

FICTITIOUS WARS

by N.H. Hyde

I must begin by warning the reader that to gain any satisfaction from what follows, two qualifications are necessary. The first is a broad mind; the second is an overwhelming desire to see wargaming as FUN. Therefore, it there are any of you who have never read the late Charles Grant's *The War Game*, or the recently reissued *Charge!* by Peter Young and James Lawford then do so as soon as possible. Within their pages are enshrined much of the charm and wit of a lost age, which I believe wargamers should set about rediscovering forthwith. Newcomers to the hobby would benefit in particular from this study, for both books explain the basic tenets of wargaming in a most engaging manner likely to encourage, rather than repel, the beginner. Similarly, the terrific range of works by Don Featherstone, another wargame pioneer, still provide one of the widest ranges of ideas for the benefit of our hobby.

What really caught my imagination was the delightful mix of fact and fantasy which Charles Grant wove into his scenarios. He took a historical period, researched it thoroughly and then invented mythical opponents to fight it out. His combatants were the peoples of "Die Vereinigte Freie Städte" and the "Grand Duchy of Lorraine", who did battle in a European-type setting during the 18th century. This period also happens to be my own favourite, but you could equally follow the example of Tony Bath who conducted a much publicised series of campaigns in the mythical setting of "Hyboria" using ancient armies. This affair was exceedingly well documented, including an extensive list of characters who got up to various degrees of mischief to add vigour to the scenario. There is no brake on the power of imagination, so whatever your favourite era or geographical location, do not be deterred by those "purists" who pooh-pooh your creative spirit.

Naturally, a mythical war serves very well as the basis for a solo campaign in which you can indulge your every whim without fear of recrimination – of this, more anon.

Having outlined the general idea, I would like to use my own set-up as an example to show you the kind of scenario you can invent without too much trouble. This is the War of the Faltenian Succession, which began in 1740 and is still raging, albeit sporadically. The protagonists are Prunkland and Faltenland, the latter having no small problem regarding the future of its throne. So far, other countries have stayed out of the quarrel, apart from hiring out regiments as 'wild geese' from time to time.

My criteria for the scenario were varied. First of all, I wanted the colour and spectacle of 18th century warfare, but without the tedium of having to paint battalions of 40-50 figures which Charles Grant advocated. A figure to men ratio of 1:50 came to the rescue here, which also made economic sense, and meant that I could represent larger formations in battle – a hint of megalomania, I dare say! I actually teetered around a ratio of 1:33, but shied away on the basis that rules designed for that ratio tended towards the highly complex whilst I wanted to be able to fight biggish battles, often solo, in the time measured by a clock rather than a calendar. In fact, I use the Wargames Research Group's 1686-1845 rules as the basis for my games, with local amendments to reflect the national characteristics of Prunkland and Faltenland.

Other factors which inclined me towards the 18th century included such simple things as the available miniature soldiery, and I was delighted to discover that the very figures portrayed marching so majestically across Charles Grant's enormous (9' x 7' – how did he reach the middle?) table were available from Spencer Smith. These are 30mm plastic chaps, very inexpensive, and though they lack the sometimes uncanny detail of their metal brethren, they proved to be ideal for a fictitious encounter, enabling me to convert figures without worrying about the cost if things went wrong.

The thing which really set my mind upon a European setting was the year I spent in Bavaria as part of my B.A. degree. Fought over by many great armies from Marlborough to Napoleon, the region is steeped in military history, and also gave me easy access to Austria and Switzerland which provided further background material. Next time you go abroad, keep your eyes open! Moreover, the German language, with its many dialects and additions from French and Italian, is a splendid medium for the invention of names for places and people which sound very much in keeping with the era. There

are other considerations too. The geography of Europe is varied and ideal for campaigning in a wargame sense. Of course, this is purely a matter of personal taste, and there will be those of you who prefer the challenge of extensive swamps, endless forests and bottomless ravines – hence the appeal, perhaps, of the American War of Independence. In other periods, for example in ancient times, barren wastelands and deserts figure more prominently. The object, however, is to choose terrain which sums up the 'feel' of your chosen period. A last consideration was a political one, since I required nations in the mould of European monarchies to complete the flavour of the period – of this, more later.

