

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

100th NIGHT, of 13 to 14 September.

Work continued on the approaches toward the Santa Llúcia curtain wall, with the aim of positioning the miner there. The enemy maintained a continuous fire upon these works, employing musketry, grapeshot, bombs, and shells which significantly slowed their progress.

At daybreak, the three breaching batteries Nos. 26, 27, and 28 resumed firing. Battery No. 27 directed its guns against the San Cristóbal bastion in order to widen the breach.

On that same day, the post at Bàscara, situated on the Fluvià River, was attacked by Colonel Henry O'Donnell with a force of two thousand five hundred infantrymen and one hundred and fifty cavalrymen, just as a flour convoy escorted by five hundred men was arriving from Figueres. The Spaniards seized the village, despite its being fortified. The defenders were forced to take refuge in the castle; however, the convoy's escort along with some troops under General Guillot who had rushed in haste from Figueres came to their aid and compelled the enemy to withdraw: a large number of flour sacks were lost, as the peasants accompanying the convoy had thrown them onto the road at the approach of the Spanish cavalry and fled with their carts¹. This attack, insignificant in itself, nevertheless spread alarm throughout France due to its proximity to the frontier. The enemy suffered a loss of one hundred and eighty men, including fourteen officers. In recognition of this feat of arms, the Supreme Junta promoted Colonel O'Donnell to the rank of Brigadier and granted a promotion to every officer who had been wounded.

101st NIGHT, of 14 to 15 September.

Work continued on the approach trenches leading toward the Santa Llúcia curtain wall. Although we had only about forty meters left to cover to reach the curtain and plant the mine there, we were unable to extend the final sap, so intense was the fire directed at us by the enemy from atop the ramparts. Engineering Captain Binarville, who had already been gravely wounded early in the siege, was killed during this operation.

¹ See Supporting Documents, No. 39.

On the 15th, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy launched a vigorous sortie against our breaching batteries. A column of approximately one thousand men emerged through the San Pedro Gate, which, since the capture of Fort Montjuïc, had been walled up but was reopened specifically for this action. The Spaniards advanced undetected as far as Battery No. 28, then successively spread out into Batteries Nos. 26 and 27, spiking the guns and severing the spokes of the gun carriages. Nothing seemed capable of stopping them until two companies of grenadiers, descending from Fort Montjuïc, struck them in the flank; throwing them into disarray, they pursued them, bayonets thrusting into their backs, all the way back to the San Pedro Gate. Another enemy column then arrived to reinforce the first and attempted a fresh assault; however, it too was repulsed back into the fortress, leaving behind a significant number of dead and carrying off many wounded. Our own casualties amounted to three men killed and seven wounded.

This sortie was not without success for the enemy; they had managed to destroy our approach trenches situated forward of the parallel, meaning that the fruits of three or four nights of work, an undertaking that had already proven extremely costly in lives, were now entirely lost. Consequently, the idea of perfecting the Santa Llúcia breach by means of mining was abandoned, leaving it to the artillery to complete the breach as best it could. It was deemed that the breaches at the German, the Latrines, and the San Cristóbal bastion would suffice.

102nd NIGHT, of 15 to 16 September.

The damage inflicted by the enemy upon the breaching batteries was repaired, and they were soon in a condition to resume their fire. General Verdier renewed, to no avail, his entreaties to the Commander-in-Chief for fresh troops to be provided at the moment of the assault².

On the evening of the 16th, the breach in the San Cristóbal bastion appeared open and practicable over a width of six to eight meters.

103rd NIGHT, of 16 to 17 September.

The batteries were repaired, and breaching fire continued.

On the evening of the 17th, the breach at the German Barracks was progressing well and offered hope that it would be practicable by the following day. The breach at the Latrines was very wide, affording a view of part of the city's interior. General Verdier, hoping that the state of these breaches would induce the besieged to capitulate, dispatched a parley officer, bearing a letter addressed to the Governor, toward the Santa Llúcia breach. Alvarez, by way of sole reply, ordered the parley officer to withdraw; and, seizing this opportunity to prepare his troops to withstand an imminent attack, he reviewed them and addressed them with these stirring words:

"Officers and soldiers, should there be anyone among you whom death intimidates, let him step out of the ranks, and indeed out of this fortress, occupied as it is by the valiant and worthy subjects of Ferdinand VII; as for us who remain, let us swear anew to die rather than surrender: do you all so swear?" And the air rang out with the unanimous cry: "Yes, we swear it!"

² See supporting documents, Nos. 40, 41, 42, and 43.

104th NIGHT, of 17 to 18 September.

The batteries maintained their fire to render the breaches increasingly practicable. General Verdier forwarded to General Gouvion Saint-Cyr a report from the commanders of the engineers and artillery regarding the state of these breaches, accompanied by a memorandum detailing the dispositions he deemed appropriate to adopt for the assault³. He himself, accompanied by Generals Sanson and Taviel, arrived at the Fornells headquarters that afternoon to finalize the attack plan with the Commander-in-Chief.

Generals Sanson and Taviel stated that the besiegers' works were sufficiently advanced to attempt an assault with a reasonable hope of success, and that the breaches made in the perimeter wall were practicable; however, this opinion was contested by Colonel Dianous and the other engineer officers attached to the Seventh Corps. These officers, who, not being assigned to the siege operations themselves, had been dispatched by the Commander-in-Chief to reconnoiter the state of the fortress, had been sent so that they might be prepared to effectively direct the troops of their respective divisions should the initial assault fail and it be deemed advisable to launch a second one using those troops. In support of their opinion, these officers pointed out that the defensive works had not been destroyed; that the flanking positions had not been neutralized by counter-fire; and that, ruined though the Fort del Calvario might be, a position that had not yet been captured, the enemy had moved artillery pieces back into it which were bound to inflict heavy casualties upon the troops during their approach march and during the actual assault on the breaches. They further argued that this fort would subject the attackers to flanking and rear fire, acting in concert with the other flanking positions of the fortress, which remained undamaged, and, finally, that it appeared highly imprudent to launch the assault before having secured the ruined Calvary Fort, a position that had been abandoned and subsequently reoccupied by the enemy simply because the besiegers had failed to establish a foothold there.

The commanders of the siege engineers and artillery initially countered these observations, objecting that the main flanking position near the San Pedro Gate was not defensible in the section immediately adjacent to the re-entrant angle near the cathedral; that the other section of this flank, being enfiladed by Battery No. 27 through the gap in the Santa Llúcia breach, was untenable; that the fire from the other flanking positions had been silenced; and that three of the breaches, particularly the one at the Latrines, were indeed practicable. After lengthy discussion, it was agreed that the small Fort del Calvario would be captured before the main assault was launched, an assault scheduled for the following day, 19 September, at four o'clock in the afternoon. This timing was chosen to allow the batteries targeting the defenses to continue firing until that hour, and to provide sufficient time to scale the Calvary and establish a foothold there before the attack columns emerged.

In light of these concessions, General Gouvion Saint-Cyr consented to the assault⁴. A powerful consideration drove him to this decision: the despondency and weariness that the prolonged siege had instilled in everyone involved, from the commanding officers down to the common soldiers. By refusing any longer to attempt an action that offered a chance to bring the matter to a close,

³ See supporting documents, Nos. 44 and 45.607.

⁴ See supporting documents, No. 46.

he feared that this weariness would degenerate into utter despair, leaving no room for any further hope. It was the month of September, the season when endemic fevers rage with the greatest intensity. The army was dwindling day by day due to fatigue and disease, receiving no reinforcements from France, as the war in Germany was absorbing every available recruit. The Souham and Pino divisions were overrun with sick men being treated in makeshift barracks; indeed, their encampments bore the appearance of vast hospitals rather than that of an army. The battalions of the siege division were in the weakest state of all; of the fourteen thousand men this division had numbered at the commencement of the siege, scarcely five thousand remained⁵.

On the 19th, the troops of Pino's division took up positions around Girona, relieving those of General Verdier, who were thus rendered entirely available for the assault on the fortress. A battalion from the Fourth Italian Regiment occupied Fort Montjuïc, and the Mazzucchelli Brigade was tasked with executing a feint attack on El Mercadal in order to divide the enemy's attention.

General Souham assembled his division and cavalry to contain General Blake for as long as possible should he descend from the mountains; otherwise, he intended to renew the assault that very evening or during the night, should the initial attempt fail due to a lack of vigor on the part of the troops.

Around four o'clock in the afternoon, General Verdier gathered his troops on the Montjuïc plateau and formed the assault columns.

The first column of four hundred men from the Berg contingent, under the command of Colonel Mouff, was to storm the breach at the German Barracks. To its left, a detachment of three hundred and twenty men from the Fifty-Sixth Line Regiment was tasked with occupying the hamlet of La Gironnella to guard against sorties, while a second detachment of one hundred men from the Würzburg contingent was to attack Fort Calvary.

The second column of nine hundred and sixty men from the Seventh Line Regiment and the Thirty-Second Light Infantry, under the command of Colonel Rouffini, was to attack the Latrines breach.

The third column of one hundred and fifty men from the Sixteenth Line Regiment, was tasked with attacking the breach at the San Cristóbal Bastion.

Finally, the fourth column, composed of nine hundred men from the Italian and Berg contingents, was tasked, under the command of Colonel Foresti, with storming the Santa Lucia breach.

The remainder of the troops belonging to the siege division was held in reserve. Detachments of sappers and miners, commanded by engineer officers, were positioned at the head of the columns.

⁵ See supporting documents, No. 47.

For its part, the garrison was making its defensive preparations. The guards in the cathedral belfry, catching sight of the distant advance of our columns, raised the alarm; all the city bells rang the tocsin, and the drums beat the general call to arms. Governor Alvarez immediately made his dispositions: the Ultonia Regiment and a portion of the Baza Regiment were tasked with defending the breaches at the German Barracks; a reserve force, formed from the Bourbon Regiment, the Governor's reserve company, and several detachments drawn from the garrison corps, took up position at the San Cristóbal breaches. These breaches were placed under the command of Brigadier Fournás. A second reserve force took post at the walled-up San Pedro Gate, and at the grate where the Galligant River entered the city. Other bodies of troops, drawn from the Ultonia, Baza, and Bourbon Regiments and commanded by the English Colonel Rudolph Marshall, along with several detachments of soldiers from Girona, Vic, and Barcelona, were stationed on the tower and vault of the Church of Santa Lucia, or at the foot of the perimeter wall, to defend the breach and the salient located there on the city side.

