

# The Napoleon Series

## The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume V Our Allies the Bavarians Chapter V Part II

By Commandant Sauzey

Translated by [Greg Gorsuch](#)

### CHAPTER V

#### CAMPAIGN OF 1812

##### 2. -- Bavarian march on the Elbe, the Vistula, the Niemen and the Duna.

The 9<sup>th</sup> of March, the Deroy Division left Bayreuth in five columns which followed one day apart, and went by Hoff, Zwickau and Freyberg to Dresden where the King of Saxony reviewed it; crossing the Elbe, it was then moved by Bautzen and Bunzlau on Glogau, where it reached the Oder.

Wrede, for his part, left Bamberg on 10 March; his troops also formed five columns and reached Glogau by crossing Schleiz, Meissen and Bautzen.

On arriving at Bunzlau, Deroy counted in his division 9,874 infantrymen present under arms, 1,462 horsemen and 591 gunners or soldiers of the train.<sup>1</sup> In this manpower are not included, for the infantry and in each regiment, about

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<sup>1</sup> *Papers of General d'Albignac*. Situation of the troops composing the 19<sup>th</sup> Division of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps of the Grand Army, on 26 March 1813 (signed: François Gravenreuth, major of the general staff, acting as chief of staff of the 19<sup>th</sup> Division ).

This situation gives, in a complete way, the state of artillery material, park cars and ammunition of the division:

#### *Equipment.*

Pieces of 6	.....	16
		(including 2 in Danzig)
Pieces of 12	.....	4
Howitzers of 7	.....	10

#### *Ammunition.*

Cartridges	with balls of 6.....	2,530
--	with grape shot of 6.....	740
--	with balls of 12.....	592
--	with grape shot of 12.....	156
--	with shells of 7.....	1,526
--	with grape shot of 7.....	350
--	of infantry.....	642,000
--	of carbine.....	24,192
--	of pistol.....	48,384
Firing flints	for infantry.....	90,000
Firing flints	for cavalry.....	8,000
		21
Caissons	for pieces of 6.....	(2 in Danzig)

fifty men who are not "combatants in line", such as quarter-masters, surgeons, fourriers, musicians, provosts, farriers, saddlers; in each light battalion or cavalry regiment, there were approximately 30 such non-effectives. The division left 200 men en route to hospitals; it had only 4 batteries (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Light, 11<sup>th</sup> Foot, and 6<sup>th</sup> of 12), the 2<sup>nd</sup> Foot having sent 2 pieces of 6 to Danzig with the 13<sup>th</sup> Line Regiment; the other 2 pieces of 6 and the 2 howitzers of this battery walk with the park of the division.

At the same time (27 March, in Bautzen) the division of Wrede counted, present in the rank, 11,539 infantrymen, 1,450 horsemen, and 1,077 artillerymen; none of its units were detached; it left only 154 men in hospitals during its marches.<sup>2</sup>

The season was terrible, but there was no shortage of food; besides, the inhabitants of Saxony received, dried and fed well the Bavarian troops while they crossed their country. The two divisions therefore arrived in Glogau in good condition.

On the initiative of Davout, the ration of the troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, had been regulated so that each soldier received per day:

28 ounces of bread,  
 10 ounces of meat,  
 2 ounces of rice,  
 4 ounces of dried vegetables,  
 1/30 pound of salt,  
 1 liter of beer, or 1/16 liter of brandy, or 1/20 liter of vinegar.

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Wurstwagons	for pieces of 6.....	8
Caissons	for pieces of 12.....	10
Caissons	for howitzers.....	23
Wurstwagons	for howitzers.....	4
Caissons	of infantry units.....	45
	(2 in Danzig)	
Caissons	of cavalry units.....	4
Forges	.....	6
Charcoal wagons	.....	6
Baggage wagons	.....	6
Carts	for equipment.....	2
--	for tools.....	2
--	for harnesses.....	2
Ambulance	.....	1

*Ammunition (continued).*

Reserve carriages	.....	6
	(1 of 12, 3 of 6, 2 for howitzers)	
Other wagons	.....	5

The 20<sup>th</sup> Division, under the orders of General von Wrede, had similar artillery: 5 batteries (2 light and 3 on foot, including one of 12). The rest of the material and the supply of ammunition were identical.

<sup>2</sup> Situation of the Bavarian 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps at the time of 27 March 1812.

