

A Few Notes on the Russian Losses at Austerlitz¹

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The Battle of Austerlitz was a masterpiece of Napoleon's military tactics. Despite their numerical superiority, the Allies were decisively defeated and the Third Coalition suffered a deadly blow. While the French lost some 9,000 men, the Allied army suffered almost three times more casualties, most of them in the Russian army. Some Russian regiments suffered appalling casualties - Galicia Regiment lost 1,271 men, Butyrsk Regiment - 1,902 men, Narva Regiment – 1,600 men while the Arkhangelogorod Regiment lost over 1,600 men and the Old Ingermanland Regiment suffered 1,099 casualties.² Kutuzov claimed that during the retreat the Austrian guides chose wrong path, where the Russians were unable to move their guns and had to abandon them. Thus, the French captured the entire artillery of the 1st and 2nd Columns. Immediately after the battle, casualties seemed even higher since hundreds of soldiers were scattered in the area and did not report to their regiments.³ Alexander instructed Kutuzov to write two reports, one to appease the public and the other one confidential. The first report, intended for the general public, contained an embellished account of the battle, where the Russian troops fought until midnight, losing 12,000 men but inflicting 18,000 casualties on the French.⁴

The official report on losses prepared on 6 January 1806 demonstrated the heavy casualties the Russian army suffered at Austerlitz. According to this document, the casualties were distributed as follows:⁵

Major General Gizhitsky's Column					
Regiments	Staff Officers	Ober-Officers	NCOs	Musicians	Privates
His Majesty's Life Cuirassier	-	2	6	5	87
Kharkov Dragoons	-	2	3	-	103
Pavlograd Hussars	-	9	25	3	206
Gordeev's Cossacks	-	-	2	-	31
Kiselev's Cossacks	-	-	-	-	55
Malakhov's Cossacks	-	-	-	-	4
Total	-	13	36	8	486

¹ I am thankful to David Hollins, Robert Ouvrard and Robert Goetz for their help with proper names of locations mentions in this article and details on Russian prisoners in 1805.

² Report on Killed and Missing in Action of 20 November [2 December], 6 January 1806, Correspondence of Kutuzov, II, 235-236. Also see Report on Artillery Losses at the Battle of Austerlitz, *Ibid.*, 237.

³ Kutuzov reported that 4,579 men, who were previously considered killed or missing, reported back as the army retreat. Report on Killed and Missing in Action of 20 November [2 December], 6 January 1806, *Ibid.*, 236.

⁴ Kutuzov to Alexander, 26 January 1806, Correspondence of Kutuzov, 259.

⁵ 'Vedomost ob ubitikh i bez vesti propavshih v 20 chislo noyabrya voinskikh chinakh i stroevikh loshadyakh [Report on Killed and Missing in Action of 20 November (2 December)], Kutuzov to Alexander, 6 January 1806, Documents of M.I. Kutuzov's Headquarters, 236;

Lieutenant General Shepelev's Column					
Regiments	Staff Officers	Ober-Officers	NCOs	Musicians	Privates
St. Petersburg Dragoons	-	2	4	1	38
Tver Dragoons	2	23	34	6	277
Mariupol Hussars	1	13	5	-	136
Melentyev Cossacks	-	-	-	-	14
Denisov's Cossacks	-	-	-	-	4
Khanzhenkov I's Cossacks	-	-	-	-	25
Sysoev I's Cossacks	-	-	-	-	13
Total	3	38	43	7	507

Major General Voinov's Column					
Regiments	Staff Officers	Ober-Officers	NCOs	Musicians	Privates
Chernigov Dragoons	1	2	6	3	90

Lieutenant General Miloradovich's Column					
Regiments	Staff Officers	Ober-Officers	NCOs	Musicians	Privates
Isaev's Cossacks	-	-	3	-	43
Malorossiiski Grenadiers	1	2	9	2	257
Jaroslavl Musketeers	1	3	9	8	261
Apsheron Musketeers	-	2	1	2	185
Smolensk Musketeers	-	3	12	6	220
Azov Musketeers	2	16	44	26	403
Vladimir Musketeers	-	4	11	2	219
New Ingermanland Musketeers	1	2	7	4	214
Field Artillery	-	8	9	2	85
Total	5	40	105	52	1887

