

Old soldiers never die.. they just come back 11 years later and get even!

A scenario for *Republic to Empire* by Barry Hilton

Introduction

Detailed source material relating to the death throes of the Prussian Army after Jena on 14th October 1806 is not easy to come by. When asked to put together a scenario dealing with the final engagements around Lübeck on November 6th 1806 I found myself staring at a fairly barren bookshelf. An emergency call to the network saw friends come up trumps for me and so the context and background information for this scenario was secured. The link with various other articles in this month's issue is the life and times of Wilhelm von Dornberg who was serving in the Prussian Army at the time. He does not feature in this piece but a rather more famous Prussian does. Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher in many respects epitomizes the deep rooted and emotionally fuelled francophobia which sustained militarily exhausted opponents of Napoleon through the wilderness years and into a new era of resistance and ultimate victory. Blücher was no master strategist and could be considered no better than a competent tactician. He was barely literate and allegedly could not read a map. He did however possess other highly potent leadership qualities. Extraordinary personal courage, fierce loyalty and the gift of building unbreakable bonds with his men marked him out as special. This last quality alone made the common soldier quite prepared to die for him without question. He empathised with his troops and was always to be seen in the front line sharing the danger. He spoke plainly, with sincerity and in a way that the lowliest private could relate to. He was as emotionally engaged with his army as Wellington appeared to be disengaged with his. This scenario draws on some of Blücher's leadership strengths as he battles in vain to save the final few demoralised parts of the once mighty Prussian Army from oblivion.

Scenario background information

The crushing defeat at Jena left the Prussians little will or resource with which to further oppose Napoleon. Blücher and other diehards retreated northwest during the two weeks following the battle and fought a series of increasingly desperate rearguard actions most of the way. The senior cadre of these survivors contained notable personalities such as Yorck, Scharnhorst and von Müffling. Several of the fighting rearguard engagements between Jena and November 4th were masterfully handled by the Prussians against vastly superior forces. The list of French commanders who wanted to be in at the kill reads like a Who's who? of the First Empire. Ney, Lasalle, Lannes, Murat, Soult, Gerard and Grouchy all played a greater or lesser part but the chief protagonist was Bernadotte.

We join the action at the end game. Blücher has been harried and herded toward the Hanseatic free city of Lübeck on the Trave river near the border with Denmark. Although initially seeking only resupply from the senate of the non aligned city, the Old Hussar quickly revised his plan and more or less told the denizens of Lübeck that the enemy were right on his heels and he was going to use their beautiful burg as the bastion in which he would make his last stand. The Prussians utilised the existing formidable but neglected defence works and put up a stout fight. The French, fired with the prospect of total annihilation of the Prussian Army were unstoppable and stormed through the defences and into the city. Soon it was all over and surrender

negotiated. Right till the end the Old Warhorse insisted that if bread and powder had been available he would have fought on. At the time this may have seemed like face saving rhetoric but his performance between 1813 and June 18th 1815 suggests that the Lübeck speech was highly likely to be more than just empty words.

The scenario itself does not seek to recreate the entire final stand of Blücher's two reduced corps but to represent a portion of this action with some interesting and exciting aspects and terrain features. The focus is Bernadotte's attack on Lübeck's northern gate known as the Burgthor which is positioned behind a narrow strip of land between the Trave and Wakenitz rivers. The French greatly outnumber the Prussians but arrive on the table and deploy straight into action. They are racing against time and have four key 'built up area' objectives to storm. One is on the far side of the Trave river and can only be reached by boat. The Prussians will have an interesting game and can win even if troop losses are high and some objectives fall to the enemy.

French briefing

for Marshal Jean Baptiste Bernadotte

You and many others have been chasing these Prussian rabbits across this northern plain for three weeks. At last there is nowhere left for them to run. Their backs are to the sea, their shoe leather is worn done and their muskets are empty. They are a hungry, ill disciplined and beaten rabble who must be swept up in a dust pan and dumped in the cold waters of the Trave River. Storm the city and give no quarter to the enemy.

Prussian briefing

for the Duke of Brunswick Oels

There can be no more retreating. The French have surrounded Lübeck and any chance of moving further south or west to cross the Elbe has gone. You must fight and die where you stand. Your men are hungry, cold and exhausted. They have been marching and fighting with the ravenous French wolves snapping at heels for nearly three weeks and many, many leagues. There are no reinforcements, there is no escape and there is no hope other than to die gloriously and kill Frenchmen in such numbers that they will never forget Lübeck!

Victory conditions

A total victory is achieved if the French capture ALL of the built up areas: Gertrüden Kirchhof, Bellevue bastion, Semi circular bastion and Burgthor-Lübeck. Taking 3 objectives is a draw and 2 or less is a defeat for Bernadotte and a Prussian victory.

