

Translated by Greg Gorsuch
Part 7

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 1809

II

After his successes in Portugal, General Wellesley conceived the bold project of retaking Madrid. To this end, having consulted with the supreme junta of Seville and the two generals Cuesta and Venegas, who were, the first on the Guadiana, at the head of thirty-eight thousand men, the second in the province of La Mancha, with twenty-six thousand, he advanced on the 1st of July from Abrantès by Castelo Branco, Coria and Plasencia, on the right bank of the Tagus, with twenty-two thousand English and four or five thousand Portuguese. The Spanish army of General Cuesta advanced on the same side by the bridges of Almaraz and Arzobispo. On the 20th of July, these two armies joined up at Oropesa. Sir Robert Wilson was maneuvering on the left, between the Tiétar and the Alberche, with the Lusitanian Legion and some Spanish troops, in all six or eight thousand men. General Wellesley's plan was to first defeat Marshal Victor's corps, which had retreated to Talavera, and then to rally Venegas' army at Toledo in order to march on Madrid. Marshal Beresford had advanced with fifteen thousand Portuguese troops to Fuenteguinaldo near Ciudad-Rodrigo, to cover the road to Lisbon, and to secure the left flank of the English army. The Duke of Parque, who had gathered ten thousand Spaniards at Ciudad-Rodrigo itself, was to make a diversion on Salamanca. General Wellesley had judged that these troops would be sufficient to hold in check Marshal Soult, whom he believed to occupy the Kingdom of Leon alone, unaware of the arrival of Marshal Ney at Astorga, and the presence of Marshal Mortier at Valladolid.

On hearing of these movements, Marshal Soult, to whom the Emperor had given the supreme command of the Second, Fifth and Sixth Corps, began to assemble his troops and put himself in a position to act¹. On 22 July, King Joseph gave him the order to advance with all haste on Plasencia with all his forces, in order to cut the line of communication of the Anglo-Spanish army there. He himself, leaving in Madrid only General Belliard with three battalions for the garrison of the Retiro, a royal castle fortified to serve as a redoubt, he left this capital with his Guard and his reserve, and headed for Toledo, the point of concentration of all his forces.

¹ See supporting documents, no. 32.

General Sebastiani, who was covering Madrid on the La Mancha side with the Fourth Corps, managed to elude General Venegas, and also headed by forced marches for Toledo.

On 22 July, Marshal Victor had been obliged to evacuate Talavera and take refuge behind the Alberche; but, finding himself threatened in this position by the corps of Sir Robert Wilson, which had moved towards Escalona, he approached Toledo where he was joined on 25 July by the troops coming from Madrid and the corps of General Sebastiani. King Joseph, finding himself thus at the head of forty thousand men, believed himself strong enough to take the offensive himself without waiting for the army of Marshal Soult, whose vanguard was to arrive on 1 August at Plasencia; and, against the advice of Marshal Jourdan, his chief-of-staff, he advanced along the Tagus. On 26 July, he encountered the vanguard of General Cuesta near Torrijos and overthrew it. The next day he defeated a body of ten thousand English, who had advanced to cover Cuesta's retreat on Talavera. He forced the passage of the Alberche, the right bank of which the enemy was defending, and on the evening of 27 July he found himself in the presence of the Anglo-Spanish army occupying in two lines the steep plateau of Talavera, where General Wellesley had already built some works.

This position was almost impregnable: the right, occupied by the Spaniards, rested on the Tagus; the left, where the English were, rested on a high hillock, itself covered by the deep bed of the little river of La Portiña. The gain of the battle depended on the possession of this hillock. That very evening King Joseph had it attacked, but only by three regiments already tired from the day's march. The enemy held this important point and directed new forces there during the night. King Joseph, instead of bringing his whole army there to turn the enemy and drive him back to the Tagus, made only a partial attack on the same point the next day, which was without success. Then the action began along the whole line. The combat was fierce and lasted until nightfall without any marked advantage for either party. Our loss was seven thousand three hundred men. That of the Anglo-Spanish was seven thousand four hundred men. On both sides two generals remained on the battlefield².

During the night, King Joseph, worried by the movements of Venegas' army on Toledo, and by Sir Robert Wilson's march on Madrid, convinced moreover of the extreme difficulty of forcing Lord Wellington in his position, decided to retreat to get closer to Madrid and Toledo, leaving Marshal Victor in observation on the Alberche. During the night, the enemy was reinforced by the English division of General Craufurd, which had remained behind. He expected a new attack, and was very surprised, on the morning of 29 July, when he noticed the departure of the French army. Instead of pursuing it and marching as a conqueror on Madrid, he remained motionless in the position of Talavera until the 2nd of August, the day on which he learned of the movement of Marshal Soult. The latter had not received the orders from King Joseph until the 24th; delayed further by the difficulty of promptly reuniting the Fifth and Sixth Corps, which were very far apart, he had not been able to leave Salamanca until the 27th. He advanced on the rear of the Anglo-Spanish army with fifty thousand men, by the pass of Baños, Plasencia and Naval Moral, thus placing himself between the Anglo-Spanish army and the bridge of Almaraz, the only one which remained to this army to return to Portugal. Sir Arthur Wellesley, informed of the danger which threatened him, hastily left Talavera, crossed the Tagus, on the 4th of

² See supporting documents, no. 33.

August, at the bridge of Arzobispo; and, heading through the mountains towards Deleitosa, by a road barely passable for vehicles, he reached Trujillo with infinite difficulty. The Spaniards followed the retreat of their allies towards Deleitosa. Marshal Soult pursued them, reached them at the bridge of Arzobispo, forced the crossing of the Tagus on 8 August, and destroyed two divisions which formed their rearguard. The enemy lost in this hasty retreat seven thousand sick or wounded, thirty pieces of cannon and an immense quantity of baggage and caissons.

