

## **The Fortress (1807 - 1813)**

Convinced about the invincibility of the Prussian army, King Frederick William III Wilhelm decided to independently discipline the bold Emperor of the French, Napoleon Bonaparte, who was feeling quite at home in the German countries. On 1 October 1806, in response to the formation of the Confederation of the Rhine, the King of Prussia sent an ultimatum to Napoleon, demanding the withdrawal of the French army behind the line of the Rhine. The provoked Napoleon send his army to Berlin; however, before it was conquered on 14 October 1806, he destroyed both Prussian armies during the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt, and thus, Prussia stood open before him. The King of Prussia escaped from Berlin to Królewiec and attempted to bring the remnants of his army there. At the same time, he requested help from the Russian armies, the battle with which took place near the end of winter, in Masuria. Meanwhile, Koźle and other Prussian fortresses found themselves on the back of the Napoleonic armies.

When entering Silesia, the French were met with strong resistance. From 1807, the command over the French army in Silesia was taken by the Emperor's brother, King Jerome Bonaparte. It was him who was entrusted with the task of conquering respective Prussian fortresses. The siege of Koźle began on 23 January 1807. The part of the entrenchments on the side of the Reńska Wieś and Kobylice villages was considered the best to storm. These fortifications were strictly guarded with three redoubts: the redoubts of Kobylice, Reńska Wieś, and Większyce. Due to the expected attack with the existing system of dams on the Lineta river in Koźle, the foreground was flooded; however, as winter was not over, the swamps froze. The Bavarian and French divisions besieging Koźle built artillery positions in the area of the present road ramification leading to Reńska Wieś and Dębowa. The artillery fire decimated not only the defenders but also the besiegers.

The crew of the fortress included a large number of local Polish-speaking recruits, who anticipated the arrival of the Polish Legions. The most dangerous of them seemed to be the dragoons, whose horses were ordered to be taken away by the commander of the fortress. Many soldiers deserted. The town was ridden with diseases. In May, the defendants began to run low on food, and people were dying due to the spread of typhus. Since help did not come, a ceasefire was signed in July 1807, followed by an act of surrender. However, the Napoleonic army did not enter the fortress, as in the meantime, peace was made in Tylża. The battles of the second Silesian episode of the Napoleonic Wars in 1813 did not arrive in the Koźle Region.