

SIEGE OF GIRONA,
BY THE FRENCH ARMY OF CATALONIA,
IN 1809.

86th NIGHT, of 30 to 31 August.

Work continued on the approaches toward the Sant Lucia Tower.

Breaching Battery No. 27 had opened a gap in the Santa Lucia curtain wall approximately twelve meters wide; however, it had cut the wall too high, and the resulting rubble left a step-like obstruction that rendered the breach impassable. The plan was to complete it using mines, first extending the approaches right up to the foot of the wall. In the meantime, the artillery was to maintain its fire upon the nascent breach in order to level its crest and widen it.

Breaching Battery No. 26 had opened three breaches: the first at the German Barracks; the second, known as the Latrines Breach, situated almost adjacent to the first, at a point where the wall was already partially ruined. These two breaches, too, had been started too high and required further refinement. The third breach, eight meters wide, had been initiated at the San Cristobal Bastion.

Such was the state of progress of the siege works when fresh reports confirmed the intelligence provided the previous day by Spanish prisoners regarding the approach of a relief force bound for Girona. On 16 August, the Junta of Catalonia had addressed a new representation to the Supreme Junta, couched in forceful terms, regarding the situation of the besieged fortress¹. Blake, having seen his army routed at Maria and Belchite on 15 and 18 June by General Suchet, commander of the Third Corps in Aragon, had withdrawn to Tortosa. The Supreme Junta dispatched fresh troops and six million reals to him, accompanied by formal orders to proceed to the relief of Girona at all costs, even if the only remaining recourse was to call for a mass levy of the entire province².

Blake therefore assembled an army of fifteen thousand men in the valleys of Vic and Hostalric, along with a large convoy of provisions and ammunition destined for Girona. Having no hope of forcing a frontal assault against General Gouvion Saint-Cyr's army, he resorted to stratagem.

On the morning of 31 August, he ordered three battalions of his vanguard under the command of Colonel O'Donnell to attack the heights of Bañolas, which were occupied by a battalion of the

¹ See supporting documents, No. 24.

² See supporting documents, No. 25.

First Light. The Spaniards succeeded in seizing this position, but they were driven out shortly thereafter by a vigorous bayonet charge. At the same time, fierce attacks were launched against the Italian troops encamped on the heights of Caldas and Vidreres. Colonel Rovira and Lieutenant Colonel Claros, with their corps of miquelets and somatènes, had also advanced closer to Girona to attack the camps at San Medir and Taialà, while another corps of miquelets, commanded by Lieutenant Llander, had moved onto the Mountain of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles (Our Lady of the Angels), from where it threatened to take the Montjuïc camps in the flank.

Deceived by these maneuvers, General Gouvion Saint-Cyr accepted the battle that Blake offered him on the road to Hostalric. Consequently, the siege division received orders to suspend its operations in order to provide the main army with a reserve force of four thousand men; this compelled it to withdraw all its outposts from the Galligant Valley, evacuate the Convent of San Daniel, and abandon the positions at San Miguel and Campdorà. It retained only Montjuïc, the village of Sarria, as well as that of Pontmayor, behind which lay the artillery park, the heights of Montegut and San-Medir, the Green Knoll, the village of Sant Eugenia, and the plain of Salt. The Souham and Pino divisions likewise received orders to rendezvous during the night and take up positions on the Barcelona road, at the Hostal Nou farm, two and a half leagues in front of Girona.

The army was severely weakened by a shortage of provisions, disease, and general hardship; nevertheless, it could still field twelve thousand men for battle, exclusive of the troops of General Verdier. Consequently, General Gouvion Saint-Cyr feared the enemy's inaction far more than the outcome of a battle, should the enemy decide to remain within sight of his camps for more than two days while avoiding a general engagement, for the necessity of supplying his troops had forced him to keep them dispersed, and once they were assembled, he possessed a reserve of biscuit sufficient to feed them for only two days; once this reserve was consumed, he would no longer be able to field even two thousand assembled men against the Spaniards.

On 1 September, before dawn, the Souham Division had assembled to the rear of San Dalmau and Salitja, with its left flank resting at the Hostal Nou farm, on the Barcelona road. By eight o'clock, the First Brigade of General Pino was deployed, with its right flank resting on the road and its left on the Onyar, to the rear of Riudellots. The Second Brigade was still on the march; the troops comprising it arrived successively on the line and, by the afternoon, were fully assembled. The four thousand men General Verdier had brought up during the night were placed in reserve behind the Souham and Pino Divisions.

The Lechi Division, numbering approximately two thousand men and commanded at the time by General Millossewitz, was left at Salt. Its mission was threefold: to guard the bridge over the Ter, the only crossing enabling General Verdier to return to his positions at Montjuïc; to advance to the left bank of the Ter should the troops of Rovira and Claros, stationed on that side, attempt any action against Sarria or the siege works at Girona; and to keep watch over the Ter Valley, serving as a reserve for General Verdier in case of need. The Westphalian troops remained in their camp near San Pons to cover Sarria and the siege installations. These troops, thus echeloned, were also tasked with maintaining communication with the forces guarding the trenches and siege materiel at Montjuïc.

At any moment, General Gouvion Saint-Cyr expected to be attacked. Indeed, Blake would have held a significant advantage had he attempted a vigorous strike the previous day, while the French troops were still dispersed; every moment of delay represented a lost opportunity for success, given that all our forces were on the verge of being fully concentrated. The enemy, however, made no move, and it remained unclear how to account for this complete immobility. Toward noon, the Commander-in-Chief, accompanied by General Souham, conducted a reconnaissance of the Spanish line and soon became convinced that the enemy was resolved to hold its position; at least for the remainder of the day.

While Blake's army thus held the French forces in check on the road to Hostalric, and while Rovira and Claros created a great diversion on the right flank by attacking the heights of Montegut and Domeny, another enemy column, commanded by General Garcia Conde and comprising four thousand infantrymen and five hundred cavalrymen, was escorting approximately fifteen hundred beasts of burden, donkeys and mules, laden with provisions and war materiel, as well as a herd of cattle and sheep. Having traveled from Vic via Amer and Angelès, and having descended from the heights of Bescanó that morning, the column advanced toward Salt around noon, hugging the right bank of the River Ter. It went undetected until its vanguard reached the first houses of Salt. A portion of the Italian division, encamped in the plain, was cut off by this column; it crossed the Ter and reached the plain of Sarria. The other portion, numbering approximately twelve hundred infantrymen and one squadron of cavalry, was led by General Millossewitz to confront the enemy. However, halted head-on by formidable forces and outflanked on its right, it was compelled to veer left in an attempt to gain the high ground and secure a tactical advantage. At that moment, Brigadier Fournás launched a sally from El Mercadal with eight hundred infantrymen and twenty-five horsemen. Consequently, the convoy, now encountering no further resistance, passed through the villages of Salt and Santa Eugenia, proceeding unhindered toward the fortress, which it entered amidst the jubilant cheers of a populace and a garrison that had truly earned this triumph.

General Millossewitz had been forced to continue his retreat; however, instead of falling back upon General Verdier to receive his support, he had headed toward the village of Fornells in order to cover the army headquarters. His troops arrived there in disarray around four o'clock—at the very moment when the Commander-in-Chief, who knew nothing of what was transpiring on that flank, was making his way to his headquarters, rather displeased to see a day's rations consumed without any action having been taken. One can well imagine his surprise at the sight of these stray troops. He immediately reformed them and sent them back toward the heights of Palau, reinforcing them with a battalion from the Sixth Italian Regiment, drawn from the left flank of the division of Pino; at the same time, he sent word to General Verdier regarding the events unfolding behind him, ordering him to fall back. Despite all these delays, General Verdier still managed to overtake the rear of the enemy column, which was continuing its march toward Girona, and took several prisoners. This column could have been annihilated had the troops of General Millossewitz fallen back upon General Verdier; for the latter, though two hours' march away, could have been in a position to attack the enemy convoy before three o'clock that afternoon with the four thousand men he had brought with him; troops that were no longer indispensable on the Hostalric road, given the complete consolidation of the Pino Division and the marked inactivity of Blake's army.

