

# TACTICS IN THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

## FROM OPENING SHOTS TO THE BATTLE OF SEDAN

By Mike Johnson

### INTRODUCTION

Although an increasing number of books are coming forward regarding the campaigns and battles of the Franco-Prussian War, and there are now some excellent sets of rules covering this fascinating conflict, whose authors clearly have an insight into this period, I find that neither source of information seems to deal concisely with tactics used and formations adopted by both sides.

In my opinion this is why the period, although enjoying popularity a few years ago fuelled by the release of some astounding ranges of figures notably in 15 and 25mm (and now in 10mm), has never really broken into the Nineteenth Century Period's "big league" which is dominated by Napoleonic and ACW. All the other ingredients are there – spectacular uniforms, battles with moments of drama and pivotal tension, and weapons of daunting lethality. Without an understanding of tactics and formations those lovingly painted armies are all dressed up with nowhere to go, and left to languish on the shelf or edge ever nearer to the "For Sale" column of this magazine. In these articles I hope to change all that!

Suffice it to say that researched rules will reflect the developments in weapon technology in this period, the salient ones of which can be summarised as follows:

1. The French Chassepot rifle in the main outranged those of their German counterparts.
2. The German Krupps artillery outranged and was more effective than French artillery, mainly due to the "shell" rounds being fitted with percussion fuses, leading to explosion on impact at all ranges.

## PART 1: FRENCH TACTICAL DOCTRINE

### 1. INFANTRY TACTICS

Until 1869 French infantry tactics had been steeped in the value of offensive action, relying heavily on French élan and the irresistible momentum of the bayonet charge – tactics which came to be known as "*furia francese*" (French Fury). These were the tactics which had been adopted in the Crimea and more recently in Austria and Italy. Referring to Diagram A1, an attack would commence with a probe by a thin screen of skirmishers (typically Chasseurs à Pied if they were available, if not Zouaves or Tirailleurs Algériens – the dreaded Turcos) designed to draw fire on themselves and protect the massed formations moving up behind them. These skirmishers were to thin out the enemy ranks, and were certainly not to become bogged down in long range firing. Forward motion was all. Behind them the battalions would be advancing deployed, where the ground permitted, alternately in line and in column. When the columns were within charging distance (see Diagram A2) the skirmish line would part like a curtain, allowing the columns to charge forward, supported by the volleys of their comrades in line who would then advance generally to consolidate the gained ground. The columns, bayonets fixed and sometimes in echelon, would sweep all before them. The tactic was not universally successful, but was ideally suited to the French temperament.

Another hallmark of French tactical doctrine prior to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War was flexibility. If the

3. French "shell" was only effective at certain pre-set ranges.
4. The French Mitraillease was not as lethal as expected due to the scarcity of men trained to operate and service the weapon and its very narrow cone of fire.

I would also like to make a few points on the diagrams which you will find in these articles:

1. The diagrams mainly depict infantry formations. I have not "cluttered them up" with cavalry and too many artillery units as the role of these latter arms is best explained in the text as a supplement to the diagrams.
2. The essential infantry fighting unit on both sides was the battalion. In reality many more battalions would participate in the engagement than the diagrams would suggest, but as wargaming is all about recreating history in miniature – in organisational as well as visual scale – by deploying your 15mm or 25mm battalions as depicted in the diagrams you will capture the "feel" of these desperate battles in the Imperial phase of the war. If you fight in 6 or 2mm (ye gods!) you can pour in more battalions, but still follow the battalion level tactics.

You will see that in the text and in the diagrams, I refer to "Prussia" and "Prussians". This is because the war is popularly known (in this country at least) as the Franco-Prussian War. In fact, as a quick perusal of any Order of Battle will show, a considerable number of troops from Prussia's German Allies (for example Bavaria) fought alongside the Prussians and their organisation chiefly followed by the Prussian pattern. So, for Prussia, read "Prussia and her German Allies".

Enough of the preliminaries, to battle . . .

circumstances of battle did not warrant a "*furia francese*" style of attack, then other tactics would be implemented as the Commander thought fit, ideally to create the circumstances where such an attack would meet with success. In short, dynamism and versatility.

And then came the 1869 Drillbook. In 1867 (in the light of Prussia's crushing defeat of Austria in a mere 6 weeks the year before) Committees were established by Napoleon III to re-evaluate the tactics of "*furia francese*". They had to examine just how successful such tactics would be when pitted against a modern (and recently victorious) army equipped with breech-loading artillery and breech-loading rifles. The reports of these Committees were not unanimous in their recommendations. Although the tactics of "*furia francese*" still enjoyed much support (especially in the rank and file and junior NCO's of France's Imperial army, as well as among those in high command) there was a movement towards adopting a more defensive posture. It has to be said that the result of all the reports, counter-reports and observations was inconclusive. It was not until 1869 that a new infantry Drillbook appeared. It was the worst of all worlds, neither reinstating the tactics of "*furia francese*", nor comprehensively adopting the new defensive tactics. In hindsight, just when France needed a clear statement of tactical doctrine, there was confusion. The damage was done, and France went to war with her confidence in the bayonet charge severely shaken.