Lieutenant General Dokhturov's Column					
Regiments	Staff Officers	Ober-Officers	NCOs	Musicians	Privates
Kiev Grenadiers	1	3	2	-	64
Moscow Musketeers	1	5	11	6	439
Novgorod Musketeers	1	2	7	4	71
Vyatka Musketeers	1	2	2	3	215
Bryansk Musketeers	-	-	2	5	451
Narva Musketeers	6	44	100	42	1319

Butyrsk Musketeers	6	50	91	45	1614
Galitia Musketeers	4	34	65	35	1129
Artillery	-	-	8	3	113
Three companies of the 2 nd Pioneer (Engineer) Regiment	-	-	4	3	113
Total	20	140	292	146	5528

Lieutenant General Count Langeron's Column

Regiments	Staff Officers	Ober-Officers	NCOs	Musicians	Privates
Phanagoria Grenadiers	1	4	7	10	555
Ryazha Musketeers	-	-	20	6	576
Perm Musketeers	6	39	75	41	1553
Kursk Musketeers	5	36	44	20	1166
6 th Jagers	-	5	12	2	141
8 th Jagers	-	6	17	5	127
Horse Artillery	1	1	4	-	43
Field Artillery	-	-	13	2	115
Total	13	91	192	86	4276

Lieutenant General Essen I's Column

Regiments	Staff Officers	Ober-Officers	NCOs	Musicians	Privates
Elizavetgrad Hussar Battalion	1	3	8	-	85

Lieutenant General Prince Bagration's Column

Regiments	Staff Officers	Ober-Officers	NCOs	Musicians	Privates
Elizavetgrad Hussar Battalion	1	1	4	-	30
Pskov Musketeers	-	9	28	17	482
Vyborg Musketeers	3	11	20	17	540
Arkhangelogorod Musketeers	1	14	71	37	1502
Old Ingermanland Musketeers	1	20	53	33	978
Podolsk Musketeers	1	28	22	10	181
5 th Jagers	1	2	9	2	151
7 th Jagers	3	21	54	13	688
Artillery	1	2	11	1	82
Total	12	108	272	130	4634

Thus, according to this official report, total Russian losses amounted to 55 staff officers, 43 ober-officers and 954 non-commissioned officers, 432 musicians and 17,493 rank-and-file. Kutuzov noted that out of the number shown in the tables 4579 men later returned to the army.

This number however does not include Russian artillery losses. Major General N.I. Bogdanov, commander of the Russian Artillery at Austerlitz submitted the following report to General Aleksey Arakcheyev 5 December 1805⁶

	Men		Artillery		Horses	
	Present	Killed	Present	Lost	Present	Killed
Staff Officers	10	4				
Ober-Officers	38	27				
Rank-and-File	1976	1235				
Guns			39	133		
Caissons			18	100		
Wagons			5	106		
Horses					1545	1011

Thirty-seven years after the battle, the famous Russian historian Lieutenant General Alexander Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky, as he worked on the study of 1805 Campaign, requested the Artillery Department Archive to draft a new report based on the reports of the artillery commanders. The resulting study showed the following losses:

Units	Killed, Captured, and Missing in Action					
	Officers	Privates	Guns	Caissons	Wagons	Horses
Life Guard Artillery Battalion	1	40	3	11	-	213
½ Artillery Company of the Battalion of the Imperial Militia	-	-	-	-	-	16
1 st Horse Artillery Battalion: Colonel Yashvili's and Colonel Yermolov's Company	1	101	14	17	2	273
2 nd Horse Regiment	1	22	-	-	-	62
	3rd Artillery Regiment					
Colonel Kudryavtsev's Battery Company	-	-	9	18	-	113
Major Slizov's Light Company	-	-	9	9	-	109
Colonel Count Syver's Battery Company	10	519	12	12	12	152
Major Sigizmund's Battery Company	-	-	12	12	12	121
Major Klingenberg's Light	-	-	9	-	10	100