General Wellesley, much dissatisfied with the disorder which reigned in the Spanish armies, with the want of skill of their officers, and with the junta which left him wanting for provisions and means of transport, resolved henceforth to act on his own account. He retired with his troops to Badajoz and Elvas, where he took cantonments on the Guadiana. There he received, as a reward for his uncertain victory at Talavera, his nomination as a peer of Great Britain, with the title of Duke of Wellington. Marshal Beresford went, with the Portuguese troops, to Castelo Branco, to cover the approaches to Lisbon by the valley of the Tagus.

General Cuesta resigned his command, and his army was divided into two parts: one, under the orders of General Eguia, fell back behind the Guadiana; the other joined the army of Venegas, which on 11 August, at the battle of Almonacid, a short distance from Toledo, had lost, against the army of King Joseph, three thousand men killed, four thousand prisoners, all its artillery and baggage.

The First Corps was charged with cleaning the plains of La Mancha up to the foot of the Sierra Morena mountains. The Second, Fourth and Fifth remained on the Tagus. The Sixth, under the orders of Marshal Ney, returned to Salamanca, to oppose the progress of the Duke del Parque, and to support General Kellermann who, with a division of dragoons and a brigade of infantry, had advanced on the Esula, with the aim of preventing the army of Galicia, commanded by the Marquis de la Romana, from emerging into the plains of Castile. Marshal Ney met on the way, at the Baños Pass, the corps of Sir Robert Wilson, who found themselves cut off from the English army, and were seeking a passage through the mountains to return to Portugal. This corps was partly destroyed. The Spanish troops, who had already occupied Salamanca, withdrew, and Marshal Ney returned to this city on 14 August.

The Spaniards appeared to be defeated by so many reverses, and the English army was greatly shaken. King Joseph, instead of taking advantage of these fortunate circumstances, either to fall relentlessly on the English, as Marshal Soult proposed, or to lay siege to Ciudad-Rodrigo and Almeida, returned to his capital to enjoy the pleasures of rest. The troops were tired; the artillery equipment needed major repairs, and the food stores were exhausted. These reasons determined the Emperor to postpone until the following year a new expedition against Portugal³. It was also necessary to re-establish communications with France, which the guerrillas had intercepted. Porlier had reorganized his bands at Potes, in the Asturias, and found himself at the head of three thousand infantrymen, and five hundred cavalry, with four pieces of cannon; he beat the plains of Valladolid and Burgos, attacked the convoys and the fortified posts which guarded the communications⁴. Mina was in Navarre with two thousand five hundred men. Villacampa and

³ See supporting documents, No. 34.

⁴ See supporting documents, No. 35.

El Empecinado, with bands no less numerous, were active in Aragon and Castile. Biscay, at first fairly quiet, also found itself infested with brigands.

Combined attacks were made against these bands. General Bonet left Santander with a strong column, and went to Orduña, to guard the Asturias passes; while General Solignac, who had left Burgos at the head of four thousand men, beat the country as far as the Ebro, and General Harispe went up the river with two or three thousand men detached from Saragossa. At the same time a strong reserve division, which entered Spain under the command of General Loison, repulsed the brigands and occupied Biscay. As a result of these movements, several bands were annihilated; Porlier and Mina lost two-thirds of their men, and communications were reestablished. General Kellermann, Governor General of Upper Spain, issued several decrees for the safety of convoys, and the Emperor himself prescribed various provisions on this subject⁵.

The month of September passed without any important events in the provinces of Castile, the Kingdom of Leon and Upper Estremadura. Marshal Soult temporarily replaced Marshal Jourdan in the functions of Major General of His Catholic Majesty, and General Heudelet took, ad interim, command of the Second Corps. The Marquis de la Romana, called to form part of the supreme junta of Seville, left Galicia at the end of September, with twenty thousand men, leaving only ten thousand in this province under the orders of General Mahy, and went to Ciudad-Rodrigo. The Duke del Parque took command of these troops; and, with those he already had, he found himself at the head of an army of more than thirty thousand men. On the 15th of October, he advanced on Salamanca, against the Sixth Corps, of which General Marchand had taken command in the absence of Marshal Ney, who had returned to France, not wishing to be under the orders of Marshal Soult. General Marchand had only two divisions of infantry and a brigade of cavalry, forming about ten thousand men. He marched to meet the enemy and attacked them at Tamames on the 18th of October; but he was repulsed with a loss of thirteen hundred men; and the Duke of Parque, reinforced by a division of Asturias newly arrived, and commanded by Ballesteros, continued his movement on Salamanca. General Marchand evacuated this city on the 25th of October, to retire to Toro. At the beginning of November, the central junta, excited by the successes of the Duke of Parque, wanted to try once more the fate of arms to reconquer Madrid without the help of the English. It had succeeded in gathering, in Andalusia, an army of fifty-five thousand men from the remnants of the troops of Cuesta and Venegas. General Aréizaga took command of this new army, which rapidly crossed the Sierra Morena, advancing in the direction of Aranjuez. It had been provided, by the English, with arms, munitions, clothing and equipment; it was one of the finest that the insurrection had yet set up. At the same time that this army was marching on Aranjuez, the Duke of Alburquerque, who commanded in Estremadura, was advancing, with ten thousand men, on the Tagus, towards the bridge of Arzobispo, to link up with the Duke of Parque, who was to join him by the pass of Baños, and then march on Madrid by Talavera de la Reyna. On the 12th of November, the vanguard of Aréizaga, having imprudently advanced by several days' march the main body of the army, was beaten at Ocaña by the advanced troops of General Sebastiani. If Aréizaga had attacked at this moment with all his troops, he would have easily thrown back the French vanguard on the left bank of the Tagus, and destroyed the bridges of Aranjuez.

⁵ See supporting documents, Nos. 36 and 37.

