

Enclosure.

My interview with Colonel de Freisenau took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September at night. The apprehension of all the persons in Office at Berlin of being detected by French emissaries in any the least of their intercourse with individuals suspected to be attached to England, caused a variety of mysterious precautions to be adopted previous to my introduction, though I did not arrive at Berlin till long after it was dark and immediately before my visit to the Colonel. I never saw him before. But having been previously informed of my Distinction, he entered into the Subject at once, almost instantly after my being

introduced to him by my brother.

He prepared the explanations, which he was about to communicate over a large map of the Prussian dominions, by expressing the lively joy imparted to him but one of those last days past, from the statement of a gentleman — Colonel de Porponcher — recently arrived at Berlin from this country, of the magnanimous dispositions of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, for the assistance of all those powers, oppressed under the yoke imposed by France, who should attempt to liberate themselves from their bondage. That he had particularly heard with an animating hope, that the affairs of Germany and the present crisis of Prussia attracted His Royal Highness's peculiar interest. That from this circumstance

he hoped, that the illustrious house of Brunswick would finally restore the liberty of that country, in which their ancient & glorious family had stood foremost for ages. That, encouraged by this idea, he supposed, that by enabling me, by communications from a military man to a military man, to convey to England the main features of a plan for the defence of the Prussian dominions in the case of a probable attack from France, (which he had submitted to the King of Prussia and which had been adopted,) the determination of His Majesty's Government with respect to the assistance wanted & requested at the hands of Great-Britain, might be facilitated.

He next alluded to the momentous

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crisis, in which Prussia evidently must be  
placed by the renewal of the war, from her  
political, geographical and military situation.  
With Magdeburg in front, Stettin in their  
right flank, Danzig & the Poles in their  
rear, Carlsruhe & Glogau occupied by the  
French in their very centre, and a  
formidable body of Saxons quartered  
for several months past on the open  
frontier of their left flank; — 17,000  
men at Stettin, a numerous French  
corps d'armee on the Silesian  
frontier, within less than a day's march  
from the Prignitz, and, upon the whole,  
an army of 154,000 men (computing  
native French and Poles & the allies of  
the Confederacy of the Rhine) between  
this latter river and the Vistula; —

and in this position Prussia left to her own resources, with a view of "la bombe sur le point d'écarter" — all this they knew, but there was no choice, and whatever seemingly insurmountable difficulties there might be, must either still be tried to overcome or not minded. Under this impression, and with the firm resolution rather to fall gloriously than to yield with ignominy, it next behoved to survey the resources actually left to them.

These consisted chiefly in a very numerous army, provided the whole could be properly armed, & in 8 fortresses, which afforded as many most important rallying points; and, as a final resource, the "Heerbann" or rising of the whole country. From these elements of their defence, the plan

proposed by him was exactly the reverse of the measures hitherto adopted by the continental powers in their wars with France. To collect all their troops in one grand body and to risk the existence of the Monarchy in the event of a single battle, they had, at their severe expence, learnt to avoid.

What then seemed the most advisable, was, to establish four distinct main theatres of the war, corresponding with the very number of provinces left to the King of Prussia by the peace of Silesia, and managed so, as to serve each other for a mutual support, in order that if they should be defeated in one quarter, all might not be lost, but still the war kept up in the rest.

Thus all their means of respite were to be collected, 1.) in the Margraviate of Brandenburg, 2.) in Pomerania, 3.) in the Kingdom of Prussia and 4.) in Silesia. That, as to the first of these theatres, being the most exposed, though the most important from containing Berlin and most of the Royal residences, the King, from the almost thoroughly open nature of this part of his dominions, had decidedly thought of giving ~~it~~ up the country between the Elbe & the Oder, & retreat with the troops and whatever could be saved behind the latter river. That however he, Colonel Freisenau, upon seriously examining the country, had found out a position near Spandau,

at about 10 English miles to the westward from the Capital,) which seemed to him to afford facilities for one of the strongest, entrenched Camps. That it's main advantage consisted in the peculiarity of the river Havel's (which at this point receives the Spree from Berlin,) branching out in a succession of lakes, below and even above the fortrefs, establishing a breadth of water, over which it was impossible to throw a bridge of pontoons. That besides he had taken advantage of 5 small islands, situated at convenient distances above and below Spandaw, every one of which was fortified by strong redoubts, so as to strengthen the front of the position.

