

First contact on the Sambre: 15th June, 1815.

A small scenario for *Republic to Empire* by Barry Hilton

Introduction

The large engagements of the 100 Days Campaign are challenging to recreate as wargames. The number of models required is beyond the scope, patience, space, time and budget of most. Consequently, we frequently move on to a new project before being able to get enough toys onto the table to play with. Even as a club project Ligny, Quatre Bras and Waterloo would take many months or perhaps years to organise. We wargamers are never that patient and want to play now, not next year so this piece may offer some short term incentives to stick with that Napoleonic project!

Building a force that can be used relatively quickly in a realistic scenario is always a good way to stimulate further painting and collecting. This means larger projects can be broken down into smaller more bite sized pieces with the option to change direction at different points in the painting and collecting process. Forget trying to build the combined Allied armies for the Leipzig campaign and start with something more manageable.

I am constantly on the look out for smaller sized actions which are less well known. These offer a chance to construct creative scenarios without the nagging doubt that you are twisting history too much. They also allow smaller forces as previously described, to participate in meaningful games. I have recently written about the Allied cavalry rearguard actions used to keep the French pursuit at bay as Wellington retreated from Quatre Bras on 17th June. This article is in the same vein, partly historical, partly hypothetical and focusing on the day before Quatre Bras and Ligny.

Napoleon's Armée du Nord crossed the River Sambre at multiple locations before dawn on the morning of 15th June, 1815. Much of the army headed for Charleroi causing congestion and delay. Reille's II Corps and D'Erlon's I Corps crossed the river 10 -15 km south west of the town making quicker progress.

The villages of Binche and Thuin lie within 10 km of each other and directly in the path of Reille and D'Erlon. This area of the frontier was defended by elements of von Ziethen's Prussian I Army Corps. Both villages are mentioned as locations of action on the 15th in various accounts. At Thuin, units from Jerome Bonaparte's 6th Division opened fire on the 2nd Battalion, 1st Westphalian Landwehr Regiment. It was part of von Steinmetz's 1st Infantry Brigade. The Prussians did return fire but retired as more French troops arrived. The 12th & 24th Infantry regiments from the same Prussian brigade also in this area, were ordered to pull back north east across the River Pieton and on towards Gosselies about 20 km away. The 4th Hussars from von Treskow's Prussian 1st Cavalry Brigade were quartered in the area too.

Much of the first contact action took place in the dark and was very fluid. Units would not easily have been able to orientate themselves to friends or enemies. The situation would have been particularly confusing for the local Prussian commanders who had no idea what they faced in terms of enemy numbers or troop types. I have used these factors as the basis for a scenario involving imbalanced forces working to objectives and against the clock. Some of the units included may not have participated so I would recommend that gamers use whatever regiments they have available as long as the troop types and numbers are correct.

Scenario background information

Napoleon has decided to move north to defeat the Anglo-Dutch and Prussian armies before the massive Austrian and Russian armies can reach the Rhine and crush France and himself one final time. He has crossed the border into Belgium on the southern frontier and his army is pointing north toward Brussels. He has around 125,000 men on the move and it is before 0400 on 15th June 1815. His brother Jerome Bonaparte's 6th Infantry Division, part of Reille's II Corps, is in the very forefront of the advance. This corps is crossing the River Sambre to the south west of most of the army which is converging on the town of Charleroi. Jerome's battalions are strung out in column of march and unsure of precisely where they are in location to both friendly troops and the enemy. Some battalions are crossing the river at Lobbes whilst others are crossing at Thuin a kilometre east. Jerome knows that Prussian elements are located somewhere to his front but which units and in what numbers is unknown. Jerome must push on as quickly as possible and try to avoid protracted engagement which will slow the advance of the entire army. That is most definitely not in line with his brother's master plan to beat the Allies quickly and decisively.

The Allied commanders have spread their two armies in a wide arc to cover all possible roads to Brussels and the coast. Such a deployment protects lines of communication, supply and escape but has spread the corps of Wellington and Blucher deep as well as wide. This means front line units do not have instant access to support and reinforcement and those unlucky enough to meet the advancing French will have a nerve wracking experience which may end in disaster. Advanced detachments from the 1st Westphalian Landwehr stationed south of the Sambre near the village of Thuin have reported massive troop movement heading north and have themselves fallen back across the river. The 2nd battalion of the regiment stands ready on the north side of the river but at the moment is unsupported and nervously awaiting the sound of marching feet and creaking wagon wheels.....