The opening engagement of the War – the French attack at



Fig. "A1": Furia Francese

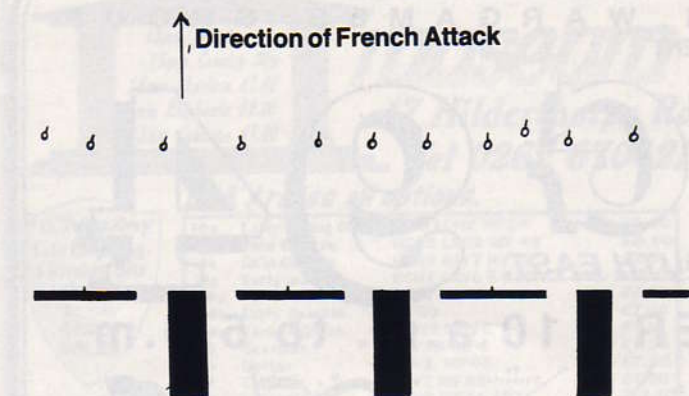
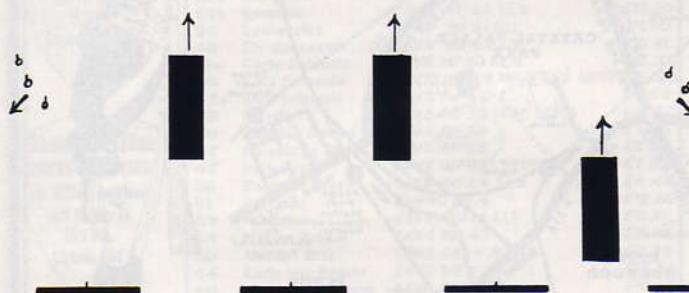


Fig. "A2": Furia Francese



Saarbrücken – saw the French using the favoured “*furia francese*” tactics, but frankly as the French attacked in such overwhelming numbers, almost any tactical formation would still have resulted in a French victory. However, the subsequent battles of those fateful days of August 1870 and the Battle of Sedan at the beginning of September bore witness to the fact that the defensive tactics had become prominent in French military thinking, and had become “the official line”.

So let us take a closer look at these defensive tactics. They stressed the desirability of solid defensive positions giving a good field of fire for the French Chassepot rifles. Such “*positions magnifiques*” typically comprised ridges, hills and prominent spurs, upon the top and facing slopes of which the French infantry would be less densely deployed than before, lying prone in line formation. Where time allowed, shelter trenches (merely “scrapes”) and other rudimentary earthworks were prepared. Villages and walled farms were swiftly transformed into loop-holed bastions to form strongholds in the line of defence. Woods and vineyards too would be defended. As can be seen from Diagram B1, behind this solid line and on the reverse slope the reserves would be formed up in close column. However, in front of this seemingly impregnable line would be swarms of skirmishers (again, Chasseurs à Pied, Zouaves and Turcos, but in greater numbers than the “*furia francese*” tactics) using cover wherever possible and picking off enemy gunners and infantry. The whole idea was that the enemy would break itself by attempting to storm such a position, and would then (see Diagram B2) be driven off by a counter-attack comprised of open order formations screened by skirmishers or, if the enemy were sufficiently demoralised, by deep columns (as Diagram B2 shows). To the detriment of the French, in practice such counter-attacks were too localised and too frontal for their success to be sustained and developed, as there appears to have been little will left in those in high command to launch flank or general counter-attacks, or for neighbouring friendly forces to abandon their own “*positions magnifiques*” and march to the sound of the guns.

In summary, apart from their opening gambit at Saarbrücken,



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en, where time allowed the French infantry adopted the defensive tactics (notably at Spicheren and Froeschwiller), though when hard-pressed they simply had to cope with the

Fig. "B1": French "Defensive"

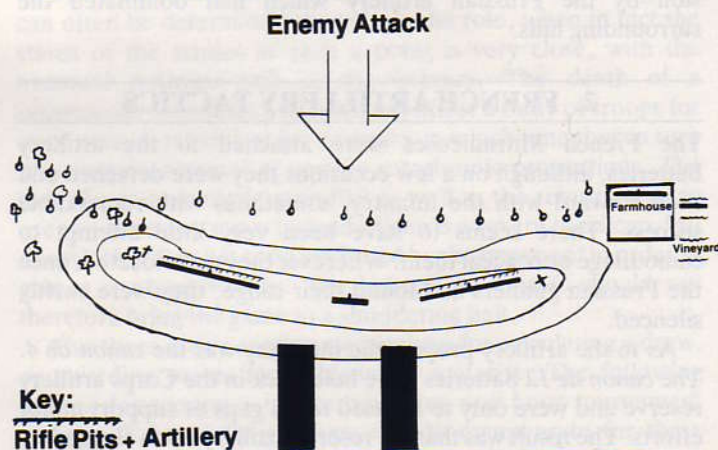
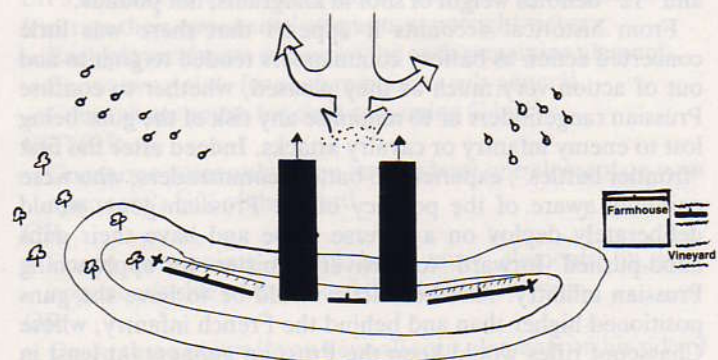