Having decided upon period and general geography, I decided to have Germanic combatants in order to reflect the undercurrent of Prussia versus Austria which pervaded much of the 18th century. There were to be equivalents of France, Russia, Italy and the Scandinavian countries too, but I decided to fashion these as allies or mercenaries only to avoid overreaching myself. It is a recurrent pitfall to attempt too much, too soon, particularly for the solo wargamer, and the consequence is invariably frustration leading to boredom.

Concentrating on two countries had other advantages. Lack of cash (as a student or when unemployed) limited purchasing power, so my plan was to start the campaign with reasonable, but not huge forces, which could grow in a gradual manner to reflect the escalation of the conflict. Thus by basing the forces initially on what I deemed to be the opposing standing armies, I could add to them whenever I had a few pounds to spare.

The sharp reader will notice that I recruited two armies. This is because I like to play solo for much of the time, but it also allows me to fight different opponents who may have another era as their main interest, but don't mind dabbling if they don't have to part with any cash! Naturally, if you belong to a club or have a regular opponent, then sizeable forces can be fielded relatively quickly when the burdens of finance and painting are shared. Furthermore, by using 15mm, 1/300 or even the new and quite incredible 2mm figures available, space, money and time will be further conserved.

Now to the more nitty-gritty aspects of fictitious wars. The nub of the matter is that when you create something of this kind, it must be plausible and CONSISTENT. This holds true because of our inherent reaction to invention. Read a novel, and you automatically test for just these things, which is why you don't need to be a literature graduate to know whether you've read a good book or a bad one – you just seem to sense it. Even a fantasy novel works on these principles, and Tolkien spent years checking and double checking for internal consistency.

The link here is that when you undertake a fictitious wargame campaign, you go through exactly the same process as a novelist. You invent people, places and ideas which interplay to create situations which should produce a coherent whole, linked together to form a narrative of events portrayed as the 'real thing'. The difference between a wargamer and a novelist, however, is that the events are indeterminate when you begin, and you have fun acting out – or 'discovering' – the outcome of events on the wargames table or in role-play situation. (Fringe theatre and our hobby have a lot in common!) If you find all this hard to believe then recreate the narrative of a wargame you have fought and, hey presto! a chapter in an unwritten book emerges as if by magic. All you need to add is the before and after with a healthy leavening of personalities.

This confirms the fact that wargaming is at least as much an art as it is a science and I favour enhancing these creative aspects to restore the GAMING into wargames.

Having therefore chosen your period and place, and set about embellishing the scenario with its appropriate background, you will usually require a map which will form the basis of your military operations. I say "usually", since it is not strictly true that you need a map, and some scenarios may actually benefit from a lack of knowledge of the area (or dimension?). But for wars in the period which I am concentrating on, a map is a boon even if only available to an umpire. (I've had fun myself in situations where the players, in true D&D style, had to draft their own maps as the campaign progressed in uncharted territory – with hilarious results when units

went astray trying to find misplaced towns.) Your map can be a real one or partly or wholly invented, and Tony Bath's *Setting Up a Wargames Campaign* provides some excellent ideas for the creation of fictitious geography. For beginners in this field, this book should be required reading. However, a simple idea could be to use Australia as your theatre of war, adapting the terrain when necessary – for example, you could transform the extensive deserts into steppe-like grasslands, or distribute the centres of population more evenly across the empty areas of the continent. All this depends, of course, on the scale of conflict you intend to create. You can have as much fun with a country the size of Liechtenstein as you can with a whole planet. Just remember not to attempt too much, too soon.

Considering the protagonists in greater detail, a word for solo wargamers. You can either favour one side in the conflict, or have sympathy for both (or more) of them. I feel that it helps to see the redeeming characteristics of all concerned, or it will become difficult to remain impartial enough to make the thing work. Don Featherstone's *Solo Wargaming* is to be recommended in this context, this work still being the bible of solo wargamers in most respects. Needless to say, if you have a 'live' opponent then you can be as scathing as you like about the scabby sons of camels on the other side of the table!

My own warring nations – Faltenland and Prunkland – have been developing over five years or so. During this time, the entire context of the campaign has changed several times, allowing me to experiment with various ideas and reject those which proved to be laborious or dull.