That under these topographical advantages a line right and left from Spandau of four german miles, — from Segel (a village near Berlin) down to Potsdam, might be esteemed impenetrable to what ever invading force; that under these circumstances, the enemy must advance upon the intrenched Camp near Spandau by a long circuitous way, which would afford the troops stationed there the opportunity of sallying through the forbes to assail him in his rear, while he moved to either flank, or to attack him in detail, if the length of the front should induce him to take up an extensive line opposite. That at any rate Colonel G. hoped by this position to gain time, was it but for three weeks, what would be of the

atmost importance to them; that, as this advanced point was certainly the most critical and might be considered as of a doubtful propriety of choice, he had entreated the King, to give him the command of the intrenched camp, prepared for 15,000 men; that the King had granted his request; that he hoped to check the enemy & should do his best to make him repent if he should too rashly attempt either to attack him in a position rendered formidable

(a.) The following circumstances

(a.) will perhaps not be deemed totally uninteresting of nature and art, or pass by him and leave the force under his command in the vicinity of Spandau. That besides he relied on the moral impression of the measure, as hitherto nobody had thought of defending a country apparently so open as that whole tract between the Elbe and Oder, and therefore the novelty and seeming boldness of the idea

as it tends to corroborate the opinion of the importance of Spandau. Nearly a fortnight previous to my interview with Col. de Gneisenau was spent by me at a Villa near Potsdam, belonging to a gentleman of my acquaintance, where I waited for the result of my brother's negotiations

with Baron Hardenberg and Colonel de Gneisenau, for which I delayed my journey to England; avoiding by this apparent party of pleasure the notice which my appearance at Berlin might have attracted. This Villa being one of the most elegant & pleasant in the vicinity of Potsdam, had been generally chosen for the reception of several of the French Generals, amongst others General Nansouty, the family of my friend being thereby in possession of a number of Anecdotes relative to their characters, they formed frequently the topic of the Conversation. and among these, the gentleman, who is not a military man, once mentioned, before Colonel Gneisenau's project relative to Spandau was known to me, that he had been very much surprized to hear the French Generals observe, that Spandau was a place, whose importance had been strangely overlooked, and that it

might inspire confidence. Colonel G. mentioned the circumstance, that Count St. Marsan, the French Minister at Berlin and the rest of the Diplomatic chancery of the allies of France had lately taken their rides towards Spandau, in order to look on at what was doing there. A numerous body of men, consisting of soldiers who formerly served in the old and totally disbanded Army, who purposely have hitherto been suffered to stay quietly at home, whilst the young population has been successively embodied in the present Regiments, and again dismissed to make room for other recruits, so as to train to arms the greatest number possible — is employed at the fortifications. The same system is pursued at Colberg, Pillau & in Silesia. Colonel Gneisenau next passed to the second & most important stage



might be rendered extremely  
strong from it's natural  
advantages.

of their preparations — the fortress of Colberg,  
 the rallying point of the forces in Pomerania.  
 The successful defence made by this fortress in  
 the Seven years War & latterly in 1807, when  
 Colonel Gneisenau himself, as Commandant of  
 the place, acquired the honor of a most gallant  
 & fortunate resistance to the french besieging  
 Army under Mortier, would alone be sufficient  
 to fix the eyes on this point as one of main  
 importance. But this strong fortress is at  
 present rendered considerably more formidable  
 A triple position is intrenched in it's  
 vicinity. It admits of so many successive  
 retreats. The last position, partly traced  
 on the Downs, where the right wing and  
 the Centre are covered by the fortress, and  
 the left reclined towards the Sea, with  
 strong redoubts for it's appui, may be  
 considered as one of the strongest possible