Fig. "B2": French "Defensive"





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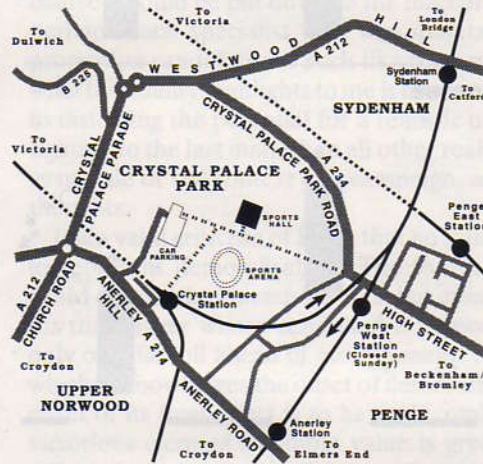
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position as it presented itself. The battle of Sedan is a stunning example, as the French amongst orders, counter-orders and the resultant disorder, held on for as long as possible, partially relieved by localised counter-attacks, until pelted into submission by the Prussian artillery which had dominated the surrounding hills.

## 2. FRENCH ARTILLERY TACTICS

The French Mitrailleuses were attached to the artillery batteries, although on a few occasions they were detached and used forward with the infantry, sometimes with remarkable success. There seems to have been very little attempt to camouflage or conceal them. Wherever they were located, once the Prussian gunners had found their range, they were swiftly silenced.

As to the artillery proper, the mainstay was the *canon de 4*. The *canon de 12* batteries were held back in the Corps artillery reserve and were only to be used to fill gaps or support major efforts. The result was that the reserve artillery often clogged up the roads to the rear, and arrived on the scene too late – if at all – to play any influential role. Incidentally, the reference to “4” and “12” denotes weight of shot in kilograms, not pounds.

From historical accounts it appears that there was little concerted action as battery commanders tended to go into and out of action very much as they pleased, whether to confuse Prussian rangefinders or to minimise any risk of the guns being lost to enemy infantry or cavalry attacks. Indeed after the first “frontier battles”, experienced battery commanders, who were painfully aware of the potency of the Prussian guns, would deliberately deploy on a reverse slope and have their guns hand-pushed forward to deliver canister to approaching Prussian infantry. Another tactic would be to have the guns positioned higher than and behind the French infantry, whose Chassepot rifles would keep the Prussian gunners (at least in

theory) at a respectful distance. In this way the French infantry would still enjoy artillery support, thereby bolstering their morale.

A point which should not be missed was that the French artillery had to limber up and withdraw to the rear lines (usually becoming increasingly congested) in order to be resupplied.

It was made absolutely clear to battery commanders that their prime target was the enemy infantry. Counter-battery fire was only to take place to support French infantry attacks, or if the battery commander was aware that the enemy battery in question was beginning to break his immediate infantry support. It is readily apparent that the burden of silencing the enemy artillery was to fall on the French infantry and skirmishers.

## 3. FRENCH CAVALRY TACTICS

In a word, French cavalry reconnaissance was appalling. The tendency was for reconnaissance to be undertaken by a combined arms force (say a squadron or two of cavalry, a battalion of Turcos or Chasseurs à Pied and a troop of artillery) which had the effect of restricting its movement to the roads, and reducing its speed and range.

On the actual battlefield, the cavalry brigades were often placed under an infantry commander.

Again and again in the early battles, they were formed up in close order, and used for shock action in desperate counter-attacks even against unshaken infantry and over unreconnoitred ground. These magnificent regiments were almost invariably cut to pieces by the hail of artillery fire and small arms fire into which they rushed headlong, and were then driven off by fresh Prussian cavalry. It seems that there was never any realistic prospect of their heroism and sacrifice buying victory, rather they bought time for hard-pressed French infantry to fall back and re-group.



# TACTICS IN THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

## FROM OPENING SHOTS TO THE BATTLE OF SEDAN

### PART 2: PRUSSIAN TACTICAL DOCTRINE

By Mike Johnson

(As mentioned before in these articles, the States allied to Prussia would have closely followed the Prussian system, either through similarities in training or through being subordinated to Prussian command.)

#### 1. INFANTRY TACTICS

Prussian infantry, supported by their artillery, were used aggressively, at times recklessly. Their main function was attack.

Due to their numerical superiority in most of the initial battles, and to their superior command and control, they would pin the enemy frontally whilst expanding either or both of their own flanks in order to find the extremities of the enemy's flank. That flank would then be pounded mercilessly by their artillery before the Prussian infantry was sent in. These simple principles were not always followed – most notably in the case of the attack by the Prussian Guard at St. Privat, to which I will refer again at the end of this section.