What has proved vital is geographical and demographical research (or, in this case, invention based upon historical precedent). The latter is especially important for reasons of available manpower for the armed forces, taxation and so on. You can indulge in the intricacies of exchequer and politics as much as you like, and the powers of the former would include levies on imported or manufactured goods, farm produce etc. Bear in mind that income tax is a fairly recent innovation, historically speaking, requiring an extensive bureaucracy to operate it. Taxes were normally gathered with varying degrees of coercion for a specific project in the pre-modern era, and refusal to pay usually led to a visit from members of the local regiment who would billet themselves in your house at your expense. This also meant that it was households, not individuals, which were taxed and those with the least political clout – usually the peasantry – had to pay the highest price for their freedom.

This leads to a political decision you must make in your chosen scenario. Are you going to have monarchies, more or less absolute in their power and supported by royal troops? Or would you prefer a more democratic state of affairs, with a parliament and constitutional monarchy – even a republic? You could have a go at reproducing the sort of potential civil war situation which existed in Germany just after WWI, with regular troops and Freikorps becoming heavily involved in politics and individual regions threatening to break away from the mother country. Such considerations have a direct bearing on the type of armed forces available to the combatant nations. You could raise strictly disciplined regular armies (often comprising the "scum of the earth"), or perhaps dabble with militia forces who might even elect their own officers. In this connection, George Washington once said that relying upon militia is "resting upon a broken staff" and he moulded the Continental army in the European style instead. Nevertheless, in a modern setting, a Swiss-style army might prove to be a formidable opponent, particularly when ensconced in rugged terrain. Moreover, in a Renaissance setting, there is always the option of raising forces composed almost entirely of mercenaries, with due trepidation as to whether they will remain on the side who first hired them.

Prunkland, if I may again use my own inventions as an example, is definitely an absolute monarchy, and King Ludwig himself often leads the army in the field. Faltenland, on the other hand, is reorganising on more constitutional lines, with considerable internal debate about the precise form it should adopt. One madman even wants universal male suffrage! Good grief, has the world gone mad? This ties in with the theme of plausibility: in 1740, schemes like democracy were not countenanced to the extent that we accept as normal today. Note that in Switzerland, women were not allowed to vote until 1971. In France, the ideals of 1789 quickly slipped into the oppression of Empire and America gained independence, not political revolution. Equally, in ancient times, 'democracy' was a subject for intellectual debate rather than a political reality.

This leads to a consideration of the size of forces which your

countries can call upon to extricate them from whatever political mess they may perpetrate. In the 18th century, a surprisingly large proportion of adult males saw military service. In some cases, it was as high as 1 in 4. Therefore, if you have a country of some 6 million souls, of whom half are males, up to 750,000 could be eligible to serve. This huge number does reflect a considerable commitment to the armed forces and would require a huge financial outlay by the state. However, not all would be serving at the same time under normal circumstances – perhaps 10% would be a realistic average in wartime, and 75,000 does equate well with the size of field armies in the horse and musket era. Bear in mind also the question of what you do with all those men *after* the war – note the earlier example I gave of Germany in the post-1918 era.

To raise, arm and clothe all these men – let alone feed them – will take large sums. Other, more able minds have researched such matters in great detail: see Tony Bath's book again, or Bruce Quarrie's *Napoleon's Campaigns in Miniature* for excellent explanations of how to incorporate these factors in a campaign. Feeding troops was a particularly imperfect science, and many real campaigns had no other object than to station one's men on enemy soil and live at the enemy's expense. If I may be forgiven for extending the reading list, I strongly recommend Martin van Creveld's *Supplying War* to those of you who wish to delve into logistics and add greater realism to your fictitious campaigns (or your historical ones, for that matter). In a nutshell, even the armies with comprehensive supply systems have always relied on local supplies, with magazines *en route* concentrating on ammunition and basic clothing, such as Marlborough providing new shoes for his troops on the way to the Danube.

This leads on to the question of how much paperwork you are prepared to do. Do you want to enter every last drachma and bale of hay into the ledgers, or simply decide in a more or less random fashion whether your armies are well, moderately or poorly supplied? The latter option can be decided by the simple expedient of a die roll, perhaps modified by a command factor for the unit commander to indicate his prudence, or otherwise, in caring for his men. It is advisable to keep track of each unit's progress, and Don Featherstone in *Advanced Wargames* outlines some simple methods of charting the effects on a unit's performance. Obviously, a half-starved unit will not operate at full efficiency, and will be prone to disease and desertion – but this can also result in a 'death wish' syndrome in the men, manifesting itself as fanatical defiance against all the odds. A canny general might take the El Cid option and lob tasty morsels (of food, I mean) at a starving garrison, though this might not always work to his advantage!

