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MARSHAL JEAN LANNES IN THE BATTLES OF SAALFELD,
PULTUSK, AND FRIEDLAND, 1806 TO 1807: THE APPLICATION
OF COMBINED ARMS IN THE OPENING BATTLE

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U. S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

ROBERT E. EVERSON, MAJ, USA
B.S. Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, 1981
M.A. Webster University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1992

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1994

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Marshal Jean Lannes in the Battles of Saalfeld, Pultusk, and Friedland, 1806 to 1807: The Application of Combined Arms in the Opening Battle

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The French Army corps during the Napoleonic era was a combined arms organization, designed as a self-sustaining combat unit which could operate independently from the rest of the army. One corps was designated as the advanced guard to the French army's main body and acted as the unit which would make first contact with the enemy's army. This corps developed the situation while other corps would attempt to maneuver to the rear of the enemy force and consequently fight a major battle under Napoleon's control. The advanced guard corps which made first contact, would fight an opening battle which could last many hours until reinforcements arrived. The corps under Marshal Lannes in 1806 to 1807 fought three opening battles. During each battle the corps conducted their security and reconnaissance while moving toward the enemy, seized their initial positions on the impending battlefield and fought as a combined arms organization for the duration of the opening battle. This study shows how each of the branches; artillery, infantry, and cavalry, interacted in the opening battle. This study also reveals how Marshal Lannes established a combined arms advanced guard element within his corps each time he moved the corps as the advanced guard for the French Army. Although this advanced guard element was not a doctrinal organization for the French Army, the elements mission was strikingly similar to the larger corps acting as an advanced guard, but on a reduced scale.

Lannes, Meeting Engagement, Combined Arms, Advanced Guard, Jena Campaign, Friedland Campaign

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The opinion and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

MARSHAL JEAN LANNES IN THE BATTLES OF SAALFELD, PULTUSK, AND FRIEDLAND, 1806 TO 1807: THE APPLICATION OF COMBINED ARMS IN THE OPENING BATTLE by MAJ Robert E. Everson, USA, 150 pages.

The French Army corps during the Napoleonic era was a combined arms organization, designed as a self-sustaining combat unit which could operate independently from the rest of the army. One corps was designated as the advanced guard to the French army's main body and acted as the unit which would make first contact with the enemy's army. This corps developed the situation while other corps would attempt to maneuver to the rear of the enemy force and consequently fight a major battle under Napoleon's control.

The advanced guard corps which made first contact, would fight an opening battle which could last many hours until reinforcements arrived. The corps under Marshal Lannes in 1806 to 1807 fought three opening battles. During each battle the corps conducted their security and reconnaissance while moving towards the enemy, seized their initial positions on the impending battlefield and fought as a combined arms organization for the duration of the opening battle.

This study shows how each of the branches; artillery, infantry, and cavalry, interacted in the opening battle. This study also reveals how Marshal Lannes established a combined arms advanced guard element within his corps each time he moved the corps as the advanced guard for the French Army. Although this advanced guard element was not a doctrinal organization for the French Army, the elements mission was strikingly similar to the larger corps acting as an advanced guard, but on a reduced scale.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The French Army during the Napoleonic Wars accomplished numerous conquests that etched its combat prowess into the lore of military history. The Grand Army was the main body of Napoleon's offensive army and was organized into combined arms corps with interacting infantry, artillery, and cavalry units. Several corps moved along separate routes through an area of operations, but within supporting distances of each other. When one corps made contact with the enemy, it was then Napoleon's decision to give or refuse battle with other available corps. The corps commander in contact was obligated to develop the situation and decide on the best use of the available forces within his corps until reinforcements arrived, the enemy retired, or the corps withdrew. This action was known as the opening battle, fought by the advanced guard.

The primary question of this thesis is, "In what manner and under what circumstances would a corps commander in Napoleon's Army use combined arms tactics in an opening battle during the Jena and Friedland campaigns?" The four secondary questions this thesis will address are: (1) What was French Army doctrine for combined arms operations in an

opening battle during the Napoleonic Wars? (2) How did the corps commander use the different arms of the corps in support of each other in the opening battle? (3) What effect did terrain have on the commander's decisions to deploy his units? (4) Did the methods of employing combined arms evolve during the two campaigns?

There are two major assumptions for this thesis. The first assumption is that analyzing the same corps commander's actions in three separate battles will provide a useful example of combined arms combat during the Napoleonic Wars. The circumstances surrounding each of the battles are different. Some of the major variables are the relative size of enemy force, the dispositions of the forces, and the nationality of enemy. The only major constant among the three battles is Marshal Lannes and a French corps acting as the Grand Army's advanced guard. This means that there are some consistencies in the actions and counteractions to enemy moves and countermoves.

The second assumption is that the actions taken by Lannes in the three opening battles provide a contribution to the studying of the Napoleonic practice in maneuver warfare. The corps *d'armee* was purposely structured as a large combined arms organization and by design fought in a combined arms manner. The combined arms actions of corps in the mature battles have been meticulously documented. There are major differences between the circumstances leading to

the opening battle and the mature battle, consequently, there should exist a difference in the methods applied.

Definitions

There are numerous terms and phrases in this document that require definition.

Advanced Guard. "The security element operating to the front of a moving force."¹

Campaign. A series of related engagements and battles designed to achieve one or more strategic objectives within a given time and space and in a theater of operations.²

Combined Arms. The application and interaction of different arms of an army in a battle, specifically; artillery, cavalry, and infantry.³

Grand Tactics. Commanders moving and maneuvering their forces in large bodies of troops in a number of units, an extension of elementary tactics, also referred to as the science of generals.⁴

Key Terrain. "Any locality or area [where] the seizure, retention, or control of which affords a marked advantage to either combatant."⁵

Mature Battle. The battle that develops from an opening battle, or the arrangements made prior to the mature battle, in which a large part of the main army's forces are involved with the army commanders present.

March Column. Military units on the march, under the control of a single commander and using the same route for movement.⁶

Opening Battle. The first engagement by a part of an army in which either protagonist attempts to set the conditions of subsequent battle through military action, until reinforcements from the rest of the army arrive.

Operation. A military action or the carrying out of a strategic, tactical, training, service, or administrative mission; the process of carrying on combat, including movement, supply, attack, defense, and maneuvers needed to gain the objectives of any battle or campaign.⁷

Strategy. "The art and science of employing the armed forces and other elements of national power during peace, conflict, and war to secure national security objectives."⁸

Tactics. "The method by which commanders of units and higher formations bring their forces from their formations of movement into their fighting formations, and change their disposition or position once they are on the battlefield."⁹

The Mature Battle versus the Opening Battle

This study will analyze in detail the actions and decisions of one corps commander in an advanced guard opening battle. Three examples of the opening battle are compared to determine similarities and differences in the

tactical employment of forces. This study emphasizes the forces at the corps commander's disposal and how he used those forces within a combined arms framework. The enemy's actions and counteractions, as well as terrain and weather effects, are studied to determine the influence on the corps commander's decisions and subsequent actions in the opening battle. An analysis of the corps commander's actions during the three battles will compare any changes or methods that are different over time. A final comparison shows the difference between French Army doctrine and the actual application of combined arms.

The mature battle is the mainstay of Napoleonic warfare; Napoleon sought victory in major, decisive battle. He thought this would force his opponents to negotiate a favorable peace. The mature battle occurred one of two ways: either the mature battle grew out of an opening battle or the two opposing armies established battlelines and then fought a set piece battle. Armies established battlelines usually when they arrived on the battlefield very late in the day and the battle began the next morning. Napoleonic historian David Chandler gives a good description of the mature battle in his book Campaigns of Napoleon.

At the outset, a heavy bombardment would be loosed against the enemy formations, causing fearful losses if they failed to seek shelter, and generally lowering their power of resistance. Under cover of this fire, swarms of Voltigeurs would advance to within musketry range and add a alarming "nuisance" element by sniping at officers and the like. This preliminary phase would be followed by a series of heavy cavalry and infantry

attacks. The secret of these was careful timing and coordination. The first cavalry charges were designed to defeat the hostile cavalry and compel the enemy infantry to form squares rather than to achieve an immediate breakthrough. This task was left to the hurrying infantry columns, which under ideal circumstances would have moved up to close range before the horsemen fell back, and before the enemy could resume his linear formation. Reduced fire from enemy units because of losses and protective formations enabled the French columns to get close without large casualties. If the attack succeeded, the French infantry would blaze a gap in the enemy lines; their accompanying batteries of horse artillery would unlimber and move into action at point blank range, and finally the French cavalry, after reforming, would sweep forward again to exploit the breakthrough.¹⁰

The Napoleonic Wars lasted from 1799 to 1815 and marked a major step in the evolution of modern maneuver warfare. Napoleon Bonaparte was the driving force behind the French Grand Army and directed the Army as the head of state and commanding general in a quest for national strategic objectives. Napoleon understood what was required to achieve those strategic objectives, and early in his career as the Army's commanding general he made minor changes to the army to correspond with his methods of warfighting. The French Army under the *Ancien Regime* was composed of trained combat units, modern equipment, established support organizations, and motivated personnel, that managed to survive the political upheaval of the French Revolution in 1789.¹¹ Napoleon managed to harness the army's spirit of nationalism and developed a standardized system of corps, known as *corps d'armee*, under the command of competent and confident young leaders. The corps was a

self-sustaining organization, structured as a combined arms force.

During the years 1806 to 1807, the Grand Army under Napoleon's leadership conducted two major campaigns through Saxony and Bavaria, and then into Prussia. The Jena Campaign in 1806 sought to defeat the Prussian Army in Germany and to destroy the Prussian's ability to make war. The campaign of 1807 culminated in the battle of Friedland. Napoleon strove to drive the Russians out of East Prussia and to bring the Russian leadership to peace terms. Both campaigns were French victories.

The Marshalate and Jean Lannes

The French corps commander during the Napoleonic Wars was an experienced and proven combat leader. The corps commander in the Grand Army was generally a Marshal of the Empire, the highest rank an officer could attain. From the period 1804 to 1815; twenty-six general officers were given the title of marshal (four appointments were honorary). It must be noted that all promotions above the rank of *general de division* or major general were considered temporary ranks. Theoretically, an individual above the rank of *general de division* could be demoted to his last permanent rank once a crisis was over, but once promoted to marshal, an individual was never actually demoted. The officers selected as marshals and given the command of corps had proven their worthiness as battlefield commanders and were

expected to achieve great victories for the French Army in the future. As a group, the members of the marshalate were courageous, intelligent, and ambitious.

Marshal Jean Lannes was tenth in seniority in the marshalate and was a good example of an officer's rise to that rank. He was born the second son of a modest farmer and was fortunate to receive an education from monks who taught him to read and write. When war broke out in 1792 Lannes, at the age of 23, enlisted in a volunteer battalion. On the day he enlisted, his comrades elected him as a second lieutenant. Within sixteen months of his enlistment, following many combat experiences, Lannes was promoted to colonel. He was noticed by Napoleon as a colonel in command of a combined grenadier brigade in the Italian campaign of 1796. In 1797, Lannes was promoted to *general de brigade* or brigadier general. By the end of 1800, eight years after he enlisted, Lannes was a major general in command of a division. Four years later and with more combat successes to his credit, Napoleon raised Lannes to the marshalate. Though his rise was extremely quick, his situation was not atypical in the French Army at the time.

Marshal Lannes had considerable combat experience throughout his early career that prepared him for later corps command. During the Italian campaign of 1796, Colonel Lannes commanded three battalions of grenadiers in the French Army's advanced guard.¹² The combined grenadiers were organized from Napoleon's orders to act specifically as

the army's advanced guard. Their mission was to move quickly in front of the French Army as it attempted to maneuver onto the rear of the defending Austrian Army.¹³ He successfully continued in the advanced guard until the end of the campaign and for his actions during this campaign he was promoted to *General de Brigade*.¹⁴ During the Egyptian campaign in 1798, General Lannes assumed command of a division under Napoleon. Lannes fought in the battles of El Arish, Jaffa, and Acre, gaining valuable experience in grand tactics.¹⁵ When Napoleon left Egypt for France in August of 1799, Lannes was one of his trusted subordinates who Napoleon decided to take with him.¹⁶

In 1799, one year later, Lannes was given command of a small corps for the Marengo campaign and received the mission as the army's advanced guard for the move through the Alps into northern Italy. Lannes fought through numerous Austrian detachments onto the plains of Piedmont. He engaged the enemy in the first battle of the campaign at a town called Montebello and won a small victory against a larger Austrian force.¹⁷ At the battle of Marengo, Lannes successfully supported the center of the French Army's defense as the Austrian Army attacked. When the French went on the offensive, Lannes was instrumental in the destruction of the Austrians.¹⁸ Later in the Ulm and Austerlitz campaigns in 1805, Lannes commanded the Fifth Corps in the major operational maneuvers and battles.¹⁹

Lannes was an experienced and successful corps commander by the time the Jena campaign began.

Lannes commanded the French Fifth Corps in the Jena campaign and the Reserve Corps in the Friedland Campaign. During these campaigns, both corps received missions within the capabilities of a corps-sized element, and their compositions were not atypical for a French corps of the period. Lannes and his corps were involved in numerous engagements and battles as the Grand Army's advanced guard. The Fifth Corps was at the decisive battle of Jena in Germany, and the Reserve Corps was at the battle of Friedland in East Prussia.²⁰ Three times during the course of these campaigns, Lannes and his corps were the first to make contact with the enemy and fight an opening battle.

The Battle of Saalfeld occurred on 10 October 1806, four days before the Battle of Jena. The Prussian Army's advanced guard had crossed to the west side of the Saale River at the town of Saalfeld and had established a hasty defense in preparation for the approaching French. The French Army's left wing, the Fifth Corps, moved towards Saalfeld from the west as the advanced guard. The corps moved on a single route and deployed rapidly into combat with the Prussian defense. The opening battle did not result in a decisive major battle; the Prussian advanced guard retired after it was defeated and the advanced guard commander was killed.

Marshal Lannes fought the battle of Pultusk on 26 December 1806. The Grand Army moved northeast to Warsaw to establish winter quarters on the Vistula river. Lannes and the Fifth Corps, as the army's advanced guard, made contact with a major Russian counteroffensive. The Russian Army and the Fifth Corps fought to a stalemate, until Lannes was reinforced by a division from the French Third Corps. Soon thereafter the Russian Army withdrew to the east after further indecisive fighting.

The Battle of Friedland occurred on 14 June 1807, and the opening battle developed into a decisive major battle with the Russian Army. Once again, Lannes and his corps moved towards the main body of Russians as the advanced guard of the Grand Army. Marshal Lannes approached Friedland and established a hasty defense west of the city to ward off Russian attacks. As Lannes expanded his defense, the Russian commander moved west across the Alle river to deny the French any crossing sites and to destroy the French advanced guard. The Reserve Corps fought the opening battle until the Grand Army, under Napoleon's command, arrived to complete the destruction of the Russians.

The Battle Analysis

The research design of the analysis follows a strict format. Analyzing the application of combined arms by Marshal Jean Lannes begins with an indepth study of

each opening battle. Each analysis uses the same criteria. The purpose of these analytical criteria is to provide a consistent framework for the study of each battle separately and to provide consistency for comparison between battles. The conclusion will establish the relationships between each branch, trends on the commander's decisions and actions, possible terrain and weather effects, and finally, the possible evolution of the application of combined arms over a relatively short time period of continuous combat operations. The questions that are used to study each of the opening battles are listed below, grouped under general subject headings.

1. Opening Battle Considerations

A. Army Dispositions

(1) Which side was first to occupy the area where the battle occurred and how much time did they have to reconnoiter or prepare?

(2) Which force conducted an approach march directly into the opening battle and what was the march column composition?

(3) What were the force compositions and ratios?

B. Intelligence on Enemy Forces

(1) What knowledge did each commander have of the force he was opposing and how accurate was the information?

(2) Did that knowledge cause the commander of either side to take a particular course of action or change a decision?

C. Terrain and Weather

(1) What knowledge did either commander have of the terrain where the opening battle took place?

(2) Did terrain play a decisive part in the outcome of the opening battle?

(3) Were there any weather factors that altered the opening battle tactical operations?

D. Reserve Operations

(1) Did either side have a designated reserve and what types of units were in the reserve?

(2) Which side committed its reserve first and was it to reinforce a success or a failure in either the defense or offense?

(3) Which side committed its reserve last and did this action have significant impact on the outcome of the opening battle?

E. Defensive and Offensive Operations

(1) Which side adopted the defense first and what prompted this decision by the commander?

(2) Which side attacked first and why?

(a) What was the immediate objective of the attack?

(b) Was the attack successful or unsuccessful?

(3) How did the commander array his forces and why?

2. Tactical Aspects for each Force in the Opening Battle

A. Plans Prior to Battle.

(1) What was the commander's intentions in the area of operations prior to the opening battle?

(2) What tactical objectives was the commander trying to achieve?

B. Tactical decisions on Deployment/Employment

(1) What was the disposition of the units at the time initial contact was made during the opening battle?

(a) Were forces deployed forward as scouts?

(b) What type of force made first contact?

(c) Where was artillery positioned during movement prior to first contact and/or during the opening battle?

(d) What formations were used by each type of unit, i.e, infantry, artillery, and cavalry?

(e) How did the commander array his forces on the terrain?

(2) What were the initial decisions made by the commander who committed forces into battle?

(a) Was the first commitment of forces directed by the commander?

(b) Was the employment an action or counteraction?

(c) What type of unit was employed first and why?

(d) What type of unit was employed second and was it done to support the first movement?

(e) What type of unit was employed third and was it undertaken to support any previous movements?

The French corps organization, tactics, and leadership are the emphasis of the second chapter, which also covers the Prussian, Russian, and Saxon organizations and tactics at the time they were in each battle. Each of the three battles, Saalfeld, Pultusk and Friedland, is described and analyzed in chapter three. Chapter four is the concluding chapter and notes any differences between doctrine and actual application. This chapter also identifies the relationships between each of the branches and notes any evolution in the methods of applying combined arms.

Literature Review

Napoleon Bonaparte and the Napoleonic Wars are probably the most researched individual and time period, respectively, in military history. For example, the Combined Arms Research Library at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, has 348 separate book titles under the heading Napoleon. This number does not include dissertations, theses, or periodicals.

A current trend in the study of the Napoleonic Wars is the emphasis on Napoleon and the operational level of warfare. The operational art is "the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals through the design, organization, integration, and execution of battles and

engagements into campaigns and major operations."²¹ This emphasis is evident in popular books and studies on the Napoleonic period. Each of the listed publications is applicable to this study and provides a wealth of knowledge within its specific area of emphasis. The focus of these works is an opening battle and how the different arms interacted.

The standard work in the area of operational art in Napoleonic Warfare is David G. Chandler's The Campaigns of Napoleon. This is a scholarly study of each of Napoleon's major campaigns from 1796 to 1815. There are indepth studies of both the Jena and Friedland campaigns which are extremely useful as sources in this study.²² The focus in each campaign is on the plans and objectives, detailing the operational maneuvers and battles within the campaigns and the course of each campaign to the final outcome. Chandler establishes a firm base on the intricacies of Napoleonic warfare, specifically, the tactics, organizations and weapons.

Three Napoleonic Battles by Harold T. Parker, is a scholarly study of battles which span the period: Friedland, Aspern-Essling, and Waterloo. A comprehensive analysis of the battle of Friedland provides considerable insight for this study.²³ Parker concentrates on the operational art which led to each battle, the tactical conduct of the French, and the outcome of the battles. The three battles correspond to the rise, zenith, and fall of

Napoleon's power and compare the changes in Napoleon's warfighting abilities over time.

The books that specifically target the operational level of war and the conduct of battles from 1806 to 1807 are the scholarly studies by F. Lorraine Petre: Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia, 1806 and Napoleon's Campaign in Poland 1806 to 1807. Both works detail the conduct of each campaign and the battles within the campaigns. Petre analyzes both the moves and countermoves by each protagonist in each campaign and provides an insight into the reasons why certain actions took place. Detailed descriptions of the actions taken by Marshal Lannes during each campaign are helpful for this thesis since they clarify when certain actions were done. The detailed descriptions of the battles of Saalfeld,²⁴ Pultusk, and Freidland,²⁵ are extremely helpful.

Another scholarly study is Their's History of the Consulate and the Empire; The Jena Campaign. The British War College assembled this study strictly from primary sources, as an instrument to aide the study of Napoleonic campaigns. The book provides detailed descriptions of events and actions as they occurred and how they influenced the campaign. It serves as a history of the period and informs this study with a detailed account of the battle of Saalfeld.²⁶

The West Point military history series publication, The Wars of Napoleon written by Albert S. Britt III is an

excellent overview of the Napoleonic Wars. This book gives clear and concise descriptions of each of the campaigns, while providing insight into the main concepts behind the plans. Although it does not provide detail in the battles fought during the Jena and Friedland campaigns, the book gives a good synopsis of the events before and during the campaign.²⁷

There are three books that provide a description of French tactics prior to the Napoleonic era: The Bayonets of the Republic by John A. Lynn, The Army of the French Revolution by Jean-Paul Bertaud, and The Background to Napoleonic Warfare by Robert S. Quimby. Each of these books explores the makeup of the French revolutionary army, analyzing the factors that influenced military operations during the revolutionary period. The theme of Lynn's book is the motivation and tactics of the revolutionary army from 1791 to 1794 and provides an excellent description of tactics and doctrine in the French Army.²⁸ Bertaud's study concentrates on the use of citizen soldiers as an instrument of power, but provides a good overview of battlefield tactics.²⁹ Quimby's book reviews each of the major military innovators prior to the French revolution and their contributions to developing doctrine for the revolutionary army initially and subsequently Napoleon's army.³⁰ Each of these books provide the basis for the French Army's doctrine on battlefield tactics prior to Napoleon's influence.