Marshal Soult left the Second Corps under observation at Talavera de la Reyna; he led the First Corps through Toledo and Villamanrique to turn the enemy and united the Fourth and Fifth Corps at Aranjuez. The infantry of these two corps, under the orders of Marshal Mortier, and the cavalry, commanded by General Sebastiani, crossed the Tagus there, numbering about twenty-four thousand men, and went to meet the enemy, whom they found formed, on 19 November, on several lines at Ocaña, in a vast plain. The attack was to be postponed until the next day, to give time for the First Corps to arrive at the rear of the enemy; but Aréizaga took the offensive. Then General Senarmont, advancing with a battery of thirty pieces of cannon, struck down the enemy's center; General Sebastiani's cavalry threw itself on the right of the Spaniards, and routed them. Their infantry formed in a square tried in vain to reach an olive grove, it was everywhere broken through, sabered or taken. The division of dragoons of General Latour-Maubourg from Marshal Victor's corps arrived in the meantime and completed the total rout of the enemy army which fled to Guardia, leaving in its wake horrible traces of disorder and confusion. Thirty thousand prisoners, forty-two pieces of cannon, twenty-six thousand rifles, thirty-two flags, two thousand loaded mules and immense baggage were the brilliant trophies of this day, which gave irrefutable and glorious testimony to the great superiority of our soldiers over the Spaniards⁶. If the First Corps had arrived on the 18th in the rear of the enemy, as Marshal Soult had hoped, the army of Aréizaga would have been completely taken. The Spaniards left more than five thousand dead on the battlefield. They had not yet experienced a bloodier or more complete defeat; their courage was broken.

As early as 5 November, the Duke of Parque had been obliged to evacuate Salamanca before General Kellermann, who, having left Valladolid with two infantry brigades and a division of dragoons, had come to reinforce the sixth corps at Toro, and was advancing at the head of twenty-one thousand men. But the Spanish army of Galicia, taking advantage of the distance where the French troops were from Es-la, advanced towards Leon, and forced General Kellermann to retrace his steps. The Duke of Parque then resumed the offensive. General Marchand, once again too weak to risk a battle, evacuated Salamanca a second time on 20 November, and withdrew to Toro. On hearing this news, General Kellermann rejoined the Sixth Corps, and advanced again against the Duke of Parque. But the latter had received, on 26 November, positive orders to join the Duke of Alburquerque on the Tagus, to advance against Madrid. He was marching on Alba de Tormes, when the cavalry of General Kellermann, composed of the Second Division of Dragoons, the Third Regiment of Hussars, and the Fifteenth of Chasseurs, reached his rearguard on 28 November, near this city. Kellermann, without waiting for his infantry, attacked the Spaniards and cut them to pieces. Three thousand men remained on the battlefield; two thousand prisoners, fifteen pieces of cannon, ten thousand rifles and six flags were the results of this brilliant affair. The remains of the Spanish army gained the mountains under cover of night and arrived at Ciudad-Rodrigo.

The English army was still at Badajoz. Its stay on the unhealthy banks of the Guadiana had been fatal to it: it had nine thousand men in hospitals; and, although since the battle of Talavera it had received seven or eight thousand men of reinforcement, it hardly numbered more than twenty thousand men. Lord Wellington, not expecting, at least for some time, assistance from England, on account of the great efforts which the British government had just made for its unfortunate expedition against Flushing and Antwerp, and apprehending an offensive movement of the

⁶ See supporting documents, no. 38.

French troops on Lisbon by the valley of the Douro, left Badajoz on the 10th of December, to go to the north of the Tagus. He established his headquarters at Coimbra; his troops entered cantonments behind the Côa. General Hill remained at Abrantès with a body of thirteen thousand men. The Duke of Parque, who was still at the head of twenty-five thousand men, left on the 23rd of December the environs of Ciudad Rodrigo, where his army could no longer find provisions, and came to occupy the Sierra de Gata towards Castelo Branco and Coria, with the intention of covering the entrance to Portugal by the valley of the Tagus, and of linking up with the Duke of Albuquerque towards Badajoz, to protect Seville, where the supreme junta resided. These events, and the capture of Girona in Catalonia, were the last of the campaign.

No. 32.

*Letter from Marshal Soult, Duke of Dalmatia,
superior commander of the Second, Fifth and Sixth Corps, to King Joseph.*

Toro, 13 July 1809.

Sire,

I feel great satisfaction in seeing by the dispatch, dated the 6th of this month, with which Your Majesty has deigned to honor me, that it shares my opinion on the subject of the resumption of operations. Thus, it is only a matter of taking prompt and effective means so that, in the shortest possible time, I can return to the campaign. Before fifteen days the troops will be ready to act.

His Majesty the Emperor has imposed on me the honorable task of driving the English from the continent; I will fulfill his expectation and that of Your Majesty, whatever difficulties there may be to overcome, if what I ask and what is indispensable is granted to me. The results will amply compensate for the sacrifices which will have to be made to obtain them, and on which, no doubt, Your Majesty has already decided.

I consider that the position of the Imperial troops in Spain is infinitely precarious, as long as the enemy remains master of the strongholds; after the capture of Saragossa and that of Girona (which should have been in the power of Your Majesty for a long time), it was of the greatest importance to undertake the siege of Ciudad-Rodrigo, in order to cut off all communication to the troops of the southern provinces with those of the northern provinces, and to secure a good place of arms for the operations in Portugal. Certainly if, while I was in this Kingdom, the fortress of Ciudad-Rodrigo had been taken and that of Almeida threatened, my position would have been much better, and I could have, by changing my line of operation, put myself immediately in communication with Spain. Unfortunately, this has not been done, but it is time to take care of it, and I believe that this beginning of the campaign will be of a very advantageous effect in whatever respect one considers it.