Another point to consider is what your fictitious armies look like. This will depend on how far you wish to follow historical precedent. The weapons available, the style of clothing, the tactics employed will all need to be consistent with the historical outline you are using unless you aim for a fantasy pot-pourri. In fact, many colonial wars have provided bizarre encounters between essentially classical weapons and modern technology, so you don't have to feel too inhibited in your choice of foes. The thing is that it should 'feel' right, and as long as innovation is restricted to what would have been possible at the time, the outcome should be balanced. For example, in the 18th century a more enlightened commander might have further refined the use of horse artillery or light infantry; medical services could have received greater attention, making wounds more survivable; or, as an extreme case, the famous Puckle gun (an early machine gun) might have been developed further. However, such things as breech loaders and recoil mechanisms are inconsistent with the period, and if you stray too far, your 18th century battles will begin to look suspiciously like 19th century ones. You will soon develop a 'feel' for the parameters of your chosen era, and it is simple to calculate the possibility of an idea being adopted or rejected, with a pair of percentage dice being the final arbiter in the matter.

The attire of your troops is all important. You will no doubt have been drawn towards a particular epoch or army by the fashions they sported in any case. You *can* use historical uniforms of real units and simply give them a different name. This spares you the effort of inventing statutes of military dress, and also allows you to use the figures in 'normal' wargames without causing a stir. But, I have to say, it is tremendous fun to invent all the regalia of your miniature soldiery as well, and really provides the final touch to all the hard work you have put in on other aspects of the project. Of course, unless you possess the skills to either cast your own figures or undertake extensive conversions, you are limited by the styles of commercially available figures, but a mixture of products from different manufacturers and a good paint job can reward you with a totally



*Vielficken Hussars charging into
Prunkland's artillery redoubts,
Mackenbach 1740.*

*N. Hyde
Jan '87*

unique force.

My own armies, whilst conforming to generally accepted 18th century styles, have imaginary colour schemes and local oddities of dress. (See illustrations.) One must always remember that military colour schemes are derived from the heraldry of the country concerned and are based on long traditions. I worked from the basis of the national (royal) flags of Prunkland and Faltenland (which, naturally, I also have to invent) to give me the basic coat colours for their respective infantry, whilst allowing the cavalry a greater degree of sartorial freedom. In assigning facing colours my main consideration was to make units easily identifiable, so I followed the spectral sequence in varying tones with exceptions for special units. (For those not versed in colour theory, I mean the 'rainbow' sequence of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet.) This turned out to be easier on the eyes and simpler to devise than such minutiae as buttonholes and lace patterns, and the regimental standard reinforces the individuality of each unit. In eras prior to the raising of standing armies, unit identification is usually a simpler matter, but can provide equal enjoyment.

One of the joys of wargame campaigns in general, and the designing of fictitious forces in particular, is the raising of less publicised troop types, such as pioneers, engineers, medical staff, semi-regular militias and border defence troops such as Grenzer units. I have provided uniforms for all these types and I will vouch that the effort was well worthwhile. The irregular units look particularly splendid, and though they occasionally disgrace themselves, if looks could kill . . . !

Now we have reached the stage where we have two or more well dressed armies, organised into units of the appropriate type, ready to march and fight at your command. The politicians squabble, the populations grumble and the soldiers' stomachs rumble. What do we want? ACTION!

Leaving aside the techniques of painting figures or making scenery, since both are topics which regularly receive expert attention in this and other publications, we shall plunge instead into one of the first encounters between Prunkland and Faltenland. This will also give us the opportunity to see how combat can be taken out of your hands and personalities allowed to influence the battle – so those of you who like to be omniscient and omni-present should sit down with a stiff drink!