While these events were unfolding in the plain of Salt, a column of three hundred elite troops sallied forth from the fortress near the Gironella Tower; they seized the Convent of San Daniel and advanced toward Montjuïc. They destroyed portions of the nearest trenches and pushed forward as far as breaching battery No. 26; however, heavy grapeshot and musket fire forced them to retreat back into the fortress. On the left bank of the Ter, the miquelets and somatènes under Rovira and Claros, emboldened by the rout at Salt, attacked the Westphalians and forced them to fall back upon Sarria. General Hadeln, who commanded them in the absence of General Morio (who was ill in Perpignan), was killed during this engagement. Simultaneously, the Llander column seized the strategic position on the Els Àngels (mountain of the angels) and, from that quarter, also succeeded in bringing several small convoys into the besieged city.

General Verdier was therefore compelled, that very evening, to recross the Ter with his troops at the bridge of Salt which, fortunately, had not been destroyed, in order to cover the siege works. The enemy remained on the heights throughout the night, stretching from Montegut to Domeny; however, when attacked on those heights the following morning, they fled in haste. The Spaniards remained in control of the Galligant Valley, the Convent of San Daniel, and Els Àngels.

General Blake remained in position with his army on the Barcelona road for part of the morning of September 2nd; however, upon observing the offensive maneuver executed by General Gouvion Saint-Cyr to attack him, he withdrew toward San Hilario and Hostalric, declining to give battle³. This constituted a grave error on his part, one that not even the fear of a potential disaster could justify, since, even in such a worst-case scenario, Girona would nonetheless have remained left to rely solely on its own resources. The besieged garrison had been expecting to be relieved. Having long been misled by the promises made to them, they were dismayed by General Blake's retreat and foresaw the fate they could no longer avert. From that moment on, conversely, the besiegers became convinced that the Spanish army was powerless to disrupt their operations around Girona, and that the fortress was bound to fall. As the garrison possessed no more than eight days' worth of provisions, Alvarez reduced his soldiers' rations first to half, and subsequently to a quarter. From that point forward, he began to experience desertion, a phenomenon hitherto unheard of within the Spanish army. He submitted a report to General Blake and the Junta of Catalonia detailing the deplorable state of the fortress, urgently requesting fresh reinforcements; aid that the city's own junta was likewise pressing for⁴.

General Gouvion Saint-Cyr, rightly surmising that a portion of the Spanish troops who had entered the fortress with the convoy would attempt to leave it, made arrangements to prevent this, aiming to force the garrison to consume the provisions it had just received as quickly as possible. The brigade of General Mazzucchelli was placed in ambush behind the heights of Palau and in the Onyar valley; a battalion of the Seventh Italian Line Regiment took up a position between Girona and Castellar; and General Fontane proceeded to occupy La Bisbal with three battalions and a squadron.

³ See supporting documents, Nos. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31.

⁴ See supporting documents, Nos. 32, 33, 34, and 35.

The enemy once again outmaneuvered these dispositions. On the 4th, at daybreak, General Garcia Conde exited the city with approximately one thousand infantrymen, five hundred cavalrymen, and eleven hundred mules, leaving behind a reinforcement of about two thousand nine hundred men within the fortress. This column initially headed toward the mountain of Our Lady of the Angels; when the battalion of the Seventh Italian Regiment set off in pursuit, the column evaded it by veering to the left and succeeded, without being molested, in reaching Castellar. From there, it attempted to advance upon La Bisbal; however, having been warned by peasants that it would encounter General Fontane's troops there, it once again altered its course and marched toward Casa de la Selva. General Pino, who had just re-established his headquarters in that village, having been alerted to the enemy's approach by his advanced posts, mounted his horse, issued orders to assemble a few troops, and while awaiting their arrival rode out with his escort picket to confront the enemy. He forced the column to veer to the left, attacked its rearguard, threw it into disorder, and captured some fifty men and a hundred mules; however, the remainder of the column, accelerating its pace, managed to escape him and retreated toward Hostalric. Following this engagement, the Army of Observation once again dispersed due to a lack of provisions. Almost the entire harvest had been consumed by the troops' prolonged encampment. They were forced to range far afield in search of the meager remnants of grain; stocks that had initially been forgotten, neglected due to their distance, or rejected on account of their poor quality.

Nevertheless, as early as 2 September, the Siege Division had received orders to resume its operations; yet it was with the utmost reluctance that it returned to its labors: eighty-six days of continuous fire, combined with the diseases so prevalent in such a scorching climate during the height of Summer, had left it severely depleted. Officers and soldiers alike, everyone, longed to see this siege brought to a swift conclusion; indeed, the recent arrival of reinforcements within the fortress, as well as the loss of the San Daniel convent, were viewed as distinct setbacks. Furthermore, General Taviel delivered the unwelcome news that the remaining ammunition was insufficient to sustain the siege. The initial stockpile of six hundred rounds per gun which had subsequently been augmented was now entirely expended, yet the breaches in the fortifications remained impassable. How bitterly, then, must they have regretted having so widely dispersed their artillery assets, rather than conserving them for the decisive moment! It therefore became necessary to take whatever time was required to bring in fresh convoys from Perpignan and, as a prerequisite, to re-establish the line of communication with France, which had been temporarily abandoned in the wake of Blake's maneuvers. This resulted in a delay of more than ten days.

With the Siege Division weakened by the task of escorting these new convoys, and the enemy garrison having, in the meantime, been reinforced, the opportunity afforded by this suspension of operations was seized to place Fort Montjuïc in a state of defense. The breaches were cleared of rubble, and the parapets were restored to the best of their former condition. The flanks were armed with light pieces and covered by traverses against fire from the Constable. Fort Montjuïc having thus been secured against a surprise attack, the trenches and batteries remained under its protection until the means were available to resume the attacks.

General Gouvion Saint-Cyr, increasingly convinced of the need to press forward with siege operations and to tighten the encirclement of the fortress with a strong line of contravallation, reinforced the siege division with the Italian brigade of General Mazzucchelli, comprising the

Sixth Light, the Sixth Line, and the Royal Chasseurs. These troops took up positions at Mount Llivia. General Pino remained at Casa de la Selva. The Fourth Italian Line and the Napoleon Dragoons reinforced the line across the plain. The Seventh Italian Line encamped on the heights of Castellar. The division of Souham held the entire gently undulating terrain situated between Riudellots and Bescanó, anchoring its right flank on the River Ter and its left at the Tiana crossroads.

On 5 September, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy sallied forth from the fortress, emerging from behind the Capuchin Fort, with approximately eighteen hundred men, intending to occupy the heights lying directly opposite; their objective appeared to be establishing a link with the outpost at Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, with the aim of protecting the arrival of several convoys they were expecting from La Bisbal or San Feliu, as well as facilitating the departure of the peasants who had previously smuggled provisions into the town. The Sixth Italian Line, which was encamped in that sector, attacked this column with impetuosity; after a spirited engagement, they routed the enemy force, drove it back into Girona, and took a number of prisoners, among whom was Lieutenant Colonel Fitz Gerald of the Ultonia Regiment.

On 6 September, General Verdier having not yet resumed full-scale siege operations, sought to make productive use of the precious time at his disposal (which allowed him the use of the greater part of his troops) to strike a blow against the bands led by Rovira and Claros, who were relentlessly harassing his lines of communication with Figueres. These bands had taken up positions at the foot of Nuestra Señora de las Gracias, in front of San Gregorio, and thus controlled an outlet into the Ter Valley. A column formed from the Westphalian Division and the Thirty-Second Light was tasked with this attack; however, it was repulsed, and the brave General Joba, who commanded it, sustained a mortal wound; furthermore, we suffered five men killed and forty-seven wounded.

On the same day, General Mazzucchelli was ordered, with his brigade, to attack the post of Our Lady of the Angels, which the enemy had occupied since 1 September with four hundred men. The convent and chapel had been crenellated. General Mazzucchelli first summoned the commander to surrender; but when the latter ordered his men to fire upon the parley envoy, all preparations were made to launch an assault. Shielded by the contours of the terrain, our troops reached the foot of the wall, where, finding themselves under cover, they undermined the escarpment and breached it at a weak point, opening a passage that was narrow but sufficient. Five officers and a few intrepid soldiers were the first to gain entry into the fortified church, where the defenders were crowded together and followed by the rest of the assault force, they soon gained mastery over the garrison and the redoubt. The Italians, enraged by the loss of approximately eighty men, ruthlessly massacred all the Spaniards, with the exception of two officers and a young cadet whom the commanders managed to save. Commander Llander had escaped by leaping from a window of the church⁵.