Two books which concentrate on the tactical level of warfare in Napoleon's time are: The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon by Gunther E. Rothenberg and George Jeffrey's book, Tactics and Grand Tactics of the Napoleonic Wars. Rothenberg's book acts as a link between operational warfare and tactics. This book is a scholarly study of the essential aspects which influenced Napoleonic Warfare at the unit level. It gives the reader good overall knowledge of strategy, tactics, and weaponry.³¹ Jeffrey's book is a concise popular publication that concentrates only on the tactical methods applied on the Napoleonic battlefield. It specifically addresses formations for each type of unit, the relationship between units, and considerations of the commander. This book illuminates the numerous options available to Napoleonic era commanders in controlling their units on the battlefield.³²

There are three scholarly books that, together, provide a thorough knowledge of Napoleon's Army: Swords Around a Throne by John R. Elting, Napoleon's Army by H. C. B. Rogers and The Anatomy of Glory by Henry Lachouque. Elting's work provides an indepth look at life in Napoleon's Army while on campaign. The details of coping with army life are eloquently illustrated, as well as the higher considerations of managing an army during this time. There are detailed descriptions of each branch in the French Army that are useful for this study.³³

H. C. B. Rogers gives a definitive analysis of each of the branches within Napoleon's army, to include supporting branches. This analysis involves the organizations, structure, and capabilities. Rogers discusses weapons, uniforms, and basic tactics.³⁴ The emphasis of the book is strictly French, and the book concludes with an excellent discription of the battle of Pultusk as an example of a Napoleonic battle. The discription is on the actions taken by a division in the French Third Corps, which went to the aide of the French Fifth Corps.

The Anatomy of Glory is a definitive history of the French Old Guard. The Old Guard was Napoleon's elite corps consisting of artillerymen, cavalrymen, and infantrymen selected from the ranks of the rest of the army. This book provides an insight into the internal workings of a corps-sized element. It fully illustrates the dedication and enthusiasm which permeated elite units in Napoleon's army.³⁵

An excellent collection of biographies of the twenty-six marshals is compiled in Napoleon's Marshals edited by David G. Chandler. This is a scholarly study by twenty-six accomplished historians, each writing a biographical essay on one of the marshals covering his youth, education, combat experiences, and contributions. An indepth biography was written by Donald D. Horward on Marshal Jean Lannes.³⁶

There are two primary sources that this thesis relies on for corroborating evidence. The Memoirs of Baron De Marbot by Marcellin Marbot is the first-hand account of a cavalry officer who was an aide to Napoleon and was present during both campaigns in 1806 and 1807. Marbot was a messenger between Napoleon and Lannes during the opening phase of the battle of Friedland, and he provides information on the instructions sent to Lannes.³⁷ Jomini's Life of Napoleon is Antone H. Jomini's discription of the activities in Napoleon's headquarters while he was present. The English translation was done by Union General Henry W. Halleck, just prior to the start of the Civil War, as an instructional tool for American officers. This book provides a first-hand view into the inner workings of Napoleon's staff during the period of study.³⁸

The only thesis found that was appropriate for this study was a narrative history done by a graduate student at the University of Texas A & M. Charlton J. Matovsky produced the study The Role of Marshal Jean Lannes in the War of the Fourth Coalition, 1806-1807. Matovsky's goal was to fill a void in Napoleonic scholarship by detailing the actions and events that surrounded Lannes in 1806 to 1807. This study provides precise details on the events that influenced the three battles in this study and also concentrates on the motivations and actions of Lannes.³⁹

Endnotes

¹Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Symbols (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), 1-1.

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CHAPTER TWO
THE FRENCH ARMY AND HER OPPONENTS

France's Grand Army

The French Army's organization and tactics were key ingredients to its success. A French corps was required to accomplish specific tasks. Each corps moved along specific routes in the offensive seeking battle with enemy forces. Corps moved within mutually supporting distance so that they could go to another corps assistance in a matter of hours. "A corps could fight a battle for the better part of a day and was capable of engaging and holding off several times its own number while their neighboring units moved to the corps support or to outflank the enemy."¹ The corps battle resulted in one of two outcomes: either side was reinforced and a major battle developed or either side withdrew from the battle with the opposing force pursuing or not pursuing. After a successful battle, the corps was capable of reorganizing quickly and continuing its mission or a new mission within a day, depending upon the severity of the battle.

Napoleon organized his *corps d'armee* with representative units from each branch, consequently this

represented the first level in which a complete combined arms structure existed. Each corps had units from all three combat branches: artillery, cavalry, and infantry. The cavalry corps was an exception with pure cavalry divisions and supporting artillery. Each corps was composed of two or three infantry divisions and one division or brigade of cavalry. This is a general representation of an infantry corps structure. Corps had no fixed structure by doctrine and this was done on purpose. Napoleon was continually altering the composition of his corps for security and deception. The enemy commanders were never sure exactly how many soldiers were in the French Army's major formations.² This nonstandard structuring served the purpose of confusing the enemy commander on more than one occasion.³ One foot battery or two artillery batteries, one each of horse and foot, was usually in each infantry division. The cavalry division had one or two horse batteries attached. The corps commander retained control of an artillery reserve of two to five medium or heavy foot batteries (see appendix A).

The infantry division was organized in a semistandard manner. The infantry divisions had two to three brigade headquarters with one to two regiments in each brigade; consequently, each division had three to six regiments in its structure. Each regiment had two to three battalions.

The cavalry brigade had one or two cavalry regiments each of three to four squadrons; a cavalry squadron is the

organizational equivalent of an infantry battalion. A cavalry division in a corps had two to three cavalry brigades. The cavalry in the combined arms corps of the French Army during the time frame 1806 to 1807 was light cavalry; the heavy cavalry was organized into cavalry corps.

Each of the branches in the French Army had different types of units with different capabilities, specifically designed to fill a particular role on the battlefield. The infantry was either light (*legere*) or line (*ligne*) infantry with different uniforms and unit distinctions, but with very similar capabilities and missions. Mounted forces were organized into light or heavy cavalry, each type with different missions. The artillery was organized as either horse or foot artillery; the differences were in the size of the organizations, the types of cannons, and the speed in movement. Each branch complimented the other branches on the Napoleonic battlefield. There existed a balance between the strengths and the weaknesses of the different branches such that no arm dominated the battle. Commanders required a thorough understanding of their capabilities and limitations for proper employment.

French light infantry and line infantry units were organized similarly. Napoleon ordered the restructuring of all infantry regiments, regardless of type, in September of 1806. Both types were organized into regiments of three

battalions in each regiment, however, in practise many regiments only had two battalions. Each of the battalions had eight companies, instead of nine, with approximately 100 to 120 men in each company and roughly 800 to 1000 in each battalion.⁴ Light infantry battalions had one company of elite soldiers called carabiniers, which was more of an honorary distinction for soldiers who had good service records in other companies and were experienced campaigners. This designation did not entail any special function or mission. All light infantry units did possess the ability to break down into small elements and fight as skirmishers. Light infantry was generally manned with younger and more physically capable soldiers.⁵ One regiment in an infantry division structure was usually light infantry, while the two to three other regiments were line infantry. Although light infantry was envisioned as the force that conducted skirmishing missions on a large scale, line infantry companies were also employed in this manner, but on a limited scale.

Line infantry battalions were structured in the same fashion as light infantry, but had two companies designated as elite units. One of the elite units was called grenadiers and represented an archaic form of heavy infantry that existed prior to the Napoleonic Wars. The other elite company was a light infantry company called voltigeurs, trained and employed as skirmishers and scouts. Membership

in either of these companies was considered an honor by the soldiers within the line battalion. However, except for the scouting missions conducted by the voltigeur company, there was no major distinction between the missions of the line and elite companies. Once again, the soldiers that had proven themselves in the line or fusilier companies were picked to man the elite companies. At the end of campaigns, accomplished soldiers were also pulled from both line and light infantry units to fill openings in the Imperial Guard, Napoleon's personal *corps d'elite*.

Infantry during the Napoleonic period acted as the base force in all armies. The infantryman walked everywhere he went and consequently was relatively slow moving into action. Infantrymen were employed in masses and were capable of delivering devastating musket fire at close range in the attack or defense. Infantry was the ideal arm to defend a position.

The French cavalry had similar distinctions as the infantry. The light cavalry were called either lancers, hussars, or chasseurs, distinguished by their ornately colored uniforms and weapons. They had the mission of reconnaissance and security for the corps by skirmishing and scouting in small elements. Once the corps was engaged in battle, the light cavalry regiments would reform to support the battle under the command of a cavalry division commander. The light cavalry in the infantry corps were

usually hussar or chasseur regiments. Lancer regiments were typically foreign units that served in the cavalry corps.

The light cavalry structure was standardized within the *Grand Armee* with both hussar and chasseur regiments composed of four squadrons. Each squadron had two troops of cavalry with each troop composed of 60 to 80 men commanded by a captain. A squadron had approximately 200 men when the additional support personnel are counted. The support soldiers provided services for both men and horses, i.e., blacksmiths, farriers, veterinarians, etc. The squadron commander was either a senior major or lieutenant colonel. The regiment's commander was a full colonel who had a small staff. Light cavalry units always operated with considerably fewer men than were authorized because of a high attrition rate from continuous operations. The light cavalry was responsible for the army's security regardless of the time of day.

Light cavalry was very mobile and could maneuver to the enemy's sides and rear quickly. It could move behind friendly forces in order to reinforce a weak position or move to attack an enemy weakness. The attack by cavalry on the Napoleonic battlefield could result in a decisive action that quickly eliminated enemy units. Light cavalry possessed a limited capability to defend or hold a position.

The primary light cavalry missions were to gather information while securing the army against enemy action.

Light cavalry troopers were sent in small elements of various sizes along routes of march or to the flanks of the army, to scout for the enemy units. They also conducted reconnaissance along routes the army was going to take, observed enemy activity, captured prisoners, and questioned civilians. The information gathered was then sent by messenger to the corps or army headquarters. The security mission was divided into two parts. The first was a guard mission that had the cavalry unit stay to the front, flank or rear of their army to provide early warning if the enemy attacked. This mission was done usually when the army was on the move and the cavalry oriented on the friendly unit. When the friendly army was stationary, the cavalry established a screen that oriented on the suspected or known enemy locations in order to render early warning.

The light cavalry on the battlefield played a role that took advantage of its mobility and speed. Light cavalry protected infantry, artillery and heavy cavalry. The light cavalry had the greatest mobility of all the branches and this mobility allowed commanders to threaten or engage enemy forces while other units prepared for action or moved. The light cavalry could then move quickly to another location to again threaten or protect. When light cavalry was committed to an attack on the battlefield, the engagement often resulted in a high degree of disorganization. Small groups of troopers were spread over

great distances with many killed and wounded. Consequently, the unit would need time to reassemble and reorganize to fight again. Light cavalry was lethal against infantry not in a square formation, the flanks and sides of any type of unit, and especially against the support troops of the enemy army. Light cavalry was vulnerable to massed infantry fires, heavy cavalry and artillery. An enemy infantry square halted light cavalry in battle.

The heavy cavalry were called cuirassiers, carabiniers, or dragoons. Cuirassiers and carabiniers were formed into cavalry corps in the army's cavalry reserve and were not employed except in major battles. The heavy cavalry was usually committed into battle at Napoleon's personal order. They were generally held in reserve until the enemy battle line had been sufficiently weakened by other forces, then committed in an attack to break enemy resolve. Heavy cavalry were not used for scouting missions and consequently received no training in that role.

The heavy cavalry regimental organization was similar to that of the light cavalry. Each regiment had four squadrons with two troops and a regimental total of 800 men. The same rank structure existed; lieutenant colonels or majors commanded squadrons, while captains commanded troops. The heavy cavalry trooper, the carabinier and cuirassier, wore the cuirass, a breast and backplate made of steel. The trooper also wore a steel helmet. The combination of helmet

and cuirass added considerable upperbody protection against sword cuts and bullets fired at long distances.

Dragoons were organized in separate cavalry divisions within the cavalry corps or as an entire cavalry corps within the army's cavalry reserve. Dragoon regiments were structured like the other heavy cavalry units, but they were outfitted differently. Dragoons had steel helmets and infantry type firearms modified for cavalry use and a cavalryman's sword. They were intended to be used as mounted infantry with the idea of riding into battle, but dismounting to fight on foot. In actual use, dragoons were used as heavy cavalry and rarely dismounted.

The heavy cavalry was designed as a powerful strike force that could exploit enemy weaknesses on the battlefield and disrupt enemy actions. This intended mission always placed heavy cavalry regiments in the main body of the army to preserve them and during the 1806-1807 time period, heavy cavalry were generally in the army's cavalry reserve under Napoleon's control. When a mature battle had been fought to a certain point and a weakness was created in the enemy's battleline by artillery, infantry or other cavalry attacks, the heavy cavalry was then ordered to attack to take advantage of the enemy's problems. Heavy cavalry regiments were never broken down into smaller elements as were light cavalry. Heavy cavalry was lethal against any unprepared

enemy unit regardless of branch. The infantry square could stop heavy cavalry but could not destroy them. Heavy cavalry was vulnerable to artillery.

The French structured their artillery under the Gribeauval system since 1776. Jean Baptiste de Gribeauval was the Inspector General of Artillery for the French Army from 1776 until his death in 1789. During that time he revolutionized the artillery branch by developing a standardized group of artillery weapons with corresponding limbers, carriages, ammunition and tools to service the guns. He developed a standard training program for artillerymen, both officers and soldiers.

Both the French and their allies used guns standardized to the Gribeauval system. Standardized field guns were the 12-pound, 8-pound, 6-pound, 4-pound cannon and a the 6-inch howitzer. The 12-pound had a maximum range of 1050 yards for shot and 700 for cannister. The 8-pound and 6-pound; 900 yards for shot and 600 for cannister. Napoleon planned to eventually replace all 8-pound cannon with 6-pound cannon because of the same effects, but less weight. The 4-pound, 900 yards for shot and 500 for cannister. Solid shot was a round iron ball of a particular weight and cannister was a can filled with musket balls that made a shotgun effect. The howitzers fired shot, shell or cannister at ranges comparable to the 6-pound. Shell was a hollow cannon ball filled with explosive which caused a shrapnel effect.⁶

Artillery were of two types: foot or horse. Foot artillery batteries had their cannon pulled by teams of horses, but the artillerymen or gunners walked. The cannons in a foot battery were larger those of a horse battery. A foot battery had four to six cannon of eight or twelve pounds with one section of two howitzers. A foot artillery battery, in concert with other foot artillery batteries, provided the greatest means of destroying and demoralizing enemy units. The infantry division's foot battery usually had eight pound cannons, while the corps reserve foot batteries were usually equipped with twelve pound cannons. The howitzers for both division and corps foot batteries were six-inch.

Foot artillery could deliver devastating direct fire onto enemy units, but was very slow moving into position. Once in position, foot artillery was typically stationary for the remainder of the engagement. Because of its linear formation, an artillery battery in firing position was vulnerable from the sides and rear, but was capable of defending towards the front if attacked by cavalry or infantry. It was only capable of defense as long as there was ammunition and enough of the artillery gunners were still with the guns.

Horse artillery batteries had their cannons pulled by teams of horses and the artillerymen were also mounted on horses. A horse battery's cannon were small and lightweight

to facilitate movement. The typical battery had six pieces of ordnance and approximately 80 men. A horse battery had 4 four or six pound cannon and two six-inch howitzers.

Horse artillery was able to move quickly across the battlefield. Limbering and unlimbering, the process of getting the guns ready to move or fire, was a relatively quick operation which added to the mobility of the battery. Commanders could reinforce a successful attack or assist in the defense by rapidly positioning horse batteries. Horse artillery was vulnerable to infantry or artillery fire while it was unlimbering or limbering and if enough gunners or horses were put out of action, then it could not complete its mission. Horse artillery had a limited number of rounds it was capable of carrying because the carriages and limbers were designed as relatively light weight structures to aide in mobility.

Artillery batteries were administratively grouped into regiments during times of peace to facilitate training gunners and standardizing equipment. Artillery regiments had approximately nine batteries. During war, artillery batteries were task-organized to support the army. The army and corps reserve artillery was normally composed of large caliber foot batteries of 12-pounder guns under the corps commander's control.

French Tactical Doctrine

The Regulation of 1791 was the governing document for army operations through the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods until 1831. The regulation was the culmination of the intellectual work conducted by French military thinkers in pre-revolutionary France.⁷ This surge in military thought was caused by the failure of the French Army against the Prussians led by Frederick the Great.⁸ The regulations covered unit movement, formations, and firing in elaborate detail.⁹ There was a new emphasis on the quick maneuvering of platoons, companies, and battalions. The 1791 regulation governed only the infantry. Artillery and cavalry doctrine were developed separately by members of those branches.¹⁰

The cavalry units of revolutionary France were untrained and ill-equipped.¹¹ Cavalry was used as a police force from 1789 to 1793, and was divided into small attachments to better control the civilian population of France.¹² This activity completely nullified attempts by cavalry commanders to train in large units. The infantry branch grew the quickest and received the most men, equipment, and supplies.¹³ The cavalry was also stripped of much of its weapons and equipment while receiving no men to replace shortages.¹⁴ A conscious effort was made to couple good horses and men in an effective training program late in 1794.¹⁵

The French governing body, the Assembly, established a separate artillery branch with nine regiments in October 1790. Prior to this the artillery was a subordinate branch of the infantry.¹⁶ The artillery was initially composed of either foot or heavy seige batteries. Infantry and artillery doctrine was already established and there was good cooperation between the two branches, evident throughout the revolutionary period.¹⁷ In January 1792, the Assembly authorized two horse artillery batteries based on the results of tests made the year prior.¹⁸ The horse artillery establishment had thirty batteries by the end of 1793.¹⁹ The French artillery arm was considered the best in Europe.²⁰

The 1791 regulation divided the French field armies into three parts. There was an advanced guard composed of grenadier battalions. A right and left wing was thought of as the second part with light infantry supported by cavalry in regiments or brigades. The advanced guard along with the right and left wings were each commanded by a *general d'division*. Finally, the third part was a central group or main body of infantry commanded by the overall army commander.²¹

Before 1794, a divisional organization, containing elements of the three combat arms, was unofficially established and began to replace the 1791 model of wings and main body.²² The division was under the command of a single

general d'division. The division could operate independently and was easier to support logistically. The division had two brigades of line and light infantry with a regiment or brigade of cavalry and a company of cannons. This represented 13,000 infantrymen, 700 to 1200 cavalrymen in four to twelve squadrons and thirty-two to thirty-eight guns (see appendix B).²³

The divisional system was designed to allocate a balance of forces over a given space for operations. There were two requirements for successful operations, the need for relatively large areas and forceful action to bring the units of the division into combat.²⁴ Most generals did not have the talent or experience to conduct such actions and as a group they were mediocre.²⁵ In practice, the divisions did not support each other in combat, primarily because of the different levels of skill in the division commanders.²⁶

The training of the revolutionary army began in earnest in the summer of 1793.²⁷ Individual soldier drills to battalion and brigade maneuvers were conducted under the 1791 regulation.²⁸ The revolutionary army did not start winning at the tactical level until late in 1794. Each combat branch usually trained independently of one another with no time for any inter-branch coordination because of near-continuous combat operations. Not until the victories of 1796 in the Italian campaign by General Bonaparte did the potential of the divisional combined arms organization

become apparent.²⁹ However, success required a army commander with exceptional abilities.

Napoleon saw the combined arms potential of the division. In 1802, he reorganized the army from the combined arms division into a slightly larger corps organization called the *corps d'armee*.³⁰ Division commanders now controlled smaller units of either infantry or cavalry supported by artillery.

The French army experienced its only real period of peace from 1801 to 1804, while it assembled at Boulogne, France.³¹ The army had assembled for the planned invasion of England, but as the Austrian threat grew and French naval operations failed, the invasion was cancelled.³² The army had the opportunity to train with the new corps structure and managed for the first time in over a decade to establish a working relationship between the branches.³³ The astute corps commander learned to use the potential of each branch to increase the power of his corps. Napoleon did not get involved in the tactical handling of small units. He was content with giving objectives to a subordinate commander and letting the commander achieve the objective through his own initiative.³⁴

French tactics during the Napoleonic Wars continued to reflect the French spirit in warfighting. The French thought the offensive was the strongest form of combat and this was a result of the spirit that grew out of the French

Revolution. On 2 February 1794, the Committee of Public Safety emphasized that the army must always act in mass and in the offensive with troops continuously on the alert to seize every opportunity to employ the bayonet.³⁵ In May of the same year, the Committee directed, "attack to avoid being attacked."³⁶ This offensive spirit existed in the French Army from the private through the corps commander.

A corps moved in accordance with Napoleon's design on the campaign and all of the campaigns conducted by Napoleon were of an offensive nature. As the campaign developed and enemy intentions became clear, the corps would draw closer to each other and orient on the enemy forces. The corps of an army were arranged such a manner that one corps would make contact with the enemy and try to develop the situation. The corps commander then reported to Napoleon's headquarters. The corps in contact was then considered to be the advanced guard. The other corps in the vicinity of the engaged corps, marched to the sound of the guns in an effort to reinforce the engaged corps and win the battle. Corps moved towards the battle on their commander's initiative or on Napoleon's order. This scheme was repeated on numerous occasions during the Napoleonic Wars and the technique was eventually mastered by Napoleon's opponents.