The story begins in March, 1740, at the little fortified town of Mackenbach in northern Faltenland. This place was one of the border fortifications which lay close to the river Sturmwasser, which flows from the southern mountains and forms the border between the two countries. King Wilhelm of Prunkland (who died later that year,

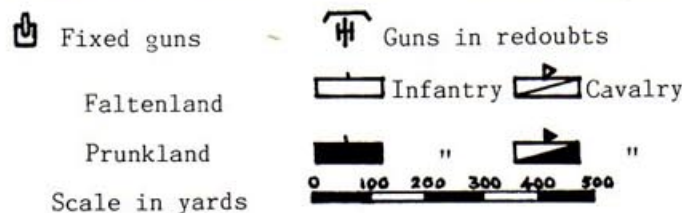
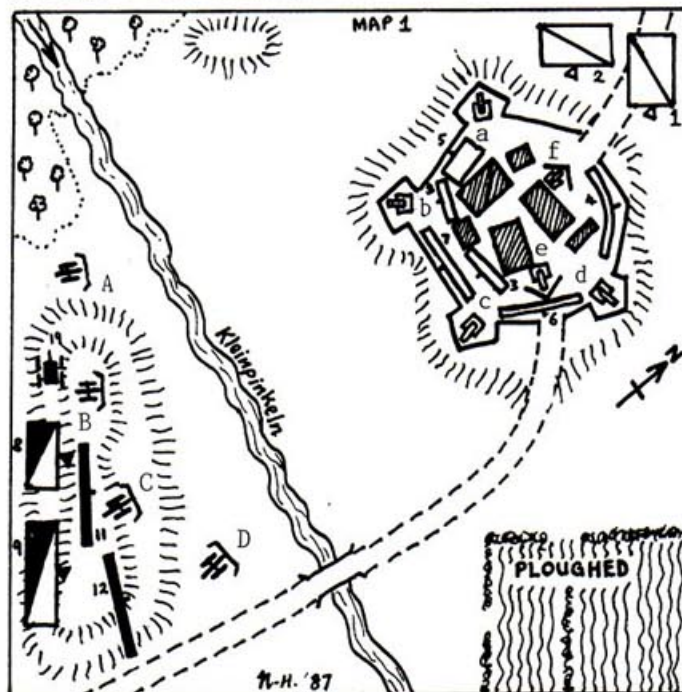
leaving the throne to his son Ludwig) had opted for a plan to take his main army into southern Faltenland in order to add weight to his political moves to take the vacant throne of Faltenland for his son. At the very least, he reckoned, he would be able to station his troops on the west bank of the Sturmwasser and save considerable sums in supplies. In support of this planned move, Lieutenant-General Maximilian von Durchschnitt was given the task of attacking in the north as a diversion prior to the main crossing in the hope of drawing the Faltenlanders thither.

Unknown to the Prunklanders, however, Mackenbach was home to a larger garrison than was usual at the time of year, for the local militias were being trained by several units of the regular army at the time. In addition, the defenders of Mackenbach were aided by the thick mist which always shrouded the valley of the Sturmwasser in early spring. Poor reconnaissance by the Prunklanders had failed to appreciate the obstacle posed by the Kleinpinkeln, a small but deep stream which flows into the great river nearby.

At this juncture, Map 1 should be consulted, in which the positions of the rival forces at dawn are detailed. The artillery of the Prunklanders had been set up the previous evening in redoubts of earth and gabions, ready to concentrate their fire on the southern wall of the town. The Faltenlanders had only fixed artillery in the bastions and their cavalry, it should be noted, were posted behind the town, concealed by the knoll on which Mackenbach stands. The garrison commander was Luzian Marcklenburg, about to have his mettle tested for the first time.

What von Durchschnitt had in mind was a concentrated cannonade followed by a swift assault on the old walls, thus obviating the need for a lengthy siege and prompting the Faltenlanders to commit considerable numbers of troops to its recapture. However, before the bombardment began, various units en route to the scene became lost in the fog and could only arrive piecemeal.

This scenario was played solo, but the methods used to take matters out of my direct control could easily be used in a multi-player. The two most simple expedients were (a) not assuming that messengers bearing orders always arrive on time and (b) letting the personalities of individual unit commanders assert themselves. I took a simple idea from Don Featherstone to cover the first problem. You make a series of "Courier Cards", about 30 in number, which bear notes such as "makes journey safely", "good horse – 25% faster than usual", "horse lame – 1/2 speed" or "killed by stray roundshot". Every time you want to change a unit's orders, you draw a card and must suffer the



appropriate delay or otherwise before the unit concerned receives its orders. The results of such a simple idea are remarkably realistic, and you can expand the idea to include the calibre of the C-in-C, so that he won't necessarily notice that a message has gone astray until the units he sent the orders to don't respond at the right time.