Our troops' occupation of this important position made communication between Girona and the sea much more difficult for the Spaniards and provided strong support for the left-flank of the

⁵ See supporting documents, No. 36.

siege division's camps. General Fontane, who was stationed at La Bisbal with the Second Italian Light and a squadron of Napoleon Dragoons, could then be dispatched to the left bank of the River Ter, between Taialà, San Pons, and San Medir, to reinforce the line of investment, which had been weakened as a result of losses sustained by the Westphalian Division.

Our sapping operations and our fire were suspended until 11 September. For its part, the enemy fired sparingly; however, they worked to repair and restore their batteries. They re-armed the Fort Calvary with two guns and a mortar. They emplaced several light pieces on the Gironnella Tower, and three pieces of 16 in the San Cristóbal Bastion. They still maintained their two pieces of 12 atop the cathedral vault. They re-armed the platform at the San Pedro Gate, on the Sarraïnes flank, and emplaced two guns within the Santa Maria Bastion. They also constructed a retrenchment at the gorge of this bastion, facing the San Pedro Square, and emplaced two guns there. The armament along the front of attack thus found itself in approximately the same state as it had been at the moment our counter-batteries were established.

General Verdier ordered the preparations for the attack to continue. Damage inflicted upon the communication trenches by enemy fire and by the rains was repaired. The batteries were resupplied as munitions arrived. Battery No. 26, comprising six pieces of 24, having been heavily harassed by fire from the Constable and the Chapter Redoubt, three of its guns were withdrawn to make room for the construction of traverses. And, to compensate for the fire of these pieces, the artillery began during the night of the 5th to the 6th a new breaching battery (No. 28), comprising four pieces of 16, situated at a point along the parallel that lay out of sight of the Fort Constable.

During the night of the 6th to the 7th, a reconnaissance mission was directed toward the San Daniel Convent. The enemy had evacuated it, and our troops took up quarters there. Work began immediately to restore its defenses.

98th NIGHT, of 11 to 12 September.

It was possible to resume the approach work begun in front of the parallel, with the aim of reaching the foot of the Santa Lucia curtain wall thereby enabling the sappers to set to work and compensating for the inadequacy of the breach that had previously been opened at that point.

99th NIGHT, of 12 to 13 September.

The same operations were continued. The batteries were fully resupplied, and on the morning of the 13th, they resumed their fire after a thirteen-day hiatus. General Verdier requested troop reinforcements from the Commander-in-Chief, intending to launch an assault as soon as the breaches were deemed practicable; however, the latter refused. It was with the utmost displeasure that he observed General Verdier, though nominally under his command, corresponding directly with the Minister of War and receiving all his supplies and provisions from France, while the remainder of the army was reduced to subsisting on the meager resources of the local region⁶.

⁶ See supporting documents, Nos. 37 and 38.

No. 24

*Representations from the Superior Junta of Catalonia to the
Supreme Central Junta regarding the critical state of the
town of Girona, in August 1809.*

Poblet, 16 August 1809.

Sire, for three months now, the invincible town of Girona has been under siege; for three months, it has ceaselessly cried out to us, pleading for the powerful aid it requires to extricate itself from the critical situation in which it finds itself, a situation that grows more alarming with each passing day. For three months, Catalonia has turned its gaze toward this Superior Junta, accusing it of culpable inaction in terms that rend our very hearts. This universal outcry, the sorrowful groans of the besieged and deeply unfortunate city, and the reproaches of our own consciences which would poison the remainder of our lives were we to neglect a single possible means of saving it, given that our fellow citizens have placed their trust in us all these motives compel us to address Your Majesty once again. We do so without fear of importuning you with our entreaties, relying upon the high regard in which we hold your benevolence and patriotic zeal. The object of our solicitude is of too great importance; the loss of Girona would inevitably entail the ruin of Catalonia and gravely imperil the entire nation.

Our representations of 15 June and 2 July have apprised Your Majesty of all that this Junta has accomplished thus far. The current plight of this unfortunate city defies description: its walls stand breached on all sides, as do those of Fort Montjuïc, the fall of which would infallibly precipitate the fall of the town itself. The garrison and inhabitants now have nothing left to oppose to the enemy's cannonballs and bayonets but their own bodies; their chests are their last rampart, those very chests that harbor hearts so eminently patriotic. In this city, forever memorable, prodigies have taken place, deeds that all save eyewitnesses will attribute to the realm of fable, for the dictates of mere prudence forbid accepting them as possible. The only thing capable of sustaining the steadfastness of these invincible Spaniards of enabling them to struggle for a few moments longer against the force of events is the hope of soon seeing both the province and Spain herself rushing to their aid. Eh! how could they fail to believe that their homeland would hasten to defend them, when they are dedicating themselves to death in order to save it? Yet time slips away, and their pleas go unheard. The generals of our army have resolved upon no course of action capable of lifting the siege; not one of the three lieutenant generals present here has been charged with taking command of the troops designated for this expedition. They all claim to be acting in strict accordance with the plan approved by Your Majesty. Can it truly be, then, that Your Majesty approved a plan to abandon Girona to its own meager resources? Its fall would be the inevitable consequence of such abandonment. Should this calamity come to pass, will the other strongholds of Catalonia and the Peninsula have the courage to emulate the fidelity that has reduced Girona, its temples and its buildings, to a heap of ruins, and condemned its heroic defenders to slavery or death? And should similar calamities come to threaten other cities, will they dare to count upon aid from us, when the most vital of our strongholds failed to obtain it? Do you not perceive the terrible consequences of this dire reflection, a thought capable of chilling the most ardent patriotism and shattering the souls of the most zealous defenders of our just cause? Once this frontier bulwark is breached, the province

lies open to the enemy, who will seize our harvests, our treasures, our children and ourselves; in short, the homeland ceases to have any real existence.

But let us bring this painful account to a close here; since Your Majesty has deigned to loudly proclaim the glory of this province and its patriotism since you have deigned to lavish the most flattering praise upon the noble city of Girona, do not permit the immortal memory of its heroic efforts to simultaneously remind posterity of a culpable indifference.

This shall not come to pass; Your Majesty will hasten to issue orders as swift as lightning; the reinforcements necessary to lift the siege will converge from all sides against the enemy who, having been halted by a defense prolonged far beyond his calculations, has already expended half of his forces. Such, then, is the hope we dare to place in the wisdom and benevolence of Your Majesty, who has entrusted us with the duty of safeguarding the defense and preservation of this province. We would betray our oaths, and our most sacred duties were we not to make resound within Your Majesty's paternal heart the final groans wrung from the noble city of Girona by a ceaseless and all-too-protracted agony.

May God preserve Your Majesty for many years.



No. 25

*Decree of the Supreme Central Junta in favor of Girona.
To M. the President of the Superior Junta of Catalonia.*

Royal Alcazar of Seville, 23 August 1809.

The Superior Junta of the Principality, considering the duty to safeguard the defense and preservation of the vital stronghold of Girona to be one of its most sacred obligations did, on 15 June, 2 July, and 16 August last, address the most vigorous representations to His Majesty, requesting his orders and such assistance as would be requisite to achieve this most critical objective. His Majesty the Supreme Junta could not but accord equal interest to this province and to the defense of Girona; consequently, it has deigned to adopt the Royal resolution set forth below, a resolution which the Junta hastens to publish in order to meet public expectations and to demonstrate to the Principality the high esteem in which it is held by the Supreme Government and the entire nation.