The remainder of the Baza Regiment was stationed in the Santa Maria Bastion; although low-lying, overlooked, and, more than any other section, exposed to attack, it nevertheless did not come under serious threat. All other sections of the city's perimeter and the forts were manned with artillery, a number of line infantry soldiers, and all the companies of Girona volunteers. Finally, the ecclesiastical crusaders, as well as the women of the Company of Saint Barbara, hastened to the breaches or positioned themselves in suitable locations to tend to the wounded and bring aid and provisions to the defenders.

These preparations were not yet complete when, at half-past four, the French columns emerged from the San Daniel convent. The detachment of one hundred men tasked with attacking the Calvary Fort ascended the mountain with difficulty, reaching the foot of the plateau; however, they found no practicable breach. Crushed by fire from the fort and taken in the flank by a sortie that swept down upon them with fixed bayonets, they were put to flight. Nevertheless, the troops assigned to attack the breaches at the Germans, the Latrines, and San Cristóbal crossed the Galligant stream at the San Daniel bridge. Hemmed in within the narrow, steep ravine of this stream, they were unable to deploy and instead ascended en masse along the narrow, precipitous path leading up to the San Cristóbal bastion. As a result, the columns became entangled and intermingled; the column directed against the San Cristóbal bastion, having emerged first, effectively prevented the others from participating in the attack simultaneously. The rear of this column paused to exchange musket fire with the Latrines breach, even attempting to scale it, but those at the vanguard, finding themselves unsupported, withdrew. Thereupon, the other two columns surged forward, rallied the fugitives, and headed toward the Gironnella Tower; there, along the wall connecting the tower to the Germans Barracks, they formed a massive column, the head of which appeared at the summit of the barracks breach.

At the first determined movement by the attackers, the Spaniards had begun to abandon the ruins of the Germans Barracks, a structure almost entirely detached from the rest of the city. However, observing the disarray among the attackers, they held onto the hope of victory; and, aided simultaneously by Brigadier Fournás and the Ultonia Regiment, they retook the German Breach and the Gironnella Tower. They killed those who were the first to reach the summit of the breach and wounded many others, among them Captain Vincenzi of the Engineers, who, along with a few sappers, had managed to penetrate as far as the barracks. At that point,

confusion spread through the ranks of the attackers, who were, moreover, being decimated by the ceaseless fire from the fortress's defensive works, defenses that the besieging artillery had not yet managed to destroy. These included the defenses of the great Sarraïnes Flank, situated at the mouth of the Galligant stream, and those of the Fort del Calvario, which, having failed to be captured, was delivering flanking fire upon the attacking columns. Twice, our brave troops regrouped at the foot of the Gironnella Tower; yet the head of the column never advanced beyond the point where the perimeter wall ceased to shield it from the direct fire issuing from the barracks.

The right-hand column, commanded by Colonel Foresti of the Fifth Italian and directed against the Santa Llúcia breach, had descended from the San Juan Tower to the foot of the ramparts. Its objective was not merely to feint an attack, but as explicitly stipulated in the orders, to execute a genuine assault. The column bravely advanced to the attack and succeeded in reaching the very lip of the breach; there, however, it was halted by a vertical drop, a sheer step in the masonry approximately five meters high, formed by the inner face of the wall on the city side. This obstacle proved insurmountable under the terrible fire unleashed by the enemy. The attackers were ultimately compelled to withdraw to the outer slope of the breach in order to take cover. Shortly thereafter, urged on by their officers, they once again advanced to the upper lip of the breach, determined to leap down into the city; but the formidable nature of the obstacle halted them a second time. Colonel Foresti, who had been the first to step forward to the edge of that fatal drop, fell dead, and with him, several other officers. The Spaniards, drawn up at the foot of the city's inner wall and emboldened by the presence of General Alvarez, unleashed volleys of battalion fire upon anyone who dared to show themselves. The attackers were forced to withdraw. At that very moment, General Verdier, who, from Fort Montjuïc, had watched the repulse of the final assault attempted at the German breach, seeing casualties mount to no avail, ordered a general retreat.

This unfortunate affair lasted two hours. It cost us six hundred and twenty-four men killed or wounded, including thirty-three officers, among them Colonels Rouffini of the Thirty-Second, Foresti of the Fifth Italian, and Mouff of the First of Berg.

The Spaniards suffered two hundred and eighty soldiers or inhabitants put out of action, along with twenty-five officers, among whom were the English Colonel Marshall and Major MacCarthy.

That very evening, General Verdier submitted his report on the outcome of the assault to the Commander-in-Chief⁶.

The following day, General Gouvion Saint-Cyr consulted the engineer officers on his staff, whom he had tasked with monitoring the details of the assault, regarding the feasibility of seizing the breaches using other troops. Their opinion was entirely negative, and they substantiated it in a report which they submitted to the Commander-in-Chief⁷.

⁶ See supporting documents, Nos. 48 and 49.

⁷ See supporting documents, No. 50.

The opinion of Generals Souham and Pino, who were summoned to this meeting, was that the attackers had done everything that could reasonably be expected of them; furthermore, they deemed it foolhardy to attempt a fresh assault before the artillery had dismantled the defenses and more effectively neutralized the flanking positions commanding the breaches.

The Commander-in-Chief shared this opinion and ordered that the siege works be continued; however, the artillery was entirely without ammunition, and all the magazines in Perpignan and the neighboring strongholds had been depleted. The siege division had been reduced to fewer than four thousand men by fatigue, disease, and enemy fire. It was worn out by ceaseless marches to escort convoys and disheartened by the protracted duration of the siege. Consequently, the Commander-in-Chief concluded that the city could now be reduced only through an absolute lack of provisions; he therefore converted the siege into a blockade, enlisting time, fever, and famine as his allies⁸.

The sanitary condition of the army was becoming more alarming with each passing day; disease was wreaking havoc: during the first fortnight of September alone, more than two thousand two hundred men were admitted to the hospitals. The Seventh Corps had scarcely more than ten thousand men fit to bear arms, while it counted thirteen thousand three hundred and twenty-two men in the hospitals, in addition to a considerable number of sick soldiers being treated in the divisional field ambulances. The siege troops alone had six thousand six hundred and sixty-six men in the hospital, a proportion higher than that of the rest of the army.

General Verdier, afflicted with fever and despondent over the failure of the recent assault as well as his strained relations with General Gouvion Saint-Cyr, withdrew to Perpignan⁹. Each of these two generals submitted a separate report to the Minister of War and to the Emperor¹⁰.

The besieged, too, were in the most deplorable condition; we were apprised of this by deserters who escaped from the city every day. The garrison soldiers received only a quarter-loaf of bread every three days, along with horse or mule meat, without oil, salt, wine, or brandy. The hospitals lacked medicines and the most essential supplies. The inhabitants, too, suffered greatly from hunger; every day, the corpses of men and women who had died of starvation were gathered from the streets. Diseases, the inevitable consequences of such extreme destitution, wrought terrible havoc; between forty and fifty people were buried daily. Yet, none of these afflictions diminished the fierce resolve of the Spaniards, whom the monks and priests exhorted to patience and buoyed with the brightest hopes.

⁸ See supporting documents, Nos. 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, and 56.

⁹ See supporting documents, Nos. 57 and 58.

¹⁰ See supporting documents, Nos. 59, 60, 61, and 62.

No. 39

Report from General Guillot to General Verdier regarding the Affair at Bàscara.

Bàscara, 24 September 1809.

The post at Bàscara was attacked by two thousand five hundred infantrymen and one hundred and fifty cavalymen just as the convoy, escorted by approximately five hundred men, was arriving there.

The enemy displayed great audacity, and the troops defending Bàscara put up a most gallant resistance; they were, however, forced to withdraw into the castle. The enemy then swarmed into the town, where a large number of their men met their deaths.

Having threatened the rear of the convoy, the enemy threw the peasant carts into disarray; the drivers fled, casting aside their sacks of flour in order to make their escape via the side roads. The convoy's escort rushed to the aid of Bàscara and the main body of the convoy, which was just entering the town. Our loss in flour is not considerable; however, several horses were killed.

I have had several sacks of flour retrieved from the road and brought into Bàscara; yet we are left with very few means of transport, and we have no hope of procuring any replacements.

Upon being informed of this attack, I set out from Figueres with my poor-quality cavalry, the hundred men of the One Hundred-Thirteenth Regiment and the hundred of the Sixth who remained to me, and I ordered the Fifty-Sixth, currently stationed at Capmany, to join me at Bàscara; it has not yet arrived. In addition to my cavalry, these two hundred men, and M. Garriga's gendarmerie, I also gathered the grenadiers and voltigeurs of the Second, a detachment from Berg and another of Westphalians, who were returning from the hospitals and serving as an escort for the convoy. With this force, I say, I marched against the enemy, who was drawn up in battle formation at the far end of the Bàscara plain, with his back to the Orriols Pass. I forced him to retreat by charging him, firing very little, and by maneuvering to attack his flanks. Nightfall aided his withdrawal, and I have reason to believe that he has retreated in the direction of Bañolas, or perhaps toward Besalú and Crespià, with the intention of spreading out behind our lines. I was unable to find a single man in Bàscara willing to go out and scout the enemy's line of march; tomorrow morning, my reconnaissance patrols will doubtless reveal his whereabouts, or perhaps, during the night, M. Ping, the Corregidor, or M. Garriga (who is here with me) will find a way to locate him.

I do not yet know whether the Croix de Fallines position has come under attack; if it has not, the garrison there could not possibly have been unaware that Bàscara was being attacked, yet no reconnaissance patrols were dispatched from that post. What I can assure you, General, is that the enemy suffered heavy casualties, while our own losses were very light.

A Spanish captain, taken prisoner of war at the very foot of the Bàscara fort, reported that the enemy intended to launch a fresh attack at daybreak. I do not believe a word of it, nor will I be

deceived; for I am almost certain that the enemy will move upon our rear. I believe, General, that it would be advisable for you to dispatch some transport assets here, as well as to push forward an infantry and cavalry reconnaissance force.

I shall await your orders at Bàscara, General, unless I decide to march upon the enemy's rear myself, depending on what intelligence I gather regarding their movements.

I am attempting to convey this report to you via a few infantrymen, as the cavalry is utterly exhausted and would be placed in jeopardy.

I have the honor to be, etc.

Signed: GUILLOT.

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**No. 40.**

*Report from General Verdier to General Gouvion Saint-Cyr regarding the situation of the siege division.*

Sarria, 15 September 1809.

Excellency,

I have the honor to submit to Your Excellency the exact strength return of the men belonging to the Seventh Corps division currently conducting the siege of Girona, a matter I mentioned in my letter of yesterday.