Davout had written to Gouvion Saint-Cyr, proposing to adopt a similar ration for the Bavarians of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps,<sup>3</sup> arguing the advantages of a uniform fixing of the ration of food and adding, as regards the officers, that the generals lived at their expense but that the other officers received the number of rations fixed by the regulations with the following composition:

27 ounces of bread,  
5 ounces of meat,  
1 ounce of rice, or 2 ounces of dried vegetables,  
1/30 liter of salt,

"by the means of which they look after their households... In the case, however, where all the army officers who are entitled to rations could not touch them in the store of Glogau, which is until now the sole one in the district, and as it is essential that most of these gentlemen live with their hosts, it would be necessary to fix according to the number of rations which are due to the officers according to their rank, what each would have to ask his host. "

We were unable to find Gouvion Saint-Cyr's response to these proposals; but this correspondence shows the concern which the French generals took for the food of their troops.

"I think," -- wrote the Emperor to Berthier,<sup>4</sup> -- "that on 1 April the Bavarians will be in Posen... It is likely that on 15 April, I will give them the order to go to Plock, where they will arrive on the army battle line..."

In execution of this order, Derooy went beyond Glogau and by Lissa (1 April), Posen and Gnesen (Gniezno) arriving at Czerniewo (12 April), where he established his headquarters; his three infantry brigades are at Wilkowo, Żydowo, Niekanowo; his cavalry, reduced to 2 regiments, at Stupa; he lost the 1<sup>st</sup> Light Horse which has just entered -- with the 2<sup>nd</sup> taken from the Wrede Division -- into the Dommanget Brigade, Kellermann Cavalry Division; these two regiments would make the whole campaign far from the Bavarian corps and would count with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps of Cavalry Reserve commanded by General Grouchy. Derooy, who received from Bavaria from 1 to 12 April 484 men and 316 horses, had 11, 657 men in his division and 292 soldiers in hospitals. The headquarters of the division included 25 officers, 20 non-commissioned officers and soldiers, 60 officers, 22 troop and 55 draft horses.<sup>5</sup>

This rest, in the cantonments around Czerniewo, allowed the equipment and the parks to join the divisions on 26 April, the 19<sup>th</sup> Division saw arriving a complement of 176 men and 321 horses; on that date it had 11,733 men under arms and still had only 311 soldiers and 8 sick officers.<sup>6</sup>

As for von Wrede, also passing Glogau, which he reached on 6 April, he traveled by Kuttlau (Kotla) and Posen (15 April) to Owińska, where he settled in cantonments. He had, according to a situation on 25 April, 368 officers and 13,158 men present under arms, 357 soldiers in hospitals and 4 on trial; since 15 April, he had lost 7 deserters; on the other hand, 56 artillery or train horses arrived from Bavaria.<sup>7</sup>

The 6<sup>th</sup> Corps waited in these cantonments in front of the Posen, on the road to Thorn, for orders to march on the Vistula. This order arrived on 27 April and the Bavarian columns arrived at Plock from 6 to 12 May. The inhabitants of Poland, poorer than those of Saxony, could not give the soldiers what they lacked to themselves: therefore the Bavarians began to suffer from the scarcity of subsistence.

Squeezed between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> Corps, having the 4<sup>th</sup> to its rear, the Bavarian Corps experienced for the duration of its stay around Plock fatigue and unprecedented privations; the Derooy Division, in particular, changed

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<sup>3</sup> *Papers of General d'Albignac*. Letter of 20 March from a 1<sup>st</sup> Corps procurement officer to Colonel d'Albignac, Chief of Staff of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps of the Grande Armée, in Glogau.

<sup>4</sup> The Emperor to the Chief of Staff, Paris, 30 March 1812.

<sup>5</sup> Situation of the troops composing the 19<sup>th</sup> Division at the time of 12 April 1812.

<sup>6</sup> Situation of the troops composing the 19<sup>th</sup> Division at the time of 26 April 1812.

<sup>7</sup> Situation of the troops composing the 20<sup>th</sup> Division at the time of 25 April 1812, signed (in the absence of Colonel von Comeau) by Major Palm, first aide-de-camp to General von Wrede.

cantonments ten days in a row and had little -- or no -- distributions during these marches; so it was already exhausted when the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Corps went to the Vistula; sent on the banks of the Narew and the Omulew, to Makaw, Przasnysz, Nasielsk, Liechanow (16 May), then successively to Porzellen, Willenberg, Ortelsburg, Johannsburg and Dregallen (12 June), they finally joined the Wrede Division which abandoning the banks of the Vistula on 27 May was moved by Willenberg and Nikolaiken on Lyck.