According to all information, it appears that the English army which acted against me was of twenty-six to thirty thousand men, who, after having pursued me as far as Montalegre and Allariz in Galicia, returned to Portugal, and appeared to wish to direct their operations on the frontiers of Spain between the Tagus and the Douro, relying on the fortresses of Badajoz, Almeida, Ciudad-Rodrigo, even on the fort of the Conception, which is being rebuilt at this moment and on which, it is said, two thousand men supported by an English corps are working with great activity. This army is not strong enough to take the offensive before the help which it has certainly requested from England has arrived (a report which I received yesterday announces that a corps of twelve to fifteen thousand English has just landed at Oporto: this may be false); before the Portuguese and Spanish armies are in a position to furnish him with at least fifty thousand auxiliaries, and before the harvest is done, not only to ensure the supply of the stores, but also to make available all the men of the kingdoms able to bear arms, who are at present detained by the harvests, and who will soon be partly employed in the grape-picking or other work of the land. Thus, I do not think that before the month of September we have large masses

to fight, nor that the enemy can engage in large enterprises. But, certainly then, he will act, if he is not warned, and if we give him time to organize his means and to reunite.

Galicia and Asturias are now in such a state of exhaustion that it will take them several months to recover; and it is not likely that a strong army will go and assemble there and then make it the pivot of its operations. Thus, for some time, we have, I believe, nothing to fear from these two provinces but parties that a corps of observation placed in the Kingdom of Leon could easily contain, even if La Romana and La Carrera were to descend with their bands. Nor is there anything to fear from the left bank of the Tagus except parties that another corps of observation can also maintain; for the enemy will not go beyond the river to make his line of operation pass, which would be for him the most dangerous and the longest. Thus, all the combinations that can reasonably be attributed to him, lead me to think that when he resumes his operations (which may take place sooner than I have said, and we must even count on it), he will direct them by the shortest line, which, at the same time, offers the best outlets, where he will find several places of arms for his depots, and assured supports. This line can therefore only be the one that will end at Ciudad-Rodrigo, one direction going towards Oporto will pass through Almeida, a stronghold supported by the fort of the Conception, and the other direction going towards Lisbon will pass through Guarda, an advantageous post which is entrenched.

This admitted, I believe that it is appropriate, in order to fulfill the task that His Majesty the Emperor has imposed on me (to fight the English and drive them from the continent), either for the success of the operations in Spain, or to ensure the conquest of the provinces which are in a state of insurrection, to begin with the siege and capture of Ciudad-Rodrigo, and then with that of Almeida which could be very long; because, if, in order to find the English and force them to come to a battle or to re-embark, I must enter Portugal a second time, as seems inevitable, I cannot militarily engage in this country where I will have considerable forces against me, without having secured one or two places of arms to deposit my sick and ammunition there, and to protect my communications with Spain. The capture of Ciudad-Rodrigo is still necessary to disorganize the plans of the insurrectional armies of Spain, and to make it impossible for them to communicate with each other. It is also to cover Madrid; and finally it becomes indispensable to subsequently conserve our forces, and thus to be able to dispense with maintaining on this part of the frontier an army which fulfills at the same time these various objects.

Thus, I have the honor to propose to Your Majesty:

1° To be good enough to give imperative orders so that the siege crew that he has already had prepared, be assembled in its entirety at Salamanca before the end of this month, whatever means it is necessary to employ, even if they are vexatious.

2° To give orders so that an observation corps as strong as possible, taken from the troops that are in Aragon and Catalonia, be assembled in the Kingdom of Leon, and that there is a good leader to command it.

3° To have another observation corps prepared to maneuver on both banks of the Tagus, and occupy Plasencia, or at least be within range of this city.

4° To leave at my free disposal the three army corps that His Majesty the Emperor has deigned to place under my command, so that as soon as the siege equipment is ready to arrive at Salamanca, where I will carry out my meeting, I can march the next day on Ciudad-Rodrigo, invest the place, open the trench, and offer battle to any enemy army that would want to stop me.

5° That all the battalions and detachments whatsoever belonging to the Second, Fifth and Sixth Army Corps, which are spread out in the provinces of the interior of Spain, be replaced and have orders to rejoin their regiments, whatever service they may otherwise be performing.

6° That Your Majesty dispose of the surplus troops currently on the Tagus, which will not enter into the composition of the observation corps, to form a strong reserve intended to cover Madrid, at the same time as its object would be to protect, if necessary, whichever of the two observation corps would request assistance. This reserve could be placed towards Salvatierra between Salamanca and Avila, occupying these two cities, and would also have orders to keep my communications free in the rear, and to come promptly to meet me, if, in the case of absolute necessity, I called it. On this subject, I will observe that it is to be expected that from the moment I bring my corps of observation to the frontiers of Portugal, to cover the siege of Ciudad-Rodrigo, all the forces that the English, the Portuguese and the Spanish, even the army of Cuesta, can muster, will head towards me, to relieve the place, and force me to sustain an unequal combat. Thus, it is fitting that on our side we have sufficient forces, all ready to oppose them, and that we press the operations.

7° That Your Majesty deems it appropriate to give orders so that work be promptly done to increase the defense of the fort of Zamora, and to fortify some other posts on the Douro where the bridges are, should one limit oneself to building earthworks and to taking advantage of some houses or convents to protect from the parties the detachments that will defend these passages. A sum of 200,000 francs well used would suffice for all these expenses.

8° Finally, that by extraordinary means 500,000 francs be placed at my disposal, even a million, if possible, to provide for the emergency expenses of artillery, engineers, food administration, hospitals and other unforeseen or secret expenses that one will be in the case of making, and the use of which will be justified after the operation.

As for provisions, it would be necessary to have in Salamanca two million complete rations, so that when Ciudad Rodrigo is taken, what is not consumed could be poured into the place, to form the supply. It is probable that I will find on the spot, or on the banks of the Douro, sufficient bread; but meat and wine, which would have to be obtained by purchase, would be more difficult to find, and I will experience no less difficulties for the hospitals and ambulances, if the general administration does not come to my aid. All the proposals that I have the honor to make to Your Majesty seem to me necessary to ensure the success of the campaign, and even to ensure that its beginning is brilliant, as, day by day, circumstances make the necessity more and more felt. I therefore think that there is not a moment to lose in putting them into execution, and I repeat, however violent or vexatious the means that will be employed may be.