In diagrams C1 and C2 I have attempted to show the gradual build-up of Prussian forces prior to the attack. It will be seen that the Prussians would first send out a screen of skirmishers (Jaeger, Schutzen or Fusilier battalions), behind which the main force would be moving forward in line formation, in close order. The battalions on the extreme flanks would be moving outwards, with the skirmisher screen extending in front of them, whilst the reserves would be following up behind, initially in column formation and then changing to line to occupy the "gap" created in the centre by the outward movement of the flanks. In diagram C1, one of the reserve battalions has remained in column as it has received orders that it will soon be required other than at the centre! Accordingly, the picture emerges of the main tactic being a series of infantry battalions in line, with skirmishers to the front, and a relatively weak reserve behind.

In diagram C2, the French right flank has been found, and already the Prussian infantry is beginning to envelope it. The reserve battalion has been rapidly moved in column to support the impending attack. The remainder of the Prussian force would occupy the French to their front, either by spirited infantry attacks in their own right, or by small arms fire from the skirmishers or the lines behind, in both cases supported by a deluge of Prussian artillery fire.

These formations would readily adapt to the defence, say in the face of a French counter-attack. The skirmishers would be pulled in to allow the Prussian battalions in line to paralyse the French attack by volley fire, whilst the furthestmost Prussian battalions would move in on the flanks of the French thrust.

Diagrams C3 and C4 illustrate the *coup de grace*, the Prussian assault on the French right flank. For those of us who have a limited size table, or only say an hour or two available before being called off to other duties, the tabletop encounter may well commence at this point.

In Diagrams C3 and C4, preceded and then accompanied by an artillery barrage on the French lines, the skirmish screen moves forward with the main attacking battalions behind (see Diagram C3). These battalions would either remain in close order line or, if the French were judged to be sufficiently broken, would advance in column. There is some confusion as to how these columns were constituted. Depending on the

Fig. "C1": Prussian Positional Stage 1

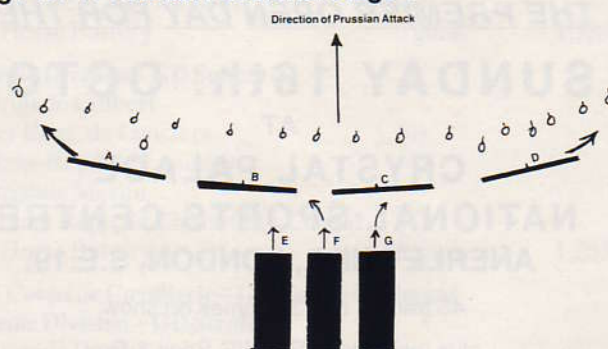


Fig. "C2": Prussian Positional Stage 2

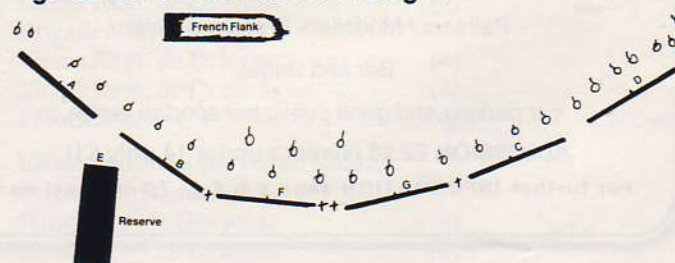


Fig. "C3": Prussian Attack Stage 1

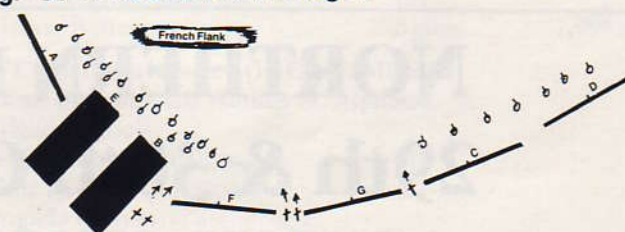


Fig. "C4": Prussian Attack



circumstances, in particular the degree of resistance being offered by the French, the columns would be of full battalion strength (4 companies), half battalion strength or a series of company strength (about 250 men) columns, the latter being referred to in various accounts as company columns. Flexibility is the key. If there was a considerable amount of French artillery and rifle fire to contend with, then the Prussian commander may have opted for any particular battalion to attack by say 2 companies in separate single company columns, with the remaining 2 companies of the battalion thrown forward in skirmish order. This would increase his mobility and lessen the size of the target they presented to any enemy with sufficient energy left to resist. On the other hand, the impact of each column of only 250 men was far less than a column made up of the entire battalion (1000 men).



In Diagram C4, the French flank begins to disintegrate and the Prussian attack goes in. First the skirmishers withdraw, to allow the main punch to be delivered, in this case by two battalions in column and one in line. In practice, pockets of enemy resistance would often force attacking Prussian columns to break down; they would then be urged to move forward in open order and using cover where available. Prussian weight of numbers would normally ensure that the momentum of the attack was maintained. As the French flank breaks under the onslaught, the rest of the Prussian front in that sector moves forward and the process of rolling up the French line begins.