This return totals four thousand nine hundred and five men. Your Excellency will see what remains at my disposal to attempt an assault, once I have deducted from this number the forces absolutely indispensable to secure, during said assault, my siege works, my artillery park, and Montjuïc, as well as to hold certain positions that it would be imprudent to abandon to the risks of a failed attack: namely, the Convent of San-Daniel, the Pedret suburb, and the heights of Campdorà.

A calculation of the men I will be unable to employ in the assault amounts to nearly three thousand men, even assuming the evacuation of the Salt plain. I am therefore left with only eighteen to nineteen hundred men to deploy against breaches that will be defended by more than three thousand men, by the entire population, and by every obstacle that military engineering and the firmest resolve could possibly create.

Such, General, is the true reality of my situation; I now leave it to Your Excellency's wisdom to decide whether you deem it prudent to attempt an operation as decisive as an assault upon the city, with means as meager as those currently at my disposal.

Should this assault be repulsed, it would serve to utterly crush and annihilate the besieging troops, embolden the garrison and the populace, and could well undermine the morale of the troops Your Excellency intends to employ in a second and third assault, as you indicated in your letter of yesterday. In light of these observations, dictated by my conscience, my limited experience, and the best interests of the cause, I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that I do not believe I can assume so grave a responsibility, unless you are prepared to issue me a formal written order to that effect. I feel duty-bound to take this stance, for when the time came to launch the final assault on Montjuïc, Your Excellency deemed it necessary to dispatch two regiments to my aid. Yet, on that occasion, I was facing a far weaker garrison, while my own forces were considerably stronger. I frankly confess to Your Excellency that I am at a loss to comprehend this discrepancy in your judgment.

I believe, like Your Excellency, that at the juncture we have now reached, my summons is dictated by humanity; this summons shall be delivered tomorrow. I trust it will yield the result Your Excellency anticipates. As for myself, however, I expect nothing but an insolent and negative reply, assuming, that is, that my parliamentarian is received with anything other than a volley of cannon and musket fire, as has occurred in other instances. I therefore request that Your Excellency kindly inform me, by this evening, upon what basis you wish this summons to be framed, whether I am to issue it in your name or in my own, whichever you deem most appropriate.

The letter Your Excellency did me the honor of writing yesterday, to which this present missive serves as a final reply, bears the unmistakable imprint of your displeasure, your reproaches, and perhaps even a touch of irony; sentiments which I do not believe I have either provoked or deserved. I have the honor to inform you that I deem it essential for my personal safety to dispatch an officer from my staff to the Government immediately, entrusting him with copies of my correspondence with Your Excellency, including copies of your own letters, in order to safeguard myself against the adverse impressions that this letter, and several others, appear to foreshadow.

I may well have committed errors, yet I have certainly not erred through any lack of zeal or goodwill, still less through insubordination or disloyalty, given that all my major operations were duly submitted to Your Excellency. You must, presumably, have approved them at the time, for I received neither comment nor counter-order from you in this regard.

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

*Signed:* VERDIER.

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No. 41

*Summary Statement of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Soldiers
Fit to Bear Arms, within the Corps Conducting the
Siege and Blockade of Girona, as of 15 September 1809.*

DESIGNATION of Regiments.	Officers.	Non-Commissioned Officers and Soldiers.	OBSERVATIONS.
32 nd Light Regiment.....	14	489	In position at Sarria.
Würzburg Regiment.....	17	649	At San-Miguel, at the San-Daniel Convent, and at the Green Mamelons.
1 st Berg Regiment.....	21	705	Occupies the Pedret suburb and the Montjuïc plateau.
2 nd Berg Regiment.....	16	604	In position behind
2 nd Westphalian Line Regiment...	23	340	Montjuïc.
3 rd id.....	19	491	.
4 th id.....	5	534	In position on the
1 st Light Infantry Battalion.....	5	269	mountains between Sant Medir and Taialà
Royal Velites.....	4	50	
5 th Italian Regiment.....	10	280	
1 st Neapolitan.....	10	172	
2 nd id.....	15	322	
TOTALS	159	4905	These four corps occupy the plain of Salt

Certified as accurate, based on the returns furnished to me.
The Battalion Commander, Chief of Staff.

Signed: SAINT-HILAIRE.

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## No. 42

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

Sarria, 16 September 1809.

Excellency,

Around half-past one, I was alerted that a great commotion was taking place within the city; I thought it might be occasioned by the plan for some sort of sally. However, in an instant, everything fell quiet; not a single musket shot is being fired anymore, and I do not know to what I should attribute this silence. Our batteries are still firing, though with less success, owing to the thickness of the vaults we are encountering along almost the entire line. Nevertheless, I hope that by tomorrow evening we shall have three practicable breaches, not counting the one at Santa-Llúcia, which remains in its current state due to the damage the enemy inflicted yesterday, during their sally, upon the communication trenches leading us to the foot of that breach. It will therefore serve as a feint attack, given that it would require another four or five nights to repair the damage, reach the foot of the wall, and place the miner there, as had been planned.

Once the breaches are practicable, I shall issue a summons to the Governor tomorrow, should you approve, a copy of which I have enclosed herewith. If a response is received, so much the better; otherwise, the assault must be launched, and therein lies the critical moment for me, and for all of us. For, I repeat this to Your Excellency, I lack the necessary confidence in the troops I would be able to employ for the task, and yesterday's events have only further confirmed my fears. Should this assault be repulsed, it will undoubtedly come at a heavy cost to my forces; what, then, would remain to me while I await Your Excellency to send reinforcements to attempt fresh assaults?

The troops I dispatch to mount the assault will be observed, and their mettle soon judged; their small numbers will be held in contempt by the enemy, and I have no doubt that he will exert his utmost efforts to overwhelm them. The situation would undoubtedly be different if Your Excellency could resolve to dispatch in advance, as I have had the honor of requesting, the troops intended, or formerly intended, to support these operations; their presence would instill confidence in the units acting in the vanguard and would surely intimidate the enemy, to whom it would be advisable to display them; moreover, by being already on the ground, they could take immediate action; whereas, were this not the case, a considerable delay would ensue, a respite granted to the enemy that might well prove fatal to us.

I beg Your Excellency to weigh these considerations, and, above all, not to abandon me in so decisive a juncture by entrusting to my meager force an operation that it is incapable of executing.

Whatever resolution Your Excellency may adopt, I shall have discharged my duty, of this, I beg you to be assured; and should misfortune befall me, I shall at least have the consolation of having foreseen it, and of having sought every possible means to avert it.

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

*Signed:* VERDIER.

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No. 43

*Reply from General Gouvion Saint-Cyr to the
preceding letter.*

Fornells, 17 September 1809.

General,

I have received your letter of yesterday. You need not doubt that I shall support, to the fullest extent possible, the assault you are to launch; and I reiterate that, for this assault, you have all your troops concentrated on the sector under attack, where, not only do they appear to me to be sufficient, but where I do not believe it possible to employ any more.

Signed: COUNT GOUVION SAINT-CYR.

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**No. 44**

*Report from General Verdier to General Gouvion Saint-Cyr regarding the condition of the city's breaches.*

Sarria, 18 September 1809.

I have the honor to forward to Your Excellency the reports from the Engineers and Artillery regarding the reconnaissance of the breaches made in the walls of the city of Girona. Your Excellency will observe that the commanders of these two branches of service consider the existing breaches to be practicable; nevertheless, I deemed it necessary to devote the entire day today to thoroughly leveling the crests of the breaches, widening them, and perfecting them as much as possible.

Tomorrow, at daybreak, we shall commence counter-battering all remaining flanking and reverse fire positions that require destruction; such are those of the Fort of Calvary, although this fort, already in ruins, has long since ceased firing and holds a garrison of only thirty men, quartered amidst the rubble which the enemy has attempted to rebuild as best they could, as well as those

of the Gironnella Tower, and those of several interior guns positioned on the San-Pedro platform, which is visible to us. I shall continue to engage these fortifications even while the troops are marching toward the breaches, a course of action that will be feasible, as I shall be firing from elevated positions upon other elevated positions, whereas the troops will be advancing through the Galligant Valley and other low-lying areas. This fire will be sustained until two o'clock in the afternoon, the moment I have selected to set in motion the troops designated for the assault, provided Your Excellency issues the necessary orders, as I have had the honor of requesting.

To ensure the execution of these measures, I believe it would be necessary for Your Excellency to kindly arrange for the relief, tomorrow, at daybreak, of the troops currently under my command in the Plain of Salt, as well as those stationed at the San Pons Convent, near the Green Knoll; those situated on the San-Medir ridge, at Montagut, Costa Rosa, the San-Miguel chapel and the heights above it, and at Campdorà, so that, by withdrawing these troops from the positions they currently occupy, I may station them early at the approaches they are to secure for the assault, and so that the commanders leading them may have sufficient time to thoroughly reconnoiter the terrain over which they must operate.

Having received from Figueres everything I could expect in terms of provisions and ammunition, sufficient for four or five days, I am bringing up General Guillot with a portion of his brigade. Only Figueres and Bàscara will remain heavily garrisoned. I continue to count on Your Excellency to send me the battalion you promised for Montjuïc; with this reinforcement, I shall be in a position to field four thousand five hundred men, troops of passable quality, with whom I might reasonably hope for some success, were they not so utterly exhausted and did they not suffer from such a dearth of officers, who are the very soul of any unit. Tomorrow, then, General, we shall do everything within our power to bring this undertaking to a successful conclusion. Perhaps our lucky star will watch over us; should it fail to do so, we will at least have exhausted every resource at our disposal, and it will then be up to Fate to do the rest.

I have the honor to request that Your Excellency inform me this evening of your intentions, so that I may make my arrangements accordingly and issue the necessary instructions to all concerned.

I beg to assure Your Excellency, etc.

*Signed:* VERDIER.

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No. 45

*Opinion of the Commander of Engineers regarding the condition of the breaches
made in the perimeter wall of the fortress of Girona,
17 September 1809.*

Four breaches have been made in the perimeter wall of the fortress, extending from the Gironnella Tower to the Santa-Maria Bastion.

The first is located at the German Barracks: all the upper stories of this barracks have been laid open, and the rubble forms a rather steep slope rising to a height of two to three toises; nevertheless, it appears practicable. It is estimated that six men abreast could ascend this breach. It had been proposed to widen and facilitate this breach by attacking the section of wall situated between the Gironnella Tower and the barracks; however, the lower section of this wall, as well as that of the barracks' front wall, proved to be far thicker than anticipated and has, to this hour, withstood the assault. Nevertheless, it has been possible to sever the upper-level communication between the Gironnella Tower and the barracks by demolishing the upper sections of the two walls connecting them and completing the defensive enceinte.