The request that I make for 500,000 francs, or a million, if possible, is no less urgent than the others, and it is necessary, at all costs, to obtain this sum, even if it were obliged, in order to

obtain it, to make onerous sacrifices, or to put all the great men who have the honor of approaching her person, as well as the French generals and senior officers who are in Spain, in the position of contributing to form it. In my particular case, I offer with great pleasure what I can have, and, in the meantime, I will make use of it; but unfortunately, it is too little. Your Majesty knows that money is the sinews of war, and that by the appropriate use of it, one often secures successes that, without this powerful vehicle, one would not always be sure of obtaining, or at least, it would cost many more men and a loss of time that could not be replaced. Your Majesty is also doubtless persuaded that when His Majesty the Emperor is informed of the urgency of the need, it is infallible that he will send the necessary funds to provide for it.

I have spoken of the siege crew, but I must assume that its organization will include all the personnel of the artillery and engineering arms, as well as the munitions, tools, and an immense quantity of sandbags that will be needed. In this persuasion, I have the honor to beg Your Majesty to deign to order Generals Senarmont and L  ry to place all the means that will have to be used at the disposal of General Dulauloy for the artillery, and that of Colonel Garb   for the engineers, at the same time as they will take the necessary measures to bring everything to Salamanca, as I have proposed.

Now that I have developed all my thoughts on the subject of the operations to be undertaken, and to fulfill the duties imposed on me, it only remains for me to beg Your Majesty to forgive, if I have dared, in submitting my thoughts to him, to put so much frankness into them, and to make him proposals. The glory of the Emperor's arms, of which I am an idolater, the ardent zeal with which I am animated for his glorious service, the possibility that I foresee of arriving by the indicated means at the complete submission of the provinces of Spain and even of Portugal, the ambition that I have to contribute to this great result, without any difficulty being able to intimidate me or stop me, and finally the desire that I feel to be agreeable to Your Majesty by making myself useful, all these considerations have led me beyond the limits where perhaps I should have stopped, and have suggested to me that in order to conquer it was necessary to assure myself of the means in advance. If I am mistaken, may Your Majesty deign to give me your orders and I will obey.

Signed: MARSHAL DUKE OF DALMATIA.

No. 33.

*Letter from the Minister of War to Marshal Jourdan,
Major General of His Catholic Majesty.*

Paris, 31 August 1809.

Mr. Marshal, the Emperor has instructed me to make known directly to Your Excellency his observations on the manner in which affairs have been conducted in Spain, in relation to recent events. The importance of these remarks will oblige me to transcribe them in part, and to render the rest with the most scrupulous precision, so as not to run the risk of altering in any way the Emperor's various ideas.

In the first place, His Majesty thought that the Marshal Duke of Dalmatia should not have been directed towards Plasencia, but that he should come from Salamanca towards Madrid, via Avila, and that the three corps marching separately, the head would have arrived as early as the 27th or 28th. During this time, it was necessary to retreat, taking one's time, and not give battle under Madrid until all our forces had been united. The march of the Duke of Dalmatia towards Plasencia was, according to the Emperor, dangerous and above all useless; dangerous, because the other army could be beaten at Talavera without any help being given to it, and that the safety of all the army corps in Spain would thus be compromised, while the English had nothing to fear, since in three hours they could get behind the Tagus, and that, by recrossing this river at Talavera, Almaraz, or anywhere else, they had their line of operations on Badajoz under cover. His Majesty finds that the troops were compromised by the ordered movement, without it being possible to obtain a result, even in the event of success.

The Emperor thinks that a mistake was made in dividing into two armies, of fifty thousand men each, separated by mountains and a large expanse of country, but that at least the battle should not have been given until the same time or later.

Marshal Duke of Dalmatia could not be at Plasencia before the 4th of August, because he had to arrive there with the whole of the Sixth Corps which came from Astorga, and needed all this time to complete this march; whereas the King's army could maneuver on the side of Madrid and gain a few days without giving battle; the English would not have compromised themselves, if they had found it in a good position.

Finally arrived at Talavera, it was known from the prisoners that the English army was present, and it was not to be attacked without having reconnoitered it. Their right being at Talavera, where the Spaniards were, it was known that these, although worthless in the open field, are no less good troops when they can entrench themselves in houses. The left of the English being on a plateau, it was necessary to ensure that this plateau could not be turned, and this position therefore required prior reconnaissance, without which the troops are compromised, and exposed unnecessarily.

His Majesty finds moreover that once resolved to give battle, it was necessary to do so with more vigor and unity, and that it is an affront to be repulsed when one has had twelve thousand men in

reserve who have not fired. The Emperor adds that one should not give battle when one has not been able to assure oneself in advance of having three-quarters of the chances in favor of its success; *one should even, says the Emperor again, give battle only when one has no more new chances to hope for, since by its nature the outcome of a battle is always doubtful; but once it is resolved, one must conquer or perish, and the French eagles must not retreat until all have made their efforts equally.*

I will not let Your Excellency be ignorant that His Majesty has been informed of a circumstance which has excited his discontent: that the Duke of Bellune, at the battle of Talavera, thought that if the reserve had been placed under his orders, he would have taken the position of the English. The Emperor therefore judged that it was as a result of the faults committed that the army of Spain was thus defied by thirty thousand English. His Majesty ends with this sentence: *As long as one wants to attack good troops, like the English troops, in good positions, without reconnoitering them and ensuring whether one can take them, one will lead men to death in pure loss.*

I am fulfilling the duty imposed on me by the Emperor's orders; in a circumstance as delicate as it is important, I am not permitted to deviate from the line that has been drawn for me. I very much desire that your reply will enable me to give His Majesty satisfactory explanations, of a nature to dispel the impression that the circumstances have made on him.