And what of the Prussian Guard at St. Privat? Due to the impatience of their commander, they were ordered to attack the village of that name, across open ground with a slight uphill gradient, in close order line (some formations were initially in half-battalion columns, but changed to close order line as the attack progressed), but without any significant skirmisher screen and, most importantly of all, without preliminary artillery bombardment of the enemy, who were essentially in hard cover in the village. The French Chassepot rifles cut them to ribbons. The Prussian attack faltered and they were pinned down and were only able to resume their attack once the belated artillery bombardment had done its work on the French lines and once the French were in danger of being totally outflanked by an attack, in this case by Saxons, coming in from the far side of the village.

## 2. PRUSSIAN ARTILLERY TACTICS

There is absolutely no doubt at all that the Prussians used their artillery as an infantry support weapon. It was always deployed as rapidly as possible and pushed well forward with the main infantry line.

Whether in attack or defence, its first priority would normally be to silence enemy batteries and Mitrailleuse positions. It would then pound the enemy infantry.

Unlike their French counterparts, Prussian batteries would invariably be grouped together and would act in concert.

It is worth noting that the resupply caissons came up close to the batteries to replenish their ammunition, thereby ensuring continuity of fire – there was no need for the batteries to retire to the rear for that purpose.

Furthermore, if batteries were to limber up to move closer to the enemy lines, it was usual for say half of the batteries to move, with the remainder maintaining their fire. Once the first batteries were in their new position and firing, the remainder would follow.

The Prussians recognised very early on that the power of their artillery was needed to counter the fire superiority of French infantry. When that power was not used, the Prussian infantry suffered heavily – as the Prussian Guard found to its cost at St. Privat.

## 3. PRUSSIAN CAVALRY TACTICS

It has to be said that Prussian cavalry was occasionally used in bold and aggressive reconnaissance patrols, but the practice was not widespread, and often the opposing armies would be only a short distance apart, without knowing.

Similarly, there appears to have been a limited use of cavalry for what should have been a relentless pursuit of a beaten foe. Notably after Froeschwiller, MacMahon's mauled army was allowed to slip away and the Prussians actually lost track of it.

As with the French cavalry, the main preserve of the cavalry was shock action, involving massed cavalry charging boot to boot in line formation. Von Bredow's "Death Ride", involving Prussian Cuirassiers and Lancers, was a successful (if costly)

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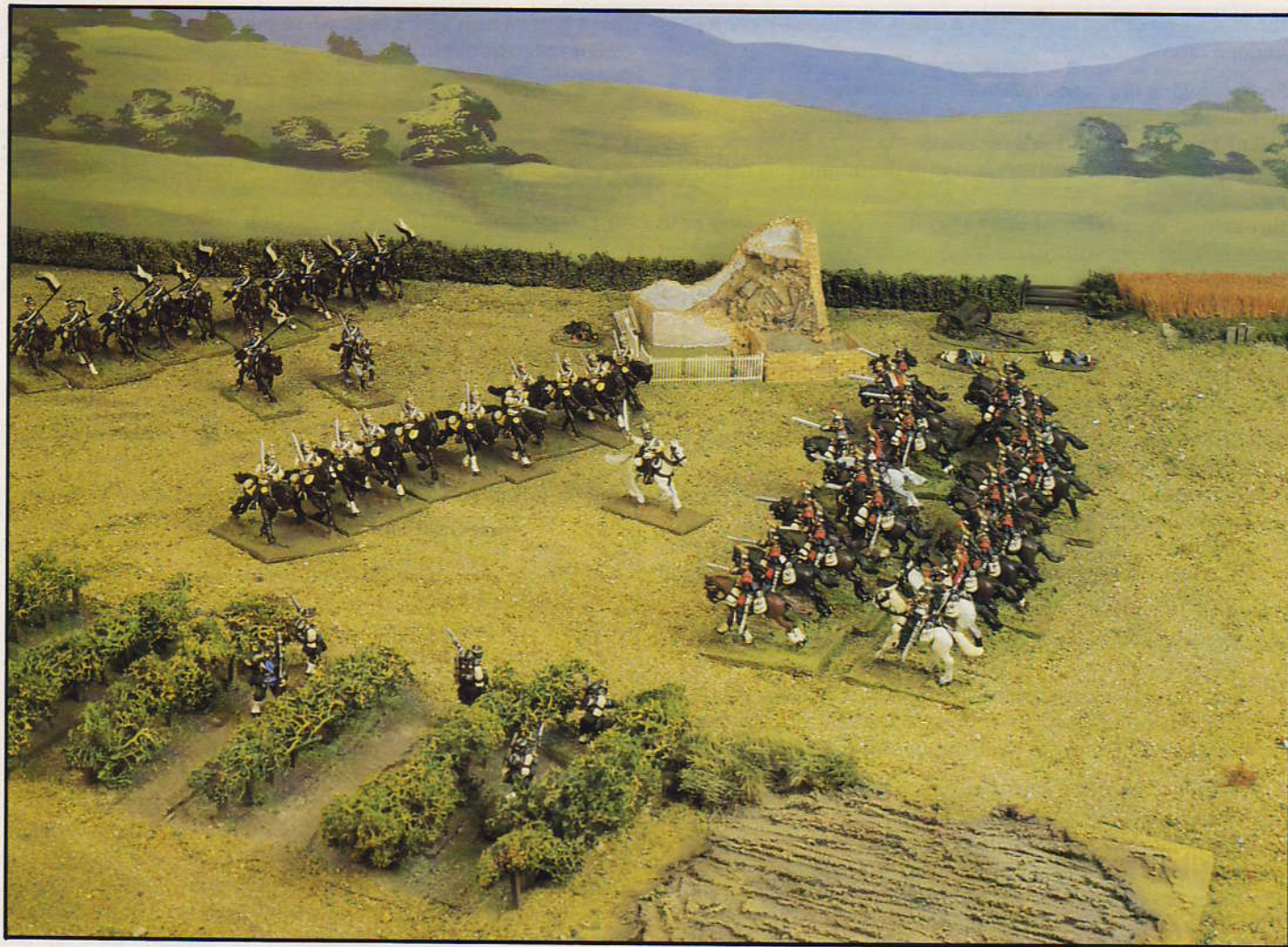
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charge breaking the French gun line, principally due to its use of the lie of the land, circumventing woods and using undulations to block the French line of sight. Without these factors the charge would undoubtedly have failed at even more severe cost.