Game length and table size

The game lasts for 12 turns. This represents a four hour period. The action on the 6th November began around 0800 and the city was in the hands of the French by early afternoon. I recommend this game be played lengthways on an 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. This is a relatively small game and so the Commander in Chief for each side should be treated as a Corps Commander. This

means that the maximum number of additional MPs that can be contributed based on his ability level is 2.

The French are under 44 years old Marshal Jean Baptiste Bernadotte. Bernadotte was a highly competent and experienced soldier and controversy usually surrounds his politics and scheming not his military ability. He can be rated no worse than Competent when setting his commander ability level and this can be taken as a measure of how he is feeling about his relationship with Napoleon and not a reflection on his military prowess!

Overall command of the Prussians lies with the 64 year old Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher. He is not a tactical genius but for the purposes of this scenario and the desperate circumstances in which the Prussians find themselves he can be rated as Inspirational. The command effect of this rating is not precisely as laid down in the rules because Blücher's part in the scenario is a little unusual!

Blücher's arrival is dealt with separately. He is not present as the game commences. The Prussians are initially commanded by the Duke of Brunswick Oels. He should use the *Commander Ability Rating* table in the rules but can be no better than Skilful. The brigade quality of each formation should be determined using the mechanisms from the *Command* chapter of the rules.

Prussian Order of Battle and Manoeuvre points

The Prussian force is all on the table and in position as the game begins. Most Prussian units are under strength and the force is extremely fragmented. All of the artillery is immobile and must stay in place until it is over run or the game ends. The detachments and garrisons may ignore the conditions applied to being supported and act independently. Single unit actions govern their use if MPs are available. Units in the two smallish brigades; one in front of the Semi circular bastion the other with the baggage train can count as supported as long as the other unit of their brigade meets the criteria for providing support. To calculate Manoeuvre Points (MPs) each of these brigades provide a DAv until only a single unit in each is under half strength and still in play. At that point the brigade loses its DAv. No matter how depleted the Prussian command becomes they will always be allowed at least 1DAv for MPs per turn plus the additional points created by the Duke of Brunswick Oels or Blücher. No MPs need be expended on maintaining the DEFEND orders of garrisons or detachments. Before the game starts Brunswick Oels and the brigadiers can be placed wherever the Prussian player chooses.

Commander in Chief: **General Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher.**

Initially in command: **The Duke of Brunswick Oels**

Garrison of Gertrüden kirchhof

Fusilier battalion: D-E (20 models)

In the woods north of Gertrüden kirchhof

Jäger detachment: D-E (12 models)

West bank of Trave river

Brigadier + infantry battalion: D (20 models), 1 x battalion gun D

Bellevue bastion

2 x 6pdr guns + infantry detachment D (8 models)

Lübeck

Infantry garrison D (32 models) + 1 x 6pdr gun

Semi circular bastion

4 x 6pdr guns + infantry detachment D (16 models)

Open ground north of Semi circular bastion

Brigadier + 2 infantry battalions D (each of 20 models)

Huxtertor spur

2 x battalion guns D

Baggage column

Brigadier + 2 infantry battalions D (each 16 models), Hussar regiment V-E (16 models), 4 supply wagons. The wagons move at the speed of limbered foot artillery.

Prussian initial orders

All troops with the exception of the baggage column have DEFEND orders. The Baggage train has MOVE orders although the hussars accompanying it begin the game facing north and may charge by paying for a single unit action without the Baggage train and its battalions changing orders. This is not normal in the rules but a scenario special condition.

Baggage Train

For each wagon that reaches the Burgthor the Prussians receive an extra round of ammunition for all of their guns still in operation.

Boats

These boats were actually commandeered from Swedish troops who the French took prisoner further along the Trave river. The French did use them during the battle so are positioned on the east bank. Each model represents a small flotilla and can carry up to 18 models. The French must give a FORM order as a single unit action to a battalion which wishes to embark. This takes a turn. On any turn they remain sailing they throw 2 x D6 and move this number of inches. To disembark also needs a FORM order and the unit is considered to finish in whatever formation the French player desires. The boats will be required if the Bellevue bastion is to be captured as both the Trave and Wakenitz rivers are unfordable. Boats are susceptible to artillery fire and any boat can be sunk if it takes 5 hits. All passengers are lost if this happens. If the Prussian player fires artillery at boats, ignore casualties to passengers and tally hits against the boats themselves. There are no special modifiers for the boats as targets and they are not treated as 'Dense' targets. Musketry fire on the boats is taken against the passengers. For morale purposes the passengers are treated as 'Unsupported' but not 'Disordered'.