French briefing

for Général de Division Prince Jérôme Bonaparte o/c 6th Infantry Division, II Corps, L'Armée du Nord

Your division is in the van of Reille's Corps and has avoided the confusion in Charleroi by crossing the Sambre to the west. You are expected to make first contact with the enemy who will most probably be Prussian. Your orders are to push as far north as quickly as possible in an attempt to drive a wedge between the forces of the English and the Prussians. Deploying for a formal engagement would be contra to Reille's orders and those of your brother the Emperor. You expect the enemy to fight and so you have a potentially difficult situation to face as any hold up will have consequences. The objective is to push as many battalions as possible north through the villages whilst containing any enemy resistance or blocking activity. Forward movement is the key to victory.

Prussian briefing for Major General Karl von Steinmetz o/c 1st Infantry Brigade, I Army Corps, Army of the Lower Rhine.

All is confusion. It appears the entire French army may be advancing against your brigade which is dispersed over a wide area between Binche and Thuin. Your orders for the moment are to hold and await reinforcements. You are with the 1st Westphalian Landwehr Regiment, a unit from your brigade. Only the 2nd battalion is in position with the 1st and 3rd somewhere to your rear. Both of the brigade's other regiments: the 12th Infantry and the 24th Infantry are in the general area but their status and current position are not known to you. There is a regiment of Hussars from General von Treskow's brigade at Binche or certainly it was there at 9pm yesterday evening as you rode through. Until ordered otherwise you have decided to stand and fight and attempt to prevent the French from progressing. Your hope is that help arrives soon.

Game length and table size

The game lasts for 10 turns. This represents a three hour and twenty minute period sometime between 0430 and 0800 hours. I recommend this game be played crossways on a 8 x 6 feet table for 28mm models. Players using 15mm models could comfortably play the game on a 6 x 4 feet table.

Commander Ability and Brigade Quality

One of the principle tenets of *Republic to Empire* is command and control. An army's ability to perform is limited by the skill of its commander and the competence of the general officers who direct its brigades. These abilities are determined before a game begins. As this encounter battle is not being directed by either commander in chief the quality of each force commander should be set randomly. The French are under 31 years old Général de Division, Prince Jérôme Bonaparte known to be of limited military ability. When setting his commander ability level his rating should reflect these limitations. On a 50% throw he is either a Plodder or Competent. The Prussians are commanded by 47 years old Major General Karl von Steinmetz who was a brigade commander. Prussian brigades were frequently larger than the divisions of other armies (please see notes later in the article on how *Republic to Empire* deals with Prussian formations). Von Steinmetz was a very distinguished and experienced commander with a reputation for competence and bravery. Throw a D3 for his ability rating and he should be no worse than Competent. Neither Commander has the status of Commander in Chief therefore the Manoeuvre Points allocation will range between -1 and 0 for Jérôme, 0 and +2 for von Steinmetz.

The brigade quality of each formation should be determined using the mechanisms from the *Command* chapter of the rules.

Initial forces

Prussian Order of Battle

Commander in Chief: **Major General Karl von Steinmetz**

1st Westphalian Landwehr Regiment (*Maj von Hulsen*) Brigadier + 3 battalions. D, R, R (all battalions 40 models each)

Jäger detachment: D-E (5 models)

This means the Prussians will start the game throwing one DAV for Movement Points (MPs) and adding any supplement for von Steinmetz's ability rating. The Jäger may ignore the conditions applied to being supported and act independently. Single unit actions govern their use if MPs are available.

Prussian Deployment

The Prussians can position themselves anywhere north of the Sambre. Only the 2nd battalion of the regiment (brigade) can be in line. The other two battalions must be in column of companies and 9 inches away from the 2nd Battalion and each other. The regiment (brigade) has DEFEND orders.

French Order of Battle

Commander in Chief: **Général de Division Prince Jérôme Bonaparte**

1st Infantry Brigade, 6th Infantry Division (Baron Bauduin): Brigadier + 7 battalions total.

1st Light Infantry Regiment (1er Leger) 3 battalions V, D, D (all 32 models)

2nd Light Infantry Regiment (2eme Leger) 4 battalions V, D, D, R (all 30 models)

In a slight departure from the normal conditions of *Republic to Empire* this large brigade is split into two Regimental sized brigades. This means the French will start the game throwing 2 DAV for Movement Points (MPs). There will be no supplement from the commander as Jérôme cannot be rated above Competent.

French Deployment

The 1st Light Infantry Regiment (1er Leger) enters the table at Point E. Only the 1st battalion is on table. Position it on the road in column of march. The other two battalions are considered to be behind it on the road and in column of march. The 2nd Light Infantry Regiment (2eme Leger) enters the table at Point F. The conditions of arrival are the same as those for the 1st Regiment. In this case the other three battalions are behind the first. Orders for both regimental brigades are MOVE. Jérôme need not be attached to any regiment but Bauduin should be. The other is not classed as out of command from its brigadier. Place another brigadier model with it, apply the normal brigadier command radius for Resolve Check purposes but do not add the +1 Resolve modifier for brigadier attached. This means the command advantages of staying together as a brigade still apply but no positive 'General officer' modifiers apply. This substitute brigadier model is in fact the regimental colonel.