"Excellency," the Supreme Junta of the Kingdom's Government has read, "with as much sorrow as deep emotion Your Excellency's representation dated the 16th of this month, in which Your Excellency depicts, in such vivid and faithful colors, the extreme ills afflicting the vital stronghold of Girona, and the urgent necessity of providing a remedy. It has never been His Majesty's intention to leave it abandoned to its own devices, and thereby to lose the fruit of its incomparable sacrifices. His Majesty has ceaselessly issued the most categorical orders for its relief; and, unwilling to neglect any means of saving it from the peril in which it now stands, new and precise orders have been issued this very day to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of

Catalonia to hasten to its aid, at any cost and through every possible effort, even if the sole remaining recourse were to call for a mass levy of the entire province. Furthermore, to ensure that the necessary funds do not fail to secure the success of this vital undertaking, a sum of six million reals has been embarked aboard the vessel *Algésiras* which now awaits the moment of departure, while a further two million are likewise earmarked for the service of Catalonia. The courier bearing this Royal Order is entrusted with the entirety of the coined gold currently existing and available within the Treasury. His Majesty is pleased to believe that the Junta is fully convinced of the deep concern His Majesty feels regarding the fate of this faithful province; and it is His Majesty's will that Your Excellency make known to all its inhabitants that no sacrifice shall be spared to achieve the expulsion of the enemy currently oppressing them, to sustain their efforts, to fuel the courage of their defenders, and to worthily reward their heroic steadfastness. I convey this to you by His Majesty's command, and to ensure that its execution is in no wise delayed."

"May God preserve Your Excellency, etc."

"Signed: MARTIN DE GARAY."

No. 26

Report from General Gouvion Saint-Cyr to the Minister of War, regarding the entry of the Spanish convoy into Girona on September 1st.

Fornells, 3 September 1809.

Monseigneur,

I have the honor to forward to Your Excellency various letters intercepted a few days ago from a courier attempting to enter Girona. From them, Your Excellency will observe that, despite the reluctance felt by the Spanish generals to risk a battle in order to relieve Gerona, they were compelled by orders from the Junta to make an attempt to liberate that fortress. General Coupigny, who opposed this course of action, was relieved of command of the army, and General Blake personally took charge of the operation. He assembled every resource available in Catalonia, leaving behind only peasants to garrison the various strongholds. To these troops, he added a division drawn from Aragon under the command of the Marquis de Lazán (Palafox); finally, he withdrew from Tarragona every piece of field artillery contained within that fortress.

At the head of these forces, combined with those already facing us, he emerged from the mountains of Vic on 31 August; his vanguard, composed of the Savoy and Swiss Wimpfen regiments, attacked a battalion of the First Light Infantry Regiment encamped at Bruñola. The vanguard had already seized part of the position when the battalion, charging the enemy with fixed bayonets, routed them, inflicted heavy casualties, and remained in possession of Bruñola until nightfall. At that point, acting on orders received, the battalion evacuated the position to

take its place in the line alongside the rest of its corps. This action reflects great credit upon the battalion and will have served to demonstrate to the enemy exactly what they may expect from our troops.

On that same day, I received a letter from General Verdier, which I have attached here, in which he reported that his breaching batteries were having little effect, and that he would be obliged to employ sapping operations to crown his breaches, even though this undertaking would be time-consuming: firstly, because behind the wall lay a drop of eighteen to twenty feet; and secondly, because he lacked sufficient gunpowder to sustain the fire of his batteries against an ancient wall whose masonry offered extraordinary resistance. He therefore proposed to set his miners to work at the foot of this wall.

Alerted to the enemy's movements and the advances they signaled, I had no doubt that they were coming to offer me battle; I therefore did not lose a moment in concentrating my troops, which were at that time extremely dispersed, this being the only means of keeping them supplied. The left wing of Pino's division could not possibly arrive in time for the engagement; thus, convinced that the enemy was about to launch a massive assault against us, I wrote to General Verdier instructing him to leave only the troops necessary to guard our siege works and magazines along the attack front; to station General Lechi's Italian division in the plain of Salt to hold that sector, as it had done hitherto, and to join me with whatever available troops remained at his disposal. He arrived, and I positioned his force in reserve behind the Souham and Pino divisions, approximately one and a half leagues from Girona, so that I might deploy them either toward the Oña (Onyar) River should the enemy's strength demand it or toward Girona, should any event there require their presence. In any case, I deemed it the lesser evil to allow a few enemy reinforcements to enter a fortress whose walls had already been breached, rather than to run the risk of ceding an overwhelming numerical superiority to the enemy.

On September 1st, at daybreak, I was therefore drawn up in battle formation along the Oña, awaiting the moment the enemy would emerge from the woods covering the terrain as soon as an extremely thick fog had lifted. This fog persisted; nothing appeared; and it was not until around noon that I learned, solely through stragglers, that Lechi's division had allowed itself to be taken by surprise by troops advancing down the right bank of the Ter; that it had retreated in great haste toward Fornells, having engaged the enemy in nothing more than a single charge led by Colonel Banko at the head of the Crown Prince's Chasseur Squadron. I ordered General Verdier to return to Salt to restore order there, and I myself returned to Fornells, whence I dispatched the Italian Division to retake its position. General Millossewitz, who was commanding the division in General Lechi's absence and who was suffering from a severe fever, handed over command to General Zenardi, who was slightly less ill than he. I reinforced this division with a battalion from the Sixth Italian Regiment.

These various troops soon arrived in the plain of Salt, where they encountered an enemy force numbering approximately two hundred men and three hundred horses, which had just escorted a convoy of two hundred laden mules into the fortress and remained drawn up in battle formation to cover the entry of these transports. Had the Italian Division merely engaged the enemy, it would have delayed the convoy's progress and afforded us the time to seize it; but it was too late,

and we succeeded only in taking a few prisoners, among whom was the colonel of the Suizos (Swiss) Regiment.

General Verdier, having left reinforcements at Salt, recrossed the Ter and returned to Sarria, whither the Westphalian Division, which had come under attack, had withdrawn. He found his fortifications and supply depots in the exact state in which he had left them, neither having suffered the slightest damage.

On the 2nd, I remained drawn up in battle formation along the Oña, still awaiting the Spanish army. The left wing of Pino's division had arrived, and I left General Verdier holding his positions. The enemy had anchored his right flank at Santa Coloma de Farners and his left at the Las Esposas heights; his vanguard was deployed forward within the woods. Finally, seeing no sign of the enemy and unable to keep the army assembled for three days without starving it, I ordered a forward march against them. They did not wait for us but retreated in haste back into their mountains; terrain into which one cannot venture without carrying several days' worth of provisions, supplies which we were, at that time, utterly unable to procure. Thus, this great expedition which caused such a stir in Catalonia, required such extensive preparations, and aimed at nothing less than forcing us to lift the siege has resulted in nothing more (and even this only due to the fault of the Lechi Division) than introducing into a city, whose walls already feature two nearly practicable breaches a convoy capable of supplying the garrison and inhabitants with two or three days' worth of provisions, a reinforcement for the garrison that is now entirely superfluous, and, above all, a cavalry corps for which the city has absolutely no use and which it cannot possibly feed.

Yesterday afternoon, I dispatched the Mazzucchelli Brigade to take up an ambush position at the mouth of the Salt plain, there to await the sortie of the column that had entered the city the previous day. This morning, the column feigned a sortie; yet, despite the fact that we showed them only a handful of our troops, they dared not venture forth.

Yesterday, I ordered General Verdier to resume siege operations immediately, given that his approaches and batteries had remained entirely intact. He replied through my Chief and Deputy Chief of Staff, whom I had sent to him in succession to further expedite the resumption of work, that he had run out of gunpowder and possessed virtually no cannonballs; and that, in order to procure fresh supplies from Perpignan, he intended to dispatch troops tomorrow to reopen our lines of communication with France, lines that had been temporarily severed by the concentration of our forces, which the enemy's movements had necessitated.

General Verdier has expressed concern regarding the weakening of the siege troops due to the prevalence of sickness within their ranks. These same maladies are also making themselves felt within the observation corps, which has suffered severely from a shortage of provisions whereas the siege troops, by contrast, have received their supplies from France with unfailing regularity. In light of these observations, I have assigned the Mazzucchelli Brigade responsibility for a portion of the city's blockade, thereby leaving General Verdier with a larger reserve of available troops and, consequently, facilitating his operations to a greater degree. I shall not conceal from Your Excellency that I view with the keenest regret the fact that this siege has dragged on for so long. I am far from attributing the slowness of its progress to the officers in charge of it. They

were designated by His Majesty; they enjoy his confidence; I do not doubt that they have done everything that needed to be done, and I attribute the protracted nature of their operations solely to the force of circumstances. However, the shortage of provisions is now such that having, over the past two and a half months, exhausted every resource in a region where not a single inhabitant remains, I foresee that, within a few days, it will be physically impossible to maintain an observation corps; and should the siege continue for much longer, it would be impossible to predict its outcome.