Artillery ammunition and battery refit

The French dice for ammunition as per normal as the game begins. The Prussians are limited to 5 rounds per gun or battery. This can only increase if they safely escort the baggage wagons to Lübeck. Battery refitting is applied as per normal however the Prussian guns need not limber up and withdraw from their current positions and remain static until refitted.

Line of sight

Troops in the Bellevue bastion and on the walls of Lübeck and the Burgthor can see over the Semi circular bastion and therefore fire at targets within range.

The Blücher effect

Blücher was fairly confident that the strong Burgthor position would hold and so left its supervision to Brunswick Oels and General-Major Natzmer. He spent much of the battle in the city itself giving orders and monitoring the situation. He actually escaped in true Blücher style at the head of a small group of cuirassiers who fought their way to freedom in a charge down the chaos laden streets and out of the Holstein gate to the west. In this scenario the Prussians throw a D6 at the start of their phase every turn. If they score an odd number the great man has been visible amongst the troops in the Burgthor sector. Any *Resolve Checks* necessary this turn see the checking unit classed as one quality level higher than normal. For example *Drilled* become *Veteran*. This effect does not extend to shooting or close combat. The Prussians may also throw a further DAV and add that number of MPs to this turns score. This will make the Prussians unpredictable and capable of some little strokes of genius when the Old Hussar is around!

French Order of Battle

Commander in Chief: **Marechal Jean Baptiste Bernadotte** (Corps commander vignette)

2nd Infantry Division (*General de Division Drouet*): Divisional General vignette
27th Light Infantry Regiment brigadier + 2 battalions V- E, D- E (each of 30 models)
95th Line Infantry Regiment brigadier + 3 battalions V, D, D (each 30 models)

Light Cavalry Brigade

Brigadier + 4th Hussars V- E (24 models)

In a slight departure from the normal conditions of *Republic to Empire* the infantry division is split into three regimental sized brigades. The light cavalry brigade has only 1 regiment on the table at the beginning of the game but receives its DAV for MPs. This means the French will start the game throwing 3 DAV for Movement Points (MPs). There will be a supplement from Bernadotte if his rating is higher than Competent. All of this will make them fast and manoeuvrable – just what they need!

French Deployment & Turn 1 Initiative

The start positions of the on table French units are shown on the accompanying map. All are in column of companies and have MOVE orders. Bernadotte, Drouet and the brigadiers can be placed where desired. The Prussians have the Initiative on Turn 1 and are allowed to move BEFORE the French troops are placed on table for their phase of Turn 1.

Reinforcements.

Detail of French reinforcements should not be shown to the Prussian player. The scenario will have added edge if certain details remain hidden. Reinforcements will arrive on turns 2, 4, 5 and 8. Throw a D4 or D8 to select the composition of the reinforcement from the list later in the article.

Arrival location of reinforcements

Reinforcements can arrive at Points A, B, or C. When a unit arrives throw a D3. On a score of 1 it is point A, 2 it is point B and 3 it is point C. All reinforcements 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. As troops appear, cross them from the list of available reinforcements as each will arrive only once. The French will receive one extra brigade MP dice when the 95th Line arrive. The gun batteries do not provide extra dice nor do the Hussars. These may take double MPs to move when they do arrive as their brigade comrades and brigadier may be out of command distance.

FRENCH Reinforcements

- 1. (2nd Infantry Division):** Brigadier + 95th Line Infantry Regiment 2 battalions V, D
- 2. (Light Cavalry Brigade):** 2nd Hussars V (24 models)
- 3. Foot artillery battery:** 3 x 8pdr + 1 howitzer D
- 4. Horse artillery battery:** 3 x 6pdr D-E

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.

Built up Areas

Gertrüden Kirchhof is classed as a 2C built up area. The portion of Lübeck around the Burgthor is a 3C. The Bellevue bastion is 1C and the Semi circular bastion is a 2B. This is relevant for garrison size, assaults and bombardment. If you are using other rules The Gertrüden Kirchhof is a large stone church with a curtain wall, Bellevue is a small stone bastion, Lübeck is a walled town and the Semi circular bastion is a low stone and timber field fortification.

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. One of your batteries 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. If you have more than one battery dice to identify the relevant unit.

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. An up and coming staff officer makes some astute observations which allows you to issue even more intelligent orders! Add 3 MPs to your total for this turn only.

Note on the scenario

Although there are not a huge number of troops in this scenario it is very busy with a lot going on. It has all of the usual troop types plus, wagons, boats, fortifications and a charismatic commander. It could be adapted for the Peninsular without any trouble at all.

***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 apply a simple but effective adaptation to the Manoeuvre Points (MP) system which makes a smaller engagement 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