Napoleon's strategic maneuvering was designed to bring about a decisive battle. During the maneuver, Napoleon

tried to fight his enemy in three phases.³⁷ The first phase involved the effort to find the enemy army's main body. Once found there would ensue a spoiling attack.³⁸ The object was to pin the enemy and not allow further movement.³⁹ This initial action is what this thesis refers to as the opening battle. The second phase of the battle was the concentration of forces where the opening battle was occurring. The phrase opening battle is better suited as a description of the action, because if the French advanced guard was doing its duty, it would have made contact with the enemy main body and was considerably outnumbered. A small unit does not continuously attack a larger enemy unit with any real expectations of winning.

The last phase of the Napoleonic battle had three major parts that began as the mature battle began and lasted well after the battle was finished. The three parts were envelopment, breakthrough, and exploitation and those parts hinged on the decisive battle with the main body of the enemy's forces as the target.⁴⁰ The envelopment was a maneuver of forces to either one or both sides of the enemy's flanks and into the rear of their army. This maneuver was known by Napoleon as the *Manoeuvres sur les Derrieres* or maneuver on the rear.⁴¹ The breakthrough occurred in the mature battle when the enemy army was finally defeated through the concentration of massed artillery fires, followed by cavalry charges and subsequently

supported by infantry attacks.⁴² The last part was the exploitation and it involved the pursuit of the withdrawing enemy forces, attacking remaining defenses, and destroying enemy cohesion. The exploitation was specifically designed strip the enemy of any further power to fight.⁴³

The corps commander of the advanced guard usually made initial contact with the enemy forces in a situation known as an opening battle. The opening battle occurred when two opposing forces first made contact either intentionally or unintentionally. Each force was generally in column formation, strung out along a road, marching in the enemy's direction. One or both sides might have light cavalry or infantry scouting to the front or flanks. There was a possibility that a cavalry screen to the front of one or both forces was under the control of the army commander and not the commander in charge of the march column. The commander of either force might have knowledge of the enemy's presence, but not know anything about the enemy's exact location or intentions. When the forces made contact with both sides still moving, or one force halted and the other moving, the resulting action was the opening battle fought by the advanced guard. The opening battle ended when the reinforcements from another command arrived, and command and control went to a higher commander, usually Napoleon himself, or either side broke off and withdrew from the opening battle.

The commander in an opening battle was faced with the decision of how to employ his forces to best advantage as the units approached the battlefield. His first concerns were to move forward to observe and control the action, make an estimate of enemy strengths and positions, and deploy his forces as they became available. He was also faced with having to make rapid decisions in the midst of a relatively chaotic situation. The commander's ability to assess the situation and to make rapid and accurate decisions, with regards to available time and surrounding terrain, was known by the French as *coup d'oeil*. The commander assessing, deciding, and initiating, combined with the actions of his units in relation to each other, contains the reasons for opening battle success or failure.⁴⁴

The French Order of Battle

The order of battle for the French Fifth Corps and the Reserve Corps under Lannes during the Jena and Friedland campaigns is listed for 1806-7.⁴⁵ All the infantry regiments consisted of two battalions unless otherwise noted. Many regiments were at reduced strength, having fought at Austerlitz ten months earlier and not yet filled with replacements.

First Division - General Suchet (approx. 11200 men)
Brigadiers: Claparede, Reille and Vedel
17th Light (three battalions)
34th Line
40th Line
64th Line

88th Line
 One foot battery (2 x 12 lb., 2 x 8 lb., 2 x
 howitzers)
 One horse battery (4 x 8 lb., 2 x 4 lb.)

Second Division - General Gazan (approx. 9200 men)
 Brigadiers: Graindorge and Campana
 21st Light
 28th Light
 100th Line (three battalions)
 103rd Line (three battalions)
 One foot battery (2 x 12 lb., 4 x 6 lb., 2 x
 howitzers)
 One horse battery (4 x 6 lb., 4 x 3 lb.)

Corps Cavalry Division - General Treillard
 10th Hussars (500 men)
 19th Hussars (500 men)
 21st Chasseurs (500 men)

Corps Troops
 Detachment of mounted Gendarmes (30 men)
 One company of sappers (140 men)
 One foot battery (6 x 12 lb.)

Figure 1. Fifth Corps Order of Battle

The Fifth Corps maintained the same basic order of battle under Marshal Lannes through the Jena campaign and through the winter of 1806 to 1807 until before the battle of Pultusk. Prior to this action the Fifth Corps was given one dragoon cavalry division of fifteen squadrons under the command of *General d'Brigade* Becker. This unit had suffered many losses in the previous campaigning and had a strength of approximately 1200 men.

Marshal Lannes was wounded at Pultusk and invalided to Warsaw where his wife took care of him until the spring of 1807. Marshal Massena assumed command of the Fifth Corps on 24 February.⁴⁶ When Marshal Lannes rejoined the *Grand*

Armee prior to the Friedland campaign, Napoleon gave him command of the army's reserve corps which would serve as the army's advanced guard. Between the two campaigns, during the winter of 1806-1807, the French Army received recruits to replace many but not all of the losses suffered during the Austerlitz and Jena campaigns.

The Reserve Corps and its supporting cavalry at the battle of Friedland was structured different from the Fifth corps. The Reserve Corps had three infantry divisions. One of the divisions was a French combined grenadier division, in which the grenadier companies of infantry regiments in garrison were detached and organized under one commander. The division started the Austerlitz campaign with 5700 men and was reinforced when the Friedland campaign began.⁴⁷ Attached to the grenadier division was one hussar regiment. The second infantry division was a small French division, while the third infantry division was a small Saxon division with one brigade of attached cavalry. The Reserve Corps had no corps troops assigned, such as engineers, pontoonniers or corps artillery. During the opening battle at Friedland, the Reserve Corps assumed operational control of three cavalry divisions. One dragoon and a cuirassier division were taken from the army's reserve cavalry and given to Lannes. A light cavalry division came from Marshal Mortier's Eighth Corps when it arrived on the battlefield. The heavy cavalry divisions were commanded by

General Grouchy who was acting as the army's reserve cavalry commander in Marshal Murat's absence.⁴⁸ The heavy cavalry divisions had 3000 men in eight regiments of French and Saxon origin.⁴⁹

The Kingdom of Saxony had a small army which was allied to the Prussians at the beginning of the Jena campaign. The Saxon Army of 1806 was an awkward imitation of the Prussian Army of 1786.⁵⁰ When the Prussians were beaten and Napoleon gave Saxony their autonomy as a Kingdom, the Saxons allied themselves with the French. The Saxons had an infantry brigade with one cavalry regiment and one artillery battery with the Prussian advanced guard at Saalfeld. The Saxons also had a small division with two brigades, two cavalry regiments and two foot batteries in the French Reserve Corps at Friedland.

A Saxon infantry brigade was the basic element in the Saxon army. The brigade prior to 1807 usually had two to three regular infantry regiments of two battalions. When the Saxons became French allies the brigades were reorganized with two infantry regiments of one or two battalions with the battalion's grenadier companies permanently combined into one elite battalion. The cavalry was considered among the best in Europe while the infantry was usually reliable.⁵¹ The artillery branch was ineffective and small.⁵² Cavalry and artillery provided units to support the infantry in brigades or batteries,

respectively. Saxon unit capabilities and missions were like their Prussian and French counterparts. None of the Saxon units at Saalfeld under Prince Louis was in the reserve corps with Marshal Lannes at Friedland.

Grenadier Division - General Oudinot (10200 men)
Brigadiers Ruffin, Conroux, Coehorn and Albert⁵³
1st through 8th provisional regiments
9th Hussar regiment (attached with three squadrons)
no artillery

Second Division - General Verdier (5,700 men)
Brigadiers Vedel and Harispe
2nd Light
15th Light
3rd Line
72nd Line
12 cannons of various weights

Third (Saxon) Division - General Polenz (5700 men)
Brigadiers d'Oebchelwitz, de Gaffey and von Besser
Grenadier battalion Cerrini
Fusilier battalion Bevilaqua
Prince Anton fusilier regiment
Grenadier battalion Sussmilch
Fusilier battalion Prince Maximillian
Saenger fusilier regiment
King's cuirassier regiment (four squadrons)
Prince Johann Light dragoons (one squadron)
Two foot batteries (8 x 8 lb. and 4 x howitzers)

Figure 2. The Reserve Corps Order of Battle

France's Antagonists in 1806 and 1807

France's major adversaries on the continent of Europe were Prussia and Russia. The Prussians played the dominant role in 1806, until their army disintegrated in the

rout which followed the dual defeats of Jena and Auerstadt. A small contingent of Prussian soldiers, approximately 15,000 men under General A. W. von Lestocq, continued to fight under overall command of the Russian commander Marshal Kamenskoi and then General Benningson.⁵⁴ This Prussian contingent fought at the battle of Eylau in February, 1807 and was with the last Russian units to capitulate near the fortress city of Koenigsberg after the Russian defeat at the battle of Friedland in June.⁵⁵

The Russian army at the end of 1806 was still preparing to aid their Prussian allies, however, the speed of the Prussian collapse left the Russians as the primary opponents to French conquest.⁵⁶ The first contact between the French and Russians occurred on 27 November 1806, between the French cavalry screen under Marshal Murat and the Russian cossack light cavalry, west of the city of Warsaw.⁵⁷ The Russians fought a series of small engagements withdrawing further into East Prussia, avoiding any unexpected major battle with the French main body. One attempt by the Russian Army to attack and surprise the French main body resulted in the indecisive battles of Pultusk and Golymin on 26 December, 1806. The French Army's advanced guard fought the Russian main body at Pultusk, while the Russian advanced guard fought a corps from the French main body at Golymin.⁵⁸ The stalemate at Eylau ended the winter campaign.⁵⁹ Both sides were in great need of replacement and rest.

The Russians commenced hostilities in June 1807. The first action on 5 June were attacks by the Russians to encircle and destroy a portion of Napoleon's army. However, the French reacted quickly and started their own offensive operation that sent the Russians into retreat.⁶⁰ The retreat ended in the decisive battle of Friedland where the Russian army was destroyed.

The Prussians and Russians had the same basic branches in their army with a few exceptions. Unlike the French, both nation's denoted the size of the howitzers by the weight of the shell and not its diameter. The Prussians had only one infantry battalion that was capable of skirmishing (designated jaeger or grenadier) in a division organization. All other types of infantry, cavalry, and artillery are represented in the Prussian army with the same basic missions and capabilities as their French counterparts.

The Russians also referred to their light infantry as jaegers, similar to the Prussian model. The Jaegers were organized as regiments of three battalions and every division had one or two regiments. The Russians also had an artillery organization referred to as a heavy positional battery. This battery moved into position before or during a battle and remained there for the remainder of the battle. All other types of infantry, cavalry, and artillery are represented within the Russian army

organization with similar missions and capabilities as with their Prussian allies and French opponents.

The Prussian Army

The Prussian army that fought the Jena campaign in 1806 was essentially the army trained by Frederick the Great prior to his death in 1786 and was considered the, "Ghost of Frederick."⁶¹ The senior commanders of the Prussian army were young officers during the reign of Frederick and of 142 generals in the army, 76 were over the age of 60.⁶²

Rothenberg states,

Combat doctrine and methods remained Frederician. The infantry stressed the three rank linear formation, controlled volleys, and a steady advance, while the cavalry retained its faith in the massed charge. The artillery, both horse and foot, was good, though many of its pieces were too heavy for mobility.⁶³

Even though the artillery batteries were proficient in the operation of their guns, as a branch, the Prussian commanders had not adopted the French method of massing their artillery for a greater effect.⁶⁴ The Prussians used their artillery only as batteries in support of their parent organization and did not exploit their full potential until too late.

The Prussians adopted a significant organizational change as they were mobilizing for war in 1806. They organized divisions as a combined arms unit similar to the French model in order to facilitate command and control.⁶⁵ The division had eight to ten infantry battalions, one elite

battalion (either jager or grenadier), a cavalry brigade of ten to fifteen heavy cavalry squadrons supported by a separate regiment of five to ten light cavalry squadrons and two batteries of artillery. The division had two infantry brigades where each controlled four to five infantry battalions and the elite battalion was usually under division control. The division had two to three heavy cavalry regiments each of five squadrons. Light cavalry regiments had ten squadrons and a division had either half or the whole regiment in its structure (see appendix C).⁶⁶

The two artillery batteries in a Prussian division were usually one each of horse and foot. The foot battery had eight pieces of ordnance. There were six 12-pound cannons and two 10-pound howitzers.⁶⁷ The capabilities of these weapons were similar to the French in terms of range and rate of fire with one exception, they had heavy carriages and were difficult to move limbered or unlimbered.⁶⁸ The horse artillery battery also had eight pieces of ordnance with six 6-pound cannons and two 7-pound howitzers with the same weight restrictions as with the foot batteries. The horse artillery generally supported the cavalry contingent of an infantry division, while the foot batteries supported the infantry.⁶⁹

Advanced Guard - Lieutenant General Prince Ludwig of Prussia and Major General von Pelet at Blankenburg.⁷⁰

Massar's Jager Company

Fusilier Battalion von Ruhle
 Fusilier Battalion von Rabenau
 Infantry Regiment von Muffling
 Schimmelpfennig Hussars (6 Squadrons)
 Saxon Infantry Regiment Kurprinz
 Saxon Infantry Regiment Prinz Clemens
 Saxon Infantry Regiment Kurfuerst
 Saxon Hussars (4 Squadrons)
 Half Horse Battery Gause (2 x 4 lb, 1 x 7in
 howitzer)
 Foot Battery Rieman (4 x 6 lb, 2 x 7in
 howitzer)
 Saxon Foot Battery Hoyer (4 x 4 lb, 2 x 7in
 howitzer)

*Valentini Jager Company
 *Fusilier Battalion Pelet
 *Saxon Hussars (3 Squadrons)
 *Half Horse Battery Gause (3 x 4 lb, 1 x 7in
 howitzer)

Figure 3. Prussian and Saxon orders of Battle at Saalfeld

The highlighted units were a part of the advanced guard, but during the Battle of Saalfeld they were positioned at the town of Blankenburg approximately seven miles northwest of Saalfeld. Their mission was to hold another potential crossing site of the Saal river and they did not participate in the battle.⁷¹

The Army of Imperial Russia

The Russians reorganized their army after the disaster of Austerlitz. Russian units prior to 1805 were recruited and organized from geographical areas called inspections and provided soldiers to the army in regimental organizations.⁷² After the reorganization, the geographical areas provided divisions to the army, already organized as a

combined arms unit with a controlling headquarters. These units were maintained at different levels of readiness for economical reasons and consequently, received little training in combined arms application prior to the fighting in 1806.⁷³

The Russian division was a combined arms unit of eighteen infantry battalions, twenty cavalry squadrons and eighty-two guns in five batteries with over 17,000 soldiers at full strength.⁷⁴ It had a fairly equal representation of each branch and was a copy from an earlier French divisional model that had been since discarded by the French.⁷⁵ There were six infantry regiments of three battalions apiece with an authorized strength of 738 men in each battalion for over 2200 men in a regiment. The heavy cavalry component had two cavalry regiments of five squadrons apiece, while the light cavalry was one regiment of ten squadrons. Each squadron, regardless of type, had approximately 150 men for a total of 3000 cavalymen in a full strength division (see appendix D).⁷⁶

The divisional artillery contingent was extensive. There were two heavy positional batteries, three light field batteries and one horse battery.⁷⁷ The positional battery had eight 12-pound cannon, four 20-pound howitzers and two light 10-pound howitzers, for a total of fourteen guns in the battery. The light field batteries each had eight 6-pound cannons, four 20-pound howitzers and two light 10-pound howitzers, again for a total of fourteen guns. The

horse battery had twelve 6-pound cannons.⁷⁸ The entire artillery arm of a full strength division was designed with eighty-two guns and had approximately twice as much artillery as a French corps of the same time.

The Russian army was still hampered by old systems. Even with the organizational change, the Russians had no higher level headquarters like the French corps. When a number of divisions were grouped together and sent on a mission, a senior general was attached or the senior division commander assumed command of the entire element with an *ad hoc* headquarters. Below the division headquarters, there was no intervening tactical headquarters equivalent to the brigade. All cavalry and infantry regiments, and each artillery battery, received instructions from the division headquarters.

The Russians were the opponents of the French at the battles of Pultusk and Friedland. The estimates of Russian strength at Pultusk range between 40,000 to 45,000 men.⁷⁹ The estimates of the Russian soldiers at the battle of Friedland range from 61,000 to 76,000 men. The number that actually fought west of Friedland is thought to be nearer 50,000. It is known that of the seven Russian divisions present at Friedland, only six fought west of Friedland.⁸⁰

Endnotes

- ¹Chandler, Campaigns, 154.
- ²Ibid., 147.
- ³Ibid.
- ⁴Rothenberg, The Art of Warfare, 138.
- ⁵Ibid.
- ⁶Britt, Wars of Napoleon, 171.
- ⁷Quimby, Background, 306.
- ⁸Ibid.
- ⁹Ibid., 308.
- ¹⁰Ibid., 344.
- ¹¹Lynn, Bayonets, 195.
- ¹²Ibid., 200.
- ¹³Ibid., 199.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Ibid., 200.
- ¹⁶Ibid., 203.
- ¹⁷Ibid., 205.
- ¹⁸Ibid., 204.
- ¹⁹Ibid..
- ²⁰Ibid., 205.
- ²¹Bertaud, Revolution, 231-2.
- ²²Ibid., 232.
- ²³Ibid.
- ²⁴Ibid.
- ²⁵Quimby, Background, 330.

- 26Bertaud, Revolution, 232.
- 27Ibid, 237.
- 28Ibid.
- 29Ibid, 234.
- 30Charles Oman, Studies in the Napoleonic Wars (London: Lionel Leventhal Limited, 2nd ed., 1987), 232.
- 31Fernand Nicolay, Napoleon at the Boulogne Camp, trans. Georgina L. Davis (New York: The John Lane Company, 1907), 391.
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- 34Quimby, Background, 333.
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- 36Ibid.
- 37Chandler, Campaigns, 180-1.
- 38Ibid.
- 39Ibid., 191.
- 40Ibid., 184.
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- 42Ibid., 187.
- 43Ibid., 184.
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- 45Matovsky, The Role of Jean Lannes, 141-4.
- 46Ibid., 108.
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- 48Petre, Campaign in Poland, 313.
- 49Ibid., 314.
- 50Elting, Swords, 401.

- 51Ibid, 402.
- 52John H. Gill, With Eagles to Glory (London: Lionel Leventhal Limited), 255.
- 53Matovsky, The Role of Jean Lannes, 145-6.
- 54Chandler, Campaigns, 515.
- 55Petre, Campaign in Poland, 341.
- 56Ibid., 37.
- 57Chandler, Campaigns, 515.
- 58Ibid., 521-24.
- 59Ibid., 555.
- 60Ibid., 565-66.
- 61Elting, Swords, 516.
- 62Rothenberg, The Art of Warfare, 189.
- 63Ibid., 188.
- 64Petre, Conquest of Prussia, 23.
- 65Rothenberg, The Art of Warfare, 189.
- 66Ibid.
- 67Ibid.
- 68Ibid.
- 69Ibid., 190.
- 70Pascal Bressonet, Tactical Studies on the Campaign of 1806, Saalfeld-Jena-Auerstadt (Paris: R. Chapelot et Cie, 1909), 2-3.
- 71Ibid., 4.
- 72Rothenberg, The Art of Warfare, 201.
- 73Ibid., 201-2.
- 74Ibid., 201.
- 75Elting, Swords, 516.

76Rothenberg, The Art of Warfare, 201.

77petre, Campaign in Poland, 37.

78Ibid.

79petre, Campaign in Poland, 96-7.

80Ibid, 314.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BATTLES OF SAALFELD, PULTUSK, AND FRIEDLAND

The Jena Campaign

The Third Coalition against France was organized through British diplomacy and included Austria, Russia, and Sweden. Britain provided the naval power and promises of finances for both Austria and Russia, who each provided major armies to fight Napoleon. Sweden, Britain, and Russia conducted a less notable campaign on a secondary front.¹ The major reason for the coalition was from French annexations of neighboring territories in the Alps region and treaty violations. The largest annexations was when Napoleon declared himself the King of Italy over Austrian objections. Napoleon further alienated the nations of the coalition by ordering the abduction from a neutral country and execution of a young Bourbon nobleman, the Duke d'Enghien. Napoleon accused the Duke of conspiring against him behind the protection of a neutral German state.

The objective of the Third Coalition was immense, it wanted "nothing less than the return of Europe to the status quo of the *Ancien Regime* and the liquidation of the territorial, as well as the idealistic aftermath of the

French."² Prussia was the only major power in western Europe that did not participate in the coalition. France's diplomatic maneuvering to convince the Prussians to remain neutral included a bribe. France's foreign minister offered and the Electorate of Hanover to the King of Prussia, a German state that was traditionally a British protectorate and subject to the rule of the King of England.³ Napoleon's victory at the battle of Austerlitz on 2 December 1805 marked the end of the Third Coalition.

France defeated the combined Austrian and Russian Armies and this ended the Third Coalition. Austria sued for peace under French terms, while the defeated Russians withdrew to their own territory. Britain had won the great naval victory at Trafalgar, but could not project military power onto the continent of Europe except in Spain. The Grand Army in high spirits was encamped in southern Germany after the great victory at Austerlitz.