I beg Your Excellency to accept the assurance of my respect.

Signed: COUNT GOUVION SAINT-CYR.



No. 27

*Report from General Millossewitz to General Verdier,
regarding the movement of the Spanish convoy in the plain of
Salt, on September 1st.*

Fornells, 2 September 1809.

I owe you, General, a report on yesterday's engagement. It was noon when I was alerted by my outposts that an enemy column consisting of approximately one thousand men and fifty cavalry was descending from the heights of Bescanó and advancing into the plain. I immediately called to arms the infantry and the Crown Prince Chasseurs. I marched against the enemy with three columns formed en masse, ordering Colonel Banko to push forward and probe the enemy's strength. I had already advanced almost within cannon range of the enemy line when I suddenly observed a considerable increase in their forces; they now consisted of approximately five thousand infantrymen and four full squadrons of cavalry, whereas my own forces comprised only about twelve hundred infantrymen and one hundred cavalry.

The enemy then advanced with its four squadrons, moving in echelons, and pushed columns of infantry toward my right and left flanks in an attempt to turn my position; the remainder of their infantry line remained stationary.

Under these circumstances, I ordered Colonel Banko, commanding the chasseurs à cheval of the Crown Prince—to launch a charge against the leading enemy squadron. The charge was executed with vigor, and the enemy withstood it with equal determination. Colonel Banko was compelled to retreat, and the enemy pursued him for a distance of more than five hundred paces. Our chasseurs subsequently rallied and presented a united front, whereupon the enemy ceased their pursuit. The infantry columns continued to advance, with the column on the right flank protected by its cavalry. Seeing, therefore, no longer any means to maneuver successfully, as I was threatened from all sides, I resolved to seize the heights to my left in order to gain the advantage of the terrain. The enemy pursued me during my march, and their cavalry sought on all sides to cut into my ranks; however, my three small columns in mass formation, maintaining

fire in every direction, held them in check. I marched in this order as far as the Maison carrée, where I had made arrangements to hold my ground, when Colonel Banko reported to me that the enemy with a strong column of infantry and cavalry was attempting to slip in between us and the Army Headquarters. Knowing that the Headquarters had no support available other than ourselves, I continued my march until I was within cannon range of it. It was four o'clock when I reached this position. I must note that, for two hours, I had held my ground facing the enemy on the plain, both to maintain a resolute bearing in their presence and to allow time for the sick and the baggage train to make their escape.

I sent word to the Commander-in-Chief regarding my movement; he ordered that my small division, reinforced by yours, General, return to reoccupy its original positions.

Being no longer able, for my part, to remain in the saddle and having unfortunately been afflicted for several days with a continuous fever, I requested permission from the Commander-in-Chief to halt at his Headquarters. He had the kindness to accede to my request, and I handed over command of the division to General Zenardi. At this moment, General, I can do no other than offer my highest praise to my entire force, and particularly to the regimental commanders and brigade commanders.

Please accept, etc.

Signed: MILLOSSEWITZ.

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## **No. 28**

*Report from General Verdier to the Minister of War,  
regarding the entry of the Spanish convoy into Girona, on  
September 1<sup>st</sup>.*

Sarria, 3 September 1809.

Excellency,

I have the honor to forward to Your Excellency the reports on the siege operations at Girona, covering the period from the 19<sup>th</sup> until the 31<sup>st</sup> of August. In them, you will observe the progress that had been made and how little remained for us to do to create two practicable breaches which would undoubtedly have secured us possession of the fortress, were it not for the unfortunate incident regarding which I must now report to Your Excellency.

As early as July 9<sup>th</sup> last, I had the honor of informing Your Excellency that General Saint-Cyr intended to withdraw as many troops as possible from the siege corps in order to reinforce his own forces and give battle to the enemy army. I had opposed this measure; however, General Saint-Cyr unfortunately disregarded my observations, as Your Excellency will see from the copies of his letters which I have attached to this report, wherein he issues me a formal order to

abandon the siege with all the troops at my disposal, in order to take up my position within his order of battle. The silence Your Excellency has maintained toward me despite all the reports I have had the honor of submitting regarding my operations before Girona and particularly concerning my relations with General Saint-Cyr, did not prevent me (even though I had received no direct orders to that effect) from obeying that General. And this is precisely what has placed us in the grim and distressing situation in which both he and I now find ourselves.

General Saint-Cyr having ordered me to arrive with my troops, at daybreak on the 1<sup>st</sup> of this month, at the position he had designated as his field of battle as Your Excellency will see from the copy of my letter dated 31 August, I executed my maneuver precisely, though only after taking every necessary precaution to secure the artillery park, the supply depots, Montjuïc, and our advanced works. Yet, imagine my astonishment to find not a single enemy before me and to learn that there were none, either, facing the rest of the army (whose position was then revealed to me, and which lay in terrain so heavily wooded that it could not be sighted); and to learn, at the very same moment, that six thousand Spaniards, accompanied by a convoy of a thousand laden mules, had turned General Saint-Cyr's right flank, appeared in the Plain of Salt, and, after having forced their way past the shattered remnants of the Lechi Division, had succeeded in throwing some three thousand men and the entire convoy into the fortress! Upon learning of this event, General Saint-Cyr at first appeared to doubt it; but, finally, once stragglers from the Italian Division arrived to confirm the news, he decided to order me back to my camps, even though I was then more than three leagues distant. I emerged into the Plain of Salt just in time to cut down and capture a few stragglers from the force that had slipped into the fortress, and to halt—by my mere presence the success of a most vigorous sortie that was being launched, at that very instant, against our breaching batteries and Montjuïc. I also checked the advance of the bands led by Rovira and Claros, who had driven the Westphalian Division from its positions on the heights of Old Sarria and were preparing to pursue it into Pontmayor and thence toward my artillery park, which was stationed behind that village. It is, in the end, to the speed and diligence with which I moved to retake my positions that I owe the good fortune of having preserved my artillery, my depots, and my siege works entirely intact. General Joba, whom I had left behind to guard them, along with Colonel Mouff, commanding the Grand Duke of Berg's Second Regiment (whom I had stationed in Montjuïc), saved for me through their personal bravery, their intelligence, and above all their rare steadfastness everything that General Saint-Cyr's tactical blunder had exposed me to the risk of losing. General Taviel, commanding the siege artillery, provided powerful support to General Joba and Colonel Mouff by rapidly moving artillery pieces to every threatened point.

I shall not dwell upon what the consequences of these unfortunate events will be; Your Excellency will readily judge that they can only prove disastrous for the Army of Catalonia, since I am down to the last cannonballs for my 24 and 16, and at the very end of my powder—without knowing where I might procure more, unless Your Excellency would be pleased to indicate a source.

I am reduced to one-third of my original troop strength; the climate, the arduous labors of the siege, and the warfare I have been compelled to wage single-handedly from Girona all the way to Bellegarde, in order to maintain our lines of communication, have decimated the remainder.

The reinforcements received by the garrison, combined with the losses I have sustained whether through death, injury, or disease have deprived me of the ability to resume the blockade of the fortress. I find myself reduced to a position where I can do no more than hold my own installations: the artillery park, Montjuïc, and the siege works. This situation leaves the enemy with open lines of communication to the fertile region of La Bisbal and to the sea; they are actively exploiting this advantage to complete their resupply, and I have no doubt, unless General Saint-Cyr, whom I am keeping fully informed, takes measures to cut off this lifeline, that within six or eight days, the fortress will have received a full year's worth of provisions and supplies of every description.

I believe I have nothing to reproach myself with in this entire affair. My operations, though protracted, were nearing their conclusion; and had Your Excellency kindly cast an eye over everything I have felt duty-bound to convey to you since my arrival here regarding my dealings with General Saint-Cyr, you will see, I believe, that if the siege of Girona was not brought to a swifter conclusion and if it did not turn out more favorably that General alone is to blame, owing to his persistent refusal to dispatch reinforcements to me, and more particularly to the erroneous maneuver he executed, in which he compelled me to participate.