# TACTICS IN THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

## FROM OPENING SHOTS TO THE BATTLE OF SEDAN

### PART 3: FROM REALITY TO RULES

By Mike Johnson

In this article, I wish to highlight some of the salient points raised in the previous articles and make some suggestions as to how they may be reflected in your rules.

I am assuming that you will already have access to at least one of the half dozen or so rulebooks for this period, which will amply cover formations, firepower, morale and command. So what follows is in fact an additional layer of optional rules and "tips" to give additional flavour to your battles, faithful to the tactics actually employed.

For my part I use *They Died For Glory* rules (TDFG) adapted for use with 25mm figures so that the ground scale is doubled up to 1" to 25 yards.

#### 1. The Skirmish Screen

Whether French or Prussian, use light infantry (Chasseurs, Zouaves, Turco's, Jaeger, Schutzen) for the role which they were designed to play. They were designed to probe, to be an irritant, to shield the forces moving up behind them and to draw fire away from those forces. In an attack, or counter-attack, at the optimum moment they were to part like a curtain, to "evaporate", to allow the forces behind them to move forward to fulfil the attack. Timing is all. In particular, the entire attack will become dislocated if those skirmishers are pinned down for too long (the forces behind will simply halt, or move into

skirmish formation themselves to move through the pinned skirmisher screen) or if their morale breaks and they disperse (leaving for example dense columns behind to the mercy – or lack of it – of enemy massed rifle fire). In defence, skirmishers should again be used as a screen to protect the forces positioned behind, to snipe at enemy gunners, to break up attacking formations.

#### 2. French Inertia

Your rules should reflect the reluctance of French Guard units, and any French infantry units which are entrenched or occupy a ridge or hilltop, to **move** from their present position to assist any friendly unit in trouble. I suggest that they will only make such a move if a 1 or a 2 on a D6 is thrown. Throw per relevant unit per move.

#### 3. Artillery In Support

Add +1 to an infantry unit's morale if friendly artillery is **FIRING** within earshot that move. Earshot? I suggest within 200 yards (8", at 1" to 25 yards) to the rear or on either flank.

#### 4. Mitraillease In Support

Add +1 to French infantry units' morale if French Mitraillease batteries are **FIRING** within earshot that move. Earshot for Mitraillease? I suggest within 150 yards (6", at 1" to 25 yards) to



the rear or on either flank. This is in addition to any increment under 3. above.

### 5. Positioning of French Mitrailleur Batteries

Before battle commences roll a D6 per Mitrailleur battery. A roll of 1 means that the battery can be placed as an independent battery, for example well forward with the infantry. A roll of 2-6 means that it must be assigned to a specific artillery battery throughout the game and will be positioned and will move with it at all times, and furthermore must fire on the same target unless prevented by reason of range.

### 6. Firing French Artillery and Mitrailleur Batteries

As mentioned, the priority target was infantry, and there had to be a compelling reason for batteries to act in concert and aim at the same target. Accordingly:

#### 6.1 Where the intended target is enemy artillery batteries, this will only be permitted:

- to support French infantry or artillery attacks on the target battery; OR
- if the target battery is causing morale checks to infantry or cavalry within 200 yards (8" at 1" to 25 yards) to the front or on a flank.

#### 6.2 Where the intended target is enemy cavalry, this will only be permitted:

- if the cavalry is actually threatening that battery; OR
- if the cavalry is threatening a friendly unit within 200 yards (8" as above) to the front or on a flank.