In 1806, Napoleon was now in a position of unexpected power. He demanded and received territories from Prussia which he passed out to relatives as rewards. He forced Prussia into the position of signing a "unilateral and exclusive treaty with France," thereby eliminating all other alliances and economic contacts, specifically those with England.⁴ Napoleon fully intended to emasculate Prussia as a military and economic power in Europe. The Prussians had learned that in diplomatic negotiations

between France, England and Russia, the French also bribed the British with Hanover which France had already ceded to Prussia.⁵ Although the British refused the bribe and the Russians withdrew from the negotiations, the attempted bribe was the final insult to Prussian pride. The King of Prussia and his ministers began planning for war with Napoleon.⁶

Prussia organized three field armies in August 1806 with a Saxon contingent in support.⁷ Instead of waiting for Russian aid and after long debate, Prussia decided to move in a preemptive strike to destroy the French forces in their cantonment areas.⁸ Napoleon had closely monitored the situation. When he heard of the Prussian moves, Napoleon set out to the north with his army in three columns. On the right wing was Marshal Davout with the Third Corps, in the center was Napoleon with the main body of the Grand Army, and on the left wing was Marshal Lannes with the Fifth Corps.

When they heard of Napoleon's actions, the Prussians vacillated between defending along the Saale river or withdrawing to the east to the Elbe river to threaten the French right. In the Prussian command structure, no single commander asserted authority over the others and the commanders of the three Prussian armies could not decide on a single plan.⁹ The French pushed north quickly forcing the Prussians into a decision. The lead elements of the French main body fought a small action against the Prussian

rearguard at Saalberg. The left wing moved north through the Thuringer Wald, then east to decisively defeat the Prussian advance guard at Saalfeld. This turn of events forced the Prussians north of the Saale river and not only shattered Prussian illusions of victory but also shattered their morale.¹⁰ Napoleon did not hesitate; he pressed north to encircle the Prussian Army which was north and east of the Saale river thereby cutting them off from retreat. The Prussians attempted to move east towards Leipzig and secure a north-south defensive line at the Elbe river.¹¹

Both the French and Prussian armies reorganized for the coming battle. The Prussian main body and the eastern army combined as one force. The Prince of Hohenlohe in the western army formed the Prussian rearguard as both Prussian armies turned east to cross the Saale river at Naumberg. Meanwhile, the French Fifth Corps and the main body converged and pushed towards Jena on the Saale river. The French Third Corps proceeded to Naumberg to block Prussian withdrawal.¹²

Napoleon directed the French army boldly and decisively. Marshal Lannes and the Fifth Corps captured the Langrafenberg, the large hill and key terrain north of Jena and across the Saale river on 13 October 1806. That evening the Grand Army closed on Jena and occupied key terrain while the Prussians camped within view. Marshal Davout and his Third Corps crossed the Saale river at Naumberg on the

morning of 14 October, then began moving to the town of Auerstadt.¹³ On 14 October 1806, the dual battles of Jena and Auerstadt took place and each ended in decisive French victories. The Prussian Army disintegrated as it retreated north, first to Berlin, and then to Lubeck as the French captured the remains of each Prussian unit.¹⁴ By 7 November, the Prussian Army ceased to exist as a fighting force.

The Battle of Saalfeld

The town of Saalfeld is located on the Saale river in a river valley approximately 3000 meters across. The Saale river runs generally north and south thru Saalfeld, then turns west away from a hill where there is open ground which rises gradually into rough wooded ridges that are perpendicular to the Saale river. The Saale runs another 2000 meters before meeting the east-west oriented Schwarza river in the town of Schwarz. The Saale river then continues north to the town of Rudolstadt (see figure 8).

The ridges dominate the area south of the Saale and are impassable off of roads or trails. Between these ridges are intermittent streams which run into the Saale. The main road going south out of Saalfeld follows one of these streams. The numerous trails in the ridgelines run generally north and south with a few interconnecting trails.

The town of Garnsdorf is 1000 meters southwest of Saalfeld and sits astride the major road at the edge of the

wooded area. The only other major road in the area starts directly south of Saalfeld and moves through Saalfeld paralleling the Saale river, then the Schwarza. On a relatively straight line northwest of Garnsdorf are the hamlets of Buelwitz, Aue, and Unterwirbach. The Sandberg hill is between Buelwitz and Aue, while the Oberhayn hill is between Aue and Unterwirbach. Each of these hamlets is at the opening of a small valley and numerous trails fan out onto the Saale valley floor from the the villages. There are two small hamlets, Croesten and Wohlsdorf, on a line northeast of Beulwitz at 500 and 1000 meters, respectively. Movement in the open areas are unhindered by any manmade objects and the only natural obstacles which can slow movement are the streams. There were no excessive rains to soften the ground and it is too early for snowfall. The weather was to have no adverse effects on the battle.

Napoleon's instructions to Marshal Lannes were precise. Napoleon wanted to concentrate his three columns on the Prussian main body near the city of Jena. He thought the Prussians could attempt to stop him by attacking his left column under the command of Lannes. Napoleon gave Lannes three options. First, he could concentrate with Marshal Augereau's VII corps, which was following Lannes' corps and attack if the enemy had no more than 15000 to 18000 men. Second, he could not attack if the enemy has superior numbers at Saalfeld and attack only to hold on

until Napoleon arrives with the main body, or if the enemy attacks with superior forces and the VII corps is not able to support, then withdraw twelve miles south to Grafenthal and defend from there.¹⁵ Marshal Berthier further instructed Lannes to seize Saalfeld and take a good position if the enemy withdrew.¹⁶

The Prussian Army was in three groupings and Napoleon attacked preempting the Prussians initial plan. There was no true overall commander, although the Prince of Hohenlohe was senior to the other commanders within the Prussian royalty and ineffectually directed the army. The three groups were arrayed east to west with Prince Louis with the advanced guard near Saalfeld, Prince Hohenlohe with part of the army near Jena, and the Duke of Brunswick with the main body northeast of Jena.¹⁷

Prince Louis was moving south as the army's advanced guard, when Prince Hohenlohe's orders on the morning of 9 October 1806 directed him to begin movement to the east as the army's rearguard. Prince Louis requested, then received permission to remain in Saalfeld the evening of 9 October and begin movement east the next day.¹⁸ The Prince of Hohenlohe did not intend to fight at Saalfeld while Prince Louis was, "impatient to meet the French."¹⁹ The advance guard's main body was actually in the town of Rudolstadt, five miles to the North of Saalfeld, while a small detachment was in Saalfeld on the night of 9 October.²⁰

Elements of the Prussian advanced guard were in Saalfeld almost 24 hours prior to the French. By 09:00, Prince Louis had moved his units to the west side of the Saale river to contest the town of Saalfeld and a French crossing of the Saale.²¹ The Prussians had 7000 men and 2000 cavalymen spread between ten battalions, ten squadrons, and two and one-half batteries.²² The Prussians placed the bulk of their force the open ground between Croesten and Saalfeld. East of the major road which parallels the river was a continuous line of infantry with a battery one-third of the lines distance from Croesten. South of the line and along the trail between Saalfeld and Beulwitz, but next to Saalfeld, was one infantry battalion and one foot battery defending the Garnsdorf road. Three Prussian hussar squadrons were 500 meters up the Beulwitz trail and 500 meters in front of the original infantry line. These hussars were in line formation oriented to the southwest. Halfway between Garnsdorf and Saalfeld were two to three companies in a skirmish line. Behind the original infantry line near Croesten and east of the major road was the Muffling regiment as a second infantry line. Behind the Muffling regiment was five squadrons of Saxon hussars in line formation.²³

There were other small detachments in the vicinity of Saalfeld. East of Saalfeld and the Saale river were two squadrons of Prussian hussars and one infantry battalion.

North of Unterwirbach and on line oriented southeast was three Saxon hussar squadrons and a small infantry detachment. Northwest of Unterwirbach and west of Schwarza was an infantry battalion guarding the bridge over the Schwarza river.²⁴

The main body of the French V corps under Lannes was moving north along the single road from Grafenthal to Saalfeld. The French had 19,690 men and 1,630 cavalrymen in twenty-one battalions, nine squadrons, and six batteries.²⁵ The woods and rough terrain on either side of the roads restricted travel to either the main road or the trails along the route.²⁶ French light cavalry moved along these trails and ahead of the main body.²⁷

The opposing commanders knew of each other's presence prior to the battle. The Prussians had two things which confirmed the French army's presence and possible intentions. The night of 9 October 1806 was a clear night and Prussian scouts on the high ground around Rudolstadt reported numerous campfires to the south around Grafenthal.²⁸ The Prussians also captured a French soldier on the night of the ninth near Grafenthal who stated that Lannes had 30,000 men.²⁹ The Prussians had an idea of a potentially large French force but did not know its specific composition. The Prussians probably knew Lannes was in command and it is possible the Prussians knew the French were intending to advance on Saalfeld. Prince

Louis's chosen tactic of defending on the west bank of the Saale would support this conclusion.

Marshal Lannes Probably knew a considerable amount about the Prussians. In a letter from Lannes to Napoleon on 9 October, he states his 9th hussars had captured eight Prussian hussars and their responses to Lannes' personal interrogation were enclosed.³⁰ There is no record of the responses. Most likely, Lannes had a good idea of the size force he would face at Saalfeld. There is also a good possibility that Lannes knew of the Prussian commander's intentions of fighting at Saalfeld. Since the Prussian advanced guard's main body had not yet arrived at Saalfeld, Lannes could not have known anything about the defensive plan. Considering the options Napoleon gave Lannes, Lannes no doubt chose to follow through with the option of attacking and seizing Saalfeld.

Lannes had a general idea of the terrain in the vicinity of Saalfeld and he had two sources: the Prussian prisoners and information from his scouts. No maps were available of the area and Lannes requested at least one map from Napoleon on 8 October.³¹ There is no indications that Lannes had specific knowledge of the terrain where the battle occurred. Lannes probably knew he would have the advantage of high ground while moving on Saalfeld. This assumes the Prussians would not contest the road between Grafenthal and Garnsdorf.

Prince Louis had complete knowledge of the terrain and the routes entering into and around Saalfeld on the morning of 10 October.³² His scouts had taken a prisoner and some scouts were captured near Grafenthal. They were possibly from the same unit. Prince Louis had decided not to contest the French movement in the difficult woods and terrain or the high ground which came down from the ridges.³³

Prince Louis was at a tactical disadvantage by letting his attacker have the the high ground. This gave the French the initiative and consequently they attacked first and continued to attack throughout the battle. Considering the fact he knew of a potentially large French force when compared to his small force, "He had resolved on meeting with all his small force the issue of Lannes' corps from the hills."³⁴

The battle of Saalfeld began with a cavalry skirmish on the small side trail near the Saale valley. The Prussian cavalry withdrew and the French V corps continued to Saalfeld uninterrupted except for a small group of Prussian pickets which were driven from the highground above Garnsdorf at approximately 09:00.³⁵ Marshal Lannes, at the head of General Suchet's infantry division, received a first-hand view of the Prussian battle formations from the high ground south of Garnsdorf.³⁶ A small French infantry detachment occupied the high ground on the right of the road, while the lead battalion, a battalion of combined

elite companies, with two artillery pieces from a horse artillery battery moved to the right of Garnsdorf.³⁷ This action moved the lead units into the mouth of the valley where they received Prussian rifle and artillery fire.³⁸ Marshal Lannes immediately ordered an attack with the lead hussar regiment and Suchet's infantry division.³⁹ The hussar regiment advanced through the woods to assume a position left of Garnsdorf, while one elite infantry battalion was positioned in front of the town. This initial advance seized an entrance onto the valley floor and served to occupy the Prussian's attention.⁴⁰

The terrain, the disposition of his army, and the location of Prussian combat units dictated Marshal Lannes subsequent attacks. He could not move right or go forward because there was no space on his right flank to maneuver into the Prussian left, and a frontal assault would allow the Prussians full advantage of their line formations.⁴¹ Lannes knew of the trails which went to his left and onto the valley floor into the Prussian right flank.⁴² He committed the rest of Suchet's division and the second hussar regiment into an advance along the trails to the west of Saalfeld.⁴³

French reinforcements arrived in Garnsdorf after the initial seizing of the town, while other units moved to the left as quickly as possible with the most mobile units leading.⁴⁴ The rest of the horse battery moved to the right

of Garnsdorf and began a general bombardment of the Prussian line.⁴⁵ The 17th light infantry moved to the left towards Beulwitz with the entire regiment acting as skirmishers.⁴⁶

The Prussians had moved the infantry battalion and two squadrons from across the river to the east of Saalfeld to oppose the French encroachment. There were now two Prussian battalions and five squadrons facing the French at Garnsdorf.⁴⁷ The three squadrons on the Beulwitz-Saalfeld road had also moved 1500 meters southeast to counter the French at Garnsdorf.⁴⁸

The French skirmish line gradually extended to the left as small light infantry detachments came into action. This effectively engaged more Prussian units with a minimal number of French forces.⁴⁹ Lannes ordered the French hussar regiment to move in behind the skirmishing 17th light between Beulwitz and Garnsdorf, using the woods to conceal their move.⁵⁰ The hussars occupied their new position with six squadrons on line.⁵¹ At approximately 10:00, Lannes directed the units at Garnsdorf to advance and continue firing on the east while Suchet's division of infantry and artillery were to seize Beulwitz.⁵² He further directed all cavalry regiments to occupy the center where the first hussar regiment established its position in support of the skirmishers.⁵³ Along with these cavalry regiments, the last two infantry battalions of Suchet's division would form.

These battalions were still on the road from Grafenthal.⁵⁴ Suchet set up a foot artillery battery south of Beulwitz.⁵⁵

Prince Louis began to realize the gravity of the situation when an almost continuous line of French skirmishers extended to his right.⁵⁶ He probably realized the French were trying to outflank him, because of his subsequent actions. At about 11:00, he sent the Xavier and Electeur regiments forward to fight the French 17th light infantry in the vicinity of Beulwitz. The Muffling regiment with one and a half batteries, moved to the Sandberg hill between Unterwirbach and Aue, while the Clemens regiment was sent to Oberhayn just south of Aue.⁵⁷ Both regiments oriented their defence to the southeast in the direction of the current fighting.⁵⁸ All the available Saxon and Prussian hussar were consolidated in a line of nine squadrons, northwest of Saalfeld in the center of the Prussian defense.⁵⁹ One squadron was kept in support of the Prussian battalion and battery at Saalfeld, while the three squadrons with infantry at Unterwirbach remained uncommitted.⁶⁰

The French continued to develop their attack. The horse battery and elite battalion advanced from Garnsdorf to push back the Prussian skirmishers, while the 17th light infantry advanced to the Beulwitz-Saalfeld road with the foot battery at Beulwitz in support. The 64th, 34th and 40th line infantry regiments came into action on the French

left, from right to left in sequence. The 88th regiment moved in behind the hussar regiments as the last regiment in Suchet's division to reach the battlefield.⁶¹ The light infantry companies from these regiments moved forward to skirmish as they came into the line, increasing the French fire proportionally.⁶²

The situation for the Prussians had deteriorated across the entire front. Masses of French skirmishers were pressuring Prussian and Saxon units in every position, while large formations of French infantry and cavalry were seen massing behind the skirmishers unmolested.⁶³ French artillery was firing in support from two positions. Prince Louis decided to attack the French in an attempt to stop the French advance. In the center, the Xavier and Electeur regiments pushed back part of the 17th light infantry around Beulwitz, while the Clemens regiment held the Prussian right.⁶⁴

The French audacity and experience in combat then came to the forefront in the actions of its leaders and soldiers. Skirmishers in the town of Croestan stopped the right flank of the Xavier regiment through a murderous fire, but the 17th light infantry ran out of ammunition and continuous pressure from the Electeur regiment forced them to withdraw under pressure and join the 88th line regiment.⁶⁵ The 64th line replaced the 17th light infantry, attacking immediately and retaking Croestan from the

Saxons.⁶⁶ At about the same time, the 34th and the 40th line regiments attacked the right flank of the Muffling and Clemens regiments in their positions in the vicinity of Aue.⁶⁷ These attacks were fierce and unexpected, defeating the Prussian and Saxon regiments. Suchet personally lead the 34th line regiment by and brigade commander, *general d'brigade* Reille lead the 40th line regiment.⁶⁸ The French captured all the Prussian supporting artillery, a total of fifteen guns.⁶⁹ The Prussian counterattack was unsuccessful and as the Prussians recoiled along their entire front, Lannes gave the signal to conduct a general attack from every position.⁷⁰ The sounds of drums and trumpets added to the horrendous noise already present.

Prince Louis was now desperate and attempted to stop defeat with an impetuous counterattack.⁷¹ He moved to the location of his light cavalry, which was know composed of five weak squadrons because the squadrons had been committed piecemeal throughout the battle to support the infantry. In the center of the battlefield, Prince Louis made an unsupported attack on the French 9th and 10th hussars. The French had six squadrons at full strength and they quickly enveloped the Prussian and Saxon hussars.⁷² Early in the counterattack, Prince Louis was killed and this completed the Prussian and Saxon defeat. The cavalry broke into small bands of fugitives running for their lives.⁷³ The infantry also routed, receiving further casualties from pursuing

French cavalry or by drowning in the Saale.⁷⁴ The Prussian units at Blankenburg, Unterwirbach and Schwarza withdrew quickly when they learned of the defeat. The French captured over 1500 prisoners, four regimental flags, twenty-six artillery pieces and six ammunition wagons.⁷⁵ Lannes reorganized on the remainder of 10 October 1806 and resumed his advance on the morning of 11 October, having won the first battle of the Jena campaign.

Analysis of the Saalfeld Battle

Marshal Lannes had strict orders from Napoleon in regards to an enemy in the Saalfeld area and these orders took into consideration three different possibilities. Lannes seems to have opted for the first directive to attack and seize Saalfeld, but this was after there was a clear picture of the enemy force in the area. The immediate goal of Lannes was to conduct the battle in such a way as to destroy the small opposing enemy force and subsequently capture Saalfeld by default.

The French advanced guard was in column on the Saalfeld-Grafenthal road. On the flanks and leading in the column were detachments of light cavalry acting in a guard role and these were the first units to engage the enemy. Lannes' corps appears to have had a designated advanced guard. The lead unit in the column was a light cavalry regiment. This cavalry regiment probably supplied the flank and lead security detachments. Along with the cavalry

regiment were one elite infantry battalion and a horse artillery battery. All these units were under the control of the cavalry regiment commander or possibly an unnamed *General d'Brigade* assigned to control the lead element. General Suchet with his division was second in the order of march with the 17th light infantry leading the line regiments. His division's artillery battery was most likely in the middle of his divisional column, because it was firing before the reserve battalions were in place. The rest of the cavalry brigade was behind Suchet's division in column formation.

The battle around Saalfeld began with the corps' advanced guard seizing the village of Garnsdorf and the nearby terrain. This action appears to have happened without any direction from Lannes or Suchet. The elite infantry battalion established its initial firing line forward of the village, while the horse artillery set up on the right side of the village to the right rear of the elite battalion. These two units working in support of each other served to occupy the Prussians for the beginning phase of the battle. The cavalry regiment in the advanced guard did not get involved in this initial action.

Marshal Lannes had now reached a position to observe the battlefield and make an analysis of the enemy formations and the terrain. Here is where Lannes made his first decisions to influence the action and he acted to gain the

initiative. The lead cavalry regiment was directed through the trails on the left side of the road, as was Suchet's division. The cavalry regiment moved into a position that would eventually become the center of the French battleline. The other cavalry regiments were also directed to the center of the French line. Suchet's division was directed to seize the villages left of the cavalry. This action would extend the French battleline and consequently force the Prussians into reacting. Lannes also designated the last two battalions in Suchet's division as a corps reserve under Lannes' control.

When Suchet's division moved into the Saale valley the entire lead infantry regiment, the 17th light, broke into small skirmisher elements and advanced. This effectively covered the deployment of the line infantry regiments and artillery as they exited the wooded high ground. The light infantry companies of the line infantry battalions, also deployed to conduct skirmish combat as their units came into the line.

The Prussian commander, Prince Louis, had completely surrendered the initiative to the French before the battle ever began. By placing his small force in a large open area with numerous approaches and he opened his flanks to attack. He did not contest the narrow road on the high ground nor any of the small trails leading into the valley. This oversight allowed the French to deploy onto the valley floor

unmolested. Consequently, he could only react to French actions and was never in a position to gain any advantages after the battle started. His only offensive decision was to counterattack the French infantry units pushing his right flank, once he realized the French intentions. The French infantry overwhelmed the combined Prussian and Saxon infantry in the resulting melee.

While the French line infantry was moving into line, Suchet's divisional foot battery deployed in a position to support the division at the town of Buelwitz. Buelwitz is almost in the center of the division's sector. The foot battery was under the control of the division commander and was probably positioned by Suchet. The cavalry brigade had assembled in the center of the French line and was not committed to any fighting. The sight of nine French light cavalry squadrons must have been an ominous. These cavalry squadrons were obviously intended as the final instrument of Prussian destruction. Lannes attacked when the Prussian counterattack was driven off and the French had their reserve in position. The only other act by the Prussian commander was a cavalry charge at the French cavalry units. This rash act resulted in the Prussian commander's death and a further demoralizing of the Prussian forces.

Lannes is very methodical in his general positioning of units. The French units in combat were employed as line infantry and artillery combinations. The actions at

Garnsdorf and Buelwitz were both by infantry and artillery fighting in support of each other. Artillery provided long range direct fires to reduce Prussian combat power, while the infantry served to protect the artillery by fighting enemy infantry.