I beg Your Excellency to accept the homage of my profound respect.

*Signed:* VERDIER.

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No. 29

Letter from General Rey, Chief of Staff of the Seventh Corps, to the Minister of War.

Fornells, 4 September 1809.

Monseigneur,

His Excellency the General-in-Chief has rendered you a detailed account of the army's recent operations and of the movements executed by the enemy, who, having assembled in force, is now positioned opposite us, both at Hostalric and upon all the heights of Santa Coloma and San Hilario.

For two days, the General-in-Chief executed maneuvers designed to draw out the enemy and force him into battle; however, the latter declined to engage. He had received too rough a reception on 31 August at the hands of a battalion from the French First Light Infantry Regiment, stationed at Bruñola. Attacked in its position by three elite battalions, one Swiss and two Line battalions, this French unit compelled the Spaniards to retreat, killing more than one hundred of their men, fifty to sixty of whom fell to the bayonet; our own casualties amounted to two or three killed and twenty-five wounded.

The enemy seized this opportunity to throw some provisions into Girona.

The prolonged duration of the siege, combined with the obstacles encountered in breaching the main fortifications of the stronghold, has placed the army in an extremely precarious position regarding its subsistence. Our supplies are entirely exhausted; the harvested grain which has since been threshed has sustained the army for over two and a half months. Today, the General-in-Chief was compelled to dispatch a detachment of Pino's division to procure provisions from the vicinity of La Bisbal; three battalions and a cavalry regiment from this same division currently deployed in the blockade of the fortress are drawing their rations from the siege army itself; otherwise, they would have been left without bread. The division of Souham still possesses a supply of bread sufficient for six or seven days; and after this period should the breach not yet be practicable for taking the stronghold by storm we shall face the direst of shortages.

Rations for several of the army corps were reduced some time ago; unfortunately, hail had partially destroyed the crops in a number of communes situated within the district occupied by the army.

Illnesses are multiplying at an alarming rate and are assuming a more critical character with each passing day; over the last fortnight alone, more than two thousand men have been admitted to the hospitals, and today in the hospitals of Figueres and the field ambulances alone we have over four thousand sick men.

Transport capabilities are diminishing daily due to the loss of horses, and the service stands on the brink of collapse unless the Prefects promptly provide the replacements that have been requested of them.

The Army's Chief Commissary has submitted a detailed and specific report on our situation to His Excellency the Minister-Director; it is a matter of urgency, Monseigneur, that he give his most serious consideration to the arduous predicament in which we find ourselves.

The army awaits with impatience the moment when the breaches become practicable, so that it may join its efforts to those of the siege troops; it will, as it has invariably done in the past, prove itself worthy of the benevolence of our august Emperor.

Deign to accept, Monseigneur, the assurance of my profound respect.

Signed: REY.

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## No. 30

*Letter from General Gouvion Saint-Cyr to the Minister of War.*

Fornells, 5 September 1809.

Monseigneur,

In the last letter I had the honor of writing to you, I reported to Your Excellency that a convoy—which I was assured consisted of two hundred mules had succeeded in making its way into Girona; however, based on new intelligence and particularly that transmitted to me by General Verdier, it appears that the convoy was considerably larger, comprising one thousand mules or horses.

Convinced that these mules, along with the troops escorting them, could not remain within the city without consuming the very provisions they had brought in, thereby rendering their journey futile, I had positioned the Mazzucchelli Brigade (as I previously had the honor of informing you) to observe the convoy's departure and seize it. Other troops were similarly deployed across various points; yet the convoy, taking advantage of the terrain and the cover of night, managed to escape. Only troops from the Pino Division caught wind of it and gave chase. As both the troops and the mules scattered throughout the mountains and woods surrounding us, we were able to capture only a small portion of them.

I beg Your Excellency to accept the homage of my respect.

*Signed:* COUNT GOUVION SAINT-CYR.

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## No. 31

*Report from General Blake to the Supreme Junta of Seville,  
regarding the resupply of Girona, September 1<sup>st</sup>.*

Olot, 13 September 1809.

Most Excellent Lord,

Girona, immortal, whether ultimately vanquished or victorious, and at every epoch fatal to the French troops that have besieged it, perseveres with steadfastness in its glorious defense. Yet it lacked ammunition, provisions, and the most essential necessities for the sick and wounded. It was so tightly invested that it maintained no communication with the rest of the Principality, save for occasional instances when a messenger managed to slip through the enemy lines. It was, therefore, of the utmost necessity to come to its aid by introducing provisions, as well as a body of troops to reinforce its brave and indefatigable garrison. This operation was, however, as difficult and hazardous as it was important. Although the enemy occupied a very extensive line,

he could easily concentrate his forces; and it was to be expected that he would exert every effort to prevent the resupply of a fortress he had been besieging for three months and which he held under a very rigorous blockade. The only recourse remaining to me was to divert his attention to several points, and to lead him to believe that my intention was to offer him battle at a location directly opposite to the route the convoy was to take. This plan was executed with the most complete success.

My headquarters were at San Hilario when I issued the orders for the various movements. I ordered Don Manuel Llander, an infantry lieutenant in the Ultonia Regiment, to proceed north of Girona to the heights of N. D. des Anges (Our Lady of Angels), taking with him a sufficient number of troops as well as any local men he might encounter along the way in order to dislodge the enemy from that position (where they held only a small body of infantry) and to protect the supply convoys expected to arrive from that direction. This order was executed with punctuality. I then proceeded, with the reserve corps, to the Hermitage del Padre, situated two leagues from San Hilario, so as to be in a position to deploy wherever reinforcements might prove necessary. From this point, I detached the Colonel of the Ultonia Regiment, Don Henry O'Donell, along with twelve hundred infantrymen and some cavalry, to attack the enemy troops stationed at Bruñola, with the intention of convincing the French general that the convoy was scheduled to pass through that sector. Notwithstanding the excellent defensive position at Bruñola which was further strengthened by a system of earthworks, O'Donell and his troops attacked with such gallantry that they gained the summit of the mountain and planted the Spanish flag atop the fortifications. The French unleashed a terrible fire; yet they were unable to halt the momentum of our troops. The enemy, convinced that this was the critical point requiring primary defense, diverted reinforcements to the location. Thereupon, O'Donell, seeking to avoid being outflanked, descended into the plain, where he was joined by a body of our troops under the command of General Loygorri. He could, in an instant, have driven the enemy from their position; however, I deemed it preferable to order various maneuvers, with a view to exaggerating the French general's impression of our numbers, and to induce him to shift the force at his disposal in that direction, thereby leaving unguarded the route along which I intended to send the convoy. My divisions remained facing Bruñola throughout the evening, which the enemy precipitately evacuated during the night.

Colonel Don Francisco Rovira, who was positioned on the left bank of the Ter, along with Lieutenant Colonel Don Juan Claros, attacked, under my orders, the enemy troops facing them, and most fortunately drew their attention to that quarter.

In the meantime, a force of four thousand infantry and five hundred cavalry, under the command of General Garcia Conde, was escorting a convoy of fifteen hundred to two thousand mules; having set out from Amer, this convoy crossed the Ter and continued its march along the right bank of the river to enter the fortress. These troops repelled the enemy units they encountered along their route, burned several of their camps, and successfully entered Girona. The French, having failed to prevent the arrival of this convoy, sought at the very least to cut off the return of the escort troops, as well as the horses and mules that had served for transport; consequently, they abandoned their outlying posts and consolidated their line. It therefore became necessary to shift our positions and execute various maneuvers to cover the withdrawal. General Garcia Conde remained within the fortress for two days and two nights and withdrew with such

remarkable good fortune that not a single man nor a single mule from his column fell into enemy hands.

The Governor of Girona now finds himself in command of a garrison numbering three thousand men. As soon as I receive the detailed report of General Garcia Conde's operations, I shall forward it to Your Excellency. In the interim, I am sending you copies of the reports I have received from O'Donell, Rovira, Claros, and Llander.

I have the honor to be, etc.

*Signed:* BLAKE.