⁶ Correspondence of Kutuzov, II, 239

Company						
Major Yushkov's Light Company	-	-	9	-	12	118
	4th Artillery Regiment					
Colonel Marten's Battery Company	-	-	7	-	16	156
Major Vitovtov's Light Company	-	-	10	17	-	80
Major Mitrofanov's Light Company	-	-	12	23	-	88
Major Boguslavsky's Battery Company	1	44	8	7	-	63
	5th Artillery Regiment					
Major Guine's Light Company	-	-	12	24	-	70
Major Staden's Light Company	10	11	10	18	-	65
Chef Battery Company	-	-	-	-	-	15
Vacant Battery Company [Batareinoi vakantnaya rota]	-	-	-	-	-	6
Colonel Golostenov's Battery Company	-	-	-	-	-	-
Major Anzio's Light Company	12	12	12	12	-	66
Major Stein's Light Company	12	18	12	18	-	77
Total	48	767	160	198	64	1963

While general information on Russian losses at Austerlitz can be found in most campaign and battle studies, information on the fate of thousands of wounded and captured Russians is less discussed. Yet, the number of Russian losses cannot be complete without considering hundreds of soldiers who suffered and died for weeks after the battle. Fortunately, one document stashed in dossier No. 3117-1 of the Russian State Military Archive sheds light on this topic. In early January 1806, a Russian envoy to Vienna, Prince Sergey Dolgorukov, was instructed to inquire about the whereabouts of the Russian wounded and captured soldiers. Dolgorukov initially visited French authorities in Vienna, querying them about information on the Russian prisoners, some of whom were captured after the battle and some of them "unaware that the local roads went straight to Vienna."⁷ The French military authorities soon informed him that some Russian soldiers were gathered in two detention camps at Spitz and Simmering near Vienna, where they were organized into temporary groups before being freed to return to Russia through Hungary and Moravia.⁸ Dolgorukov then had a discussion with Archduke Ferdinand who told him that during Austro-French negotiations a French representative assured Austrian General Kollowrat that Russian soldiers in hospitals around Vienna would be returned as soon as they recovered; however, the French refused to sign any document pledging this and thus their promise initially seemed suspicious both to Russians and Austrians.

⁷ Dolgorukov to Alexander, 5 March 1806, RGVIA, op. 46, f. 946, d. 3117-1, l. 69.

⁸ Latour to Dolgorukov, 6 February 1806, RGVIA, op. 46, f. 946, d. 3117-1, l. 75.

The French did not expect to face any Russians in Vienna. Yet, after the battle at Austerlitz, hundreds of Russian soldiers fled to the southwest and soon reached Vienna, where they were sheltered for days by local citizens.⁹ Incredibly, rumors of the French departure soon spread and Russians came out of their hideouts to openly "beg in the streets." According to Dolgorukov, French General Andreossi was surprised to see so many Russian soldiers in the streets of Vienna and had them detained. French troops gathered over 600 Russians and had them marched off under Austrian convoy to French-occupied Saint Polten, west of Vienna. Austrian guards naturally were reluctant to deliver their former allies to their "new allies" and turned a blind eye to the Russian escape attempts. Thus, only 120 men reached St. Polten while the rest fled back to Vienna. It should be noted that Dolgorukov's report does not mention a tragic incident at Melk, where some Russian prisoners were transported. On 13 December, about 500 prisoners were locked up in the northern tower of the local closter while the remaining POWs were grouped around some fifty bivouac fires around it. The following day, the French discovered the bodies of 300 men in one room of the tower who died from smoke produced by the fire they made inside the room, which was not ventilated. Their bodies were transported to Winden, near Melk and buried in a common grave; in 1891, the Russian government placed there a special monument in their honor.¹⁰

Now back to Dolgorukov's mission. According to the Austrian report of 24 January, 1,107 Russian soldiers were recuperating under French supervision in hospitals in Vienna and its vicinities. Dolgorukov dispatched Colonel Lanskoj to examine their conditions, who reported back that soldiers were well fed and treated. Lanskoj also told his superior that he secretly provided 96 soldiers and one officer with money and instructed them to flee to Teschen. Dolgorukov then spent several days visiting villages and towns around Austerlitz and looking for Russian wounded and stragglers. He found 3 seriously wounded Russian officers in a local clergyman's house near Brunn and asked Austrian Archduke Ferdinand to transfer them to the town, where physicians could attend to them. Dolgorukov then found 6 NCOs and 76 privates at Schpinhauz, while 11 NCOs and 326 privates were recuperating at Kartauz. Although all troops were well fed and treated, they lacked linen and cloth.