The second breach extends from the barracks' latrines to the round tower situated nearest to the San Cristóbal Gate. It will undoubtedly prove the most favorable for the assault: it measures ten to twelve toises in width, and once it has been subjected to bombardment for a little while longer, it will present no further internal obstacles; it provides access to a square or to gardens that appear to be quite extensive.

The third breach, at the San Cristóbal bastion: the rampart of this bastion has been pierced completely through; the breach is seven or eight fathoms wide; however, the slope of the rubble is somewhat steep, as is the terrain upon which it has fallen. It will be possible to ascend it with six men abreast.

The fourth breach, at the Sant-Llúcia curtain wall: it was begun too high up, and the rubble, piling up at the foot of the wall, prevented it from being brought down low enough to eliminate a difficult drop that would have to be cleared when leaping into the interior of the fortress; the nature of the terrain has compounded this disadvantage; the ground level is much lower inside the city than outside, such that in the section of this breach that is easiest to traverse, and closest to the French Gate, there remains a drop of seven to eight feet to clear, and elsewhere, nearly fifteen feet. An attempt will be made, should resources permit, to mitigate this obstacle by leveling the crest of the breach or by extending it toward the Puerta de Francia, as experience may dictate.

Although the breaches have reached their final state of completion, an assault could not be prudently undertaken without first neutralizing the flanking artillery fire that would defend the approaches to the breaches; such fire emanates from the fuerte del Calvario, the Gironnella Tower, and the battery situated at the Galligant entrance within the fortress, between the Chapter Tower and the Puerto de San-Pedro. As for flanking musketry fire, it is evidently impossible to neutralize it entirely; the fire from the perimeter wall may already be considered ineffective due

to its position, which leaves it exposed to the fire of our batteries; however, every house in the city that commands a view of the breach, and of the ground our assault columns must traverse, is capable of compensating for this loss. Furthermore, even should the assault succeed, the enemy may still confront us with obstacles, such as barricades, interior batteries, mines, etc., which, while they may be anticipated, have positions and strengths that cannot be divined in advance.

This latter consideration leads to the conviction that, for an operation of such difficulty, one must select the most vigorous and intelligent troops available. The commanders leading them must know their men and be known by them; for this reason, it might perhaps be more advantageous to employ a single regiment rather than elite companies drawn from various corps. These commanders must personally verify that the breach is practicable, reconnoiter in advance the terrain their troops will have to traverse, and gain an understanding of the city's internal lines of communication.

The Divisional General commanding the Engineers.

Signed: SANSON.

Sharing the opinion of General Count Sanson, based upon the reconnaissance missions we conducted together, I hereby sign this report.

The General commanding the Artillery.

Signed: TAVIEL.

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## **No. 46**

*Letter from General Saint-Cyr to General Verdier.*

Fornells, 18 September 1809.

General,

In accordance with the reasoned and unanimous opinion of the commanders of the Engineers and the Artillery, which you have forwarded to me, and from which it appears that the breaches made in the perimeter wall of Girona are already practicable, and will be even more so tomorrow, you may launch the assault upon the main body of the fortress as early as tomorrow, employing for this purpose all the troops under your command. Those troops designated to relieve your current positions, as well as the battalion assigned to occupy Montjuïc, will arrive at their designated points early tomorrow morning.

*Signed:* COUNT GOUVION SAINT-CYR.

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No. 47

Report from the Minister of War to the Emperor.

28 September 1809.

Your Majesty will find enclosed a copy of a letter from General Rey, Chief of Staff of the Seventh Corps, dated 15 September, in which the General reports on the current state of affairs before Girona; these appear not to have changed since the last report submitted on the 12th by General Verdier. Nevertheless, the hope for a speedy surrender of the fortress remains undiminished. The enemy forces outside the city are consistently repulsed in every attempt they make; indeed, on the 14th, one of their attacks on Bàscara resulted in them sustaining heavy losses. These repeated setbacks have not, however, yet altered the resolve of the inhabitants of Girona: they continue to defend themselves with undiminished ferocity.

The number of sick soldiers within the Seventh Corps is increasing daily; during the first fortnight of September, more than two thousand two hundred men were admitted to hospitals due to illness. The Seventh Corps currently counts thirteen thousand three hundred and twenty-two men in hospitals, in addition to a considerable number of sick soldiers being treated at the field ambulances attached to the divisions. The siege troops alone have six thousand six hundred and sixty-six men in hospitals, a proportion higher than that of the rest of the army. The imminent end of the hot season, as well as the conclusion of the siege, will undoubtedly reduce these numbers.



No. 48

Report from General Verdier to General Gouvion Saint-Cyr, regarding the assault launched against the city on 19 September.

Sarria, 19 September 1809.

The assault launched this evening, at half-past four, against the garrison force failed, just as I had foreseen, not for want of troops, nor due to any defect in the breaches, but rather because of the quality of these troops, who are entirely without officers, almost all having been cut down in the course of the siege. It was not with battalions of one hundred and fifty men that I could reasonably expect any other outcome; my previous reports to Your Excellency have already apprised you of all this.

A few brave men, led by the handful of officers we had left, scaled the summit of the breach three times; yet they were not followed. They now lie dead or wounded. I am rallying the men who remain to me; they are now nothing more than a ragtag assembly of soldiers, devoid of leaders or officers, a force from which Your Excellency can no longer expect or hope for anything. I inform you of this once again so that you may take this intelligence into account when formulating the measures you are about to undertake. Indeed, I even doubt whether I

would be able to defend Montjuïc and the siege works were I to be attacked in my current positions.

Our losses today have been considerable; I shall report the full extent of them to Your Excellency sometime tomorrow. Among the wounded whose recovery is despaired of are the last three colonels remaining to me: Colonel Mouff, of the First Berg Regiment; Colonel Foresti, of the Fifth Italian Line Regiment; and Colonel Ruffini, of the Thirty-Second Light Infantry. Troops less exhausted and less demoralized than those who have endured the entire siege would, without question, have succeeded. It is truly unfortunate that Your Excellency did not deem it necessary to employ fresh troops in a juncture as decisive as this.

I have the honor to be, etc.

Signed: VERDIER.

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## No. 49

*Statement of Losses Sustained by the Siege Division  
During the Assault of 19 September 1809.*

| DESCRIPTION<br>(by Corps) | NUMBER      |             |             |             | OBSERVATIONS. |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
|                           | of officers | of soldiers | of officers | of soldiers |               |
|                           | wounded     |             | killed      |             |               |
| French<br>Troops.....     | 9           | 242         | 3           | 74          |               |
| Italian<br>id.....        | 9           | 60          | "           | 24          |               |
| Westphalian<br>id.....    | "           | "           | "           | "           |               |
| German<br>Brigade.....    | 9           | 139         | 3           | 52          |               |
|                           | 27          | 441         | 6           | 150         | TOTALS, 624.  |

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No. 50

Opinion of the Colonel commanding the Engineers of the Seventh Corps, and of the officers serving under his orders, regarding the feasibility of launching a new assault upon the fortress of Girona.

In order to launch an assault upon a fortress, the following conditions are requisite:

- 1° That the breaches be practicable;
- 2° That the artillery fire be neutralized, insofar as is possible;
- 3° That the troops be able to reach the foot of the breaches and form up there, and that offensive works, of an extent proportionate to the defenses, be in place to support and protect them. Should these various conditions not be met, to the fullest extent permitted by the local terrain, the success of the assault may be regarded as impossible.

If one applies these principles to the current state of the offensive and defensive works at Gerona, the following becomes evident:

1° It is a matter of common knowledge that none of the four breaches currently existing in that section of the enceinte, extending from the Gironella Tower to the Puerta de Francia, is practicable. This is due either to the extreme steepness of their slopes, or to the fact that they are backed by revetments which, having been struck too high up, could not be demolished down to their foundations; consequently, they present vertical drops of eight, ten, twelve, and fifteen feet that must be surmounted in order to gain entry into the fortress, assuming, that is, that one were even able to scramble up to their summits. The second breach, located below the German Barracks, which, when viewed from the front, appears accessible and sufficiently practicable, nonetheless shares this same drawback with the others; this fact may be verified by examining it from the rear, from the vantage point of the Palau heights.

2° The assault launched yesterday demonstrated that five flanking guns remain operational; namely: two at the Gironella Tower, one on the flank of the San Cristóbal Bastion, and two towards the San-Pedro Gate, quite apart from two pieces on the cathedral platform, which, along with the Calvary, the Constable, the Chapter Redoubt, and the Town Redoubt, fire upon the approaches.

3° The siege works are situated on the left bank of the Galligant; furthermore, since the escarpment on the right bank, which flanks the front of the breaches, is impassable, the foot of the breaches can only be reached by passing through San-Daniel. This point lies more than two hundred toises away, and offers only a single exit route, a path that is almost constantly exposed to view from the Calvario, the Capitulo Redoubt, the Cathedral platform, and the long San-Pedro curtain wall, against which there is no counter-fire. At the foot of the breaches, the space is extremely confined, and further encumbered by rubble that, in several places, reaches the very crest of the escarpment, making it impossible to form up properly to ascend the slopes in good

order and strength. Moreover, the area offers no cover, neither from an epaulement nor from any natural feature of the terrain, against flanking fire; indeed, the nearest siege works are situated more than one hundred and fifty toises away from the breaches themselves. No musketry fire can support or protect the assailants; for one need not take into account a short section of approach trench directed toward the breach in the Santa-Lucia curtain wall, a position which, in any case, exerts no influence upon the other breaches. As for the batteries deployed along the line of attack, they are exposed to fire from the Calvary, the Constable, the Town Redoubt, the Chapter Redoubt, the French Gate Bastion, and the first four bastions of the Mercadal, positions which, both before and during yesterday's assault, maintained a constant fire upon them, thereby inevitably diminishing their effectiveness.

Thus, given that the breaches are not practicable, the flanking fires have not been silenced, no covered approach leads the troops to the foot of the breaches, and no offensive works provide them with protection at the required distance, it is evident that the assault must be deemed impracticable. The outcome of yesterday's attempt, which failed, despite the troops having advanced against it with ardor on three separate occasions, lends support to this assertion.

Headquarters at Fornells, 20 September 1809.

Colonel of Engineers, *Signed*: DIANOUS.
Battalion Commander of Engineers,
Signed: TOURNADRE AÎNÉ.
Captain of Engineers, *Signed*: MÉNARD.



No. 51

Letter from General Gouvion Saint-Cyr to the Emperor.

Fornells, 20 September 1809.