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No. 32

*Report from Governor Alvarez to General Blake,
Captain-General of the Army of Catalonia, regarding the state
of the fortress since the entry of the convoy on September 1st.*

Girona, 4 September 1809.

Excellency,

On the 1st of this month, the relief force you sent us under the command of Major General Don Jayme Garcia Conde entered the city, bringing with it the convoy he was escorting. Your Excellency will learn, from the report of the Superintendent of Finance, that this relief force is insufficient to meet our most immediate needs. The scarcity of provisions is so severe, a consequence of the garrison's increased size that, were it not for the inhabitants who voluntarily provided food for the troops, we would be reduced to the direst extremity. Had communications remained open, we could have remedied this situation by drawing supplies from the province, the treasury, and the army's storehouses; but scarcely had General Garcia Conde departed with the remainder of his division and his mule train when the enemy occupied the heights and the plain, thereby cutting off all access routes. It is true that, prior to the completion of the enemy's siege works which now lie within pistol range of our positions, a detachment from the garrison could have seized the heights and kept the lines of communication open; however, I was unwilling to expose, to such a degree, a garrison and a populace whose heroic resistance has become the very despair of the enemy. The occupation of the heights of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles by a detachment might have afforded us a tenuous outlet; yet such a force would have proved insufficient, for the enemy facing no threat from that quarter would undoubtedly have concentrated superior forces against it. Had the divisions of Rovira and Claros occupied this hermitage as well as the neighboring heights of San Miguel with substantial forces, I would have dispatched a detachment from the garrison to the height facing the Capuchin Fort, situated on the road to Our Lady of the Angels. By this means, the enemy would never have been able to intercept the passage without exposing themselves to a crossfire; moreover, we would have secured possession of strategic points that are indispensable for a general engagement. I am

convinced that Your Excellency will view with interest the sacrifices made by the inhabitants, who have been reduced to the direst necessity for having prioritized above all else, the defense of the city, their homeland, and the King. I trust that, while we await the moment when Your Excellency delivers us from the oppression that has weighed upon us for so long, you will not fail to dispatch to these loyal Spaniards the relief they so richly deserve. The enemy is fortifying its position within Fort Montjuïc, though they are not opening fire; they are likewise strengthening their former positions, with the exception of the Den Roca battery, where no personnel are to be seen. Their movements are ceaseless; numerous columns are being dispatched in every direction, and their line effectively intercepts all avenues of passage. Under these circumstances, we look entirely to Your Excellency's resolve to provide the relief of which we stand in such urgent need.

May God preserve Your Excellency for many years to come.

Signed: MARIANO ALVAREZ.

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### **No. 33**

*Report from the Superintendent of Finance of Girona, Don Carlos Beramendi, to Governor Alvarez.*

Girona, 5 September 1809.

The Department of Finance of this garrison, which has been entrusted to my care, finds itself reduced to the direst extremity and is unable to fulfill the obligations pressing upon it from all sides.

The two thousand nine hundred men by whom the garrison has been augmented since the 1<sup>st</sup> of this month have just exhausted all the resources offered by the generous inhabitants of this city, which, for the past four months, has sustained itself entirely on its own. Your Excellency is doubtless fully convinced of this truth, so notorious to all, yet I cannot refrain from reiterating it ceaselessly, and especially on this occasion, where my conscience compels me to do so as a duty. At this very moment, finding myself surrounded by all the regimental paymasters, as well as by a multitude of laborers employed in the fortifications, the artillery, and the hospitals, all of whom are pleading for some relief to sustain themselves, I hasten to apprise Your Excellency of this situation. You are well aware of the disastrous impact that this absolute lack of funds could have upon our current circumstances; I therefore await your prompt instructions regarding the course of action I must now pursue. Your Excellency is not unaware that since 13 June when the bombardment first began I have stripped the churches of all the silver plate contained therein, and that the inhabitants have poured into the treasury every last coin they possessed in their homes. Although these contributions proved insufficient to fully cover the burdens weighing upon us, they have nonetheless sufficed to sustain our heroic defense up to this very day. May God preserve Your Excellency for many years.

*Signed:* CARLOS BERAMENDI.

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No. 34

Dispatch from the Junta of Girona to General Blake.

Girona, 6 September 1809.

Excellency, on the first of this month, a convoy that you sent us under the escort of a division of infantry and cavalry commanded by Field Marshal Don Jayme Garcia Conde successfully entered the city. This division, after two days of rest, departed again on the 4th, leaving us a reinforcement of two thousand nine hundred men.

This Junta wishes to express its deep gratitude to you for the relief it has received; however, it cannot refrain from pointing out that the meager advantage gained by the arrival of a few provisions is liable to vanish at any moment. The administration had calculated at the time that the garrison, including the two thousand nine hundred men of the reinforcement, would derive approximately eight days' worth of provisions from this supply. Yet, it is impossible not to include the inhabitants in this calculation; they had already set a generous example by sharing with the garrison almost every scrap of food they possessed. Were we, then, to condemn them now to starve, especially under circumstances where there are no longer any troops positioned outside the fortress capable of facilitating the entry of foodstuffs from neighboring villages? Consequently, the scarcity is such that, today, it was barely possible to issue the daily ration in broad beans, owing to the absolute lack of any other vegetable.

Furthermore, not the slightest sum of money has arrived here, neither with the last convoy nor by any other means. All resources have been exhausted; the Minister Director of Administration acknowledges that devotion and patriotism have already made every sacrifice that could possibly be expected of them⁷. In a word, Girona remains in the same state: with three open breaches, without provisions, without funds, without resources, and in even more imminent danger of falling prey to famine, destitution, and the fury of the enemy.

This Junta once again casts itself upon Your Excellency's bosom; it implores your protection. It trusts that, convinced of this grim truth, you will hasten with your army to Girona's aid, to deliver it from the unspeakable ills under which it has labored for four months, and which it has endured with heroic constancy.

It can hold out no longer; in three or four days, hunger will grant the enemy a triumph that he could not have achieved through the force of arms.

May God preserve Your Excellency for many years.

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<sup>7</sup> See the report from the Superintendent of Finance, Don Carlos Beramendi, to Governor Alvarez.

## No. 35

### *Report from Governor Alvarez to the Supreme Junta of Catalonia.*

Girona, 9 September 1809.

Excellency, it would be superfluous to recount to you the events that have taken place successively during the long duration of the siege of this fortress. Your benevolence is too active, in all matters concerning the welfare of the homeland, for you to have remained unaware of them. Furthermore, I have every reason to believe that your eyes remain constantly fixed upon Girona, for upon its fate depends, in part, the happiness or misfortune of the province entrusted to your care.

The most recent events that is to say, those that have occurred since the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, are the only ones regarding which it is likely that Your Excellency may not yet fully grasp the nature, whether due to the complexity of the facts or the extreme strictness with which all lines of communication have been intercepted. Although, regarding all matters of a military nature, I have fully outlined our situation to the Captain-General in my most recent reports, I nevertheless deem it my duty to apprise you of the state of the city, both in my capacity as the chief civil authority of this district, and as the president of a Junta whose loyalty and zeal merit your consideration.

The King's storehouses were already empty; every means of subsistence had been exhausted; all private funds and provisions, which had been pooled into a common reserve, had been distributed with rigorous equality between the civilian inhabitants and the troops, who had come to form but a single family; and now, a host of new necessities has arisen the inevitable consequence of so obstinate a siege. Valor alone could not suffice to meet every need. Upon making these needs known to the Captain-General, we believed we had secured some relief for them, based upon his formal promises and repeated assurances. Yet, even with the successful entry of the convoy on the 1<sup>st</sup> of this month, we find ourselves in a situation more critical than ever, despite having counted upon that very relief to see us through to the end of our suffering. The divisions of Colonel Rovira and Lieutenant-Colonel Claros, which attacked the enemy from Costa Rosa to Taialà, had in a moment driven them from all the heights, even from the Roca batteries, and forced them back into the plain and the village of Sarria.