It seems that by early February the French already began releasing Russian prisoners of war. Dolgorukov reported that, although 373 men had already died in Brunn, 614 men already marched off in three groups back to Russia and another 118 men were preparing to return. At Olmutz, Dolgorukov was initially denied access to the Kloster Hradschin hospice but his perseverance soon paid off and he managed to visit troops there. He found 587 soldiers at local hospital, of whom 55 died but 526 were sent back to Russia; 6 more men were in the garrison hospital, with one dead, three already freed and two left behind to recuperate. In the next town of Maehrische Neustadt, Dolgorukov found only 11 men, of whom 3 were still there, 3 died and 5 returned to Russia.

The hospital at Langendorf presented a different case since soldiers here were seriously ill and, according to Dolgorukov, "2/3 of local residents died of this contagious disease within one month." Out of 196 Russian soldiers there, he found 18 soldiers "treated in the same way as Austrian patients," 27 dead, 14 escaped and 137 freed to return to Russia. The largest number of Russian soldiers was at Troppau and Freiberg. At Troppau, 2,589 men were treated in January, but, by the time Dolgorukov reached them in early February, 281 were dead, 119 escaped earlier, 458 were still recuperating and 1,731 were sent back to Russia. The Freiberg Hospital treated 3,629 men, of whom 426 died and 2,091 returned to Russia; Dolgorukov found here 791 men still recuperating while 321 men were preparing for march back to motherland. "The best of

⁹ Dolgorukov to Alexander, 5 March 1806, RGVIA, op. 46, f. 946, d. 3117-1, l. 69b.

¹⁰ I am grateful of Robert Ouvrard for directing my attention to this tragic story.

hospitals" was in Krakow, where 1,192 soldiers were treated by 13 February 1806 and 507 of them were then returned to Russia. Some Russian officers were living in the houses of local nobility, who "took incredible care of them." The hospital in Odraup cared for 786 men, of whom 149 were present, 189 died, 8 escaped earlier and 440 returned to Russia. Dolgorukov visited several other towns (Kremsier, Holitz, Trentschin), where he found only 14 Russian wounded, most of them returning back to Russia. He also made inquiry about any Russian soldiers in Hungarian hospitals but could not find any reliable information. Nevertheless, based on Dolgorukov's report, it becomes clear that 11,638 wounded and sick Russian officers were treated in Austrian and French hospitals after the battle of Austerlitz. Unfortunately the number of Russian troops hiding in the vicinity of Vienna and Brunn remains unknown.

The recovered Russian soldiers were organized in groups of "at least 50 but not more than 200 men;" smaller groups were led by Russian officer and accompanied by Austrian NCO but larger groups also had an Austrian junior officer assigned to them who moved ahead of them to prepare quarters and provide 2 pounds of bread and a half-pound of meat per man.¹¹ Russian officers were actively engaged in discussions with the French to accelerate the return of prisoners. Negotiations naturally proved difficult and there were also secret attempts made to move larger groups through Austrian territories. Thus, Colonel Lansky secretly gathered and moved 887 men, who, according to Dolgorukov, "were wandering without purpose in Brunn."

However, some returning prisoners faced grim prospects. On 28 March 1806, Emperor Alexander issued a decree deploring actions of some regiments and determining specific punishments for them. The imperial decree noted that some officers and rank-and-file "left the battle field without orders but were later found healthy [with the army]."¹² The Novogorod Musketeer Regiment was singled out in the decree and accused of "fleeing in the face of the enemy and so spreading confusion in the rest of the army." Its officers were ordered to wear their swords without sword knots [temliak] while lower ranks were banned from wearing hangers [tesak]. The decree prohibited promotion of the officers listed in its annex, added five years to their service of the rank-and-file and forbade them from receiving or wearing the Order of St. Anna. The proscription list contained 90 troops in the following regiments:

- Podolsk Musketeer Regiment – 3 sub-ensigns, 4 soldiers
- Pskov Musketeer Regiment – 1 musician, 3 drummers, 2 flutists and 37 soldiers
- New Ingermanland Musketeer Regiment – 6 soldiers
- Malorossiiskii Grenadier Regiment – 1 sub-ensign, 4 NCOs and 29 soldiers.

¹¹ Dolgorukov to Alexander, 5 March 1806, RGVIA, op. 46, f. 946, d. 3117-1, l.73 b.

¹² Imperial Decree, 28 March 1806, RGVIA, op. 46, f. 946, d. 3117-1, l.81.