Sire,

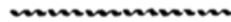
Since the letter I had the honor of addressing to Your Majesty on the 3rd of this month, efforts have been made to gather all the munitions at our disposal to breach the city wall; these were assembled on the 14th. However, this wall, constructed of very old masonry, offered considerable resistance. Finally, after four days of continuous fire, four imperfect breaches were achieved. The generals commanding the Engineers and the Artillery declared them practicable, and, at the request of General Verdier, commanding the siege, I authorized him to launch the assault. This assault was delivered yesterday at half-past four in the afternoon; yet, although I had enabled General Verdier to deploy the entirety of his troops along the sector under attack, the attempt was unsuccessful. The breaches still present obstacles that proved insurmountable.

As all our munitions are now exhausted and given that we cannot procure further supplies from France for a considerable time to come, we shall confine ourselves to maintaining the blockade

of Girona, whose inhabitants and garrison are already reduced to the direst extremity of want. We have learned through deserters and intercepted letters that, every day, a great number of people are found dead of starvation within the city; and everything leads me to hope that, notwithstanding the fanatical and fierce resistance of this fortress, it will not be long before it falls into Your Majesty's power.

Deign, Sire, to accept the homage of the profound respect with which I have the honor to be, etc.

Signed: COUNT GOUVION SAINT-CYR.



No. 52

Report from General Gouvion Saint-Cyr to the Minister of War, regarding the assault launched against Girona on 19 September.

Fornells, 20 September 1809.

Monseigneur,

I am forwarding to Your Excellency the report I have just received from General Verdier concerning the assault launched yesterday against the fortress of Girona. This morning, I requested Colonel Dianous, commanding the Corps of Engineers, to assemble several officers from his branch to provide me with a report on the situation of the fortress and to offer their opinion regarding the feasibility of undertaking a second assault with some hope of success, utilizing troops that did not participate in yesterday's attack. You will find their report attached hereto. These officers, who had been designated to lead the columns in a second assault, should it prove possible to launch one without compromising the troops, had already been tasked by me with reconnoitering the condition of the breaches; furthermore, during yesterday's assault, they were positioned in such a way as to have a clear view of the unfolding events. The troops were in the finest spirits and advanced to the foot of the breaches with both order and intrepidity, despite the appalling fire to which they were subjected from every quarter of the fortress, fire which we had been unable to suppress. General Verdier acknowledges that they mounted the assault three separate times, a fact which, when considered alongside the heavy casualties he reports, serves as a true measure of their bravery. They remained under fire, the most intense, perhaps, that has ever been witnessed, for a full hour and a half. A certain degree of disorder did ensue toward the end, a circumstance hardly surprising given the heavy losses they had sustained prior to their withdrawal. For my part, I do not believe that even the bravest and most select grenadiers could have achieved more; indeed, I am convinced that the operation failed solely because the obstacles were truly insurmountable. Your Excellency will find attached the report submitted by General Verdier, along with those of the commanders of the siege artillery and engineers, which served as the basis for the authorization I issued to attempt to take the fortress by storm.

To support this assault to the fullest extent possible, I ordered the brigade of General Mazzucchelli to stage a diversionary attack against the section of the city opposite our main front. My objective was to ensure that the enemy would not deplete their forces in that sector in order to launch sorties against the flanks or rear of our attacking troops. This objective was successfully achieved, as the sectors not under direct assault remained fully manned by enemy forces throughout the operation.

All means of siege having been exhausted, that is to say, having neither powder nor shot remaining, we are necessarily compelled to await the surrender of the stronghold through a blockade. The besieged are at the end of their provisions; yet the obstinacy and fanaticism of General Alvarez and the monks are so intense that they may well allow half the population and the garrison to starve to death before surrendering. It is well established that, every day, the bodies of men who have died of starvation are recovered from the streets. Our own situation regarding provisions is no more brilliant. For a long time now, we have been on half-rations; and, as the surrounding countryside has been totally depleted, our only remaining hope lies in the supplies that may be sent to us from France. Unfortunately, the distance from here to Perpignan is considerable, and we lack means of transport; nevertheless, we must hope that the steadfastness of the troops of the Seventh Corps will prove superior to the obstinacy of the inhabitants of Girona, and that the city will not long delay in falling into our hands.

I am dispatching my report to Your Excellency via M. Tournadre, a Battalion Commander in the Corps of Engineers. He is a distinguished officer who possesses a thorough knowledge of the fortress of Girona. He directed the engineering operations during the assault on the city launched last year by General Reille. I would even suggest that Your Excellency send him to appear before the Emperor, should you deem it necessary.

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

Signed: COUNT GOUVION SAINT-CYR.



No. 53

Letter from General Verdier to Marshal Augereau.

Sarria, 21 September 1809.

Monseigneur,

Mr. Fouques, Your Excellency's aide-de-camp, delivered to me the letter you were kind enough to write on the 15th of this month, to which I have the honor of replying in just a few words.

The siege division under my command, which consisted of seventeen thousand men when it was entrusted to me by His Majesty the Emperor, is at this moment reduced to five thousand combatants, almost entirely bereft of officers and generals. The arduous engineering works I

have executed; the daily engagements I have sustained over the course of five months, from Girona all the way to Bellegarde, without any assistance from the main army, which, throughout this entire period, remained idle, standing at ease without firing a single shot; and, finally, the impact of the local climate upon the fresh troops from the North, of which my division was partly composed: such are the causes of this extraordinary depletion.

Our reserves of ammunition were completely exhausted the day before yesterday; we have nothing left but enough to repel one or perhaps two sorties, should the enemy dare to attempt them. It was Perpignan that had been supplying us, and I very much doubt it will be able to do so again.

You may find it extraordinary, Marshal, that we have been reduced to such a state of exhaustion, and that the siege nevertheless continues. Your Excellency's astonishment will surely cease, however, once you learn that the siege artillery has effectively run out of work to do, once you realize that three major breaches, all eminently practicable, along with a fourth, which, at a pinch, could also be utilized, now exist within the main fortifications of the stronghold; that I was ordered to launch an assault with my troops, who were exhausted and disorganized due to the causes mentioned above, in the presence of an army that was fresh, well-organized, and in fine fighting trim, without that army having fired a single shot or taken a single step toward the fortress. This occurred despite the urgent and repeatedly reiterated requests I had made to obtain fresh troops for such a decisive operation. They contented themselves merely with advancing two pieces of 8 and a six-inch howitzer to the side of the city opposite my attack; these pieces fired toward the fortress, but from such a great distance that their shot fell far short of even reaching the halfway mark. The Spaniards, wiser than we, responded to this "powerful diversion" with nothing more than a single shot from a heavy-caliber cannon, as if to tell us, I presume, "Advance no further." And one thing is certain: we took the hint. As for provisions, finding it impossible to simultaneously engage in combat to secure supplies and conduct the siege, I had arranged to be provisioned from Perpignan.

Regarding the resources of the surrounding countryside, they have been entirely consumed by General Saint-Cyr's troops within a radius of more than ten leagues; these resources must now be completely exhausted, given that the General is dispatching his commissary officer to Perpignan to procure the provisions that the local region can no longer supply him.

As for myself, Marshal, tormented by the despair of seeing a fine operation come to naught, and the enormous sacrifices made by the government reduced to zero, due to an inaction that, in my view, nothing can justify, I have resolved, having suffered a recurrence of the fevers and acute pains that plagued me throughout a large part of the siege, to withdraw to Perpignan in search of the remedies and rest that are indispensable to me. I would possess the strength to endure the displeasure of His Majesty the Emperor, had I had the misfortune to deserve it; but I shall never possess the strength to dishonor myself, as some would have me do, and as you yourself will judge once you learn that, despite the depletion of my troops, certain parties had the audacity to order me to continue the siege; to maintain open lines of communication without providing me with a single reinforcing soldier; and, at the same time, to give me to understand that they might well be obliged to fall back toward Barcelona, leaving me stranded here with my siege train and

my five thousand men, exposed to a garrison far outnumbering my own, to an exasperated populace, and, finally, to all the horrors of the most utter abandonment.

Pity me, Marshal, but do not condemn me. I have done everything in my power to achieve a splendid result. The opinion of the army is with me; your aide-de-camp, who spent a few days in our midst, can tell you what he saw and heard.

I beg Your Excellency to accept the homage of my respectful devotion, etc.

Signed: VERDIER.

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## **No. 54**

*Report from Governor Alvarez to General Blake regarding  
the assault of 19 September.*

Girona, 19 September 1809.

Excellency,

I hasten to inform you that, around four o'clock in the evening, the enemy attacked our breaches and threatened several other points. The engagement lasted two hours and was as bloody as it was glorious for the arms of our King. The German Breach withstood four assaults, and that of Santa Lucia, two; everywhere, the enemy was repulsed with considerable losses. Our own losses are almost negligible in comparison to the enemy's; yet they remain deeply felt, for we have to mourn the deaths of several distinguished officers. I shall provide Your Excellency with the details once I have received them from the various corps commanders.

May God keep you, etc.

*Signed:* MARIANO ALVAREZ.

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No. 55

*Extract from the Spanish account by Don Juan Nieto
Samaniego, Chief Surgeon of Girona, regarding the assault
launched by the French against this fortress on 19 September
1809.*

Around half-past three in the afternoon, the Commanding General received a report from the watch stationed in the cathedral bell tower, warning him that French troops were descending from Montjuïc and advancing toward San Daniel. Another report from the Constable Fort announced the same news, which was immediately confirmed by a similar dispatch from the Capuchin Fort. The enemy is approaching from Montjuïc and marching directly toward the breaches; many soldiers can be seen carrying tools and sapping implements.

The cathedral sounds the tocsin (*somaten*); the general alarm drums announce the danger, and soon the din of the attack, of bells and drums, mingles with the roar of artillery and musketry. All this unfolds in a matter of moments; for the enemy, having already made their preparations during the night at San-Daniel, Montjuïc, and the surrounding areas, positions all situated in close proximity to the fortress, and moreover intent on taking their intended targets by surprise, had no sooner emerged from their lines than they found themselves already at the foot of the breach.

Each of these valiant and fierce French warriors seemed to proclaim, through the ardor and speed with which he rushed forward, that he had sworn to be the very first to enter the fortress. Extraordinary audacity and the sheer vigor of their initial charge drove a few of them, men who, no doubt, had already resigned themselves to the sacrifice of their lives, right through the terrible fire of the besieged defenders, reaching as far as the inner courtyard of the ruined German barracks. Such an effort on the part of these men seemed almost supernatural. Several of our own soldiers were about to hurl themselves upon them, and they were on the verge of being annihilated by the brave troops of the Ultonia Regiment, when the enemy artillery, bringing down a massive section of wall that buried them along with several of our own men, thereby lightened our task. It proved advantageous for us that the enemy, seeking to exploit the nature of the terrain they occupied, continued to direct their fire at the breach even during the assault, rather than aiming their shots higher; for had they chosen the latter course, we would have suffered far heavier casualties, while their cannonballs would have passed harmlessly over the heads of their own soldiers, leaving them unscathed.