The cavalry and the light infantry acted independently from the infantry and artillery combinations, however, their operations were not conducted as separate activities. Although the cavalry was not combined with any infantry or artillery in the battle, the cavalry acted in a supporting role to both of the actions at Garnsdorf and Buelwitz. They were placed to counter enemy cavalry and to exploit any weakness which arose. The light infantry provided the screen to the line infantry and cavalry as they moved into position. This screen was accomplished by skirmishers keeping the Prussian infantry occupied in combat.

The only time all three arms were organized in the same group was in the corps advanced guard element. The cavalry regiment provided the protection and early warning for both the advanced guard and the corps, while giving the advanced guard a capability to strike quickly. The infantry and artillery provided an ability to hold one location for a short time until reinforcements arrived. What has happened is the creation of a miniature version of the corps which is conducting the advanced guard mission for the army. There

are similarities in the tasks and the combined arms nature of the force allows the element to fulfill the expectations of the higher commander. The only real differences are the corps' advanced guard is predominantly cavalry and the time they are expected to conduct independent operations is considerably reduced.

The End of the Jena Campaign

Napoleon now increased his power to an unimagined level. He completed the subjugation of Prussia by granting independence to Prussian territories, requiring their allegiance to France. On 21 November 1806, Napoleon issued the Berlin Decrees demanding the boycott of all British trade to the coastlines and ports under French control.⁷⁶ The strategic aim of the continental system was to ruin the British economy.⁷⁷ The only obstacle to total French domination of the European continent was the Czar Alexander and his stubborn field army.

Napoleon did not rest after eliminating all possibilities of effective Prussian resistance through the Berlin Decrees. The Prussian King would not ratify the terms of the armistice agreement because there was a large Russian army still operating in Poland with a small Prussian contingent. Napoleon decided to move on Warsaw and occupy winter quarters on the southwest side of the Vistula river, the last natural barrier between Poland and Russia.⁷⁸ This would put the Grand Army in a position to continue an

offensive campaign in the spring of 1807. Napoleon granted Polish independence upon liberating Warsaw provoking "Polish national feelings against their Russian, Prussian, and Austrian despoilers."⁷⁹ Napoleon thought the popular support from Poland and the control of East Prussia, combined with the liberation of Warsaw, would make the Prussian King accept the terms of the armistice. The Russian army did not withdraw and attempted to counterattack the French army after it had crossed the Vistula.⁸⁰

The French Army attacked immediately after making contact with the Russians. Napoleon thought he now had an opportunity to destroy the Russian Army before the end of 1806. The Russian Army, with one Prussian corps which had not surrendered, conducted a fighting withdrawal to the northeast. The withdrawal turned into a retreat as Russian units lost their unity. The Russian army commander, Marshal Kamenskoi, ordered a general retirement to the northeast and then to the east across the Narew river to avoid a French encirclement attempt from the North.⁸¹ Napoleon was sure he could eliminate his opponents because of the slow speed with which the Russians withdrew.⁸² He attempted to maneuver onto the Russian and Prussian withdrawal route, but the combined force had regrouped and occupied a hasty defense to reorganize in preparation for a continued withdrawal.

This strategy was designed to deny the French the decisive battle they sought and conserve Russian and

Prussian fighting strength. Russian units were in the vicinity of a town called Pultusk, on the Narew river, as the center of their delaying operations.⁸³ The inconclusive battle of Pultusk involved the Russian main body against the French advanced guard on 26 December. On the same day, the French right wing clashed with the Russian advanced guard in another engagement that was likewise inconclusive. The freakish weather conditions, alternating freezes and thaws with accompanying snow and rain, severely hampered operations for both sides.⁸⁴ The Grand Army breathed a sigh of relief as it was ordered into winter quarters along the Vistula.⁸⁵

The Battle of Pultusk

The town of Pultusk is on the western bank of the Narew river in East Prussia. The river runs north to south and is an obstacle to any army moving east or west. The eastern half of Pultusk is on an island as the Narew river splits on the south side of Pultusk, then comes together approximately 2000 yards to the north. There is one bridge which crossed the Narew, and this bridge is just south of the southern split in the river. Approximately 4000 yards north of Pultusk is a small east west river called the Moshina. The Moshina is a winding river which travels to the northwest towards a town called Golymin. The ground for 3000 yards on the west bank around Pultusk is devoid of any

large vegetation which would obscure vision (see figure 9).⁸⁶

There are two prominent pieces of high ground to the west of Pultusk which dominate the open area. The smallest ridgeline is less than 500 yards northwest of Pultusk, oriented north to south with a 500 yard width and a 2000 yard length. The southern portion of this ridge is due west of Pultusk. Less than 1000 yards further to the west is a large ridgeline also oriented roughly north to south. The highest portion of the ridge runs for approximately 6000 yards, then slopes down and to the southeast back to the Narew river at a point 1500 yards to the southwest of Pultusk. The ridge is over 500 yards wide except for the northern section. The northern portion of the ridgeline is a low hill with a 1500 yard diameter. On the top of this hill is a forest called the Mosin woods which is oriented southwest to northeast and covers almost the entire hill in the northern edge. The ground to the west of the large ridgeline slopes to the west into a rough woodline which runs north south. Pultusk and the small ridgeline northeast of the town are not visible from this woodline because of the interposing large ridgeline.

Six roads intersect in Pultusk with only one route west across the bridge. Four of these roads share a common intersection on the northern edge of Pultusk. Two roads split, but parallel the river to the north while the other

two roads split and continue to the northwest in different directions. The western most of these roads leads to the town of Golymin about ten miles away. This road is on the western side of the Moshina river and bisects the northern hill on the large ridgeline. Where the road exits the woods on the northern side and slopes down towards the Moshina river, there is a small hamlet called Mosin between the road and the river. West of the southern edge of Pultusk is another intersection of two roads about 1000 yards from the city outskirts. One road leads west to Nasielsk and Warsaw while the other road parallels the Narew river to the south, passing between the river and the southernmost part of the large ridgeline. There are numerous trails throughout the area which are interconnecting and oriented in every direction.

The weather in eastern Europe during this time of year was typical. From the beginning of November through the first days of winter in early January, the precipitation increased significantly. In November, there were numerous rainstorms which continued for days. By the middle of December there was alternating rain, sleet, and snow as the temperature progressively dropped. There were periods of frost and thaw throughout the month of December.⁸⁷ The combined thaw and rain rendered any movement extremely difficult because of the clay content of the ground.⁸⁸ The roads in East Prussia were natural and unmodified, and they

were lines of mud with the churning of men and horses making them worse.⁸⁹ A definite thaw had begun on the 23rd of December and continued through the 28th of December.⁹⁰ All the rivers were swollen and fast moving, giving bridges a higher value for the military operations for both the French and Russian armies.

The French army moved northeast along two routes towards the withdrawing Russian Army. Marshal Davout with the Third Corps was on the left in the north and Marshal Lannes with the Fifth Corps was on the right.⁹¹ Napoleon and the main body was in a central position between and to the rear of the two corps. His instructions to Lannes on the 25th of December was to move to and occupy Pultusk. Napoleon did not think the Russians were in Pultusk in strength and thought the Russian main body was at Golymin, 10 miles to the north.⁹² This conclusion came from the two directions the Russians withdrew, but the largest Russian force was in the south moving east towards Pultusk.

The Russian Army was withdrawing in two major columns to the east with numerous minor columns also withdrawing. Marshal Kamenskoi wanted to get the army away from the French to reorganize and provide an adequate defense in front of the Russian frontier. Since the aborted offensive at the Vistula, the Russians had fought a series of small, violent delaying actions to ward off the French.⁹³ General Bennigson, the Russian Army second in command,

disobeyed Marshal Kamenskoi's orders. Bennigson decided to fight at Pultusk and united scattered Russian forces on the 25th.⁹⁴ Marshal Kamenskoi had been in Pultusk as early as the 21st and withdrew further to the east on the 24th. He was tired and confused from a combination of advanced age, old wounds, and continuous campaigning. On the morning of the 26th Marshal Kamenskoi relieved himself of command due to a high fever.⁹⁵

General Bennigson managed to assemble three divisions and the parts of two other divisions on the high ground west of Pultusk totaling approximately 40,000 to 45,000 men. A large part of one of the reduced divisions was in Golymin moving southeast towards Pultusk, along the Golymin-Pultusk road. Many of the units concentrating on Pultusk abandoned artillery to facilitate movement.⁹⁶ Russian units received their orders and moved laboriously into the line on the night of 25-26 December. They were prepared to defend early on the morning of the 26th.⁹⁷

The main battleline of Bennigson's defense partially coincided with the Golymin-Pultusk road. He used the large ridgeline to his advantage by masking his forces to observation from the west. The Russian right rested in the woods on the northern part of the large ridgeline. General Barclay de Tolly was in command of three jaeger regiments located in the southwestern half of the woods. An artillery battery at the northwest corner of the woods, sat astride

the Golymin road facing the town of Mosin. Two line infantry battalions were in the woods as a reserve, while another infantry battalion was in support of the battery.

The main body of the defense along the Golymin-Pultusk road went from the southeast edge of the woods to the northwest corner of Pultusk and consisted of three lines. The first line had twenty-one battalions from two divisions, the second line had eighteen battalions, while the third line had five battalions. All the battalions were in line formation oriented to the west. The artillery was dispersed in battery elements along the front of the first line.⁹⁸ The Russians had elements of seven foot and two and one-half horse batteries which should have had with a full strength of 128 pieces.⁹⁹ Modern estimates have the Russians with over 50 guns of various sizes.¹⁰⁰

The Russian left was in an advanced position in relation to the main defensive line with the mission of guarding the Narew bridge.¹⁰¹ General Bagavout was in command of this force of ten battalions, two dragoon regiments, one battery and 600 cossacks.¹⁰² Cavalry was forward on the Nasielsk road and the infantry and artillery were located on the reverse slope of the large ridgeline west of Pultusk.¹⁰³ Twenty-eight squadrons of regular cavalry were on the large ridge linking the right and left advanced positions and providing a large mobile force to protect the army's front.¹⁰⁴ The Russians were prepared for

a French advance from any direction early on the 26th. Each of the major routes were covered by strong forces and a large reserve was in position.

The French Fifth Corps spent the night of 25 December east of Nasielsk which is ten miles west of Pultusk. Lannes began movement early on the 26th to capture Pultusk as quickly as possible. At approximately 07:00, Suchet's division in the main body was five miles from Pultusk and less than four miles to Bennigson's forward elements.¹⁰⁵ General Gazan's division was the second major unit in the order of march and was one mile behind Suchet. The cavalry regiments were guarding to the front and flanks of the infantry as they moved.¹⁰⁶ The Fifth Corps traveled at a rate of approximately one mile an hour through the sea of mud. A heavy snowfall began and continued through the rest of the day complicating the situation by obscuring observation.¹⁰⁷

Marshal Davout and the Third Corps had secured Golymin early on the 26th. Davout received information of a Russian force retreating towards Pultusk. He decided to pursue and sent General d'Aultanne and his Third division along the Golymin road. General d'Aultanne's mission was to stop the Russian force from moving into the rear of the Fifth Corps as it advanced on Pultusk.¹⁰⁸

Lannes learned of the Russians at Pultusk from his cavalry scouts which had gone forward earlier. Lannes rode

forward of his corps with an escort of two squadrons of cavalry to reconnoiter the Russian position. At the edge of the woods on the Nasielsk-Pultusk road, Lannes observed the lines of Russian cavalry on the large ridge, their advanced positions on both flanks and cossacks on the intervening ground between the woodline and ridge.¹⁰⁹ His cavalry already cleared cossacks out of the woodline he now occupied.¹¹⁰ Lannes could not observe the Russian main defensive line nor could he acquire any information from his scouts. Consequently, he had no knowledge of the terrain or the large Russian force on the east side of the large ridgeline.

The lead elements of the Fifth Corps slowly arrived on the battlefield. Lannes ordered General Claparede, the advanced guard commander, to push back the cossack picket line to get more information. The 17th light infantry moved forward along the road, supported by Treilhard's light cavalry, to oppose Bagavout's position.¹¹¹

Lannes received more extensive orders from Napoleon at about 10:00. These orders told Lannes to seize Pultusk, cross the Narew river, and establish a bridgehead.¹¹² Lannes prepared to attack by giving Suchet instructions to form a battleline to the left of the 17th light infantry. The regiments slowly moved into the line in order the 64th, 88th, 34th and Becker's dragoons on the extreme left. General Wedell commanded the 64th and 88th line infantry

regiments in the center. Only a small number of guns ever arrived on the battlefield and they were positioned in front of the left and center.¹¹³

General Gazan placed his division in a second line approximately 300 paces behind the first line. The second line had only two of Gazan's four regiments present when the attack began. Gazan was reinforced with the 40th regiment and one battalion of the 88th of Suchet's division. The two battalions of the 21st light of Gazan's division were placed in corps reserve. The regiments in both lines had their battalions in line formation with elite company skirmishers to the front. Lannes had 20,000 men in twenty-four battalions and twenty-seven squadrons for the battle with no full artillery batteries.¹¹⁴ Most of the Fifth corps artillery was bogged down in the mud between Nasielsk and Pultusk.

Lannes ordered the attack to begin at about 11:00 with inconclusive intelligence on the enemy.¹¹⁵ The entire line advanced and General Claparede's men came into action first with Bagavout's advanced forces on the French right. The steady forward advance and continuous rifle fire by the French infantry drove off the Russian cavalry in the center. Claparede's brigade also repelled a small Russian counterattack by an unsupported jaeger regiment. Claparede moved forward and Wedell's Brigade in the center turned right to support Claparede's attack. Wedell's brigade

exposed its left flank to a Russian cavalry regiment of seven squadrons as the brigade wheeled to the right. The Russian cavalry commander attacked into Wedell's left flank causing confusion and damage.¹¹⁶ The battalion from the 88th in the French second line attacked the flank of the Russian cavalry. Treilhard's light cavalry also became involved in this struggle. The combat on the right broke down into a hand-to-hand struggle with neither side gaining an advantage.¹¹⁷

The French left had a difficult battle taking place in the Mosin woods. The 34th regiment attacked into the woods and drove back the three Russian jaeger regiments. The Russian battery was captured, but a counterattack by the two battalion Russian reserve recaptured the battery and forced the 34th back to the edge of the woods. The French dragoons did not enter the woods. The French second line reinforced the 34th and stabilized the position at the edge of the woodline.¹¹⁸

The French battleline reformed and Gazan's infantry line, Becker's dragoons, and Treilhard's light cavalry advanced to the top of the large ridge. The Russian cavalry had now retired behind the main defensive line and as the French units came into range the Russian artillery opened fire.¹¹⁹ The advance ground to a halt at the eastern edge of the large ridge and exchanged fire with the Russian main battleline. Russian artillery fire took a high toll in

French soldiers and Lannes even received a wound, as did many of his generals.¹²⁰ Lannes could now see the extent of the Russian defense and he probably realized the futility of a continued attack. The Russians were reinforcing their right with cavalry and infantry, threatening to envelop the French left.¹²¹ The Fifth Corps attack had completely stalled and a major retreat appeared imminent.

General d'Aultanne and the 3rd Division with 7,000 men from Davout's Third Corps arrived on Lannes left flank at about 14:00 and attacked the Russians in the Mosin woods.¹²² General d'Aultanne first heard cannon fire at about noon and because of the difficulty he had in moving his artillery, he concluded the cannons firing was Russian artillery emplaced before the thaw.¹²³ He decided to attack and support the Fifth Corps. When d'Aultanne arrived at Pultusk he sent word of his attack to Lannes, but a Russian cavalry attack between the two French forces caused no further coordination between Lannes and d'Aultanne.¹²⁴ The Russian cavalry was contained in the gap between Lannes and d'Aultannes by Becker's dragoons and d'Aultannes infantry.

The 3rd Division's attack on the Fifth Corps left countered the Russian movement and stabilized the front for the French. Bennigson was forced to fight in another direction and this diffused his offensive. The fighting gradually died out as darkness approached. Lannes had ordered a general advance late in the afternoon but this was

a hollow gesture.¹²⁵ During the night, Bennigson resumed the Russian withdrawal abandoning his wounded and sick. The Fifth Corps solemnly occupied Pultusk on the 27th.

Analysis of the Pultusk Battle

Marshal Lannes was again moving under the direction of Napoleon. His initial mission was to occupy Pultusk with the impression that few Russian units were present. This order was later modified to a more aggressive mission of seizing Pultusk and establishing a bridgehead for the army. This mission change by Napoleon must have occurred from intelligence Napoleon had received about the Russians.

Marshal Lannes had every intent of taking Pultusk by force. This is evident in Lannes' action of placing his entire corps in a battleline and moving to attack once every unit was in position. It appears Marshal Lannes may have had no better tactical plan than to take the large ridgeline and see what happens. Obviously, the best discovery would have been few or no Russian units in the vicinity of Pultusk.

General Bennigson's defense plan was simple. He apparently wanted to fight the advancing French units on the large ridgeline with his two forward positions and have the cavalry fight a delaying action in the center and not become involved in any decisive battles where they may lose. The major battle was designed to occur on the small ridgeline along the road between Golymin and Pultusk. This is where

most of the available artillery was placed and over two-thirds of the infantry battalions which were at Pultusk. When Marshal Lannes began his attack, within a short time, General Bennigson probably knew the size of the unit he was about to fight.

Lannes' corps was initially moving in column with light cavalry in the lead and on the flanks. The cavalry was the first unit to make contact when they drove the Russian cossacks from the woods west of the ridge. A light infantry regiment was close behind the cavalry and although it may have been under the control of Suchet, the division commander, Lannes was the commander who initially directed the unit into battle. There is reference to *General d'Brigade Claparede* as the advanced guard commander. Lannes gave the directions to Claparede for the initial actions by his brigade. The infantry brigade and the supporting light cavalry brigade drove in the cossacks along the road. The infantry brigade commander is probably the advanced guard commander.

Lannes assembled his corps in the open area between the woods and the large ridge. When the cossacks were driven off, this gave the Fifth Corps ample space to deploy into a large battleline. The corps established a battleline with the two infantry divisions in line with one behind the other separated by approximately 300 yards. Supporting the infantry divisions was a cavalry division on each flank.

All the infantry and cavalry units were in line formation down to the battalion and squadron level. The few artillery pieces available were placed in front of the infantry.

The deployment was remarkably unmolested by the Russians. The Russians apparently planned to remain in the defense and give the French ample time to prepare for an attack. There is no reference to any Russian artillery fire or cavalry attack to hamper the French during their deployment. The French deployment probably took much longer than it normally would have because of the terrible weather and terrain conditions. There is a good possibility that most of the Russian soldiers waited for a long time in the snow and mud before the battle began.

The battle for Pultusk was decided on the large ridgeline and never threatened the town or bridge at any time. The French were successful in seizing control of the majority of the large ridge but they did not have enough power to force the Russian main defensive line. The Russian artillery fire alone, seemed to ensure that the French infantry of Gazan's division and the two cavalry divisions would never close to assault the Russian main battleline. The French musket fire alone was not enough to disrupt the Russian units and create any weakness.

There is no evidence of when the two battalion corps reserve, the 21st light, was committed into action. The reserve would most likely have gone forward with the attack

by Gazan's division. There is a good chance the 21st was brought into the battleline to replace units which were drawn into the engagements on the left or right.

The French infantry and cavalry cooperation is what is observable in the battle. The initial attack by the 17th light infantry supported by the light cavalry was directed at cossack cavalry. The success of this action is not necessarily an indicator of effectiveness, because the cossacks were an irregular unit best used in screening and intelligence gathering. They were not reliable in a battle. The corps advanced guard continued to advance and attacked the Russian left position. The infantry apparently carried the position and also repelled at least one Russian infantry counterattack. When Wedell's brigade on the left of Claparede's brigade wheeled to support Claparede, Wedell's exposed left flank was attacked by Russian hussars. This attack was stopped by a French battalion attacking from the second French line and Treilhard's light cavalry shifting into the center to also attack. These French counterattacks were apparently directed by the unit commanders on the scene. There is no evidence of Lannes or Suchet giving such orders.

The action on the French left was strictly an infantry duel while the fighting took place in the Mosin woods. Becker's dragoons were apparently in no position to assist the 34th regiment as it fought in the woods. Becker

moved beyond the woods to the south along the large ridge and this action ensured no Russian reinforcements would enter the Mosin woods. Once the 34th regiment came back to the edge of the Mosin woods where it had entered, the units from Gazan's second line of infantry moved up to stabilize the situation.

The fight for the large ridge is a good example of how cavalry can support the infantry. The cavalry isolated the infantry action from enemy interference or regained the initiative when there was a reverse in the infantry fight. The French cavalry on the the right countered a Russian cavalry attack, which could have had disastrous results if the enemy action had remained unopposed. Becker's dragoons supported the left as best it could by denying the Russians the chance to reinforce. The dragoons did not enter the forest because this would deprive them of their mobility and observation. The dragoons would have been at a disadvantage if they encountered Russian infantry because the infantry would have had a superiority in fire power and equal or better mobility through the woods.

Lannes was able to direct the attack to continue because his cavalry gave him the freedom to maneuver. The subsequent corps attack by Gazan's division and both the cavalry divisions are evidence for this assertion. The attack continued over the large ridgeline and into the range of the Russian cannon. This is where the absence of the

French artillery was distinctly noticed. The Russian artillery fire was unopposed by any counter battery fire and consequently, the Russian artillery fired to its full effect. The Russian cannon caused heavy casualties in the French line for both infantry and cavalry units. The French had no method for causing the same damage to the Russians. The capacity of the French to take this punishment is a tribute to the leadership of their officers and the courage of their soldiers.

