

Summary of dissertation
Napoleonic garrison in the Free City of Danzig in 1807–1813

The Treaty of Tilsit concluded in July 1807 between the victorious France and Russia and Prussia, defeated as part of the Fourth Anti-French Coalition, brought enormous changes for Gdańsk. Under the treaty, Gdańsk became a free city. In theory, under the protectorate of Prussia and Saxony. In practice, the French governor, Napoleon's trusted adjutant, General Jean Rapp, played an important role in the Free City.

Together with the governor, there was a large garrison in the city, which became the subject of this work. What is worth emphasizing is that this topic has not been the subject of any monographic treatment. Although there is no shortage of studies touching on the military aspects of the history of the First Free City of Gdańsk.

The main research goals of the work were to present the actual composition and size of the Napoleonic garrison in various periods. Negating the opinion existing in research that it was constantly growing. Discussion of the infrastructure occupied for the needs of the army and the expenses incurred by the city for maintaining the garrison. Describing the relationship between Napoleon's soldiers and the burghers.

The garrison that Napoleon left in Gdańsk in 1807 consisted of approximately 11,000 soldiers. The large number did not result from the city's important role in the plans of the French Emperor. The idea was to facilitate the provisioning of the French army, which was to be done at the expense of the inhabitants of the occupied areas. In the following years, there were changes in the composition and number of the garrison. However, they were the result of events in Europe, and not Napoleon's direct plans for Gdańsk. The situation in Spain (from 1808), the desire to secure the cooperation of the Russian Tsar and the war with Austria in 1809 prompted the French Emperor to withdraw first Oudinot's division, and then the last French regiments (only the French company of sappers remained in the fortress) and the Saxon regiment cuirassiers. To illustrate the size of the reduction, Napoleon's troops in Gdańsk decreased from 11,000 people in the second half of 1807 to 2,500 in the spring of 1809.

The reinforcement of Napoleon's troops in Gdańsk took place again only in the spring of 1811, when the preparations of the Russian Tsar, Alexander, for war came to light. It was then that the emperor dictated a series of orders that resulted in 20,000 soldiers stationed in the city in November 1811. It was during this period that Napoleon began to solve the problems of garrison provisioning by taking on the costs of feeding the garrison.

The above changes reflect the condition of the infrastructure. In 1807, a significant number of buildings suitable for barracks and hospitals were taken over for the needs of the army. In the years 1808–1810, four hospitals, three barracks in granaries, and a dozen or so warehouses were sufficient for a small garrison. The expansion of the facilities began in March 1811. It was then that the governor and the commandant of the fortress began to frantically demand that more buildings be handed over to the needs of the army. In April 1812, military warehouses for various types of supplies were located in 72 buildings, and hospitals in several buildings. Similar requirements regarding the provision of new buildings for hospitals appeared in the winter of 1812/1813.

The author presented the intelligence activities of the garrison in the years 1807–1812, which were undertaken against Prussia and Russia. The importance of Gdańsk in this aspect increased at the end of the period in question. At that time, Rapp's task was not only to obtain information, but also to verify reports that came to the emperor's desk, also from the Duchy of Warsaw.

A separate issue was the description of the organization and activities of the privateer fleet in Gdańsk. It was relatively weak. It seems that the number did not exceed a dozen or so ships operating at the same time. Its small numbers and the fact that the ships were mostly sloops meant that it was unable to effectively oppose the British fleet.

What were the costs of maintaining the garrison? Gdańsk's benefits to France totaled 35 million francs. Of this, over 16 million was allocated to cover various needs of the garrison (including feeding officers, collecting supplies in the event of a siege, maintaining infrastructure, fortification works, etc.). It is worth mentioning here that the city constantly covered the costs of feeding the French troops, but also partly the Polish and Saxon ones, which in theory were to be fed at the expense of their own governments. Napoleon's aid offered in 1811 was a drop in the ocean.

How to summarize J. Rapp's actions as governor and garrison commander. In the years 1807–1809, the task was relatively simple, most of the garrison's forces were Oudinot's division and French regiments from the marching corps. Soult, which were under their own command. In 1809, after the outbreak of war with Austria, the garrison consisted of three infantry regiments that were easy to command. The most difficult task faced the governor in 1811, when an international garrison was established in the city and related problems arose, e.g. hostility between Polish and German regiments. Rapp tried to instill esprit de corps in the units and establish the closest possible cooperation between them.

He did this on two levels. Firstly, by organizing and directing garrison-wide exercises. The cooperation and quality of the maneuvers of his subordinate units were reflected in the campaign of 1812 and the defense of the city in 1813. Almost all Napoleonic diarists writing about the siege of 1813 emphasized Rapp's role in the actions and the trust his subordinates had in him. They also wrote that each unit knew its positions and tasks. Of course, not all of this was a result of the 1811 exercises, but they undoubtedly contributed to it.

Secondly, he tried to develop organizational norms of cooperation between French and allied troops. The Governor of Gdańsk also took care of this aspect. This was reflected in the composition of military courts. Although all cases were resolved based on the French military code, the court included representatives of various units forming the garrison. This created a platform of cooperation and understanding between officers of individual regiments. The same thing happened during military maneuvers.

Rapp, as well as his deputies, did not underestimate the people of Gdańsk and tried to win local public opinion. He organized balls, aid for the poorest and orphanages. Garrison officers also donated funds for these activities. However, the above actions could not erase the growing costs of the presence of Napoleon's troops, the financial decline of the city and the poverty of Gdańsk's inhabitants.

The governor, as well as his deputies, were limited in their actions by the need to comply with the assumptions of Napoleon's policy and plans. He had to settle all important matters in consultation with the marshal. Davout, the French Minister of War, and sometimes the Emperor himself. He was not, as one of his French biographers claims, the viceroy of Gdańsk.

The relations between the soldiers and the inhabitants of Gdańsk did not fit into the black and white pattern (them versus us), as A.F. Blech saw them. Rapp and some officers managed to establish friendly relations with the townspeople. This was evidenced by marriages between officers and local women. Some of the officers noticed the poverty of the townspeople and wrote about it in letters home. Rapp consistently censored this correspondence.

The correct relations were confirmed in 1813, when in the besieged Gdańsk, unlike Hamburg, there were no anti-Napoleonic riots. The officers themselves appreciated the attitude of the townspeople. About the attitude of the inhabitants during the defense of the city in 1813.

Rapp praised the attitude of the townspeople and appreciated their perseverance and courage. He considered their behavior an example for all of Europe.