Reinforcements.

Detail of enemy reinforcements should not be shown to players. The scenario will have added edge if certain details remain hidden. The arrival time of reinforcements is fixed by the table below but their composition will be randomised. The Prussians will be reinforced intermittently from Turn 4 and the French steadily between Turn 7 and Turn 9.

TURN	REINFORCEMENTS AVAILABLE	
	PRUSSIANS	FRENCH
4	Yes	No
5	No	No
6	No	No
7	Yes	Yes
8	No	Yes

9	Yes	Yes
10	No	No

Arrival time of reinforcements

When a player receives reinforcements use a D3 to decide the composition of the new arrivals. Having established composition then dice for the location in which they appear using the mechanism indicated. Reinforcements arrive at the beginning of a players phase and therefore add additional MP dice where applicable and may move in the turn of their arrival.

Arrival location of reinforcements

Prussian reinforcements can arrive at Points A, B, C or D. When the Prussians receive reinforcements throw a D3. On a score of 1 the player can choose either A or B, 2 it is C and 3 it is D. French reinforcements arrive at either E or F on a 50% throw. All reinforcing brigades arrive in column of march. If they are large they must march on behind the lead element which may be placed fully on the table at the start of the turn. This will mean that some units may not get on to the table in the turn that their brigade was scheduled to arrive. All arriving brigade orders are MOVE.

Reinforcing brigades

On each turn in which reinforcements arrive, throw a D3 and consult the list below. As troops appear, cross them from the list of available reinforcements as each will arrive only once. The French will receive two extra brigade MP dice one each for the cavalry and Soye's infantry. The gun battery does not provide an extra die as it is the divisional artillery for the 6th Infantry Division. One extra die becomes available as each brigade arrives. The Prussians receive an extra die each for the cavalry (even though it is only a single regiment) and the 12th Infantry Regiment. They do not receive an extra die for the battery with its brigade artillery for von Steinmetz's brigade.

FRENCH

- 1. Light cavalry brigade:** Divisional Commander + Brigadier +2 regts of Chasseurs or Lancers. V, D. 42 models in total.
- 2. 1st Line Infantry Regiment ((1er de Ligne):** Brigadier Soye + 3 battalions. V, D, R. (32 models each)
- 3. 2nd Company, 2nd Foot Artillery Regt : 6pdr battery** (3 guns + 1 howitzer) D.

PRUSSIAN

- 1. 4th Hussars:** Brigadier (*Maj Gen von Treskow*) + 1 regiment D. (24 models)
- 2. 12th Infantry Regiment:** Brigadier (*von Laurens*) +3 battalions DE, D, R (each is 40 models)
- 3. 7th Foot Artillery battery:** 3 x 6pdr + 1 x howitzer. D

The quality of each type of unit is indicated as follows:

G = Guard, V = Veteran, D = Drilled, R = Recruit. The suffix E = Elite ie DE = Drilled-Elite. This applies to both armies.

Victory conditions

The French receive 2 victory points for each unit of more than 66% strength and not retreating or routing which exits the table via Point A or B. This action must be totally

complete by the end of their phase of Turn 10. They receive 1 victory point for each routed Prussian unit which has disappeared or is still in rout at the end of Turn 10. The Prussians receive 2 victory points for each non retreating or routing French unit which is still on the table at the end of Turn 10. They receive 2 victory points for each routed French unit which has disappeared or is still in rout at the end of Turn 10. A points difference of 8 or more is required to win for either side. Anything less is considered an honourable draw.

Prussian organisation in Republic to Empire

This paragraph is taken from the explanation about command and organisation of Prussian brigades within the *Republic to Empire* rule book.