General Conde's division had routed the enemy in the plain of Salt and opened a passage for the convoy, which entered the city without losing a single pack mule; the disoriented enemy would have suffered the same fate at every point had they been pressed further the uncertainty of their movements leaves little doubt in this regard. Yet this expedition yielded no other result, even though the entire province, like ourselves, had been expecting the complete liberation of the city. An order from the Captain-General which General Conde showed me, and in which the former offered to provide the latter with the necessary troops and to cover the entry of the convoy is all that we gained from that day. In truth, I had fully foreseen that an increase in the garrison would deplete our provisions; but assuming that a general engagement would not be long in coming, I

did not hesitate to retain some three thousand men to ensure the defense of the fortress whose breaches lay exposed and also to facilitate other military maneuvers. How distressing it is for me to watch the days slip by, and to see the moment drawing near when all our resources will be exhausted! The soldier and the civilian alike are already reduced to a ration of worm-eaten beans and a meager quantity of poor-quality bread which, even then, is difficult to procure. What effect can such a wretched existence have following upon so many hardships other than to produce a great number of sick men, for whose care there are not even any medicines? Must not the knowledge of the fate awaiting them in the hospitals weigh upon the soldiers' morale? Only a heroic steadfastness is capable of refusing to be broken by it.

Such, Your Excellency, is the situation of this city, one of which you may take pride in counting among those entrusted to your supervision, and which I cannot cease to commend to your protection without rendering myself culpable. I therefore venture to declare to you that unless the entire province, whether by organizing new troops or by a levée en masse, should the forces of the Captain-General prove insufficient, comes promptly to lift the siege, Girona will soon be nothing more than a glorious mound of corpses lying amidst the ruins of its buildings and ramparts, a sorrowful memory that will afflict posterity.

May God preserve, etc.

*Signed:* MARIANO ALVAREZ.

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No. 36

Letter from General Gouvion Saint-Cyr to the Minister of War.

Fornells, 8 September 1809.

Monseigneur,

On the afternoon of 6 September, a column of approximately eighteen hundred men attempted to sally forth from Girona by passing behind the Capuchin Fort, and ascended the mountains bordering the fortress on that side. There, it encountered the Sixth Italian Line Regiment, which I had stationed in that position. This regiment attacked the Spaniards with impetuosity, drove them back into the fortress, and inflicted considerable losses upon them; several prisoners fell into our hands, including a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Ultonia Regiment. This engagement reflects the highest credit upon Colonel Eugène, who commands the Sixth Italian Regiment. This officer continues to demonstrate, on every occasion, proofs of his bravery and experience; I therefore commend him once again to Your Excellency's favor.

As the enemy occupied the strategic point of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, situated atop a towering rock that commands all the surrounding mountains, with a garrison of four hundred men, I ordered General Mazzucchelli, commanding a brigade of the Pino Division, to seize it. This position, naturally formidable in itself, had moreover been carefully fortified. The chapel

and the adjoining convent were crenellated. General Mazzucchelli invested the post and summoned it to surrender. Upon its refusal, he attacked with such vigor that, despite the enemy's obstinate resistance, he captured it. The four hundred men defending the position who had refused to surrender were all put to the sword, with the exception of a boy and two officers (one of whom was wounded), whom the Italian commanders managed to save.

The success of this brilliant engagement is due in particular to General Mazzucchelli and to Colonel Eugène of the Sixth Italian Regiment. General Mazzuchelli's two aides-de-camp, Loubers and Ré, also distinguished themselves.

I beg Your Excellency to accept the assurance of my respect.

Signed: COUNT GOUVION SAINT-CYR.

No. 37

Letter from General Verdier to General Gouvion Saint-Cyr, regarding a request for troops to launch an assault on the city.

Sarria, 13 September 1809.

Excellency,

I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that, our preparations being complete, our breaching batteries will open fire tomorrow at daybreak; in the opinion of Generals Sanson and Taviel, four days of bombardment will be more than sufficient to open the breaches and render them practicable. I therefore consider it indispensable that Your Excellency dispatch, at least twenty-four hours in advance, the troops designated to spearhead the assault, so that these troops may be positioned at the head of the sally-ports through which they are to advance and in such a manner that both they and their commanders have the time to familiarize themselves with the terrain and to study it. This measure is all the more necessary as I anticipate, around the second day of the bombardment, a general sortie from the fortress, aimed at leveling our siege works and spiking our guns. Your Excellency's troops, if positioned in advance as I propose, will surely be able to halt this sortie, something I cannot guarantee with my own meager forces, exhausted as they are by ceaseless labor and constant vigilance.

Moreover, General, we have now reached the culmination of both our labors and our efforts; it falls to your troops to deliver the great and final blow. Your strategic direction will be essential to them; for my own part, I would view with the utmost pleasure any decision on your part to take personal command and direct us all, assuring you in advance that no one will display greater zeal than I in executing your orders.

I beg Your Excellency to give my request your kind consideration: upon the measure I propose depends, in my judgment, the success of our enterprise; and I would not wish to have to reproach myself for any negligence or lack of foresight regarding a matter of such paramount importance.

I beg Your Excellency to accept the assurances of my highest respect.

Signed: VERDIER.

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## **No. 38**

*General Gouvion Saint-Cyr's Reply to the  
Preceding Letter.*

Fornells, 14 September 1809.

General,

In response to your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup>, I must point out that I fail to understand the distinction you seek to draw between what you term my troops and yours. I am aware of no decree issued by the Emperor that has in any way diminished my authority. One division of this corps occupies Barcelona; another has been tasked with conducting the siege of Girona; and I have positioned myself, along with the remaining two divisions, in such a manner as to be able to march upon Barcelona should that fortress come under attack, or to engage any body of troops sufficiently numerous to compel you to lift the siege of Girona. Subsequently, I moved my position closer to yours, as I presumed that you stood in greater need of my assistance than did Barcelona; and to date, Barcelona has indeed remained unassailed, no enemy force has succeeded in compelling you to lift the siege of Girona, and I have furnished you with every possible form of assistance. It follows from these observations that I am no more at liberty to assume your role than I am to assume those of Generals Duhesme, Souham, or Pino; rather, I must remain at my own post—for if matters are to proceed successfully, it is essential that each man attend to his own specific duty. Your duty is to capture Girona, utilizing the resources the government has allocated for that specific objective, and working alongside the officers it has appointed to direct the siege operations. Your troops have indeed performed arduous labor; yet they have been afforded the necessary time to complete it, thereby ensuring that no one can claim such work was executed under undue duress. They have been well-provisioned and, in compensation for their labors, have received a substantial supplement to their regular pay, funds with which they have been able to procure for themselves an even more abundant supply of food. Conversely, the troops comprising the observation divisions have been subjected to extreme physical exhaustion merely to secure for themselves a meager supply of food and food of very poor quality at that. Their plight would have been even worse had they not managed, by paying for it, to procure bread purchased from your soldiers. You are nearing the completion of your labors, I hope; and I fail to understand why you would wish for the Pino Division, or the Souham Division, to arrive and snatch from your troops the laurels they have every right to reap after the arduous tasks they have performed.

I do not share your assessment of the troops under your command: the deadly assault they launched on 8 July and the time they spent upon the breach, exposed to every manner of enemy fire serve as a sure guarantee of their quality, and of what you may expect from them during the assault on the fortress of Girona. Furthermore, one must assume that the Director of Engineers enlightened by the errors committed at Montjuïc during the assault of 8 July will have taken every possible precaution to ensure that the breaches are, in fact, truly practicable.

To ensure you have your full resources at your disposal, the Pino Division will be charged with blockading the city, while the Souham Division will maintain an external watch to prevent any enemy force from interrupting your operations. In the event, which I consider highly unlikely, that the troops of your division should fail to seize the city, and be repulsed in the assaults they launch against the stronghold, then and only then and in accordance with the arrangements previously established for Montjuïc will I issue orders for the Pino Division to attempt to storm the fortress, having it relieved from its blockade positions. Should that division, too, unfortunately, meet with failure, we would then have the Souham Division make a further attempt. However, I trust that these contingency measures will prove unnecessary, and that the moment your breaches become practicable, the garrison will not expose the city to the inevitable horrors that attend a town taken by storm. Indeed, it is entirely possible that, at that juncture, the city might surrender in response to a formal summons; a measure that the dictates of humanity require us to issue.

*Signed:* COUNT GOUVION SAINT-CYR.