It was during the month of May that one begins to notice a reduction in staff which would continue to increase; the number of patients increased: 3 officers, 235 men in hospitals, on 15 May, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Division; 8 officers, 323 men on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the same month in the 20<sup>th</sup>; desertions began, soldiers died of fatigue in the lodgings of their regiments, draft horses collapsed on the roads, in the collar...<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, despite these first tests, the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps presented at the end of May a total force of 25,648 soldiers, commanded by 725 officers.<sup>9</sup>

The irregularity or lack of distribution in Poland inevitably led to requisitions, the repetition of which motivated the most lively complaints of the local administrative authorities; we reproduce those of the prefects of the departments of Warsaw and Plock which are still unpublished:

*The Prefect of the Department of Warsaw to the Count Saint-Cyr, General of Division,  
Commander-in-Chief of the Bavarian troops, at Plock.*

Monsieur General,

"I addressed you a few days ago, Monsieur Count, to represent the very unfortunate situation of the communes through which the Bavarian troops passed. Having so far received no reply to my letter, and new complaints which reach me from all sides over the excesses which are committed in more than one place which seem to be founded, I have the honor to beg you again times kindly give the strictest orders, to put an end to these same which you will find the account in the attached report of the sub-prefect of Orlov."

"In Lwye, the squadron chief Armin demanded that he be provided with 40 live oxen, and despite the observation which was made to him that the soldiers regularly received their rations of meat, and that he covered to leave the oxen alive for the other army corps that followed him, he had 19 pieces of cattle forcibly removed."

"All the food gathered in the Lwye magazine was distributed among the troop."

"Several sub-prefects who could not bear the ill-treatment endured by their subordinates asked for their leave. I foresee the moment of a general dissolution of the administrative authorities, and the disorder which will result from it will be especially prejudicial to the army which will no longer receive its provisions regularly. I will not be able to prevent it, but it is still within your power, Mr. General, to remedy it, by recommending to the troops that you command to have regard to the unfortunate situation of so many inhabitants who have given the most obvious evidence of their devotion to the public cause."

"Pending a favorable response to my request, please accept, General, the assurance of my highest consideration."

Warsaw, 18 May 1812<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Situation of the 19<sup>th</sup> Division on 15 May, and of the 20<sup>th</sup> Division on 24 May 1812; the latter was signed by Colonel von Comeau, chief of staff of the division, who arrived from Munich on the 19<sup>th</sup> and took possession of his post.

<sup>9</sup> Small situation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps on 31 May 1812 (*Papers of General d'Albignac*).

<sup>10</sup> *Papers of General d'Albignac*.

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*The Prefect of the Department of Plock to His Excellency the General of Division, Count Gouvion Saint-Cyr,  
Commander-in-Chief of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps of the Grande Armée.*

Plock, 5 June 1812.

Monsieur Count,

"I receive complaints from all sides about the irregular procedures which the Bavarian troops allow themselves to use for the wagons and carts supplied by the inhabitants for various military transports. There are up to 700 wagons taken by the Bavarian troops from the districts of Lipin and Wyszogród which until now have not been relaxed, which hinders the store service and deprives it of the means of transport."

"On the other hand, the sub-prefect of the Przasnysz district announces the same to me; after having assembled a hundred wagons to bring a transport of grain from Wyszogród, the Bavarian troops have taken possession of it for their use, and the store remains empty, unable to be supplied for lack of means of transport."

"Please, Mister Count, give strict orders that these wagons be returned to their destination, and put an end to such abuses which can only have disastrous consequences for the service of the army and fatal consequences for the inhabitants of the country, whose deplorable state is known to you."

"Accept, Sir, on this occasion, the assurance of my highest consideration."<sup>12</sup>



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The Bavarian corps was then placed under the high management of Prince Eugene, Viceroy of Italy and Chief of the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps of the Grand Army; the latter had sent the most severe instructions so that the troops did not squander the stores constituted in the zone of their cantonments; it was, for the hungry, the torture of Tantalus; the following extracts from letters from General von Wrede bring this out quite vividly:

"... I am infinitely obliged to you, my dear d'Albignac, for the interest you take in bringing my troops to life as best as possible, and I very much agree that if my passage from the Vistula is not in a hurry, it is better that I still tickle

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<sup>11</sup> Facsimile of the signature of the Prefect of Warsaw.