Please accept, Marshal, the assurance, etc.

Signed: THE MINISTER OF WAR.

No. 34.

*Letter from Marshal Jourdan, Major General of
His Catholic Majesty, to Marshal Soult, Duke of Dalmatia.*

Madrid, 19 August 1809.

Mr. Marshal,

The King has charged me with the honor of informing you that he has received a letter from His Excellency the Minister of War, stating that the intention of His Majesty the Emperor is that nothing be undertaken against Portugal during the month of August, because of the heat of the season. The Emperor thinks that it is necessary to prepare to make this expedition next February. His Majesty and Majesty also requests that the King make known to him in a reasoned memorandum, his thoughts and views on the operations that the army of Spain will have to undertake in the month of September.

The King, who has received your letter dated the 14th of the instant, orders me to observe to you that, according to the orders he has just received, it is no longer a question, as you propose, of expelling the English from the continent as long as they remain in Portugal, and that it appears that before undertaking new operations, His Majesty the Emperor wishes to let the season of great heat pass and to know first of all the thoughts and views of the King. His Majesty instructs me to add to these considerations, that at this moment communications with France are very dangerous and on the verge of being intercepted. Couriers are assassinated, and the various detachments are attacked and sometimes kidnapped. Finally, it is no longer possible to send the convoys, due to the impossibility of giving them sufficient escorts. However, Madrid finds itself deprived of munitions, and one cannot undertake an important military operation before having received places of depot. The artillery carriages are, according to a report from General Senarmont, unable to enter the campaign. They have been destroyed by the great heat, and General Senarmont thinks that it will take more than a month to repair them. The train wagons are in the same state. The troops, especially the cavalry, are in great need of rest. Finally, all the subsistence supplies that had been formed in Madrid were used up during the last operations, and it is essential to create new ones, without which the army would not be able to sustain itself in the campaign.

The King therefore thinks, Marshal, that at the moment the principal object is to make free the communications with France and with the depots. Troops have already left Madrid to disperse the assemblies which had formed on the side of the Escorial, Guadarama and Segovia, and which were intercepting the communications with Valladolid. The Fourth Corps, which has the greatest need of rest, has been placed on the right bank of the Tagus, both to rest and to remove the assemblies which were intercepting the arrival of the provisions intended for the supply of Madrid. His Majesty hopes that the Sixth Corps has arrived at Salamanca. The Duke of Elchingen will stop the march of La Romana, he will drive the enemy from Salamanca and Leon and force La Romana to return to the mountains of Galicia. In the meantime, General Kellermann will sweep the provinces of Burgos and Soria and re-establish communications with France and the depots; the convoys will arrive, the artillery and the train of the carriages will be

repaired, supplies will be formed, the troops will rest, and some cavalry horses will recover. By then, His Majesty the Emperor will be able to transmit his orders to the King, and the army will be in a position to act when the season of great heat has passed. If, before this time, which is unlikely, the enemy were to take the offensive, then, by the positions occupied by the various army corps, they could be united in whole or in part in a few days on the necessary point, and action would be taken according to the circumstances.

The King cannot send the first corps to Talavera; the Duke of Bellune is in the La Mancha in pursuit of Venegas' army. The Fourth Corps is, as I told you above, on the right bank of the Tagus; it is, at present, unable to enter the campaign, and besides His Majesty cannot, in the present circumstances, remain in Madrid with a handful of troops around him. His plan is to consider the Fourth Corps as a reserve with which His Majesty will go wherever his presence is necessary. Thus the King thinks that the Fifth Corps should remain in the position it occupies, and that with the Second Corps you should continue to observe Portugal and to seek to know what is becoming of the English army. The enemy armies need more time to re-establish themselves than the imperial army, since they have lost the greater part of their material. It is therefore to be presumed that before they are in a state to resume operations, we will be repaired. In this case, if the operations take place on your side, the King will go there with the Fourth Corps, the Guard and a brigade of the Dessolles Division.

The King does not lose sight of the project of the siege of Ciudad-Rodrigo, and His Majesty thinks that it is necessary to prepare to carry out this operation at the first favorable opportunity. All the orders were given for this; but the dangers of communications, the presence of the enemy in Salamanca and Leon, the invasion by La Romana, with which the provinces of old Castile have been threatened, have forced the suspension of the execution of these orders.

The King hopes that you will succeed in removing Wilson's corps, since it is between you and the Fifth Corps. His Majesty cannot send a column of twelve to fifteen hundred men from Avila, since there are in this province only about twelve hundred men of the royal foreign regiment, who have great difficulty in supporting themselves against the frequent detachments of the garrison of Ciudad-Rodrigo. He thought that it would be useless to send troops from here for this expedition; for when they arrive, Wilson will be taken or have escaped.

His Majesty is unable to send you the two thousand cavalymen you are asking for; there are barely four thousand cavalymen between the First and Fourth Corps. They cannot be taken away without putting them out of action. I have written to His Excellency the Minister of War, by order of the King, to request assistance for this arm.

Orders have been given for all the detachments you left in Valladolid to be sent back to you: Orders have been given to send you funds; but we must wait until they have arrived from Burgos, where they were stopped because of the dangers of communications.

I have the honor, etc.

Signed: JOURDAN.

No. 35.

*Report of Battalion Chief Bayle Dugay,
of the Fifty-eighth Line Regiment, to General Bonet.*

Aguilar del Campo, 12 November 1809.

My General,

I have the honor to inform you that the troop of the famous Porlier, called the Marquesito, three thousand strong infantry and two hundred cavalry, having with it an eight-pounder and two three-pounders, emerged on the 6th of the current, at eight o'clock in the morning, by the road to Guardo, to come and besiege me in the convent of Cervara, located on the road from Aguilar del Campo to Potes, where I was quartered, as you know, with three hundred men of my battalion.