The second idea is dealt with by grading all unit commanders, rather than just the generals, which means that even if a message does arrive, it is not a foregone conclusion that the unit will respond as ordered. On the other hand, an exceptional officer might act on his own initiative to save the day. C.S. Grant once produced an article on the subject of staff, ADCs and such like, and for those who take their wargaming seriously this type of organisational structure is a must, with appropriate numbers of staff officers and couriers being allocated to each level of command. The potential of individual officers could be combined with the unit's morale value, but I prefer to work this out separately. Even elite units can have an incompetent colonel, while a brilliant man may be frustrated by poor subordinates.

As a rough guide, I divide unit commanders into 5 grades:

A – Exceptional. Obeys instantly, has initiative.

B – Good. Obeys next move.

C – Average. Takes a whole move to react.

D – Poor. Halts, then obeys in 2 moves.

E – Utter nincompoop. Throw one D6.

1 – 3, ignores the order.

4 – 6, reacts in 3 moves time.

The process by which these grades are established can take two forms. you can simply roll, say, two D6, with results like these:

2 = complete idiot

3, 4 = below average

5-9 = average

10, 11 = good

12 = outstanding

However, a more refined method would be to base the above on a more varied selection of personality factors in exactly the same way as a D&D player 'generates' a character for an adventure. It is equally apparent that levels of experience should be taken into account alongside factors such as intelligence, courage, strength, ability to survive wounds, general health, charisma etc. (Sadly, real generals do not have recourse to magic potions and spells to restore them to health!) This is the system I prefer, and since it helps to 'flesh out' the characters, they can play a significant role in the civilian sphere of your fictitious states as well. Thus you could have an incompetent commander who gained his rank by wheeling and dealing at court, or a frustrated genius who is passed over because he speaks his mind too freely or is just so ugly as to be repellant! Obviously, in a multi-player game the personalities can be determined by the players themselves, so get acting! (You could even dress the part if you feel so inclined. It's amazing what a uniform does to people!)

Enough of mechanism – on with the game. With mist shrouding the



Prunkland's Army Long Jump Champion, Gefreite Schulz, about to get wet in the process of saving the colours of his regiment, the 12th Musketeers. M. Hyde Jan 187

Unit Key for Maps

Bastions a, b, c, d, e and f each contain four fixed 12pdrs.

Redoubts A and B each contain eight 6pdrs.

Redoubt C contains eight 12pdrs.

Redoubt D contains eight 24pdrs.

Faltenland

1 Vielficken Husaren (16 figs.)

2 Kotztöter Uhlanten (12 figs.)

3 Mauerhalt Landwehr (17 figs.)

4 Tapfermann Landwehr (17 figs.)

5 Keinfeig Landwehr (17 figs.)

6 Steinmauer Grenadiere (10 figs.)

7 Blaue Garde zu Fuss (12 figs.)

Prunkland

8 Garde Kürassiere (6 figs.)

9 1er Dragonen (9 figs.)

10 Von Schichsal Chevaulegers (14 figs.)

11 11er Musketeiere (12 figs.)

12 12er Musketeiere (12 figs.)

13 1er Musketeiere (12 figs.)

14 3er Musketeiere (12 figs.)

15 Garde Grenadiere zu Fuss (12 figs.)

16 4er Musketeiere (12 figs.)

17 5er Musketeiere (12 figs.)

18 6er Musketeiere (12 figs.) This unit did not arrive.

19 Baggage wagons

battlefield, the Prunkland artillery opened fire and the infantry in the town began to suffer, the old walls not helping matters, splinters of masonry aiding and abetting the roundshot which came whistling across the valley. However, the Blaue Garde and Steinmauer Grenadiere did not flinch from their duties. For von Durchschnitt, the problems had just begun: the 1st Musketeers arrived via the road and their commander, von Arschloch, chose to ignore orders to advance swiftly to the bridge and dressed the ranks of his regiment instead.

Meanwhile, in Mackenbach, Luzian Marcklenburg decided to re-deploy the Tapfermann Landwehr to support the Steinmauer Grenadiere and move the Kotztöter Uhlanten to the west side of the town in an effort to attract attention away from the walls. Sadly, the courier sent to the cavalry galloped straight into a cannonball, and an ADC dispatched to the Landwehr was struck upon the cranium by a piece of masonry and had to stagger on in a dazed condition.

During this confusion, the Blaue Garde were taking horrific casualties, their comrades in the Steinmauer Grenadiere not faring much better, but the bravery of both units under this galling fire was exemplary.