#### 6.3 Where 2 or more batteries are required to fire on same target, this is always REQUIRED in the case of a Mitrailleur battery (subject to range) which is wishing to fire on the same target as the artillery battery to which it has been assigned. In the case of separate artillery batteries or an independent Mitrailleur battery wishing to fire on the same target, this is only permitted:

- if the target unit threatens both batteries; OR
- to support French infantry or cavalry attacks on the target unit; OR
- a roll of 6 on a D6 (to reflect coincidence!) AND IN ALL CASES:
- the relevant tests in 6.1 and 6.2 are satisfied.

### 7. Firing Prussian Artillery

There are NO RESTRICTIONS on the type of target or on a number of batteries selecting the same target. As a matter of practice, to ensure survival and to maintain the upper hand, Prussian gunners usually silenced the enemy artillery and Mitrailleur batteries first, and then turned on the enemy infantry (or cavalry if it presented itself).

### 8. Resupplying Artillery and Mitrailleurs

- 8.1 French artillery and Mitrailleur batteries must limber up, withdraw off-table and remain off-table for a full move to resupply.
- 8.2 Prussian artillery batteries must limber up and withdraw one move only. It then takes a full move to be resupplied.
- 8.3 Whilst batteries are being resupplied they cannot fire, and once resupplied remember that they are limbered up.

### 9. The French – Furia Francese or Defensive?

For the opening battles, the general rule should be for the French to fight using the defensive tactics, occupying ridges, hills and farmhouses – and usually outnumbered by 3:2 at least. However, why not add some variety by allowing the army commander or one of the divisional or brigade commanders to go "Furia Francese" (through an excess of cognac and nostalgia!)?

### 10. Prussian Infantry Columns

Whether full battalion, half-battalion or company columns,

these tended only to be used when moving up to the front line out of range or out of sight from the enemy, or in a final assault against poor or broken troops. In TDFG the lowest Prussian infantry unit is a battalion of 20 figures representing 1000 men in the field. However, I would make this rule flexible to allow also for half-battalion columns (10 figures) or company columns (5 figures), with the following rules:

#### 10.1 Half-Battalion Columns:

- minus 1 on first move of melee
- but saving throws for artillery casualties only (a 6 on a D6, throw per casualty).

#### 10.2 Company Columns:

- minus 1 on first move of melee
- but saving throws for artillery casualties (a 5 or a 6 on a D6, throw per casualty) and rifle fire casualties (a 6 on a D6, throw per casualty).

#### 10.3 Whether Half-Battalion or Company Columns are used:

- when in attack the remaining figures of the battalion which are not themselves in column formation must be thrown forward in skirmish order within 12" (300 yards at 1":25 yards) of the front of the columns.
- if company columns are used, there must be a minimum of two per battalion. This prevents the wily Prussian player from putting three-quarters of his line infantry into skirmish formation!

### 11. French or Prussian Columns – when the attack is Halted

Where a column has been pinned (in TDFG this means it has been forced to go prone having received at least 4 casualties that turn from rifle or Mitrailleur fire) then – if it is ordered to resume forward movement – a D6 must be rolled. If the result is lower than the TOTAL number of casualties for that unit (not just the ones received in that turn) the unit can resume forward movement in whichever formation is chosen, whether column or otherwise. If the result is higher, the unit MUST resume the advance in column.

### 12. French or Prussian Cavalry Charges

#### 12.1 Recalling a Charge. Once orders are acted on for cavalry to charge, they cannot easily be recalled. Accordingly the charge will continue until:

- The objective is attained; or
- The cavalry wins the next melee (for example where the cavalry has been counter-charged before it reaches its objective); or
- The cavalry is forced to retire in any event due to failing morale or losing a melee.

#### 12.2 Charging over unreconnoitred ground. Each charge move, roll two D6. In TDFG there are two operations per turn, so if cavalry is charging in both operations then the dice will have to be rolled for each operation. If a double 4, 5 or 6 is thrown your cavalry has problems as it indicates that the ground over which they are charging is seriously pitted, for example with unseen drainage ditches, rabbit warrens and so on. You will now need to roll a further D6 with the following consequences for your cavalry:

**A roll of 1 or 2:** Lose 1 figure as a casualty (in TDFG 1 figure = 50 men)

**A roll of 3 or 4:** Lose 1 figure as a casualty and 1 figure moves at half speed and lags behind

**A roll of 5 or 6:** What happens here depends on whether the charge move is the one which brings your cavalry into contact with the enemy:

If the move in question IS the one which brings your charging cavalry into contact with the enemy, the



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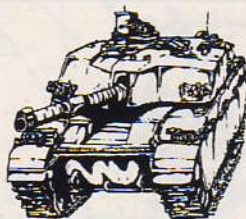
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ditch/rabbit warrens are deemed to be within a few yards of the target unit and will therefore cause maximum disruption. Accordingly, your unit will lose 1 figure as a casualty and 1 figure moves at half speed and lags behind AND 30% of the charging figures making contact suffer -1 in the resultant melee.

If the move in question IS NOT the one which brings your charging cavalry into contact with the enemy, then your cavalry has managed to negotiate the terrain difficulty and there is no effect on its performance.