Our reinforcements arrive just in time; despite the skill and tenacity of the attackers, we watch with inexpressible joy as the remnants of the first column to appear turn their backs in retreat. The breach and the glacis are strewn with corpses and the dying.

This auspicious beginning of victory reanimates our brave men; the honor of our arms, and the lives of so many heroes, soldiers, and citizens, have already been saved once. Yet scarcely had we given ourselves over to the joy of having repelled such numerous and formidable enemies, when fresh forces rushed forward to avenge them. The French, determined to conquer, surge forward over the bodies of their fallen comrades, flattering themselves that they will find an

already weary foe, and hoping to seize the triumph; they possess every advantage, weapons in prime condition, fresh ardor, and a thirst for vengeance.

A whirlwind of fire engulfs the breach and the ruined German barracks; the artillery thunders; our commanding general rushes from one danger to another, he is everywhere at once, issuing orders, rekindling the courage of our defenders, and, through his own example, making it their solemn duty to secure the palm of victory. They are worthy of the victory they are about to win.

The battle is joined, growing ever more terrible; its very duration serves only to heighten its ferocity; the tide of fortune hangs in the balance. Through the billowing clouds of smoke, one glimpses thousands of enemy corpses lying sprawled across the vast breach and the surrounding terrain; many French soldiers recoil and fall back, some struck by terror, others covered in wounds, yet an even greater host arrives immediately to take the place of the wounded, the fugitives, and the dead. The ghastly struggle grows ever more desperate. The clang of bells, the cries of the dying, the blast of bombs, grenades, and weapons of every kind, all conspired to bring the horror of that day to its very climax, a day so memorable for the city of Girona. At last, the enemy was successfully repulsed; those who, treading in the footsteps of their valiant comrades, vied with them for the glory of being the first to advance, found themselves likewise compelled to follow their retreat, for the God of Hosts blessed the warriors of Girona on that day and willed to crown them with laurels.



No. 56

*Excerpt from the Girona journals concerning the assault of 19 September
1809, published in the Gazette d'Espagne on
the following 24 October.*

.....

On the 19th, the enemy shifted all its forces to the Campdorà mountain and to Montjuïc, in order to execute its march unobserved; and, on the afternoon of that same day, a column of two thousand men began to file along the path situated between Montjuïc and the San-Daniel Tower. Another column of equal strength detached itself from San-Miguel, while a third advanced along the main road to Montjuïc; at the same time, some troop movements were observed in the woods of Palau.

.....

The general alarm was sounded at four o'clock in the afternoon, and the cathedral rang the tocsin; everyone came to receive orders from the Governor and proceeded to their posts with a celerity and discipline capable of commanding the respect of Napoleon himself. The Ultonia Regiment, under the command of Honorary Colonel Don Guillaume Nasch, moved to reinforce the breach and the German Barracks, together with a detachment of the Baza Regiment commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Don Miguel de Haro. The Bourbon Regiment, under the command of

Colonel Don Joseph de Iglesia, was held in reserve, along with fifty men from each of the garrison corps and the Governor's own company. The Commander-General's guard, drawn from the Ultonia Regiment, and all the orderlies from the various corps were dispatched to the Santa-Lucia breach, accompanied by a detachment from the Bourbon and Baza Regiments, the Second Tercio of Barcelona, the First Tercio of Girona, the Tercio of Vic, and a number of soldiers from other units, along with a reserve force positioned in the vicinity of the San-Pedro Gate. A portion of the Second Tercio of Vic and the Second Tercio of Talam were dispatched to the breach of San Cristóbal; these troops were reinforced by the Second Tercio of Barcelona, the Iberia Grenadier Company, the First Tercio of Girona, and the Company of Ecclesiastical Crusaders.

The section of the fortifications known as Sarraïnes, which is bisected by the Galligant River and flanks the breaches of Alemana and San Cristóbal—was guarded by the First Tercio of Talam; a detachment of the Baza Regiment guarded the Puerta de Francia. The remainder of the garrison, comprising both regular companies and those of the Crusade, defended the city's bastions and walls. The Illustrious Junta convened at its customary meeting place to address every exigency. The Company of Women of Santa Barbara was deployed wherever their assistance would prove most beneficial, while the city's other ladies were invited to volunteer their aid in this charitable endeavor.

The enemy column that advanced along the base of the Gironnella Tower boldly attempted, amidst repeated shouts of *forward, forward*, to storm the breaches of Alemana and San Cristóbal; and, capitalizing on the initial moments of the assault, several men from this column managed to reach the forward outposts. At that juncture, the brave soldiers of the Ultonia Regiment surged onto the breach, where they struck down a French officer who, through his gestures and shouts, was rallying his troops toward victory. They were reinforced by a detachment of the Bourbon Regiment and by reinforcements dispatched by the Governor under the command of the valiant General Don Blas de Fournás. These troops then charged the enemy, driving them back, or, more accurately, slaughtering the greater part of them. A second column, composed of Westphalians, attempted to renew the assault; yet our soldiers' chests stood firm against them like an unyielding wall, and those whom our steel and fire had spared turned and fled. A third and fourth assault were launched with frenzied fury but served only to further enhance the glory of Girona.

No one distinguished himself more than Don Blas de Fournás; Honorary Colonel and Commander of the Fourth Division of Miquelets, unable to provide the details of this defense, so glorious for Spain, we append his report herewith.

*Report from Colonel Don Blas de Fournás to Governor
Alvarez, regarding the assault of 19 September 1809.*

No sooner had Your Excellency entrusted me with the defense of the San Cristóbal breaches and the German Barracks than I have the satisfaction of announcing to you that the garrison has earned fresh claims to your esteem. Yesterday, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy, numbering two thousand five hundred men, having descended precipitously into the village of San-Daniel, advanced boldly in two columns to attack the breaches, while simultaneously

directing their efforts toward the Santa-Lucia breach and the forts of El Calvario and El Capitulo. The general alarm and the tocsin held the entire city in a state of alert. Everyone rushed to their posts, and Your Excellency's orders provided us with the means to withstand the enemy's impetuosity. The Ultonia and Bourbon regiments were the first to engage at the most perilous points; various detachments from other corps shared in this glory, serving to reinforce the weakest sectors. The sheer extent of the breaches, the treacherous terrain, the horrific cannonade from the enemy batteries and the musketry fire from the trenches, the crumbling walls, nothing could daunt the valiant defenders of Girona, who threw themselves with intrepidity and composure into the very midst of every peril. Finally, after a struggle lasting two hours, they succeeded in repelling an enemy so tenacious that they returned to the charge no fewer than four times. The obstinacy of the French was such that, at several points, their officers came to blows with ours, as occurred at the breach itself, involving my second-in-command, Lieutenant Don Mariano Tur of the Bourbon Regiment. One officer, who penetrated, along with seven soldiers whom he urged to follow him, as far as the courtyard of the barracks, paid for this temerity with his life. Three other officers who had entered the stable were killed there, and four soldiers, who, following the retreat of their column, were still attempting to storm the position, were buried beneath the rubble of a collapsed wall just as I gave the order to go and retrieve them.

It is impossible to recount in detail the heroic deeds performed during that memorable day; for those of our brave men whom I might single out would be the very first to plead on behalf of their comrades. All of them, animated by Your Excellency's presence, fought with their eyes fixed upon a city that has, for each of them, become a true homeland, given that their glory is now inextricably bound to it. Nor must I fail to mention the Governor's reserve company, or the many inhabitants who came to fight within our ranks. The Mayordomo, Don Carlos Beramendi, present at every engagement, ascended, accompanied by the War Commissary, Don Epifanio Ruiz, to the Gironella Tower; there, having discovered that the artillery captain commanding the post, Don Salutio Gerona, had been wounded, he assumed command of the position until reinforcements arrived.

The enemy's losses amounted to three hundred dead, including one colonel, whose bodies were found either at the breach itself or in the immediate vicinity. The troops who launched the assault belonged to the Fifty-Fifth Regiment.

While all this was unfolding at the German and San Cristóbal breaches, the column that had descended via the Montjuïc road hurled itself against the Santa Llúcia breach, commanded by Don Rodolfo Marschall, honorary colonel of the Ultonia Regiment. The enemy, supported by the most intense fire, attempted twice to storm the breach; yet, just as often, they were repulsed with heavy losses by the intrepidity of our soldiers. The fury with which they attacked was terrible; but, despite the rage of their desperation, they could not overcome the steadfastness of our men, who, without the confusion that usually attends such critical moments, halted the enemy's impetuosity. A colonel who had the audacity to mount the crest of the breach paid for this imprudence with his life. Second Lieutenant Don Manuel de Clercy of the Bourbon Regiment, who commanded the breach with nine grenadiers from his own corps and several other soldiers from the First Tercio of Vic, succeeded, with the courage and composure that characterized him, in dislodging the enemy from the top of the wall. His detachment was supported by the First Tercio of Vic, which, posted within the tower of the Santa Lucia church,

maintained a continuous fire through the windows and battlements of that edifice. Captain Don Antonio Codina, who was guarding the howitzer, was wounded, as was Don Rodolfo Marschall, who was stationed in the tower.

The Fort of Calvary was likewise attacked by a column of two to three hundred men, who managed to reach the very foot of the fort's breaches; the defenders received the assailants with such ardor that the latter were repulsed in an instant, fleeing in haste and abandoning a great number of wounded men, as well as the ladders and tools they had brought with them. The lieutenant of the Second Barcelona Tercio, Don José Camps, who commanded a detachment of thirty-four men tasked with reinforcing the post at the Gironnella Tower, having lacked the time to assemble his entire force yet wishing to seize a favorable opportunity that presented itself, sallied forth through the sally port and moved to take the enemy in the flank upon the heights of Calvary. He then descended impetuously toward the houses of the hamlet of La Gironnella, scattering some forty men who had taken up quarters there and who had begun constructing a parapet on the road leading from the hamlet to the Constable's Fort. From this vantage point, Don José Camps's troops directed their fire against those scaling the breach at the German Bastion; the latter, who were initially shielded by the walls of the Gironnella Tower, remained unscathed at first, but they suffered heavy casualties once they were forced to retreat. José Camps then fell upon them, as well as upon another body of three hundred men that had been lying in ambush near the Calvary Fountain. Bullets and bayonets were no longer sufficient; our soldiers resorted to hurling stones to complete the rout and sow utter consternation within the ranks of an already terrified enemy. Through his tactical maneuvers, Lieutenant Don José Camps succeeded in effectively augmenting the strength of his own force.