On the far side of the Kleinpinkeln, von Durchschnitt saw another unit arrive – none other than the Garde Grenadiere – on the road behind the 1st Musketeers. Von Arschloch, commander of this latter regiment, then decided upon something quite extraordinary. The mist lifted momentarily, and he saw the 11th Musketeers close by, commanded by von Keinglück. Now, these two men had never got on well – a long story, involving an allegation made by Keinglück relating to von Arschloch and drummer boys – and von Arschloch decided to assert the seniority of his own unit over that of his rival. With a shout of "Vorwärts, marsch!" he led his column straight into the back of the 11th, and shoved his way to the front.

It will come as no surprise to learn that von Keinglück and his men took great exception to this and a general brawl developed which was only stopped by the intervention of von Durchschnitt himself who threatened to cashier the two errant colonels. This was certainly one of the most disgraceful events in Prunkland's proud history, and augured badly for the outcome of the day.

Faltenland's artillery was by now replying to the barrage with some gusto and at about 10 a.m. managed to knock out a pair of 6pdr guns in redoubt A. It was also at this point that Marcklenburg realised that the Uhlans had not responded to his orders, and so dispatched his personal aide to convey the message. The Kotztöter unit then made up for lost time in fine fashion and wheeled around to the western flank. Marcklenburg had them poised in an excellent position should the Prunklanders attempt to ford the stream.

The Blaue Garde, however, were in a worsening situation, with their section of the wall taking the brunt of the enemy cannonade and only their remarkable *esprit de corps* kept them at their post.

On the other side, the Prunklanders were in a mess. The 3rd Musketeers arrived in the south to add to the confusion and their commander, von Probe, rated as a somewhat less than imaginative fellow. He therefore halted his regiment and awaited inspiration. Poor von Durchschnit was reduced to traffic policeman, and finally cursed and threatened his infantry into some semblance of an attack. The 11th Musketeers and Garde moved off, with the 12th Musketeers moving downhill in support. It was a moot point whether the ever widening gaps in the south wall of Mackenbach and the ranks of the Blaue Garde could be exploited.

Marcklenburg still had an ace up his sleeve – the Vielficken Hussars – and they were as yet concealed behind the town by terrain and weather. Their time would come later, but in the meantime the battered remnants of the Blaue Garde were mercifully withdrawn into the citadel together with the survivors of the Steinmauer Grenadiere, these units being replaced by the Keimfeig and Tapfermann units respectively. Less fortuitous was the poor performance of the guns in the bastions, which were making little impression on the enemy during this phase of the battle.

At about 11 a.m., Prunkland suffered another headache in the form of the von Schicksal Chevaulegers. This was another unit which had got lost in the mist and, marching to the sound of the guns, arrived in some disarray in exactly the spot where, a few minutes earlier, von Durchschnit had been trying to clear the congestion in his line of battle. This worthy gentleman was now atop the main hill, and sent a messenger to intercept the cavalry. The unfortunate courier had his head blasted asunder by a cannonball but, such a fine horseman was he that the erect torso, legs still gripping the saddle in *rigor mortis*, arrived before the astonished von Schicksal still clutching the handwritten orders. Suitably impressed, the cavalry conformed to orders and joined the cuirassiers behind the hill in the south.

Prunkland's artillerymen cared not one whit that Marcklenburg had reshuffled his units, and the Keimfeig Landwehr now lining the south wall were baptised in blood in the most ghastly fashion. It was as well for Faltenland that the Blaue Garde had set such a stirring example and the militiamen stayed put. Tension began to mount as the Prunklanders trudged dourly in the direction of the south walls of Mackenbach.

It was definitely not Prunkland's day, however, as almost an entire troop of von Schicksal's Chevaulegers were suddenly taken violently ill, later diagnosed as dysentery caused by drinking polluted water.

On the other hand, fortune was beginning to smile again upon Marcklenburg's gunners, as they dismounted two more 6pdr guns in redoubt A and severely damaged a couple of the big 24pdrs in redoubt D, such brilliant gunnery requiring no mean aim. Covered by the low-lying mist, the Kotztöter Uhlans had reached the banks of the stream in the west and now awaited further orders. A courier was duly sent in their direction, but Fate was against men bearing messages this day, and his horse was killed, forcing him to carry on on foot.