## CONCLUSION AND SOURCES

I hope these articles prove to be useful and will help to give a framework for your Franco-Prussian battles, and in particular will illustrate the power struggle which was waged between the French Chassepot rifle and the Prussian Krupps breech-loading artillery.

There is no doubt about it, the French have an uphill struggle to beat their more numerous Prussian adversaries, but given good use of terrain and deployment of light infantry the French are well able to keep the Prussian artillery at bay and to stun if not repel the Prussian infantry.

Which brings me on to a wider issue - why we wargame at all. For me the enjoyment is not in actually winning (fairly rare occasions anyway!) but in recreating the style of warfare in miniature and recapturing the "feel" of a Franco-Prussian battle, in recognition of the hardships borne by the soldiers of the day and the *esprit de corps* and *camaraderie* which spring from that common experience.

As to sources, I would just like to pay tribute to three in particular. Firstly, *The Road to Sedan*, a marvellous book published for the Royal Historical Society, the author being

Richard Holmes. Secondly, the writings of Stephen Shann who certainly has a grasp for the period. Thirdly, as an insight for what it meant to the everyday French Line infantryman in this period, *The Debacle* by Emile Zola, an English translation is available in the Penguin Classic series. It is worth reading for the description of the battle of Sedan and the graphic portrayal of the Bavarian attack on Bazeilles.

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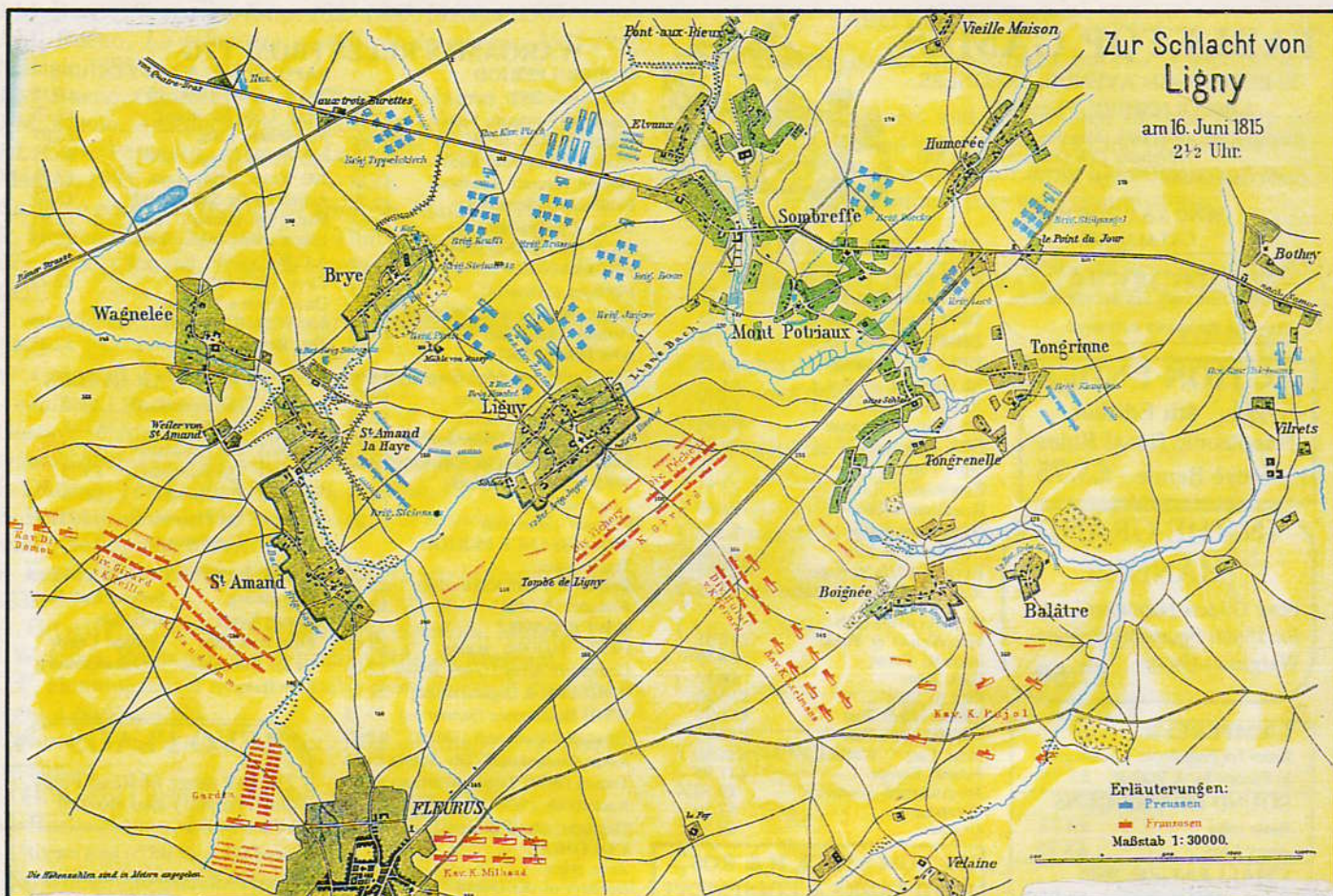
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