The advanced post that I had on the road to Guardo, having seen the enemy's vanguard, fifty strong cavalrymen, opened fire and fell back, according to its orders, on the post of the Pisuerga bridge; these two posts united vigorously opposed the passage of the Spanish vanguard, which was forced to take cover behind a large rock. But almost at the same moment a large number of skirmishers came down from the mountains, and fiercely attacked the bridge, where I sent eighty reinforcements to facilitate the return of all my other posts. The enemy was not long in showing himself with all his forces. It carried part of them to the roads of Aguilar del Campo and Reynosa; two thousand men remained on the road to Guardo with three pieces of cannon, which were immediately put into battery to fire on the convent where I had just returned with all my men, determined to make a most stubborn resistance.

I am sending you the summons that was given to me by the lieutenant-colonel of the Castile Regiment, with a copy of my response. Thirty-two cannon shots had been fired at that moment; three had made breaches in the wall of the convent enclosure. During this time the enemy was changing its pieces and removing its wounded. It was only seeking to gain time, to place them more advantageously and to put its skirmishers under cover. I ordered the fire to start again. The enemy was again forced to withdraw its cannons by the heavy fire that my men were making through the windows, battlements and scaffolding, on the gunners and skirmishers. It could only fire eighteen cannon shots from this second position, partly poorly aimed; its best pointer was killed there and seven gunners wounded.

The same parliamentarian presented himself, holding in his hand a new summons from his general. I sent him away, telling him loudly that I did not want to receive any proposal, and that I was going to have him fired on. I assure you that he quickly decamped with two braggarts who accompanied him.

The guns were then placed on the mountain which borders the town, and opposite the facade of the convent. They fired fifty-six cannon shots; the majority hit the roof of the convent. I had three men wounded by the stones; ten of my best tirailleurs had been put out of action in the morning by the musketry.

This day passed thus. I could well have retired during the night if I had wished, although the enemy was guarding all the avenues; but I had provisions in the convent for fifteen days, and I was determined to defend myself. I noticed during the night that something extraordinary was being prepared for the next day by the noise and the work that the enemy was doing on the mountain where he had his guns; one could also see a very ardent fire there. I was, however, far from thinking that he intended to cannonade me with red-hot shot; this is what he did however at seven o'clock in the morning with his eight-pounder. He sent eighteen red-hot balls into the roof of the convent, four of which set fire to the framework; but the fire was immediately extinguished by the men placed to see where these balls fell, and to pick them up. In the morning twenty-two red balls were fired by the eight-pounder; the two three-pounders were aimed at the windows and fired sixty-seven shots.

The mountain was crowned with spectators; all the priests of the neighboring villages, except one whom I know well, had rushed there; they expected to see me burned with my troop in the convent.

The enemy ceased his fire at one o'clock in the afternoon. He resumed it at four o'clock and fired another eight red balls from his eight-pounder; the small guns also fired. The spectators were in greater number than in the morning. At five o'clock in the evening a new parliamentarian having presented himself, was received with fusil shots. This day passed thus.

The next day, 8 November, the cannonade began again at daybreak. As the night had been very bad, it was impossible for the enemy to heat up balls; he was content to fire one hundred and two cannonballs at the windows during the day.

On the 9th, the enemy brought his guns down from the mountain and placed the eight-pounder in a small street opposite the entrance door of the convent, at half-fusil range; the other two guns were placed in the house closest to the convent. This artillery did not stop firing until two o'clock in the afternoon. The eight-pounder made a breach above the entrance door, allowing a man to pass through very easily. I had this breach plugged with cut stones from the convent church in the intervals of time that the enemy was loading his guns. I also had manure and bags of earth brought to reinforce the entrance door, and that of the church which had also suffered greatly.

I noticed that the enemy had withdrawn his pieces. I thought he intended to carry them to a small mountain opposite the church; this he did not do. Seeing his uncertainty, I decided to have sixty men make a sortie into the town under the command of Captain Mallet. This sortie had the best effect: terror and fright set in among the Spaniards who fled at full speed over the mountain. Many officers abandoned their horses and their booty; more than four hundred fusils were broken and smashed on the square, as well as eight drum cases, the big drum of the Marquesito's band, and a large number of kettles. If I had had with me the company of grenadiers, one hundred and twenty men strong, the enemy would not have returned to the town.

Having then rallied on the mountain, it descended again, and redeployed in the same place where it had been during the day his eight-pounder, which fired another eight shots on the breach made in the morning. At night this piece was taken; a large number of tirailleurs hidden in the houses

nearest the convent, as well as behind the low walls of the neighboring fields, did not cease firing throughout the night. At midnight, the enemy made an attempt to set fire to the convent. Twelve grenadiers led by an inhabitant brought a large cauldron full of tar and bundles of dry wood, which they placed opposite a large door of the courtyard of the convent where there was a fairly large shed only ten to twelve feet high. I had taken the precaution of having this shed partly uncovered to avoid communication and the progress of the fire: it was a good thing, because without this precaution I would have infallibly been forced to leave the convent as quickly as possible, and perhaps in disorder. The enemy had slipped in under cover of the night which was very dark, and the sentry placed on that side did not notice their approach until he saw the light of the fire; he fired his fusil. All my men took up arms. I immediately sent workers to have the roof of the shed brought down and put out the fire. Messrs. Oury and Lacroix, lieutenants, deserve the highest praise: they never stopped working, and managed to put out the fire. The enemy, having missed his shot, and no longer having any hope of forcing us, decided to retreat, which he carried out at seven o'clock in the morning. He had sent off his carriages and artillery during the night. Seeing his movement on the road to Potes, I went out with two hundred men to conduct him to San Salvador, located three leagues from Cervara. The Spaniards retreated in the greatest disorder. If I had had thirty hussars or chasseurs à cheval with me, I would have completely disorganized them. About thirty of them, including three cavalymen, were killed by my tirailleurs; several threw down their arms to escape over the mountains: eight Frenchmen taken prisoner by them, and who had taken up service, surrendered. There is also a Pole and an Alsatian, both of the Irish legion.