Besides, if the access by sea is kept  
 open, provisions and Succours of every  
 description may be thrown in continually,  
 & in this respect the easy intercourse  
 with Pillau is of great importance.  
 Nor has the anchorage been neglected.  
 The river Perdante, which falls into  
 the Sea about within gunshot distance  
 to the westward of the fortress, affords  
 a safe harbour for vessels of ten  
 feet Draught. The entrance is  
 protected by two ancient forts. But  
 at present the whole of the left bank  
 of the river, higher up than the anchor-  
 age extends, is covering by new works  
 of considerable strength; a precaution,  
 to which the late attack of the French  
 on that side, seems to have been conducive,  
 & which now <sup>appears</sup> ~~seems~~ to preclude the

apprehension of a similar approach.

A personal inspection of these fortifications on my passage through Colberg, where the highest activity in building them prevailed, has impressed me with a strong opinion of their importance & efficacy. Nor with the superior construction of these works be questioned, ~~which~~ <sup>since</sup> General Scharnhorst is the Officer by whose directions they have been raised.

With respect to the third stage of the operations, the Kingdon of Prussia, Colonel Greiseman briefly observed, that the fort of Pillau, though small, was of similar strength and importance with that of Colberg; that both were to support each other mutually; that Pillau was chosen for the protection of an intrenched camp, intended for the forces in

Prussia, in case of the necessity of a retreat; but that, as Danzig lay between the two Prussian fortresses, and that even Goaunders, the fourth Prussian fortress in the northern provinces, might through the enemy's junction from Thorn in the South, and from Danzig in the North, be occasionally reduced to it's own strength, (intended to be augmented by a strong tide to port on the left bank of the Vistula;) and thus the direct communication between the Kingdom of Prussia and the rest of the Country by the road of Marionwerder be intercepted, it was highly desirable, that some naval protection might insure the navigation between Colberg and Pillau on the one hand, and with the Islands of Usedom and Wollin on the other.

Colonel Gneisenau then took a rapid view of the theatre of the war in Silesia, pointed out the resources of that province in population and wealth; the points d'appui afforded by the four valuable fortresses of Neisse, Glatz, Kosel & Silberberg; the convenient situation of that country for an eventual junction with a Russian Army; the facility of passing from thence to offensive operations by the invasion of Saxony through Lusatia, of which Dresden, the Capital, might be the immediate object; and seemed to suppose, as a matter of course, and intrenched camp in Silesia, similar to those in the other provinces. Probably this may be intended near Schweidnitz, though

the place itself has been dismantled, by  
 restoring the famous Camp of Bunzelwitz,  
 or perhaps on the Bober, near Lauenburg,  
 in the Camp of Schmotseifen, where  
 King Frederic II and his brother, Prince  
 Henry of Prussia, repeatedly kept the  
 Superior forces of the Austrians in awe,  
 & from whence the passage into Lusatia  
 is the most easy.

The command of the four main-  
 districts seems to be intended, 1.) that  
 of Brandenburg for Colonel Gneisenau  
 under the King himself, 2.) that of Pomerania  
 for General Blücher, who has been stationed  
 there for these last years past, and who  
 during my stay at Salberg, (from September  
 15<sup>th</sup> to Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>,) was invested with full

powers of an uncommon latitude with respect to the measures, which he should think requisite for placing this Province in the most respectable posture of defence; 3.) that of Prussia for General Scharnhoff, who even was there, when I passed at Berlin, and 4.) that of Silesia for one of the Princesses of the Royal family, whose name I did not learn. Colonel Gneisenau just observed, en passant, on this Subject, that as the Silesians had a considerable deal of pride, he was sure, that this distinction would go a great way in stimulating their Spirit.

