

# WORLD HISTORY AT KMLA

1793-  
1807

## HISTORY OF DANZIG (GDANSK)

1813-  
1870

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## Under French Administration, 1807-1813

In 1806 Prussia entered the FOURTH COALITION against Napoleon, together with Britain and Russia. Napoleon defeated the Prussian forces at Jena and Auerstaedt (Oct. 14th 1806), the Russians at Eylau (Feb. 8th 1807). In March, Napoleon's troops (among whom many from the Confederation of the Rhine) laid siege to the city of Danzig, which, after staunch resistance, surrendered on May 24th. Napoleon gave the title "Duke of Danzig" to General Lefevre, the commander over the siege troops. The entering French troops confiscated food and equipment; the city had to pay a contribution of 20 million Franc.

In the PEACE OF TILSIT (July 9th), Prussia had to cede most of the territory gained in the Polish Partitions; it kept most of West Prussia, but Danzig was proclaimed a FREE CITY. However, the territory of the free city was to stretch only two French miles beyond city walls, thus significantly smaller than the territory the city used to administrate until its annexation by Prussia in 1793.

In fact, the city was administrated by the French; the city had to pay more contributions; the city's art treasures were confiscated. French soldiers, all in all 10,000 men, were billeted in burghers' houses, to be lodged and fed at their expense. The population of Danzig suffered under an increasing tax burden. As the tax revenue collected was insufficient to cover the French demands, the city had to issue paper money (assignats); inflation set in. The city's port stood still; Danzig Bay was blocked by British warships. To make matters worse, French customs officers entered the city in order to inforce the continental blockade. Cloth of English origin was confiscated and publicly burnt.

In 1810 the city's population had dwindled to 37,131. Danzig became one of the starting points of the Russian invasion; at one time, the number of troops stationed here reached 23,000. Napoleon himself visited Danzig June 7th to 11th 1812, in order to inspect his troops.

After the annihilation of the Grande Armee, Russian troops reached Danzig in January 1813; during the siege the population starved, prices went through the sky, infectious diseases claimed scores of victims. The French garrison only withdrew on January 2nd 1814. Russian and Prussian troops entered the city.

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LINKS

Article Francois Joseph Lefevre, from [Columbia Encyclopedia](#)  
The Battle for Danzig, March 18th-May 27th 1807, from [The Napoleonic Guide](#); Danzig II (1807), from [Historiska Slag](#) (Historic Battles; a Danish language site)

DOCUMENTS

Coat of Arms, from [International Civic Heraldry](#)  
World Statesmen : [Danzig](#), by Ben Cahoon; has lists of the French governors and of the Danzig Presidents of the Senate  
Danzig coin 1812, from [Napoleonic Medals](#)

REFERENCE

Erich Keyser, Danzigs Geschichte, (Danzig 1928) Reprint Hamburg : Danziger Verlagsgesellschaft Paul Rosenberg, undated (History of Danzig), 300 pp.  
Hans Georg Siegler, Danzig - Chronik eines Jahrtausends (Danzig - Chronicle of a Millennium; a timeline), Düsseldorf : Droste 1990, in German

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