The Prussian army of the later Napoleonic Wars presents a challenge. It did not utilise the divisional structure common to most other armies but formed corps from several extremely large brigades often of up to nine battalions each. With *Republic to Empire* this could be seen as advantageous because a large number of troops could move with a relatively small number of MPs. This would only be possible if an appropriate number of MPs was available each turn. Three brigades each of nine battalions would mean 3 x DAV MPs per turn. These dice would produce between 6-15MPs per turn. The Prussians are therefore treated as an exception. Prussian infantry regiments were often composed of three battalions. Three regiments would constitute one of the large brigades already mentioned. Each three infantry battalions can therefore have a regimental commander who fulfils the same role as a brigadier in other armies. This means up to three of these officers per brigade. The Prussian brigade general is treated as would be a divisional general in any other army. A Prussian brigade general may throw 1x DAV per three infantry battalions under his command. Infantry regiments with two active battalions continue to receive 1 xDAV but if the regiment is reduced to one active battalion it loses its DAV. The brigade general also dices to determine his commander ability level in the same way as a divisional commander in any other army. He can therefore add a fixed MP allowance in the range -1 to +2 to his brigade each turn. To avoid making the Prussians too flexible the senior Prussian general officer be he corps or army level commander is not permitted to pool his army's MPs. MPs for Prussian brigades must only be expended on actions for the brigade which rolled them up. Any remaining at the end of the turn are lost. This means that *Exploitation* will be a more difficult option for the Prussians to employ. This balances the slight edge they receive with 1 x DAV per three battalions as in most other armies it is 1 x DAV per four battalions. The Prussian commander can allocate his personal MP allowance in the same fashion as all other commanders. Prussian cavalry brigades were modelled far more closely on the structure common in other armies therefore a cavalry brigade receives 1 x DAV like any other brigade in any other army.

Effect of time of day

As the game begins it is dark. Dawn will arrive at the beginning of Turn 4. Full daylight will not arrive until the beginning of Turn 7. If French units reach the road junctions X or Y during a turn of darkness then there is a 50% chance they will take the wrong road. Throw for each battalion which reaches X or Y. With a failed throw they take the road to C or D until:

- They meet enemy units OR

- Dawn breaks when they can see their mistake and correct it OR
- They leave the table in which case they are lost never to return.

During turns of darkness visibility for purposes of shooting, charge threat, charging, support and reasons to take Resolve checks are reduced to 4 inches. During turns of dawn light this distance increases to 9 inches. When daylight arrives normal visibility applies.

Built up Areas

Each of the villages is classed by the *Republic to Empire* rating 2B. This is relevant for garrison size, assaults and bombardment. If you are using other rules these are small stone or brick built villages.

Events

Republic to Empire does not have an Events section but I thought the inclusion of several situation specific events would add some extra bite to this game.

There are ten turns to the scenario. It is unlikely that ten events will occur as an event is generated on a 50% die throw per turn. If an event does occur then throw again to see whether it affects the French or the Prussians unless otherwise stated. Events should be rolled up at the beginning of each turn.

1. Nervousness abounds in the current fluid situation. A report of a large body of cavalry on your left flank forces you to form square with two randomly chosen battalions in your phase of the current turn. There is no MP cost to do so but if the battalions wish to make a further formation change they must pay the MP costs.
2. A torrential squall prevents any movement for either army this turn. Reinforcements stand where they have arrived.
3. Damp powder permanently reduces the fire effectiveness of two battalions or detachments by 50%. Select them randomly from those currently on table. Simply half available combat groups after all other factors have been applied for firing purposes from hereon.
4. Your battery just happens to be the most efficient in the entire army. It manages to fire at double rate on its next turn of shooting (or when it arrives if not yet on table). This means you may target the same unit twice or two different targets within the same arc of fire. It loses only one round of ammunition as an added bonus.
5. Rain soaked uniforms all assume the same dark hue. You mistake the closest unengaged enemy unit for friends. For this turn only, perform no aggressive actions against them regardless of their proximity and intent.
6. Your commander takes a fall from his horse when it stumbles on a mole hill. He is incapacitated for 20 minutes and you cannot add his additional MPs to your total this turn.
7. Your corps commander arrives on the field briefly and issues some intelligent orders! Add 3 MPs to your total for this turn only.

***Republic to Empire* mechanism adaptation for small actions**

Republic to Empire is primarily for battles of divisional size and above but since its release I have already heard from gamers who have applied it to smaller scale actions. Clarence Harrison my creative partner in producing the rules has himself suggested some small adaptations to make brigade sized encounters easy to play; Just make a simple but effective adaptation to the Manoeuvre Points (MP) system which makes a smaller action such as this move along at a cracking pace: There is no MP cost applied to maintain brigade orders once given. MPs are still required to change Brigade Orders and hand out Single Unit Actions. This will allow some interesting developments and Exploitation even with a limited amount of MPs available per turn.

Adaption for other rule sets

The model to man ratio of *Republic to Empire* in 1:20. The troop ratios can be easily adapted to reduce the number of models necessary. Alternatively the unit sizes can be kept the same and the number of units reduced proportionately in each army. The troops rating system is fairly conventional and requires little if any modification.

Thanks & credits

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Discussion on the use of *Republic to Empire* together with free downloadable gaming aids can be found at www.leagueofaugsburg.com