I believe, my general, that I have fulfilled my duties. I will ask you for promotion for Messrs. Oury and Lacroix, lieutenants, and Mr. Chalochet, adjutant, who, during the sortie with Captain Mallet, showed rare bravery; I also ask you to take an interest in obtaining for Mr. Mallet, captain, the decoration of the Legion of Honor, as well as for Sergeant Lasalle, who defended the bridge crossing with intrepidity, and who had all his clothes riddled with bullets. Sergeant Heroux was wounded after fighting well and also deserves interest for him; the named Maillet, fusilier, and Adam, sapper, also deserve the decoration for having collected all the red-hot cannonballs that fell on the roof of the convent, and having put out the fire four times.

During the five days that this siege lasted, I had two men killed and twenty wounded. To have the latter dressed, I am obliged to use a Spanish surgeon from the city.

The convent of Cervara will be uninhabitable until its roof, which was crushed by the cannonballs, is restored. Without that I would not have left it, although Mr. Ducosso, my colleague, informed me in one of his letters that your intention was for me to go with my battalion to Aguilar del Campo, where I arrived on the evening of the 11th.

I forgot to tell you that the enemy suffered a lot from the fire of our men placed at the windows and on the scaffolding that I had erected in the enclosure of the convent. He had more than fifty men killed. He had forty or so carts of wounded evacuated to Potes. During the three days of the siege, he fired four hundred and sixty-eight cannon shots, including about twenty grapeshot shots on the main windows of the convent, always well manned by my men, who only withdrew when the enemy set fire to the guns.

I have the honor to be, etc.

Signed: BAYLE DUGAY.

No. 36.

*Letter from General Kellermann, Commander of
Upper Spain, to the Minister of War.*

Valladolid, 20 October 1809.

Sir Count,

The difficulty of communications and the delay that the reports coming from Madrid must experience, determine me to draw you a short picture of the situation in the north of Spain, and to make you feel the indispensable necessity of sending prompt reinforcements there.

The destitution of troops in which the provinces of Burgos and Biscay have been left, has multiplied the bands of brigands there to the point that one can consider communication as almost interrupted; swarms of insurgents appear unexpectedly at a thousand points on the road, and take advantage of a rather useless excursion that General Thiébault made in the south of Burgos with all his forces, without my having been able to have news of him since 4 October.

Santander is quite quiet and cannot give cause for concern by itself.

Valladolid is calm, the province is quiet, although infested with brigands.

Signed: KELLERMANN.

No. 37.

General Order of the Army.

Madrid, 2 December 1809.

In execution of the orders of His Majesty the Emperor and His Majesty the King of Spain on the safety of communications with Bayonne, the following provisions will be observed under the personal responsibility of the commanders of the place:

On the road, from Madrid to the border, each post will send out every day and at a time agreed in advance between the commanders of two respective posts, detachments more or less strong, according to the localities and the circumstances, who will take under their escort all that will be in the case of traveling in the same direction.

These detachments will necessarily meet those of the neighboring post halfway or nearly so, will exchange with them the mails, travelers, convoys and other objects that they will have escorted on both sides, and will each return to the place of their departure, after having given each other sealed notes, in which the highest-ranking commander, or the most senior between those of the two posts, will indicate to his colleague, for the next day, the time at which the two detachments must leave. This time must be changed every day, and be assigned: sometimes for the day, sometimes for the night.

The soldiers of the detachments will find in this new mode the advantage of not having to sleep out, and of finding, on their return, their lodgings and meals ready.

The general governors of the provinces will have to consider themselves particularly responsible for the success of this measure; they will regulate accordingly, for each post, the strength of the detachments that must march, according to the information they have on local circumstances, and MM. the commanders of the town will not be able to deviate from what will be prescribed to them in this regard. They will arrange the marches in such a way that the couriers or dispatch riders can cover at least eight leagues per day, or, to put it better, two stages.

The commanders of the town will be personally responsible for the slightest event that occurs on the road, and they will be punished severely, if it is recognized that they have not taken sufficient precautions. There will be a staff officer specially designated for this service, who will not cease to travel the road from Bayonne to Madrid and from Madrid to Bayonne, in order to monitor the details; which he will be able to do with his own horses and by following the march of the detachments. This officer will make direct reports to the chief of staff, will take his orders and will have them carried out, without any general or particular commander being able to change anything.

The Marshal of the Empire, Major General.

Signed: DUKE OF DALMATIA.

No. 38.

General Order of the Army.

Dosbarrios, 19 November 1809.

His Majesty hastens to inform the army that the Imperial troops of the Fourth and Fifth Corps, the Third Division of Dragoons, the Royal Guard of His Majesty the King of Spain, and the Spanish troops in the service of His Majesty, have won a signal victory at Ocaña.

The Army of La Mancha, which had received numerous reinforcements from that of Extremadura, which had brought its number to fifty-five thousand men, has been destroyed. All its baggage, all its artillery, thirty flags, have fallen into our hands. The number of captured cannons already amounts to fifty. The number of prisoners, among whom are three generals, six colonels and seven hundred officers of all ranks, is twenty-five thousand; the ground is strewn with dead; forty thousand fusils remained on the battlefield.

New prisoners are being brought in at every moment; it is thought that the number will rise to thirty thousand.

It seems certain that there is not a single battalion left in this army in a state to fight.

The First Army Corps, which had no enemies in front of it, crossed the Tagus at Villamanrique; its advance guard, in approaching its new position, took a thousand prisoners and captured an enormous quantity of baggage.

The Marshal of the Empire, Major General.

Signed: DUKE OF DALMATIA.