One circumstance, which Colonel Gneisenau only seemed to mention by the way in the course of a very animated conversation

on the topics above reported, was a project, which he stated to enter into his plans of annoyance against the enemy. This was no other, than a diversion between the Elbe & Weser, where, he said, it would be proper to send round by sea a body of four thousand men, or thereabout. Surprized at a Scheme rather strange, considering the naval resources of Prussia, I interrupted him by observing, that I supposed, he meant to lay the Coast of Mecklenburg, between Stralsund and Lubeck, and that even there a force so inconsiderable appeared to me, to be extremely exposed. But Colonel Gneisenau maintained his original statement, and said, that in plans of such magnitude

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possible sacrifices must not be attended to.

He then asked me: what was my opinion of the probability of the effect, which the appearance of the alluded to expedition would produce on the inhabitants of that part of Germany? (the Electorate of Hanover.)

I told him, "that of the spirit, which prevailed among them, there was no doubt, & that I well knew men there, who despised no better, than to be enabled to come forward; but that I very much doubted, whether a Prussian force would be considered by them as a rallying point of their choice." The subject was

then dropped, and I indeed almost suspected, that this idea was started with an intention, either to learn, whether I might be possessed of some conjectures

as to some possible plan of a diversion  
from this country to that quarter, or  
even, to create a sort of jealousy,  
which might in so far serve the general  
plan, as to determine the British  
Government on a new attempt in  
that part of the Continent.

It appears certain, that from the totally  
altered relations of the three Hanseatic  
towns, Hamburg, Lubeck & Bremen, the  
operations in the North of Germany afford  
combinations entirely new and different  
from former times, and that these three  
important places, leaving out of sight  
their commercial consequence, might  
be considered as a sort of basis for opera-  
tions embracing the North of Germany  
and even the Netherlands.



I took hold of a convenient opportunity, to enquire of Colonel Gneisenau, whether he had any prospect of a cooperation on the part of Russia, what he thought of their forces collecting on the frontiers of Poland & what was his opinion of their amount? His answer was, that, as to a concert between his Court and that of Russia, he knew nothing; but that indeed it never entered into his calculations, for that his opinion was, that the only safe reliance was on one's own firm determination & activity. That he was perfectly familiarized with the idea of their having to fight it out by themselves. That the Russians, however, were indeed assembling very strongly on

their western frontier. He stated their force at 17 Divisions, & the establishment of a division at 15,000 Men. However making allowance for contingencies, he supposed each Division at 10,000 Men, which would give an effective force of 170,000 Men, of which however two Divisions had been lately detached for the reinforcement of the Army of Wallachia. However, on my observing, that in my private speculations, I had always imagined, that Silesia might be a favourable quarter, in a military point of view, where the Russians might form a junction with the Prussians, he perfectly coincided with this opinion, and in a manner, which made me believe, that after all, the probability or possi-

bility of such an event was not entirely kept out of sight.

The strength of the regular Prussian army was computed by Colonel Gneisenau at from 100,000 to  $\frac{124}{m}$  or  $\frac{134}{m}$  men & more, according to their possibility of arming them. The levy en masse was, of course, computed much higher, and any sort of weapons admitted for them.

In general, Colonel Gneisenau seemed to incline to measures of the most decided energy, even in an administrative point of view, as the only means of meeting the enemy on his own ground. He certainly seems the man, though apparently cool, to be equally good with his word.

Colonel Gneisenau having probably

expressed in his letters his hopes and  
sentiments with respect to the great reliance  
he places in the support of England, I  
shall not dwell on what fell verbally  
from him on this subject. It is not  
a subject of surprise, that his ideas  
of this country should be enlightened,  
having begun his military career in  
a British Army; for he served, when  
very young, in the Buffs troops  
in America, at the time of the  
American war.

London, October 8. 1811.

C. Crutwell.

From O'Connell  
Oct 20<sup>th</sup> 1811.