This valiant troop inflicted upon the enemy a loss of more than eighty men killed and a large number wounded. Among the former was a captain, who was slain by Sergeant Juan Negrini of the Ultonia Regiment; the sergeant seized the captain's sword and presented it to the commander, along with three prisoners. We recovered fifty-one muskets, two ladders, six pickaxes, four axes, and a drum.

To create a diversion, the enemy had stationed a twelve-man post on a commanding point of the mountain, seeking to harass the Bastion of Gracias; furthermore, near Palau, they had emplaced a cannon and a howitzer that delivered flanking fire against the city's defensive fronts. However, neither these artillery pieces nor the twelve-man post inflicted any harm upon us. Shortly thereafter, this detachment withdrew, having suffered one man killed and two wounded. All the breaches were strewn with corpses, as were the paths leading to the forts of El Calvario, El Capitulo, and Montjuïc.

Our soldiers, roused by fury, dealt only mortal blows. The rage that seized them at the sight of these vile slaves of the usurper often prevented them from even using their muskets; instead, the muscular arms of our soldiers and peasants hurled stones, torn from the breaches themselves, down upon the heads of our enemies. The musketry fire from the bell tower and the Church of San Pedro, the volleys from Sarracinas, and the batteries at the cathedral, the town square, and the forts also wrought terrible havoc. The enemy columns fled with such haste and in such utter disarray that they became completely intermingled, rendering them unrecognizable even to those who never lost sight of them. Three colonels and many other officers struck down at the feet of

our brave troops, others lying along the roads, in the ruts and ditches, were the toll exacted from the enemy by his ill-fated enterprise. According to the reports of several deserters and prisoners, as well as our own investigations, his losses amount to eight hundred dead and a multitude of wounded.

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*Supplement to the preceding account, extracted from the Gazette
d'Espagne of 28 October 1809.*

We have already provided a detailed account of the events of 19 September, and described how the fury of the French shattered against the bronze chests of our soldiers. Our enemies, in their arrogance, believed themselves certain of triumph; yet they did not yet know the men of Girona. Today, having received the official list of casualties sustained by the besieged, we hereby publish it: the number of those killed stands at forty-three, comprising two junior officers, three sergeants, five corporals, and thirty-three privates. The English Colonel, Don Rodolfo Marshall, and the Sergeant-Major of the Ultonia Regiment, Don Ricardo Mac-Carty, have died from the wounds they sustained. The wounded, numbering one hundred and fifty-eight, include: two captains, eight junior officers, thirteen sergeants, thirteen corporals, two drummers, and one hundred and eighteen privates. Forty men suffered contusions, namely: one captain, ten junior officers, two sergeants, five corporals, and twenty-two privates. This loss, though painful for Spain, is slight in comparison to the magnitude of the peril faced and is inferior to that suffered by the enemy.

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**No. 57**

*Letter from General Verdier to General Gouvion Saint-Cyr.*

Sarria, 1 September 1809.

Excellency,

As fever and my chronic ailments have returned with the utmost severity, leaving me in the distressing condition of being unable to perform any duties, I have the honor to request that Your Excellency be so good as to appoint a general officer to replace me and to continue the siege operations, which Your Excellency has ordered me to resume via the letter from your Chief of Staff dated yesterday. Pending Your Excellency's having designated the general officer who is to replace me, I hereby inform him that I am handing over command to General Amey, the only officer remaining to me, as General Guillot is departing this morning to re-establish our communications with France.

As I am unable to find here the medications and rest that are indispensable to me, I have the honor to request that Your Excellency graciously permit me to withdraw to Perpignan in order to recover my health there, if possible; I rely upon Your Excellency's kindness in this regard.

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

*Signed: VERDIER.*

## No. 58

*Letter from General Verdier to General Gouvion Saint-Cyr.*

Sarria, 21 September 1809.

Excellency,

I regret infinitely that Your Excellency did not feel authorized to grant me permission, in order to restore my health, to proceed to Perpignan, which lies within the army's district; however, as my condition can no longer brook any delay in the application of the remedies prescribed to me, I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that I shall request a hospital admission ticket, so that I may at least enjoy the benefit granted to the lowliest soldier in the army. The sacrifice I have made of my person throughout the course of this campaign will, I trust, earn me the indulgence of His Majesty the Emperor; furthermore, having neither powder, nor shot, nor men left to continue the operations you have ordered, I believe I have nothing further to do here until such time as it pleases you to align your orders with the actual possibility of executing them.

There are circumstances in human life in which a man must sacrifice everything to preserve his reputation and his honor; I believe myself to be in just such a situation. I am doubtless raving, though this may well be merely the effect of the fever that torments me.

I shall depart the morning after tomorrow.

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

*Signed: VERDIER.*

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No. 59

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

Fornells, 24 September 1809.

Monseigneur,

I have the honor to inform Your Excellency, and with the deepest regret, of the departure of General Verdier, although I did everything in my power to prevent him from leaving, in order to avert the influence of his despondency upon the troops of his division, and to avoid witnessing a repetition of the events that followed the withdrawal of Divisional Generals Morio and Lechi, who departed early in the siege, and whose departure was perhaps as pernicious to their troops as the diseases that are increasingly plaguing the Seventh Corps.

I have earnestly urged Generals Verdier, Sanson, and Taviel to maintain at least a semblance of a siege, so as not to lead the army corps, and particularly the enemy, to believe that we were defeated and at the end of our resources simply because an assault had been repulsed; for such an example of despondency could prove detrimental to other sieges. However, I was unable to achieve anything. I am invariably told that all ammunition resources have been exhausted and that everything necessary to capture the fortress has been done; this lends rather too much credence to the existing suspicion that the assault was premature, and that the decision to launch it was made solely to avoid being forced to admit the following day, upon lifting the siege due to a lack of ammunition, that, after such extensive engineering works, we had failed to create breaches that could be assaulted with any probability of success. Furthermore, it appears that they have resorted to a tactic, unfortunately all too common in such circumstances, of claiming that the troops failed to do their duty; this has provoked justified complaints from the soldiers and has only added to their already numerous reasons for despondency. I have the honor to forward to Your Excellency a copy of the complaints I received today from General Pino.

I mention the state of my health only to inform you that, as Marshal Augereau has yet to arrive and the others are departing, I intend to remain here until the very last extremity.

The intelligence we have managed to gather from within the fortress of Girona continues to indicate that the Spaniards have reached the end of their food supplies. They have been reduced to subsisting on whatever they can find by ransacking the homes of those who might still have some provisions left. For some time now, their public storehouses have been completely empty.

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

Signed: COUNT GOUVION SAINT-CYR.

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## **No. 60**

*Report from General Pino to General Gouvion Saint-Cyr.*

Casa de la Selva, 23 September 1809.

Excellency,

Your Excellency has seen fit to place under my command the remainder of the Italian troops that formed part of General Lechi's division.

It is my duty, Sir, on behalf of the officers, to appeal to your sense of justice in favor of these remnants of units, which were tasked, on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with carrying out a feint attack upon the breach at Santa-Lucia.

It appears that the failure of the assault is being attributed, rightly or wrongly, to a general lack of energy on the part of the troops.

The commander of the troops of the Lechi Division was tasked with executing a feint attack, without any further instructions.

Colonel Foresti of the Fifth Line, at the head of the column, succeeded in reaching the very foot of the Santa-Lucia breach, even though his troops were being battered by grapeshot and musketry fire pouring from the surrounding houses and the church. The wall still stood twelve to fifteen feet high; consequently, lacking ladders, it was impossible to attempt a daring thrust.

Colonel Foresti ordered a withdrawal only when the other columns, which must have encountered nearly identical obstacles, began their own retreat.

Colonel Foresti was mortally wounded at the foot of the breach, as were all the officers of the Velites, as well as those of the Fifth Line and the Neapolitan contingent, all of whom sustained wounds of varying severity.

This column thus displayed the utmost valor; indeed, through its sheer intrepidity, it went above and beyond the specific limits of the orders it had been issued.

According to the reports I have received, it appears that the other breaches were likewise impassable.

General Fontane, whose vantage point allowed him to closely observe all the attacks, reported to me on the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup> that the troops had advanced upon the breach with the greatest courage; however, the combination of physical obstacles, grapeshot from the forts and the fortress itself, and musketry fire from the houses rendered all the troops' efforts entirely ineffectual. Such was also the consensus among all the discerning officers of the Fourth Line battalion, which, pursuant to your orders, was stationed at Montjuic that day.

Your Excellency will therefore have the goodness to ensure that the brave Italians receive the justice they deserve; and, for my part, I shall await the surrender of the fortress before requesting rewards on behalf of these brave men who have so greatly distinguished themselves.

I have the honor, etc.

*Signed: PINO.*

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No. 61

Report from General Verdier to the Minister of War.

Perpignan, 26 September 1809.

Monseigneur,

I have the honor to forward to Your Excellency the reports regarding the siege operations at Girona, covering the period from 13 to 20 September.

Your Excellency will doubtless be surprised to see this letter dated from Perpignan; that surprise will cease, I hope, once you learn the reasons that compelled me to travel here.

The well-known state of my health during the time I conducted the long and arduous siege of Girona is one of those reasons. However, it would not have been a sufficient reason had I received the support in my operations that I had every right to expect, so great was my desire to offer His Majesty the Emperor tangible proof of my respectful gratitude for all the favors with which he has deigned to honor me, and a renewed demonstration of my complete devotion. I remained on duty for five months, despite suffering as much as any man can suffer; indeed, I could have remained even longer had I not realized that my departure was in the best interests of His Majesty's arms, as well as essential for the preservation of my own reputation and honor, assets which have been under constant assault, and which others have sought to compromise in every conceivable way, from the very beginning of the siege to its conclusion. I was sent here by the Emperor, that is my crime; and it is a crime for which I have not been forgiven.

To provide Your Excellency with the key to everything I have just recounted, I have the honor to request that you kindly recall the correspondence I previously forwarded to you regarding my exchanges with General Saint-Cyr, and that you now review the additional correspondence I have attached to this report, so that you may be fully enabled to judge the conduct I have maintained in my dealings with that General. Your Excellency, it will be seen from this latest correspondence that I had foreseen all the setbacks I encountered before Girona, that I had committed this to writing, and that I had sought to avert them by every means at my disposal. This would undoubtedly have been achieved had General Saint-Cyr been more willing to cooperate in the success of a siege of such importance, one for which His Majesty has made such great sacrifices, both in terms of manpower and munitions of every kind.

Being fully aware of the departure of Engineering Battalion Commander Tournadre, whom General Saint-Cyr has dispatched to Paris, and of the pains that officer has taken to proclaim everywhere that the objective of his mission was to apprise Your Excellency of General Saint-Cyr's reluctance to order the final assault on the fortress, I deem it essential to my reputation to make the truth known to you, so as to dispel any unfavorable impressions that may have been successfully fostered against me.