The arrival of General d'Aultanne and the 3rd division from the French Third Corps ensured the survival of the Fifth Corps. His decision to move and attack the Russians at Pultusk was completely his own initiative. This action thwarted the only Russian attempt to destroy the Fifth corps. The inability of Lannes and d'Aultannes to act in a coordinated manner was due mostly to Russian action and possibly from d'Aultannes' desire to act independently. These factors effectively removed the battle from Lannes' control and ended the opening battle in a tactical stalemate.

The Friedland Campaign

There was no respite for the Grand Army during January 1807. French movements prompted Russian countermoves and unexpected actions on the part of Napoleon's commanders provoked unwanted hostilities.¹²⁶

Marshal Ney moved his corps north to make a surprise assault on Konigsberg, the largest East Prussian city. Ney overextended his forces and the Russian commander saw the thin French position and attacked to destroy Ney and his forces and relieve encircled allied forces in the city of Danzig.¹²⁷ The series of moves and countermoves by both armies in the later half of January were seriously impeded by weather conditions, supply shortages, and soldier exhaustion. The Grand Army finally fought the Russian main body which was defending at the city of Eylau on 6 February 1807. The resulting battle had no clear victor or vanquished, but it was decisive in its effect on both armies. Each side was totally exhausted and incapable of any offensive activity.¹²⁸

Operations for both armies consisted of limited minor actions during the time period of February to May 1807.¹²⁹ At the operational level, each army built its logistics base and recruited replacements for the large number of killed and missing soldiers. The French and Russian armies were ready to begin operations at the end of May, but surprisingly, the Russians attacked first.¹³⁰

The Russian army and their Prussian allies pressed their attack against the French. They attacked in six columns, pushing back screening French units from 2 to 6 June, but slowing down when they reached the main French defensive positions.¹³¹ Napoleon regrouped his uncommitted

forces behind the French positions and began his counteroffensive with the Grand Army on 6 June. On 7 June, the Russians began retreating to the northeast. A costly battle for both sides was fought at the town of Heilsberg on 10 June.¹³² The Russians continued to withdraw to the northeast and crossed to the east side of the Alle river at the city of Friedland.

The battle of Friedland began with the lead elements of the Grand Army's advanced guard, under the command of Marshal Lannes, moving into the city of Friedland on the evening of 13 June.¹³³ Throughout the night the French advanced guard moved to Friedland; simultaneously, the Russians began to recross the Alle river to the east bank and continued throughout the night. The Russians moved through Friedland, pushing back the Reserve Corps screening units. The Russian commander wanted to deny the French the Friedland Bridge and destroy the French advanced guard.¹³⁴

The ensuing opening battle pitted the Russian and Prussian alliance against the Reserve Corps for four hours, until French cavalry and infantry from other corps began to arrive.¹³⁵ The Russians were caught west of Friedland with their backs to the Alle river. The Grand Army encircled the Russian army and denied them the bridges over the Alle and destroyed them in detail. The French eliminated all opposition by nightfall on 14 June 1807.¹³⁶ The treaty of Tilsit between Napoleon and Czar Alexander, signified the

end of the Friedland campaign and the zenith of Napoleon's conquests.¹³⁷ Napoleon owed his victory to his soldiers and the leaders who directed them.

The Battle of Friedland

Friedland is a small city in the northern part of East Prussia approximately 40 miles from Konigsberg and the Baltic Sea. The city is situated on the east side of a reentering bend of the Alle river with the curve opened towards the west.¹³⁸ The space within the bend is bisected by a small brook called the Mill stream which connects with a body of water at the western edge of Friedland called the Mill pond. Both the Alle and the Mill stream were unfordable water obstacles with steep banks. The ground west of Friedland stretches onto a great plain which slopes gently upward and west from the Alle. The Mill stream divides the Friedland plain into a northern and southern sector. "The plain is enclosed on three sides by a forest and on the fourth by a river."¹³⁹ The forest creates a large irregular shaped semicircle, with minor spaces interspersed, which sweeps from the Alle south of Friedland around to the west and then back north until it again touches the Alle.¹⁴⁰ The southern part of this semicircle is called the Sortlack Forest, named after the nearby town on the western bank of the Alle river (see figure 10).

North of the Sortlack Forest is the town of Posthenen. Posthenen lies on the Mill stream approximately

4000 yards from Friedland. On an almost straight line north of Posthenen at about 4000 yards is the town of Heinrichsdorf. There are two major roads which intersect in Friedland. Heinrichsdorf sits astride the road which travels northwest to Konigsberg, while Posthenen is on the north side of the road which runs west to Eylau.¹⁴¹ The Eylau-Friedland road crosses the Mill stream on a bridge on the west side of Posthenen. Friedland has only one bridge across the Alle.

There is only one piece of key terrain in the area. East of Posthenen is a low ridge which runs from the Mill stream to the Sortlack Forest. This low ridge provides excellent observation of the entire plain and was thick with crops of rye and wheat.¹⁴² There were no excessive rains to soften the ground and the weather had no adverse effect on the battle.

Napoleon was in the process of ordering to Lannes at about midafternoon on the 13th, where he wanted Lannes to occupy Domnau east of Friedland, then reconnoiter cautiously to Friedland. One of Lannes' aides arrived and informed Napoleon that Lannes' cavalry had scouted Friedland and the Russians were not present. Napoleon immediately sent orders for Lannes to seize Friedland.¹⁴³ Lannes already had his lead cavalry elements positioned at the Alle river in Friedland.

General Bennigson had learned of the French incursion at Friedland and decided to counter the action as fast as possible. Bennigson sent an a strong cavalry advanced guard to Friedland to gain control of the bridge. Bennigson's cavalry fought for Friedland taking French prisoners as they seized the city. He learned from the prisoners that the French advanced guard of one or two divisions was on the plain west of Friedland.¹⁴⁴ Bennigson then planned to cross the Alle river, destroy the French advanced guard, and recross the Alle to the east bank before Napoleon could react with his main body.¹⁴⁵

Lannes's cavalry was pushed out of Friedland by a Russian cavalry force estimated at 3,000 men.¹⁴⁶ At 21:00, Napoleon received a message about Lannes' hussars being expelled from Friedland. Napoleon was not certain that this was the Russian advanced guard; however, he immediately orders Grouchy's dragoon division and Mortier's corps to move to and support Lannes.¹⁴⁷ Napoleon received more complete information an hour later and ordered Nansouty's cuirassier division and Ney's corps to also support Lannes.¹⁴⁸

Bennigson was continuously increasing the size of his bridgehead in Friedland. By 23:00, he had three pontoon bridges erected making a total of four bridges for the Russians forces. All four bridges started on the uncluttered east bank and crossed onto the west bank in the

middle of Friedland.¹⁴⁹ There were also four small foot bridges established across the Mill stream to try and alleviate the problem of moving north and south.¹⁵⁰ By midnight of the 13th, Bennigson had two infantry divisions, one cavalry division and part of Bagration's command established on the west bank of the Alle. The Russian units were slowly starting to move out past Friedland onto the plain and along the west bank of the Alle.

Lannes went with the leading brigade of General Oudinot's division and the light cavalry, and dispersed Bennigson's outposts of light cavalry west of Posthenen and pushed to the edge of Friedland.¹⁵¹ Lannes sent the 9th hussars, the only unit that had been in his command since the battle of Austerlitz in 1805, to scout Friedland. The 9th hussars fell back as they met strong Russian resistance.¹⁵² At 02:00 Lannes was on the low ridge east of Posthenen and could see the Russian units crossing the Alle river.¹⁵³

Lannes had 9,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry on the Friedland plain.¹⁵⁴ Lannes had only three major units to begin the battle, Oudinot's grenadier division, the Reserve Corps cavalry, and Grouchy's dragoon division.¹⁵⁵ Lannes initially massed most of his infantry and artillery on the ridge east of Posthenen. He placed one regiment of infantry in the Sortlack Forest to hold the right flank and positioned Grouchy's dragoons in reserve near Posthenen.

The Reserve Corps' cavalry was on the left flank north of Posthenen to deny the enemy an approach from this direction.¹⁵⁶

Russian infantry began to push west of Friedland at approximately 03:00 to increase their bridgehead and the firing by French skirmishers increased along the entire center of the battlefield.¹⁵⁷ The fighting slowly spread along the entire sector to include the Sortlack Forest and Heinrichsdorf. The Russian cavalry was massing in great strength at Heinrichsdorf on the French left, while Russian infantry attempted to push through the town of Sortlack on the French right.¹⁵⁸ Russian cavalry, infantry and artillery had seized Heinrichsdorf by 06:00, but Grouchy's dragoons and Nansouty's cuirassiers pushed them out with heavy losses to the Russians. Nansouty had recently arrived on the battlefield. When he received his orders to move to Friedland, he pushed his division off the road to bypass the French infantry to get to the battle quickly.¹⁵⁹ Lannes detached Albert's brigade of grenadiers from Oudinot's division to defend Heinrichsdorf.¹⁶⁰ At approximately 07:00, the brigade of grenadiers had established their defense in Heinrichsdorf.¹⁶¹

Lannes then ordered Grouchy's cavalry back to support Oudinot's division and the reserve corps cavalry between the Sortlack Forest and Posthenen. The lead cavalry of Mortier's Eighth Corps arrived and was committed between

the Sortlack Forest and Posthenen to continue the fight against Bagration's cavalry. French cavalry supporting Oudinot in the Sortlack Forest had helped the infantry drive off four Russian attacks.¹⁶² Lannes ordered the lead brigade of Verdier's division into the Sortlack Forest to support Oudinot, when it arrived on the battlefield at approximately 07:45. The rest of Verdier's division went to support the battle between Posthenen and the Sortlack Forest.¹⁶³ This freed more French cavalry to conduct other missions. As the Saxon division arrived on the field it was placed in reserve.¹⁶⁴ General Dupas with the lead division of Mortier's Eighth Corps arrived after the Saxons and moved into the line south of Heinrichsdorf in support of Oudinot's brigade of grenadiers.¹⁶⁵ Lannes had control of the two divisions from Mortier's corps.

Most of the Russian forces that were to participate in the battle were on the Friedland plain at 09:00, with a total of 46,000 men.¹⁶⁶ There were six divisions and all their available cavalry. The infantry was deployed in two lines with the first line composed of two battalions abreast from each regiment. The third battalion of each regiment was behind and between the front two battalions, while the following regiments had their battalions in column behind the first regiment's rear battalion.¹⁶⁷ Bennigson launched a general attack along the entire front. Lannes realized he

was fighting the main body of the Russian army and that the Russians were determined to destroy his force.

There were approximately 9,000 French infantry and 8,000 cavalry in the battle.¹⁶⁸ Lannes sent his first messenger to Napoleon with his assessment and implored the Emperor to send all available forces to fight at Friedland.¹⁶⁹ Russian cavalry was surrounding Heinrichsdorf and threatened the French rear.¹⁷⁰ The main effort of the Russian attack was directed at the high ground east of Posthenen. Oudinot's division slowly fell back in the center, but maintained a cohesive defense as it withdrew.¹⁷¹ French skirmishers were to the front of the battalions which were in line formations with artillery interspersed.

Counterattacking mobile French cavalry stopped the Russian offensive along the entire front.¹⁷² The largest cavalry action took place in the open ground around Heinrichsdorf. Grouchy had disengaged from the center and moved north to fight the Russian cavalry thrust.¹⁷³ The cavalry battles ended favorably for the French as the disorganized Russian cavalry withdrew to the east to reform. The French also maintained control of the Sortlack Forest on their right flank, although the fighting was fierce.¹⁷⁴

Mortier's corps assumed control of the northern sector sometime before 10:00 with Lannes in overall command. Grouchy and Nansouty remained in the north holding the left flank against the large numbers of Russian cavalry reforming

to the east.¹⁷⁵ Albert's grenadier brigade returned to Oudinot's division in the south as more of Mortier's Eighth corps arrived and assumed control of their sector.¹⁷⁶ At approximately 10:00 the battle stabilized into a cannonade with neither side seeking an advantage through maneuver.

Napoleon arrived on the battlefield at about noon and began to plan an attack which was aimed at destroying the Russian army. During the rest of the afternoon the combat consisted of artillery duels and infantry skirmishes while the French forces moved to the battlefield. Ney's Sixth Corps, Victor's First Corps, the Imperial Guard and three divisions from the army cavalry reserve had arrived. The French attack began at 17:00 with five corps and five heavy cavalry divisions. The attack successfully isolated the Russians from Friedland and their bridges.¹⁷⁷ The Russians army was destroyed and the next day the fortress at Koenigsberg capitulated. The treaty of Tilsit was signed on the 25th between Napoleon and Czar Alexander I on the Nieman river, ending the Friedland campaign and the war.

Analysis of the Friedland Battle

Napoleon was attempting to fight a decisive battle with the Russian Army in East Prussia. The Russian and Prussian force had split into two groups. The small army of Russians and Prussians was at a fortress city called Konigsberg on the Baltic coast under command of the Prussian General Lestocq. Napoleon had sent a force to defeat this

army. The large army of Russians under General Bennigson was operating on the east side of the Alle river. The Alle was a natural barrier between the two armies.

Lannes and the Reserve Corps was operating west of Friedland as the advanced guard to Napoleon's main body seeking the Russians under Bennigson. Lannes on his own initiative scouted in the direction of Friedland before Napoleon had ordered this action. Napoleon wanted the to cross the Alle on the bridge at Friedland, then pursue Bennigson on the east side of the Alle. The cavalry engagement between Lannes' cavalry scouts and the large Russian cavalry advanced guard had set the stage for the following battle. Napoleon had decided to take action and send a large reinforcement. Napoleon's order for Lannes to seize Friedland probably reached Lannes as he and his corps were moving in that direction. The order did confirm to Lannes' what he was to try and accomplish.

General Bennigson was operating in relative safety on the east side of the Alle river. After the abortive attack in early June, the Russians were trying to conserve their force until they had an opportunity to fight at an advantage. The situation developing west of Friedland on the afternoon of the 13th appeared to Bennigson as one of those opportunities.

The Reserve Corps was moving into the battlefield in column formation along the Eylau-Friedland road. On the

flanks and leading the corps was light cavalry in a guard mission to protect the corps as it moved. The first action of Friedland was when the Russian cavalry advanced guard forced the French light cavalry detachment out of Friedland. This detachment probably belonged to the light cavalry regiment which was moving in the advance guard of the corps. When the lead grenadier brigade of Oudinot's division and the light cavalry pushed back the Russian cavalry outposts west of Postthenen, this was the first action by either side on the battlefield. This action was after midnight and must have happened with much confusion, since armies and leaders of the Napoleonic period were not trained in night operations. The night most likely had much illumination from a full or almost full moon, since Lannes could observe the Russian activities in Friedland from the ridge east of Postthenen.

Both the French and the Russians spent the first three hours after midnight assembling their forces on the battlefield and placing them in a battleline. French units were moved across country to occupy a portion of the battleline and form their units into line formation facing in the direction of the perceived threat. This effort must have been accomplished by both sides with confusion and noise. The first engagement by a French regimental sized unit with a large Russian unit, was when the French 9th hussars made a reconnaissance in force towards the Russians

in Friedland. This probe towards the Russians lines met heavy resistance and confirmed the Russian strength to Lannes. The sounds of this combat must have added to the general level of the noise and commotion.

Lannes started the battle with a large infantry and cavalry force, but with a small artillery force. There is no mention of artillery placements during the initial forming of the battleline. However, artillery is mentioned in the French forces once the Russians begin their initial push at 03:00. Lannes began the battle with Oudinot's grenadier division, Grouchy's cavalry division and the combined cavalry from the Reserve Corps. The Reserve Corps did not have a light cavalry division. Oudinot had only eight provisional regiments of two battalions apiece but no artillery. The cavalry regiments were from the grenadier and Saxon divisions and also had no organic artillery. Grouchy's division probably had one or two horse artillery batteries and probably no more. Lannes only had the equivalent of four batteries in his entire corps, with two of the batteries in the Saxon division and the other two in Verdier's division. Neither of these divisions arrived on the battlefield before 07:45. There is a possibility that the two batteries of Verdier's division could have been attached to Oudinot's division earlier. The Saxon batteries would probably have remained with the Saxon division to simplify control. Lannes posted Oudinot's division

initially on the ridge east of Posthenen with artillery and the Reserve Corps' cavalry. He probably had no more than two to four batteries of artillery; the one or two from Grouchy and the two from Verdier.

The battle began slowly and increased in intensity when daylight drew nearer and visibility increased. The first skirmish fighting started at about 03:00, when the Russians pushed in the direction of Posthenen. It is possible this was the Russian attempt to test the French strength. The fighting did not diminish and it spread to the left and right as more Russian infantry and cavalry came into contact.

Lannes had placed his units with regards to the terrain. He had placed his infantry in the center on the ridge with supporting artillery. Part of this infantry force extended into the Sortlack Forest which was on the French right flank. The light cavalry was placed to the open space on the left of the infantry to protect that flank. The dragoon division was placed in the center rear of the French battleline as a reserve. This placed the dragoons in a position to shift either left or right over open terrain, using the bridge at Posthenen to cross the Mill stream. Lannes had positioned his force to defend instead of attack.

The Russian attack reached a higher tempo between 05:00 and 06:00. The center was threatened first and the

light cavalry was recalled into the center to counter Russian cavalry. Heinrichsdorf was unguarded and the town was seized at 06:00 by a Russian force composed of infantry, cavalry, and artillery; probably a Russian division. The dragoon and cuirassier divisions under the control of Grouchy, drove this force out of the town and Lannes reoccupied it with a brigade of grenadiers.

The action in the center and the action to retake Heinrichsdorf are examples of good infantry and cavalry cooperation. The light cavalry in the center countered the Russian cavalry providing protection to the infantry in battle with the Russian infantry. The cavalry engagement which recovered Heinrichsdorf occurred shortly after the Russians took the town. The Russian force did not have time to prepare an adequate defense and was probably overwhelmed by the attack of thirty-two squadrons of French heavy cavalry. The Heavy cavalry remained in position as the grenadier brigade moved to occupy Heinrichsdorf. The heavy cavalry provided a screen which allowed the infantry to move into position without becoming engaged.

The battle then shifted back to the center of the line where the Russians were beginning to push back Oudinot's division on the ridge and in the Sortlack Forest. The light cavalry from Mortier's corps moved up and entered into the battle in the area between Posthenen and the Sortlack Forest to help the Reserve Corps cavalry oppose

Russian cavalry. This light cavalry supported the infantry in the forest. The heavy cavalry moved back to support the center, but it did not become decisively engaged because it moved again to fight around Heinrichsdorf.

As French units arrived on the battlefield they were committed where the fighting was the most intense or where there were gaps in the battleline. The lead brigade of Verdier's division went into the battle in the Sortlack Forest and the rest of Verdier's division went onto the ridge east of Posthenen. The Saxon division was placed in reserve, the first time a reserve was established by Lannes. The first infantry division from Mortier's corps was placed in the gap between Posthenen and Heinrichsdorf. Lannes had four infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, as well as his corps' cavalry regiments, to fight the Russians.

The reinforcements up to this point probably increased the number of French artillery batteries considerably. Nansouty's cuirassier and Mortier's light cavalry divisions each had at least one or two horse batteries. If Verdier did not give his two batteries to Oudinot before the battle, then they were now on the battlefield. The Saxons had two batteries which were now available, while Dupas division from Mortier's Eighth Corps would have one or two batteries. It is quite possible that Lannes started the battle with two to four batteries and now had anywhere from nine to twelve batteries. All this

artillery was potentially available before the Russian attack began at 09:00.

The Russians outnumbered the combined French units under Lannes by almost three to one in soldiers. The French fought a slow withdrawal under the weight of the Russian forces. The only real threat to the French was when a large force of Russian cavalry moved north of Hienrichsdorf and threatened an encirclement of the town and an attack on the French rear. The two heavy cavalry divisions under Grouchy fought a major cavalry engagement and finally prevailed over the Russians. This engagement was probably conducted with the cavalry regiments and the horse artillery batteries of each division. Once this threat was eliminated the heavy divisions remained in the northern portion of the battleline. This suggests their artillery support was with them or it arrived later.

The organized withdrawal by Lannes' force against the Russians attack shows that the French were in relative control of the situation. The resulting cannonade by the Russians, after numerous failed attacks, suggests the Russians had reached their culminating point. They were incapable of continuing any worthwhile offensive action. Lannes' force was also incapable of conducting an attack, however, he had decided early in the opening battle to fight a defensive engagement and hold until reinforcements arrived. Napoleon finally arrived with additional forces

and the attack by the enlarged French army, resulted in the Russian Army's destruction. This last act of the battle of Friedland is an affirmation of the strategy which Lannes took during the opening battle.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Summary

The three opening battles provide an insight into French combat doctrine in the use of combined arms. The circumstances in an opening battle placed a premium on time and dictated that events happen quickly. The emphasis of speed is caveated by the proper use of particular units with regards to the terrain which was present. The use of terrain, the unit capabilities, and the time allotted combined with the enemy's activities, determined whether the advanced guard were to be successful in accomplishing the mission of tying down a large enemy force until units from the army's main body arrived. Inherent in this action is the ultimate survival of the corps forces conducting the advanced guard mission.