<sup>12</sup> *Papers of General d'Albignac.*

<sup>13</sup> Facsimile of the signature of the Prefect of Plock.

the stores established on the left bank a little... I can then live for several days without attacking my resources and provisions that I have with me..."<sup>14</sup>

"...I admit that I would not be sorry to receive the order to raise the Polish posts which scatter (sic) on all points in front of our advance, and eat the little subsistence which would still be to found... I reiterate to Your Excellency the assurance that I will not allow myself to touch the supply of flour which His Imperial Highness the Viceroy brings together here, and I will live as long as possible on the benefits of Providence, but I fear that in eight to ten days she will play a bad trick on me..."<sup>15</sup>

The supplies made up by the Polish authorities not being sufficient for the needs of the army, it was necessary to authorize requisitions which inevitably led to abuses. General Deroy, having received observations on this subject, excused himself by saying:

"...It is true that I made another requisition in oxen... You will remember, Sir, that you marked me twice that there would be a requisition of 250 oxen; the sub-prefect apologizing for not being able to supply them, I found myself obliged to prescribe that each company should take two counter-receipts, but that did not, however, produce 200; it was therefore to obtain the fixed number that I thought I should make a second requisition... If, while making the requisitions for the grains, we took bacon, I am very angry; it was against my instructions and I gave the owner some edibles which, by misunderstanding, had been taken. I cannot help but observe that the 20<sup>th</sup> Division has perhaps 400 oxen, herds of sheep, edibles of all kinds; it required (sic) candles, soap, finally everything you need: and as soon as I make requisitions and research, if even (sic) for things of the greatest need, we put an end to it. I don't deny that it pains me..."<sup>16</sup>

Returning to this case of the requisition of the oxen, the old Bavarian general wrote a few days later:

"...The number of oxen taken from the left bank of the Vistula can amount to 220, some of which, however, have perished: there are some that are no larger than a large calf..."<sup>17</sup>

Really, the brave Deroy was very excusable! ...

It was the struggle for existence, not only between neighboring army corps, but often even between divisions of the same corps:

"...I arrived here this morning," -- writes Wrede, from Willenberg, -- "and found a clean table, either in food or in fodder. General Superflu's cavalry brigade, previously commanded by General d'Ornano, composed of a Prussian regiment, a Württembergers and a Pole who left yesterday morning, took with them the magazine's supplies..."<sup>18</sup>

"...It would not be too amiable on the part of my comrade, General Deroy, if he wanted to take all of Przanic's food from me; however I love this respectable father so much, that I can never blame him..."<sup>19</sup>

A few days later, the Seydewitz brigade having passed through the cantonment area of Wrede's division, the latter testified to its annoyance in a pleasant way:

"Mister Chief of Staff."

"Here I am, nicely caught; your letter dated the day before yesterday, in which you painted for me the sad position in which my comrade Deroy finds himself, urged me to hurriedly send an officer to Lomza, to remind the detachments

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<sup>14</sup> General von Wrede to d'Albignac (Strzelce, 3 May 1812).

<sup>15</sup> General von Wrede to Gouvion Saint-Cyr (Willenberg, 2 June 1812.)

<sup>16</sup> General Deroy to d'Albignac (Racionz, 21 May 1812).

<sup>17</sup> General Deroy to d'Albignac (Pultusk, 27 May 1812).

<sup>18</sup> General von Wrede to Gouvion Saint-Cyr (Willenberg, 29 May 1812). Wrede was being witty: he wanted to talk about General Subervie, to whom, the Emperor moreover inflicted "two hours of arrest" for having allowed committing disorders by his troops (Order of the Day of the Grande Armée, Gambinen , 20 June 1812.)

<sup>19</sup> General von Wrede to d'Albignac (Biezun, 26 May 1812).

that I was sent there to look for fodder; I thought I was agreeable to my comrade there, by letting him alone enjoy the resources of the left bank of the Narew; and here is a reward for sending me his cavalry brigade, to feed it with resources that I have not yet been able to discover or find in this country! Finally, we will see how we will get out of this embarrassment... I have to fight here, my dear d'Albignac, against many inconveniences, because the construction of my ovens does not advance as quickly as I wish, lack of materials. Do well, until the sky favors me to find fodder and bread, and all that I miss..."

