessively encourage them. I therefore ask Y. Exc. to take this situation with all the consideration it requires.

It would be necessary, in the current state of affairs, to be able to bring at least ten thousand troops into Catalonia, cohorts or conscripts, it matters little, because they would replace the garrisons. With this assistance, if it is prompt, we can hope to halt the progress of the unrest and act in such a way as to be of the greatest use for operations beyond the Ebro, as well as for the advantage of the strongholds on this line, and especially Tarragona, which I am no longer able to assist.

If the mode of correspondence permitted, and if I were not convinced that Your Excellency does not need details about my situation to assess it, I would have undertaken to elaborate on my account, particularly to highlight the dire consequences that can result from an excessive lack of resources, when it has become more necessary than ever to have sufficient resources to oppose the enemy's efforts.

Since the last report I had the honor of addressing to Y. Exc., we have had several occasions to encounter enemy forces, kill a few men, wound a number, and take a few prisoners.

But, reinforced on the Llobregat, the enemy had another opportunity to attack, on 23 August, a detachment intended to relieve the post at the Molins del Rey bridge; this resulted in a loss for us of more than one hundred men killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. This unfortunate affair was mainly caused by the imprudent ardor of the officer commanding the detachment. His excessive haste in running towards the first enemies he saw led him away from an echelon which was marching to his support; he fell into an ambush and could not be rescued in time.

The infamous Lacy continues to carry out his horrible poisoning scheme. On the 6th of this month, Milans, after having a large quantity of arsenic thrown into the waters that arrive at the Capuchin fort at Mataró, attacked this post, believing he was only dealing with the dying; but Captain Chevillard's vigilance prevented the poison from taking effect. The garrison defended itself with the greatest courage for two days against three thousand enemies, who suffered twelve men killed and more than one hundred wounded. The garrison, which made several sorties, suffered eighteen men killed and forty wounded. This is the second time that Captain Chevillard has defended this post with the greatest vigor and intelligence. I had requested the rank of battalion commander for him after the first attack in May; I beg you, Marshal, to secure this reward for this brave and good officer. I intend to leave tomorrow for Girona, to provide various services there, and especially to get news; for the past month, various circumstances have prevented couriers from reaching Barcelona. I renew my requests to you, Marshal, to send funds for the army's pay, which is in dire need.

I have purchased 720,000 francs worth of wheat for the supply of Barcelona, using the funds intended for the pay. Not a single penny has yet arrived, of what was announced in May, to pay for these supplies, which I can no longer continue due to lack of funds.

I have the honor, etc.

Signed: COUNT DECAEN.