From the moment I began breaching the walls of the fortress, I wrote to General Saint-Cyr, explaining that the troops remaining to me, disorganized by sickness and casualties, and

exhausted by labor and forced marches, did not inspire sufficient confidence for me to attempt a coup de main against a stronghold that had just received a reinforcement of three thousand men, and whose garrison, supported by the local population, was still inflamed by fanaticism. Consequently, I requested that he kindly designate a few of his own regiments, fresh and well-organized, for this decisive operation, units with which we could confidently anticipate a guaranteed success. General Saint-Cyr, no doubt annoyed by my requests, replied with a very lengthy letter in which he stated that he did not share my assessment regarding the quality of the troops under my command; that he did not wish to deprive them of the glory of capturing Girona; but that, in the event they should fail, the remainder of the army would be positioned to renew the assaults until the fortress was taken. Satisfied with General Saint-Cyr's promises, however little reason I had to be pleased with the rest of his letter's content, which appeared to have been dictated by pique, I felt at ease, and I waited impatiently for our breaches to be completed so that we might finally be done with a fortress that had held us up for so long. I was enjoying the peace of mind that this situation naturally afforded me when, the very day after he had made this written promise, General Saint-Cyr dispatched his aide-de-camp, M. Balthazar, to inform me that, having reflected upon his own position as well as mine, he could not spare any troops for the assaults on Girona; and that the most he could do was to relieve the troops I currently had stationed away from the main attack front, thereby enabling me to commit my entire force to the operation. Astonished by such an unexpected change, one so contrary to the best interests of the service, I complained bitterly to the officer who had been sent to me. To this, he replied that he fully appreciated the force of my arguments, but that there was a way to resolve the entire matter. Eager to learn what this solution might be, I asked him to explain it; this is how he responded: "The Commander-in-Chief will not come here with troops, as you have proposed, for he does not wish it to be said that he arrived merely to deprive you of the fruits of your labors. Nor will he assign you any troops, for he is the Commander-in-Chief and intends to remain at the head of his entire force. However, if you are willing to assume command of the army, he will hand it over to you and step aside. This arrangement places all authority in your hands, and once he has departed, you will be free to act in whatever manner you deem appropriate."

Even more astonished by this final proposition, which I neither could nor should accept, I gave a negative reply. The officer then added: "Consider this carefully, General, "the primary objective of my mission is to convey to you precisely what I have just stated: if you accept, events will unfold exactly as you desire; should you decline, however, expect nothing further from the Commander-in-Chief, he will do nothing to assist you."

General Saint-Cyr kept his word; despite all my representations and entreaties, the assault was launched, on his orders, on the 19th of this month, by troops from whom one could reasonably expect nothing, and in the presence of fifteen to sixteen thousand brave men who stood by, arms at the ready, witnessing the futility of our efforts, our defeat, and our disgrace, a disgrace they desired, and still desire, to avenge. A handful of brave men and the officers remaining to me scaled the breaches and attacked the enemy with cold steel; but, overwhelmed by sheer numbers, they met their deaths upon the breaches or were hurled back onto the main body of the troops, troops whom we could not induce to follow their comrades, despite every effort made by Generals Guillot, Amey, and myself, who were leading them. The assault having failed, I withdrew to my original positions and submitted a report on the outcome. General Saint-Cyr

immediately had his Chief of Staff write to me stating that, since the assault had not yielded the expected results, I was to reopen my lines of communication with France without delay and continue the siege, yet he made no mention of the reinforcements in men and munitions that he ought to have provided, given that he was fully aware I possessed neither powder nor shot, and had witnessed the decimation of the remainder of my force. I obeyed the first of these orders by immediately dispatching General Guillot to Figueres with the eight hundred men remaining from his brigade; however, I could make no sense of the second order, for the siege was, in effect, over, and the fortress lay breached in four separate places; to continue the siege, as I was commanded to do, would have required abandoning all that we had achieved and undertaking a fresh series of attacks and breach-making operations, efforts that would have proved no more successful than those already completed. I confess that, in this order, I perceived nothing but a deliberate intention to do nothing whatsoever to ensure the success of the siege, an intention coupled with a desire to subject me to every hardship that the fortunes of war might inflict, by abandoning me to my own all-too-meager resources. The ultimate aim was to see me crushed, whether by a sally from the besieged fortress against my siege works; by an attack from the corps of Blake's army, which he had left encamped quite unmolested three-quarters of a league from my outposts and half a league from his own; or, finally, along the road from Bellegarde to Girona, a route I was once again compelled to secure, as I have previously mentioned, and along which I was forced to sustain the war effort, just as I had done throughout the entire duration of the siege.

Tormented by this thought, even more so than by my habitual physical suffering, I fell dangerously ill. Consequently, realizing that I had nothing left to do at the siege but bring dishonor upon myself, I resolved to come here, as much to obtain the medical treatment and the modicum of rest I so urgently require, as to await His Majesty's orders regarding my future assignment.

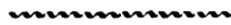
General Saint-Cyr has sacrificed the good of the service to the pleasure of bringing about my ruin. His conduct throughout the course of this campaign stands as proof of this; it is, therefore, impossible for me ever to serve under his command. Were I reduced to doing so, it would be the height of misfortune for me, and, undoubtedly, the moment when I would willingly risk sacrificing my very person, my military career, and the fruits of twenty-four years of service, during which I have served without reproach and with honor.

General Saint-Cyr now claims that he was not in favor of launching the final assault, and that if he did not order it to be renewed by fresh troops, it was because the breaches were not practicable. If this were indeed the case, Generals Sanson and Taviel, who declared that they were practicable, would have to be brought to trial. Colonel Dianous, the commanding engineer of the Seventh Corps, submitted a written report stating that the breaches were practicable, and who confirmed this on the 18th in the presence of Generals Saint-Cyr, Souham, Pino, Sanson, Taviel, and myself, would likewise have to be tried. Finally, General Saint-Cyr himself would have to be tried for having issued me the order to launch the assault, an order he undoubtedly issued only on the basis of reports from the numerous officers he dispatched daily to assess the progress of these breaches.

Such, Your Excellency, is the truth of the matter; I had foreseen these events, and my correspondence bears witness to this. I did everything in my power to achieve a better outcome in the honorable mission His Majesty was pleased to entrust to me. I believe I have nothing to reproach myself for; consequently, I await with tranquility whatever His Majesty may be pleased to ordain regarding my person.

Having the honor to request that Your Excellency continue to extend to me the effects of your particular benevolence, I also have the honor to beg you to accept the homage of my profound respect.

Signed: VERDIER.



No. 62

Report from General Verdier to the Emperor.

Perpignan, 26 September 1809.

Sire,

Your Majesty ordered me to lay siege to Girona and to capture that stronghold; to this end, You provided me with all the necessary means, in terms of both men and munitions. I have done everything within my power to execute Your orders and fulfill Your wishes; yet, although the siege of Girona has concluded, the fortress remains uncaptured, and here I lie, consumed by fever and sorrow, awaiting whatever Your Majesty may be pleased to ordain regarding my fate. Such was the outcome dictated by the arduous labors I was compelled to undertake, by the campaign I was forced to sustain for five months, stretching from Girona to Bellegarde, by the sicknesses that ravaged the troops Your Majesty had entrusted to my command, and, above all, by General Saint-Cyr, who, from the very commencement of the siege until its close, looked on with utter indifference at my predicament, steadfastly refusing to spare me a single man by way of reinforcement.

Yes, Sire: General Saint-Cyr did not wish for me to capture Girona. Had that been his desire, he would not have kept me waiting a full month for the troops that both General Reille and I had requested of him; furthermore, once he finally resolved to advance upon Girona, he would have afforded me his protection, specifically by driving back the enemy forces which, encircling me on every side, compelled me on multiple occasions to suspend the siege operations in order to dispatch detachments against them.

Had General Saint-Cyr, who has not fired a single shot in seven or eight months, chosen to extend his protection to me, as was his bounden duty, given that he had positioned himself in my immediate vicinity with an army of observation, this fortress would have fallen two months ago. Had it not been resupplied with men and provisions, I would have retained Your Majesty's

troops; far fewer munitions would have been expended; and, finally, I would not now bear the painful duty of announcing to Your Majesty that the critical operation, the siege of Girona, has failed completely, or, at the very least, that the capture of this stronghold has been delayed for a very long time.

I state that the siege of Girona is at an end because, following the capture of Montjuïc, and despite the error I was ordered to commit on the 1st of this month by abandoning the siege to take part in an imaginary battle, the siege works were pushed right up to the city walls; four major breaches were opened in those walls; and finally, acting upon the written orders of General Saint-Cyr, a final assault was launched using the meager force remaining to me, only to be repulsed. This force had been left in a state of disarray by disease and the loss of nearly all its officers, and was utterly exhausted by a ceaseless regimen of labor, night watches, and forced marches, hardships that had reduced its strength from sixteen thousand men to a mere five thousand, nearly a third of whom were confined to their barracks, unable to take a single step. Yet, although I repeatedly requested reinforcements, some fresh troops, from General Saint-Cyr, and even submitted formal written appeals to him, I was unable to obtain any assistance whatsoever. I had, moreover, made it clear to him that I lacked sufficient confidence in my troops to believe them capable of executing an act of such vigor as an assault upon the fortress of Girona, a stronghold defended by a fresh and numerous garrison, and supported by the entire population of the city.

As it would be too lengthy to detail to Your Majesty all the circumstances of this unfortunate siege, I have forwarded to His Excellency the Minister of War the documents I deemed necessary to fully apprise him of all the facts; I have attached thereto an excerpt from my correspondence with General Saint-Cyr, as well as that General's replies, in order to enable the Minister to submit a report on these matters to Your Majesty, should Your Majesty so request.

As for myself, consumed by illness, and even more so by the anguish of seeing the public interest sacrificed to the gratification of bringing about my ruin or subjecting me to an affront at the hands of the enemy, I have withdrawn here to await the effects of Your Majesty's indulgence, should I have had the misfortune to incur Your Majesty's displeasure, or should it please Your Majesty to call upon my services.

If Marshal the Duke of Castiglione assumes command of the army, which I believe he will be in a position to do shortly, I shall return to the army; I would do so under the command of any other officer, save for General Saint-Cyr, alongside whom I could never serve without seeing my ruin assured.

I have the honor to most humbly and respectfully entreat Your Majesty to graciously accept the homage of the submissive and respectful fidelity with which

I have the honor to remain,

Your Majesty's, etc.

Signed: VERDIER.