Much of what the branches did in an opening battle appears similar to the activities the branches conducted in a mature battle. There was an effort to use artillery to cause damage to enemy units before battle was joined. The cavalry was used in a reserve to exploit success, to protect the flanks of the army on the battlefield, or to counterattack any significant threats to the battleline.

The infantry was used as either light or line infantry to screen or conduct major battle engagements. Line infantry played the dominant role in retaining terrain.

The Artillery's Role

The divisional artillery batteries of the advanced guard were important to the outcome of each opening battle. An effort was made to emplace artillery early in the engagements, however, at Pultusk this was not possible and the results were disastrous. Pultusk provides an example of the consequences when the major means of inflicting damage to the enemy, before close combat begins, is unavailable. The artillery provided fires at both Saalfeld and Friedland, which contributed to the reduction of enemy infantry and cavalry strength before the battle was actually joined by French infantry and cavalry.

There is one major difference between artillery in the opening and mature battles. The artillery was generally not used in mass in either case. At the Saalfeld battle there were only two batteries available, while at Friedland there was a large area and many Russian units which negated the massing of artillery in one place. The effort was to emplace the artillery as early as possible and in a position to influence the battle for a relatively long period before the battery had to displace forward, as at the initial positioning around Garnsdorf at the Saalfeld battle or to the rear during the Friedland battle.

Corps artillery played no role in any of the opening battles. The battle of Saalfeld was over before the corps' batteries arrived on the battlefield. The road and ground conditions at Pultusk were atrocious and the corps artillery was unable to travel through the mud. The Reserve Corps at Friedland had no corps artillery in its organization. The Reserve corps could have used corps batteries with great effect were they available. The turn of events would have had the batteries in position before the Russian attack began. Stating that corps artillery was not necessary in an opening battle because it played no actual combat role in none of the would be an oversimplification. However, in these three opening battles its presence would probably have not changed the outcome.

The divisional artillery in the corps was generally used in the support of its parent organization or to support a unit which had the same level of mobility. During the Saalfeld battle, the corps lead cavalry regiment had a horse artillery battery attached. The horse battery had to have come from the lead infantry division. There were only two horse batteries in the entire corps and the corps cavalry division had none. The horse battery had the capability of moving quickly with the cavalry. When Suchet's infantry division moved to the left to attack the Prussians, Suchet positioned his foot battery in the center

of his divisions sector to support the entire division. At Friedland, the capabilities of the heavy cavalry divisions to influence the battle was enhanced by its horse artillery. When the divisions moved, the horse batteries would have moved along with them and fired on the attacking Russians. The Battle on the ridge east of Posthenen was basically an infantry engagement and the placement of Verdier's division along with the Eighth Corps' infantry division in this location was to counter the huge Russian infantry threat. This effort would need to have heavier cannon to deal adequately with the threat. The ridge at Posthenen was key to controlling the Friedland plain and the Russian attacks were intense. There is a possibility that the heavy cavalry's horse batteries were used on the ridge while the cavalry regiments were fighting elsewhere.

Whether the engagement was an infantry action or a cavalry action there was probably artillery in support of both operations. The divisional organization whether infantry or cavalry allowed for this type of arrangement and the training under Napoleon emphasized the importance of artillery for both cavalrymen and infantrymen. At the battle of Pultusk the lack of artillery literally took away the third leg of a three legged stool. Russian units were able to maintain their cohesiveness up to the point of close musket range. The lack of a long range capability to

destroy enemy units, sentenced French infantry and cavalry to costly close range combats with both Russian advanced positions on either flank. This turn of events forced a closer cooperation between the Fifth Corps infantry and cavalry units, but this was simply out of the need to survive. The rain soaked ground did help to reduce the number of French casualties from Russian artillery. The muddy ground probably absorbed the initial shock of the cannon balls and they did not travel very far if they were fired short of the French positions.

The Infantry's Role

All the activities in the opening battle revolved around the infantry actions. The infantry was essentially the center of gravity for French tactical operations in an opening battle. This shows the emphasis in French doctrine had remained unchanged from the basic concept behind the 1791 regulation. The vast majority of the forces in the French corps was infantry and this aspect influenced the opening battle.

The determining infantry force in the opening battle was the light infantry. The light infantry provided a cover for line infantry, cavalry and artillery moving into position or as they moved forward in the attack. This is no different to their actions in the mature battle. The use of light infantry is best illustrated by the 17th light infantry moving through the woods at Saalfeld to get on the

Prussian flank or at the Pultusk battle, when it cleared away the cossacks in front of the initial French position. This action by the light infantry allowed the battleline to form without enemy interference.

The line infantry units acted in mass and were used to strike at Prussian and Russian positions in all three battles. The infantry was also used as the preferred force to hold a position. The defense of Beulwitz at the Saalfeld battle and of Hienrichsdorf at the Friedland battle are good examples. Both positions had been taken by another force initially, light infantry at Beulwitz and cavalry at Hienrichsdorf, but line infantry was placed in each of these positions later for the defense.

Finally, the ability of French infantry to fight in skirmish combat is a task which is recognized as the signature of the French infantry during the Napoleonic wars. This is best depicted by Oudinot's grenadiers in the Sortlack Forest at Friedland where they stopped numerous Russian attacks. The French infantry, regardless of type, maintained the ability to fight as skirmishers. The infantry of the Prussians, Russians, and Saxons did not possess this ability unless they were specifically designated and subsequently trained for this role. The French soldiers could generate a high volume of fire while working in small groups or as independent soldiers.

The Cavalry's Role

The cavalry during all three opening battles performed a major role in the outcome of each battle. The cavalry's actions provided the corps commander with the best means of maintaining the corps' freedom of maneuver. In all three battles the cavalry scouts were the first French units to come into contact with the enemy forces. These same cavalry elements acted in a counter-reconnaissance role and pushed back the enemy cavalry screen, denying the enemy cavalry any hard information as the French advanced guard came closer to the battlefield. The forward deployment of the French cavalry in small detachments had one major drawback. Before the battles of Saalfeld and Friedland, the Prussians and Russians each captured French cavalymen and gained some knowledge on the French force. The Prussian commander at Saalfeld appears to have ignored this intelligence, while the Russian commander at Friedland received and acted on accurate information, but was unaware of the French ability to reinforce quickly.

The cavalry had the predominate tasks prior to the actual battle. The cavalry provided forces to guard the flanks and front of the moving corps in all three opening battles. These detachments conducted two simultaneous tasks for the corps in its guard mission. The first task was providing an early warning to the corps so it would not

accidentally make contact with a large enemy force. If the cavalry detachment made contact its next responsibility was to fight and delay the enemy force if the enemy were also moving or to fix the enemy force if the enemy were

ending. The second part of the guard mission was to report any information on enemy activity which the cavalry uncovered. At Saalfeld and Friedland this was done exceptionally well. In both cases, Lannes had a good idea of the force he was about to contact before he arrived on the battlefield. At Pultusk, the French cavalry was denied any view of the Russian main battleline because of the twenty-eight Russian squadrons on the large ridgeline. The large number of Russian cavalry negated French light cavalry operations and the terrain obscured the vision from the initial French position to the Russian battleline.

When each of the battles were joined, the cavalry assumed a major responsibility in the scheme of the battle. The cavalry at Saalfeld was positioned as a reserve in the center and rear of the French battleline. There was no specific mission given to the cavalry brigade. It was subsequently used as an exploitation force when the Prussian infantry counterattack was pushed back. The French cavalry attack served as the last instrument to destroy the Prussian army.

The cavalry at Pultusk secured the flanks of the infantry battleline while the entire army advanced. The

light cavalry division on the right and the dragoon division on the left were of relatively equal strength. The French battleline, with two lines of infantry in the center and a cavalry division on each flank, must have looked evenly balanced from the Russian perspective. Both of the Russian advanced positions were taken by the French, but the position in the Mosin woods was eventually retaken by the Russians. Inside the Mosin woods, the engagement was strictly an infantry fight because the woods were congested. The dragoons managed to isolate the woods from Russian reinforcement but the Russians still maintained control of the inside of the woods. The engagement on the French right was a move and counter move situation with infantry and cavalry supporting one another. The Russians in this position were pushed back by the French but the French did not gain complete control of the area. French successes at Pultusk were accomplished by hard fighting French cavalry that countered enemy cavalry and infantry.

The cavalry at Friedland was essential to countering Russian attacks which endangered the French battleline. The light cavalry was used in the center to support the infantry fighting on the Posthenen ridge. This was a close cooperation between the two branches. The heavy cavalry was used as a mobile strike force to force back any Russian advance. The heavy cavalry divisions were first placed in reserve, but as the battle developed they

were tasked to attack the most threatening Russian advance. The first attack was to retake Heinrichsdorf from the Russian force which had seized the town. The second attack was against the large Russian cavalry force which was encircling Heinrichsdorf. Both of these attacks repulsed the Russian advances and restored the French line. The French cavalry moved back to a central location behind the battleline after each engagement.

The Advanced Guard Element

The only place where infantry, artillery and cavalry were under the control of one commander, below the corps commander, was in the corps' advanced guard element. At Saalfeld the advanced guard element was structured around a cavalry regiment. Attached to the cavalry regiment was an elite infantry battalion of grenadiers and a horse artillery battery. The initial action by the advanced guard element to seize Garnsdorf and defend it with the infantry and artillery was made by the element commander. Lannes ordered the cavalry regiment to move to the left and this act essentially dissolved the advanced guard element.

At Pultusk the advanced guard element was under the command of the lead infantry brigade commander. The 17th light infantry and the light cavalry regiment in the advanced guard element were ordered by Lannes to clear the ground in front the forest where the French entered the

battlefield. General Claparede was the Commander who accomplished this task. When the light cavalry division was established on the right flank of the French line, the light cavalry regiment returned to the control of the cavalry division. This effectively dissolved the element.

At Friedland there is no mention of a separate advanced guard element composed of all the branches, however, the advanced guard element was within Oudinot's grenadier division structure. A light cavalry regiment was attached to the grenadier division prior to the movement to Friedland. The cavalry regiment moved in front of the lead division and consequently the corps. The lead division had a grenadier brigade with a *General d'Brigade* as its commander, who was designated as the corps' advanced guard commander. There is no reference to the grenadier brigade commander having actual control of the cavalry regiment to his front or of an attached artillery battery. However, Oudinot did have operational control of the cavalry regiment and fought the initial engagement. Oudinot as the lead division commander was essentially the advanced guard element commander. Lannes knew of the enemy actions at Friedland well before the opening battle began because of the cavalry in Oudinot's division. This cavalry acted as part of the advanced guard element for the corps, providing information on Russian units in Friedland. The cavalry had cleared the road the corps would travel and the emphasis

for the movement to Friedland was speed and the need for security was then unnecessary.

The advanced guard element is an ad hoc unit which existed for the duration of the corps movement and the initial phase of the opening battle. The element at both Saalfeld and Pultusk dissolved when the controlling headquarters for each of the components of the element arrived on the battlefield. The cavalry regiment at Saalfeld rejoined its brigade while the elite infantry battalion and artillery battery went back to the control of the lead division. A similar event occurred at Friedland with the infantry brigade and cavalry regiments in the advanced guard elements. There is no record of any order issued by Marshal Lannes, his staff, or a subordinate commander which dissolved the element. This action appears to have occurred with an unspoken gentleman's agreement. At Friedland there was no partition of the advanced guard element because the units involved were in the same division.

The Terrain and Weather

Terrain and weather influenced each of the opening battles. The terrain around Saalfeld allowed the French to attack downhill and to deploy their units to different parts of the battlefield behind the cover and concealment of hills and woods. No obstacles between the French and the Prussians facilitated French movement around the

Prussians on the valley floor. When the French attacked, the enemy withdrawal was hampered by the Saale river permitting the French to totally destroy the halted enemy retreat. The French infantry seizing the two small hills at the entrance of the valley floor early in the battle, enhanced their ability to maneuver.

On the road to the Pultusk battlefield, the forest concealed the French move up to the battle area. The large ridgeline deprived the French from observing the Russian dispositions or the terrain around Pultusk. The Mosin woods concealed the Russian forces stationed inside and the woods and large ridgeline denied the Russians the use of their artillery. The Russian main defensive line on the small ridge caused the French to have to fight uphill in the later stages of the battle. The Russians holding the Mosin woods on the northern part of the large ridge, gave them a position to counterattack into the flank of the French.

On the Friedland battlefield, the Sortlack Forest on the French right and the town of Hienrichsdorf were anchors for the French defensive line. Infantry was able to hold both of these positions forcing the Russians into the center of the battlefield. The Mill stream split the battlefield effectively into a northern and southern sector and the Bridge over the Mill stream at Posthenen permitted the French to move units laterally across the battlefield

unimpeded. The low ridge east of Posthenen initially provided good observation of Russian activities in Friedland and did not let the Russians see the French dispositions or actions. The French reinforcements were able to occupy this ridge without Russian interference.

The weather at Saalfeld and Friedland was good and the subsequent terrain conditions permitted both sides to move unimpeded. The rainy weather at Pultusk caused the ground to turn into blanket of mud. This slowed movement for infantry and cavalry units considerably, while completely eliminating artillery movement for both sides. The falling snow during the battle decreased observation for everyone, probably causing some enemy movements to go undetected until the enemy was within close range. The effects of the ground are probably one of the reasons the Russians did not attempt a major attack once the French had halted their advance. In this regard, the weather contributed to the survival of the French.

The Evolving Doctrine and Maturing Leader

The French thought on the use of combined arms changed from the early revolutionary period through the Napoleonic period. The Regulation of 1791 was the official army regulation, but it addressed only doctrine for controlling and employing infantry. The cavalry and artillery also had methods of fighting their specific

branches, but these were as myopic as the infantry doctrine. The restructuring of the division to the combined arms organization of 1794 was a step in the right direction. This effort was obviously advanced by officers who thought that better cooperation between the branches was required. There was still no official doctrine on fighting a combined arms organization and the French did not have the luxury of solving the problem on the training field, because they were involved in relatively continuous combat operations throughout the 1790s.

Napoleon's successful operations in Italy provided an insight into the potential of a large combined arms organization. The three weak divisions he had at his disposal were effectively controlled by Napoleon and moved in support of each other. In other theaters of operations the French did not experience the same degree of success. The large combined arms division was too much for one man to control, particularly when the division was almost full strength.

Napoleon reorganized the French army with a *corp d'armee* organization. This placed the combined arms level of command with the corps commander, where he was the only commander who had to cope with the unit interactions between each of the branches. The corps commander's subordinate division commanders had to only concern themselves with the interaction of two branches. The

infantry division had only infantry and artillery units, while the cavalry division only had cavalry and artillery units. In theory, the corps commander had the ability to influence the action with any corps assets which he had in his control. The division commander, whether infantry or artillery, now had a span of control of two maneuver elements from one branch. His 1794 counterpart had to control three maneuver elements from different branches. The Prussian and Russian division commanders had a span of control which included five and nine maneuver units, respectively. The larger number of units these division commanders had to control was complicated by the increased distances between the units and the number of subordinate commanders to direct. The French army had the opportunity to refine their skills at the camp at Boulogne, France. Under the close scrutiny and direction of Napoleon, units and their commanders worked through the maneuvers of the corps d'armee. This was the last major gathering of the Grand Armee prior to combat operations and it was the last chance to train a large organization.

Marshal Lannes had changed his fighting methods between the battle of Saalfeld and Friedland. Saalfeld was a completely offensive operation for the French. The French literally overwhelmed their Prussian opponents and the small size of the Prussian force almost assured a French victory. This offensive mentality originated in the

spirit of the revolution and was infused in the French soldier from the outset. The battle of Pultusk was also an offensive operation and continued as such, even when the situation dictated another tactic. When Marshal Lannes realized the Russian strength on their main battleline, his effort to continue the attack appears foolhardy in retrospect. The terrain, weather, and enemy conspired against him to ensure his failure.

The battle of Friedland was a defensive battle for Lannes and his corps. His inclination to conduct an all out attack appears to have waned with the experience of Pultusk. Lannes was in command of a unit which was new to him and it was not as strong as his old Fifth Corps. The Reserve Corps strength was the grenadier division and its weaknesses were a lack of a light cavalry division and the small number of artillery batteries. The attachment of the two heavy cavalry divisions to Lannes's control more than countered the light cavalry deficiency, but the lack of artillery was never really solved. Lannes' effort was not to try and win the battle by destroying the Russians, but to delay the Russians by not losing. The cavalry attacks to restore the line and the tenacious fighting for key terrain were major ingredients to the success of the advanced guard. The tactical acumen of Lannes had increased dramatically since Pultusk and at Friedland he did not allow himself to be drawn into any impetuous acts.

The Friedland battle may have been drastically different if Marshal Lannes had attacked the Russians as he did at Pultusk. The Reserve corps winning an early opening battle would have resulted in a small indecisive battle at Friedland and not the major battle that Napoleon sought. The Reserve Corps losing at Friedland early on the 14th of June would have resulted in one of two outcomes. The French advanced guard could have been destroyed and the Russians could have withdrawn across the Alle river to safety, which was their original plan. The second outcome would possibly have been the battle of Friedland with the Russian Army in an advantageous position, prepared to meet the French main body as they arrived on the battlefield. Lannes understood the intent of Napoleon's plan and fought his corps accordingly, taking prudent risks which bought precious time for the French main body.

Recommendations

A detailed look is needed on the Command and control problems with the different types of combined arms structures which were used during the period. The emphasis is on the number of maneuver elements which a commander was responsible for with regards to the subordinate levels of command and the area of ground a larger unit covered. The study should include the English and Austrian models to determine what extent the organization had to battlefield success.

Marshal Lannes' actions as the advanced guard commander during the 1809 Campaign on the Danube against the Austrians needs analysis. A thorough examination of the changes in the methods of controlling or the interaction of the branches within the advanced guard would expand on the ability of Marshal Lannes as the advanced guard commander. The study should determine the changes which represent a continuing evolution of doctrine and the professional growth of Lannes through his experiences.

The parameters of the study are expanded to determine the methods of other French corps commanders during the same time frame. This will result in a broader view of French corps combined arms tactics in the opening battle. Marshals Davout and Ney provide cases where their corps were the first unit to make contact with an enemy.

An examination the continued evolution of the French combined arms doctrine in a opening battle through the rest of the Napoleonic period. The intent is to determine the continuing doctrinal changes for the remainder of the Napoleonic Wars. The study continues to view the doctrinal changes after the 1791 regulation was replaced in 1831 and the effect of this new doctrine on France's next War.

Finally, a thorough fluency in French would greatly assist in the study of any aspect of the Napoleonic period from the French perspective. The need for translations is

reduced, consequently reducing the time required on the study. The direct reading of source documentation in French provides a better interpretation of the writers meaning before translation.