"Please take care of my company which is the headquarters of the General, who will be relieved by a company of grenadiers. Finally, this evening the great atlas of Russia arrived for me; but, from what I see, it is not worth the 333 écu it costs."<sup>20</sup>

To avoid disorder, to prevent the wastage of food and to maintain in the territory of Poland the number of vehicles essential for the supply of the magazines, the Emperor had published an order of the day prescribing that "wagons with crippling loads or which carry unnecessary baggage, likely to be sent to the depots, those loaded with hay, straw and oats which are following the cavalry will be unloaded and sent to the depots of Elbing, Thorn, Plock or Modlin, according to the position of the army corps, to receive a load of flour, biscuit, rice, brandy and be directed to the army corps after which they were." Corps commanders and commanders were to form all of these wagons into brigades of 50, led by a transport worker and an infantry escort, to maintain order, maintain their existence and maintain their cargo.

Prince Eugene immediately wrote to the commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps:

*To His Excellency the Colonel General, Count Gouvion Saint-Cyr, 4<sup>th</sup> Corps.*

--At the headquarters of Soldau, 5 June 1812.

"Monsieur the Count,"

"I have the honor to send to Your Excellency a copy of an order of the day which prescribes the formation of an auxiliary transport company by division."

"His Excellency the Prince Viceroy wishes your Excellency to take steps to organize two of these companies in the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps."

"...I beg Your Excellency to accept the homage of my respectful attachment."

The Chief of General Staff of H.I.H. the Prince Viceroy,

Count CHARPENTIER.<sup>21</sup>

The copy of the Imperial order of the day was followed by the Viceroy's instructions:

"To ensure the execution of the above prescriptions, H.I.H. orders the following provisions:"

"Immediately upon receipt of this order, MM. the generals of division will form from all the requisitioned wagons which are following their division, a transport company of 50 wagons with four colliers..."

"To this company will be attached to a fixed post a detachment of 30 men commanded by an officer and where there will be a sergeant major or fourrier (cavalry equivalent) to be responsible for the accounts of both the detachment and the transport company; the chief authorizing officer will place an employee there."

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<sup>20</sup> General von Wrede to d'Albignac (Willenberg, 30 May 1812).

<sup>21</sup> *Papers of General d'Albignac.*

"The officer commanding the detachment will be responsible for keeping this company in line and good order, for ensuring the regular payment of the fixed balance (4 francs per day to each cart) and the subsistence of men and horses."

"One must, on the day of receipt of this order, make a strong march to Plock, to load flour on 49 cars and salt on the 50<sup>th</sup>."

"One cannot, under any pretext, touch this reserve supply which we will only use when H.I.H. gives the order."

"Regardless of this flour supply, the corps must be provided with eight days of food, namely: four days in the men's bags and four days in the caissons. Daily consumption should be taken from the country's resources, or taken from the stores indicated in each division..."

"As soon as the above company has been organized, all the wagons following the division, which would not have entered its composition, will be returned in order to Plock and with escort, and addressed to General Plausonne who will give the receipt."

"H. I. H. draws all the attention of MM. the generals commanding the divisions on the execution of the above orders, the slightest negligence compromising the service of subsistence to which H.M. brings the greatest solicitude."

*The Chief of General Staff of the corps commanded by H.I.H. the Viceroy Prince.*

Count CHARPENTIER.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, to complete all these measures, Prince Eugene had the following prescriptions brought to order and recommended strict execution to the generals:

"It is forbidden to any individual in the army, under penalty of being brought to a military commission, to seize and remove the cattle, wheat, flour and finally any convoy intended for the subsistence of the army led by a employee of the administration, with a waybill or a formal order noting the destination of this convoy."

"To General from Willenberg, 10 June 1812."

*The General of Division, Chief of General Staff of the corps under the command of His Imperial Highness,*

Signed: CARPENTIER.

Identical copy:

*The Adjutant Officer, Deputy Chief,*

DURRIEU.<sup>23</sup>

The organization of the transport columns absorbed the region's resources in draft animals to such an extent and they were so poorly monitored that the Commissioner of Wars Pichot, attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps, soon reported to the existing chief of the state:

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<sup>22</sup> *Papers of General d'Albignac.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

"...We no longer find a horse, however we look for it, no more than a team of oxen. Besides, the way in which peasants and horses are treated will soon render all these means void. Men and animals have nothing for their food, although goods are made for them; the drivers and the escorts are often without any attention for each other. Men desert when they can and abandon their carts and teams. It is high time that we put an end to these disorders, which mainly concern the army..."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The War Commissioner Pichot to d'Albignac (Willenberg, 8 June 1812).