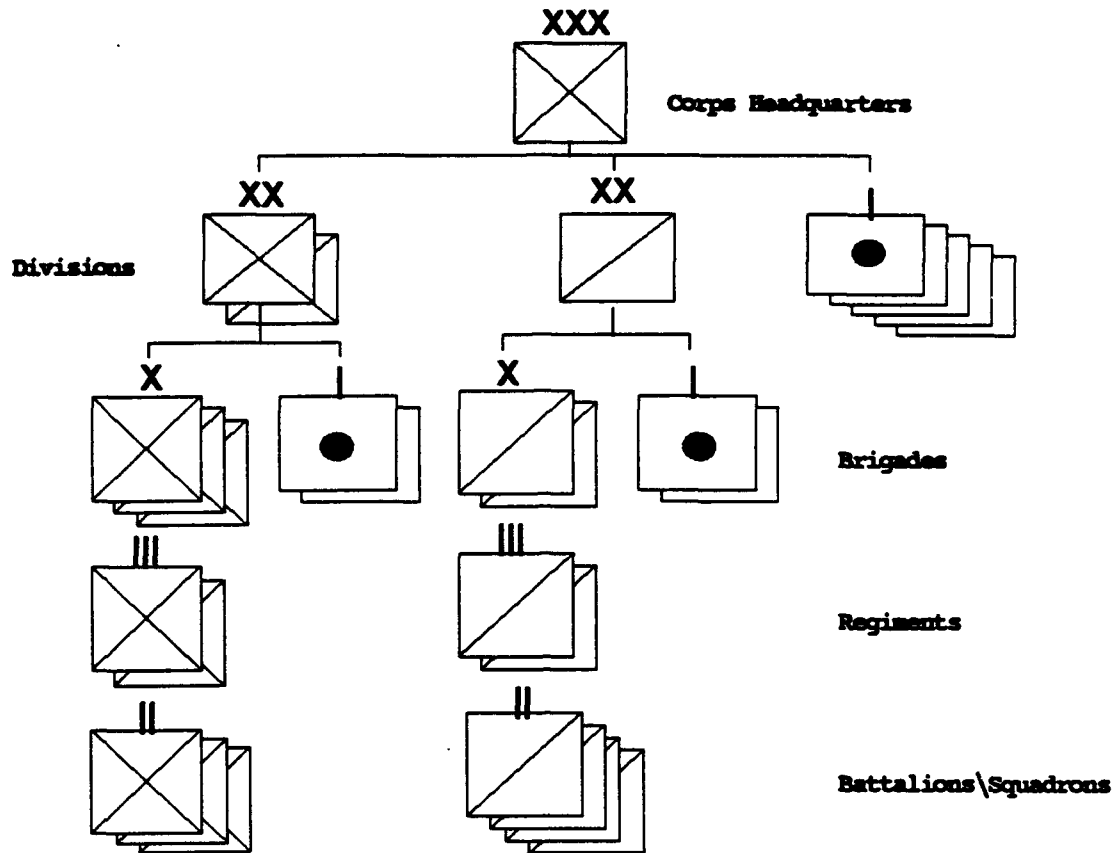


Figure 4. The 1802 French Corps Structure

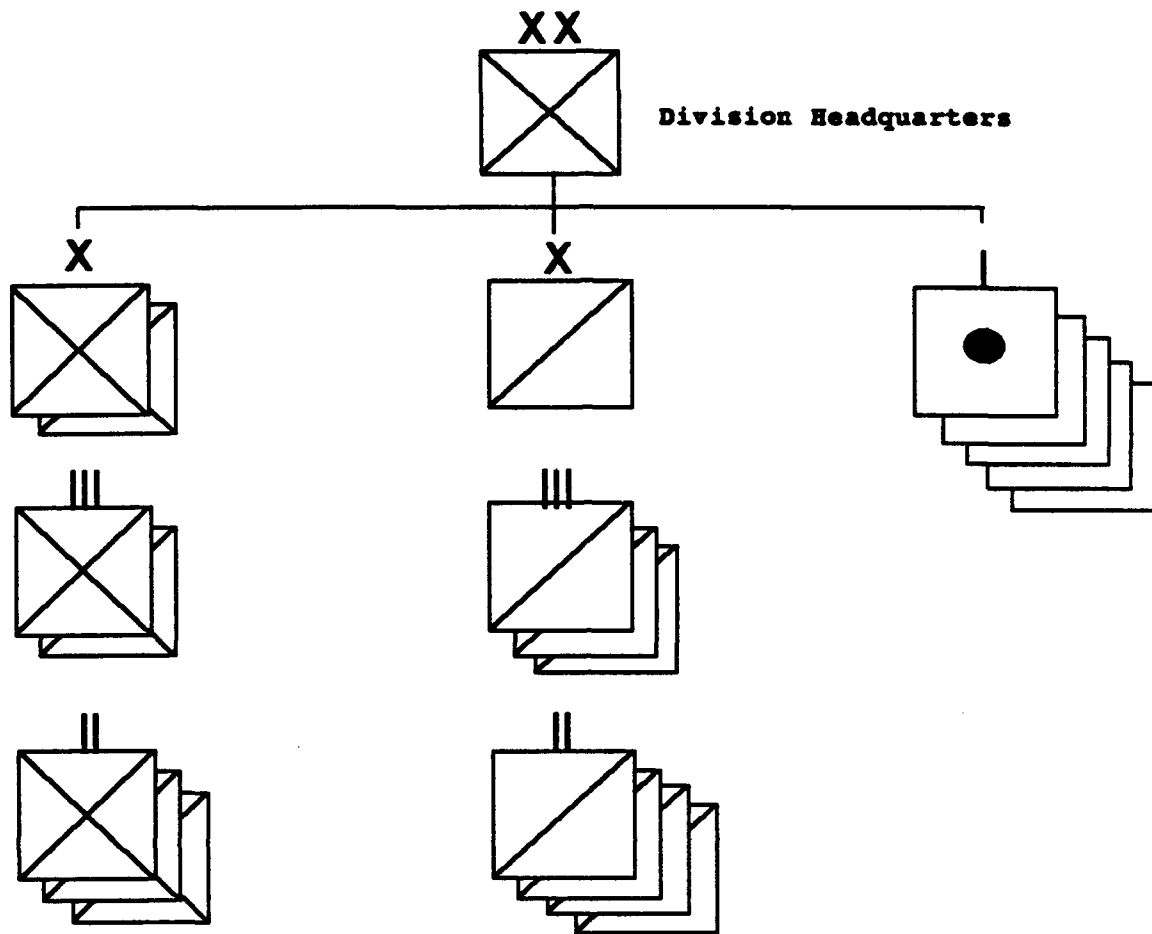


Figure 5. The 1794 French Division Structure

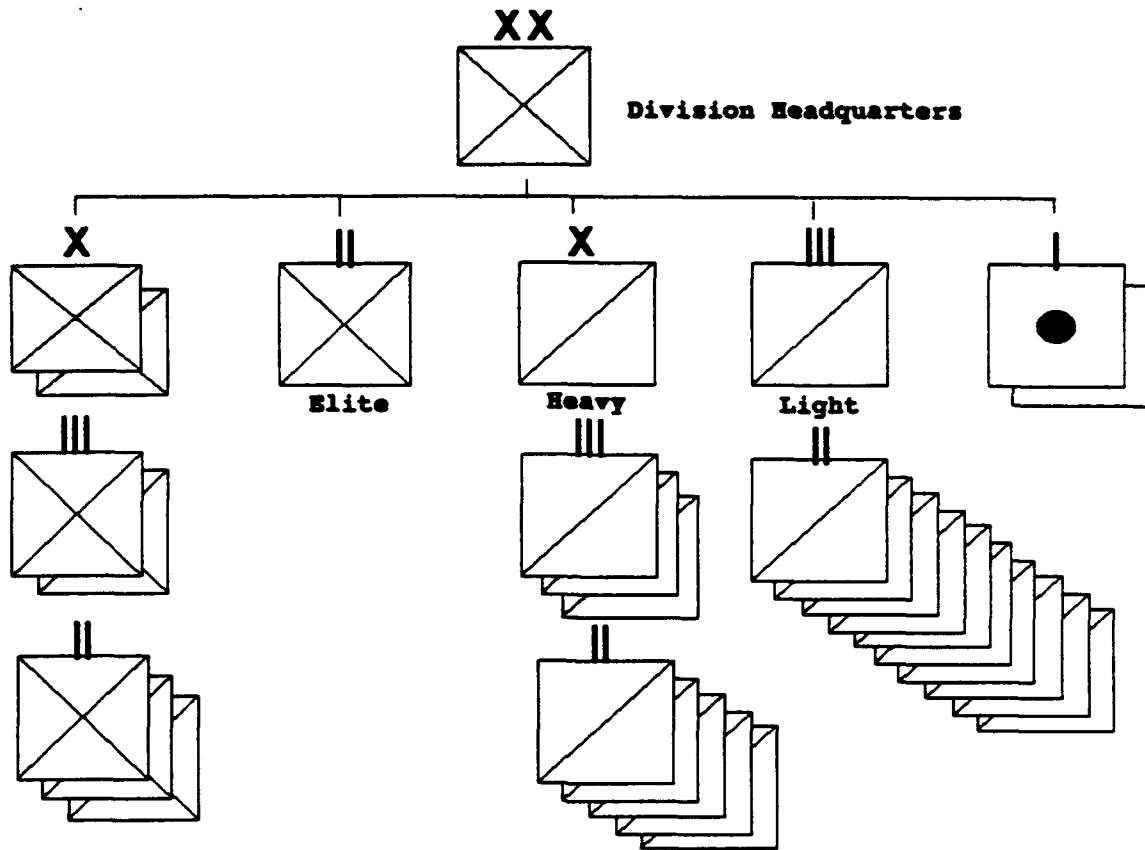


Figure 6. The Prussian Division Structure

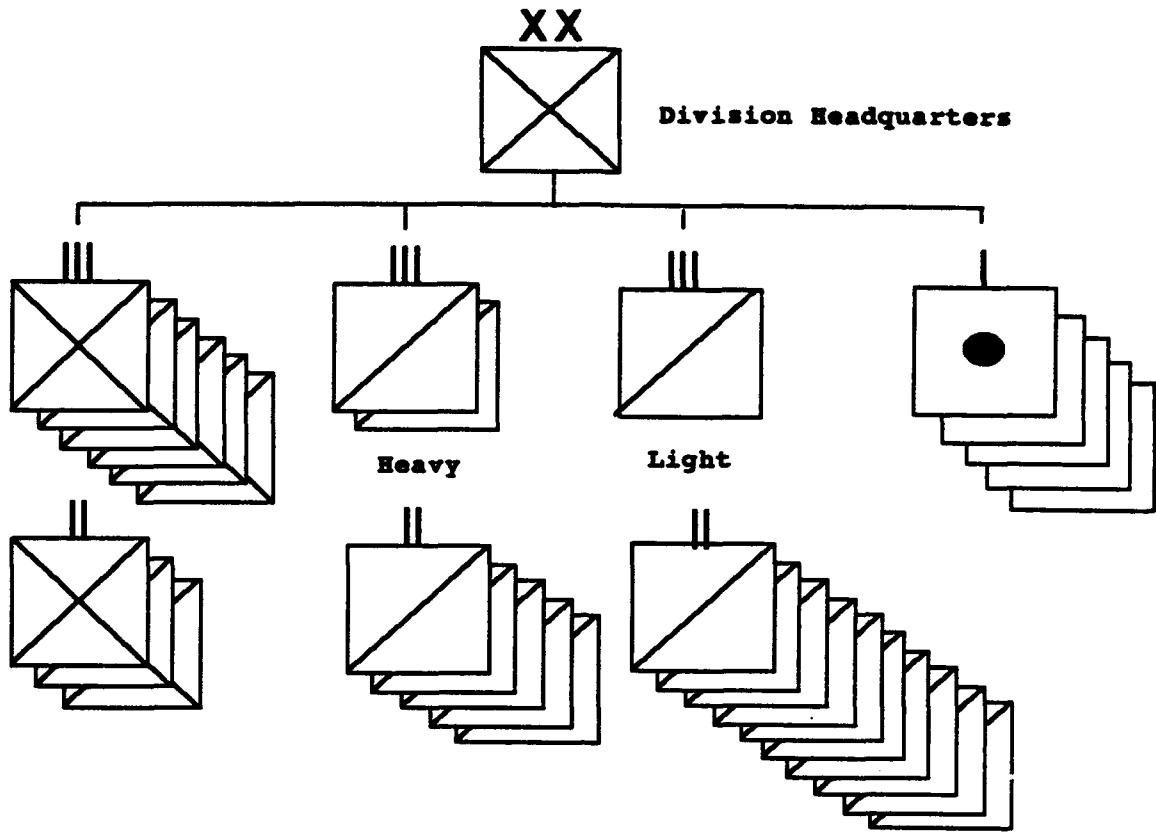


Figure 7. The Russian Division Structure

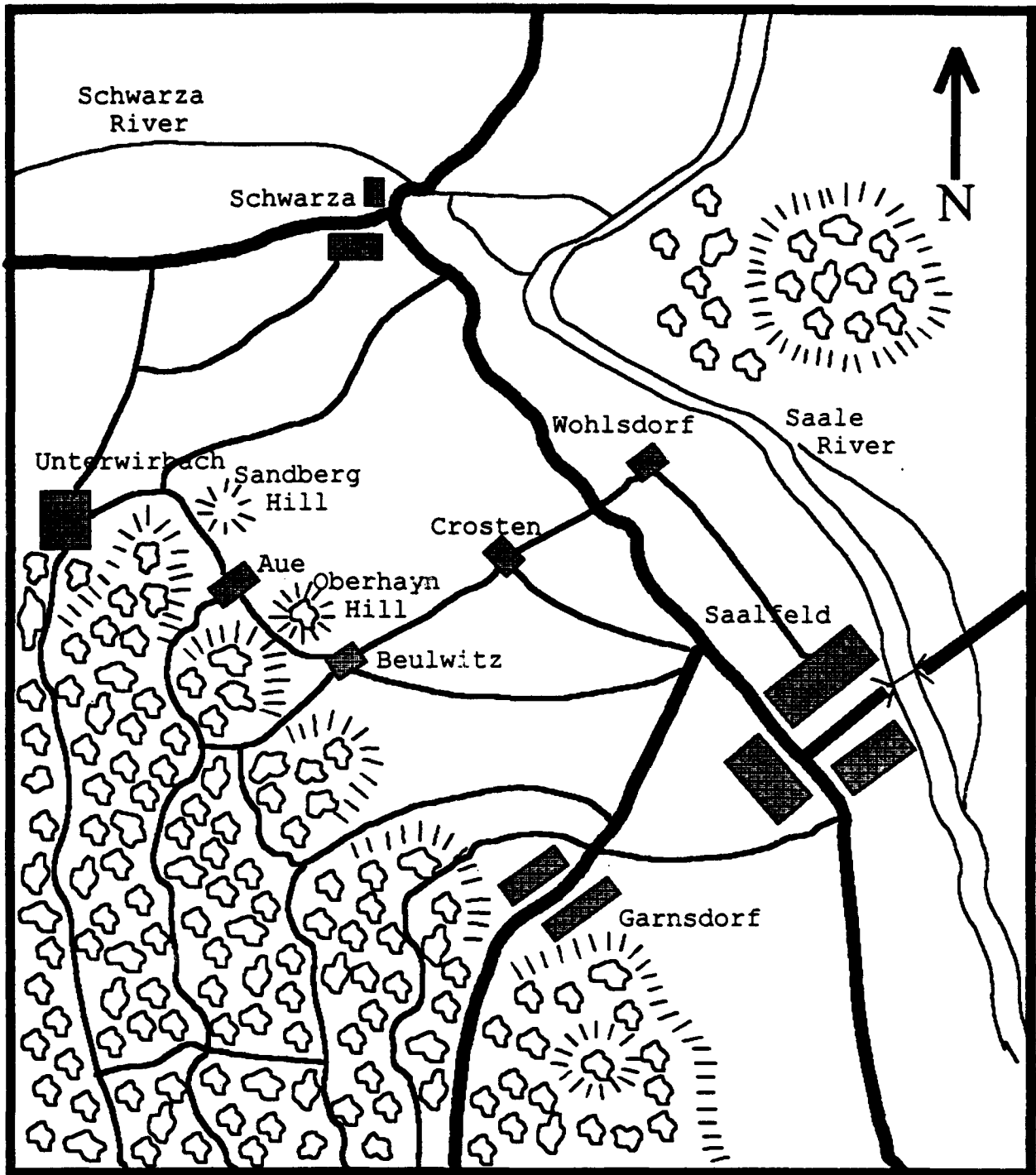


Figure 8. The Saalfeld Battlefield

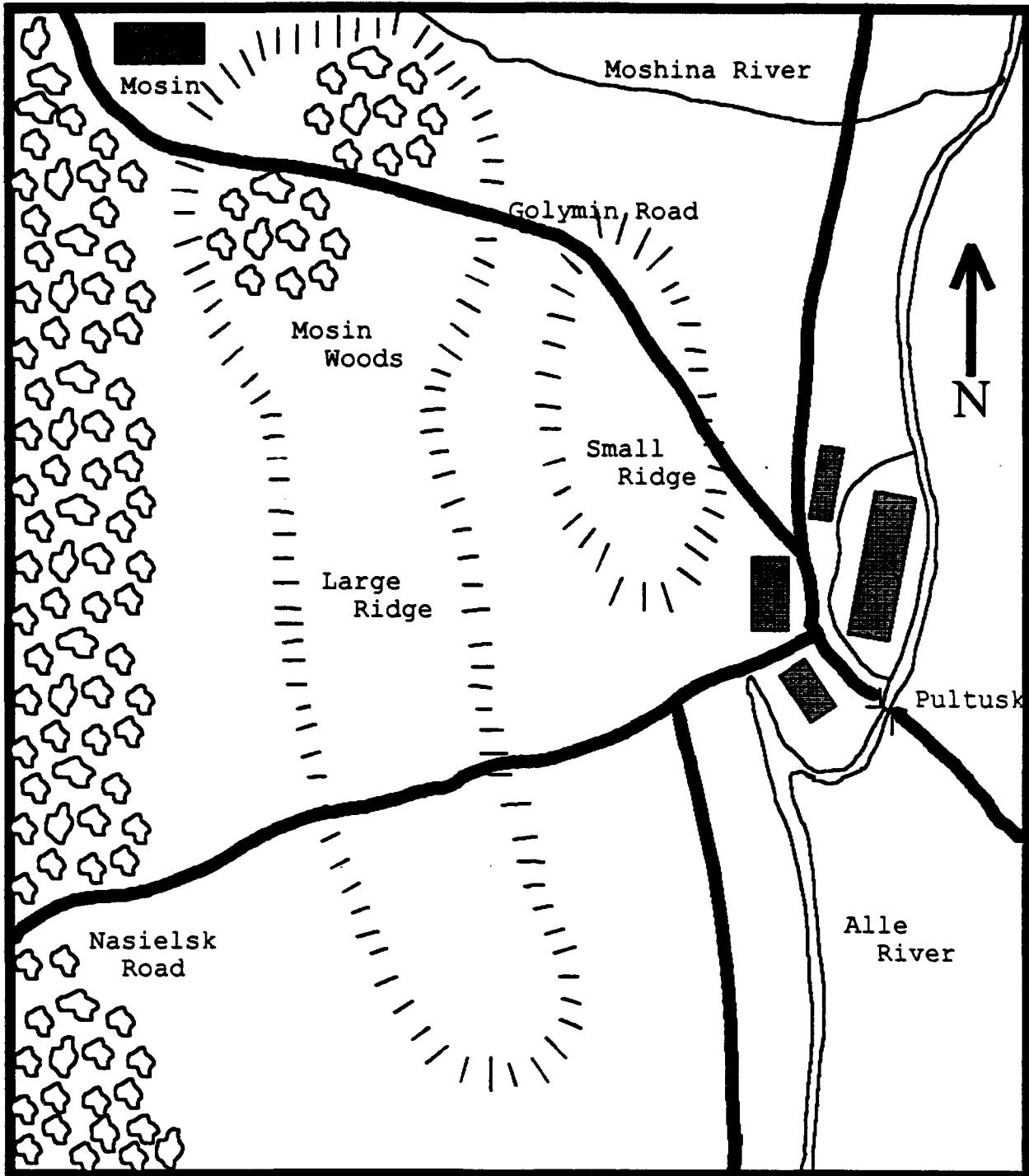


Figure 9. The Pultusk Battlefield

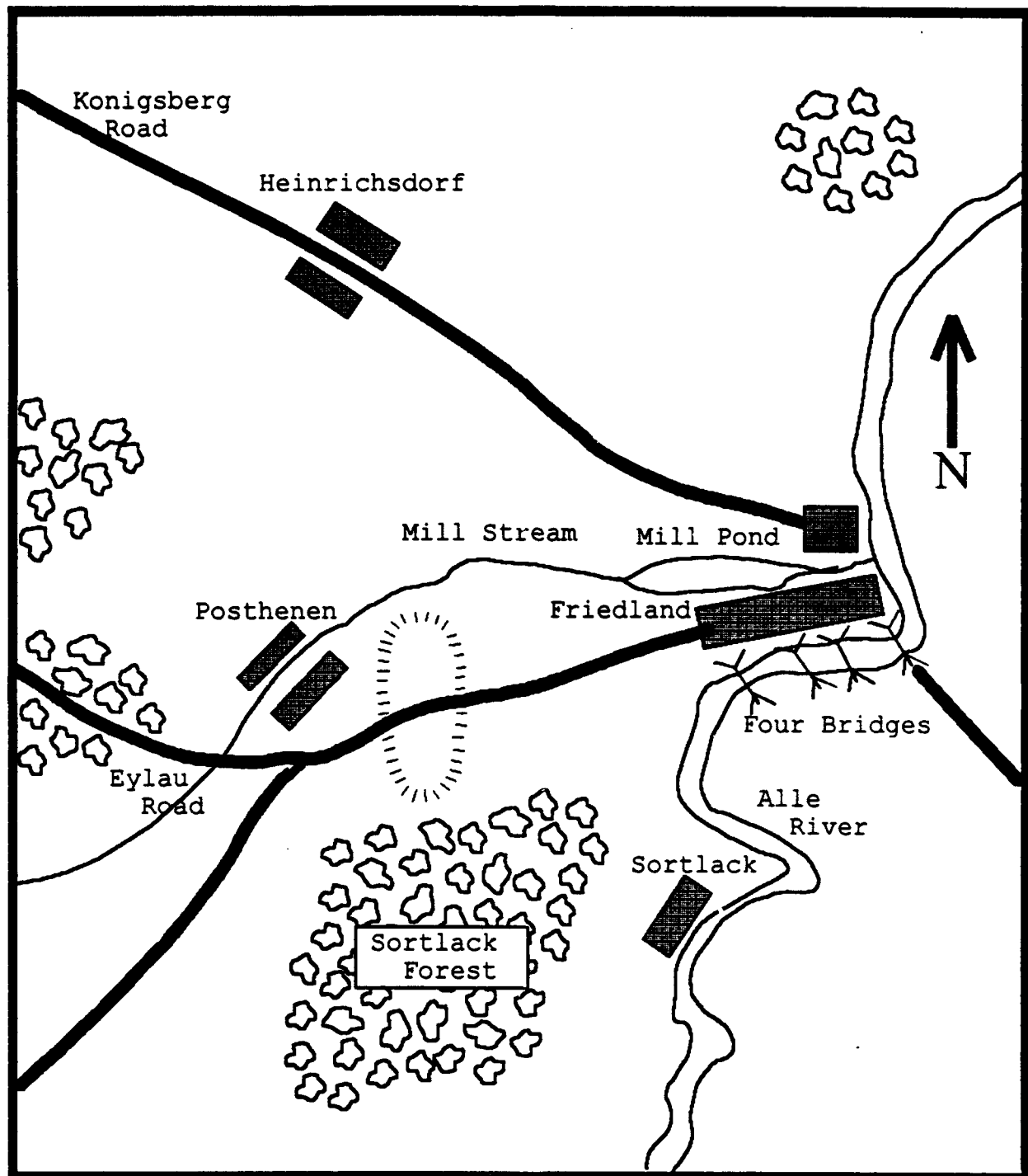


Figure 10. The Friedland Battlefield

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