Von Durchschnit had espied the Uhlans through the haze and, leaving nothing to chance this time, went in person to the 3rd Musketeers and sent them to the left flank in support of the 6pdr battery there, and to guard the baggage. As this was put in motion the 12th Musketeers were looking for a shallow spot to cross the Kleinpinkeln and the 1st Musketeers and Garde were nearly on the bridge.

As the furious cannonade continued (the officers of Keimfeig Landwehr were now having to keep their men in line at the walls by force), Tapfermann Landwehr had taken up positions covering the main gate, and Marcklenburg's brave messenger at last reached the Kotztöter Uhlans who instantly divided into two squadrons and got ready for imminent action.

Von Durchschnit, on the other hand, was becoming rather anxious and sent the Garde Kürassiere to the left flank in anticipation of the threat posed there by the enemy lancers. His infantry were now fully committed to crossing the Kleinpinkeln, those forced to wade across were, in places, in water up to their chests, holding their muskets and cartridges aloft to keep them dry. The water was

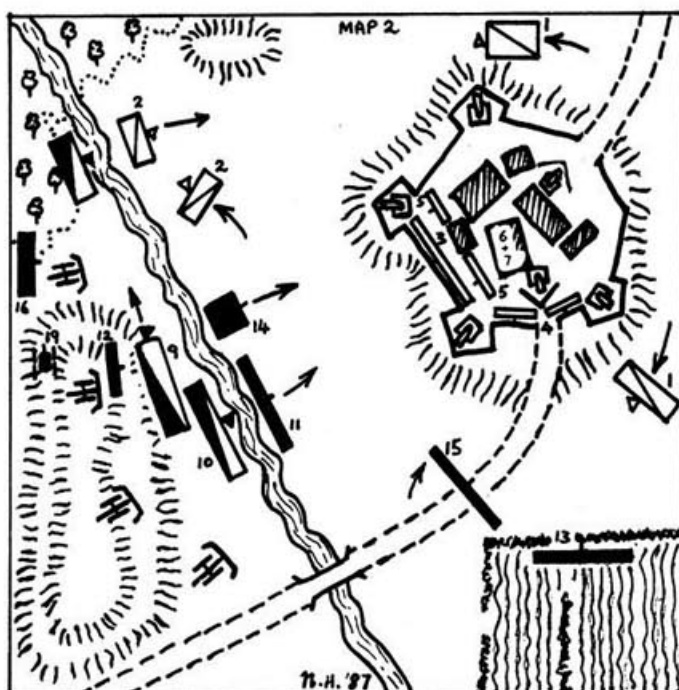
reported as being "*Verkramt kalt*".

At this point, the Keimfeig Landwehr, reduced to half strength by the gunnery directed at the walls, decided that they had had enough and, officers notwithstanding, abandoned the wall and headed for the citadel. This could have been a calamity for Faltenland if the enemy advance had been better coordinated, but despite gnashing of teeth there was nothing von Durchschnit could do to exploit the situation in spite of the mist having cleared from all but the small hollows. The 1st Dragoons were sent an order to race across the bridge and dominate the gap in the defences, but their colonel, von Kleinhirn, lived up to his name and did nothing instead.

The tide was about to turn for Marcklenburg. The 12th Musketeers were now heading for the breach and came under canister fire from the bastions b and c, and were sufficiently chastened as to halt their advance. The 1st squadron of Kotztöter Uhlans plunged into the stream, as the other squadron headed for the now exposed flank of Durchschnit's infantry. The 12th Musketeers looked aghast at this threat for a moment, then turned on their heels and headed back from whence they had come, with the delighted horsemen hot in pursuit. The gunners in redoubt A spotted the threat to themselves and hurriedly trained their guns towards the 1st squadron of Kotztöter Uhlans, fired – and missed!

As all this was going on, the remainder of Prunkland's guns had switched their attention to bastion c in Mackenbach, and a veritable storm of iron silenced the guns there, thus giving the infantry of the assault a useful opportunity. The men of the 12th Musketeers, however, were in turn being butchered as they struggled back across the Kleinpinkeln, and their plight induced their neighbours, the 11th, to conform with this rearward move. On the right, however, the 1st Musketeers and the Garde were pressing on towards the main gates of Mackenbach, and on the left the beleaguered redoubt A was given succour by the Garde Kürassiere who reached the fringes of the woods to the west. Von Durchschnit himself urged his cavalry reserve up the hill to encourage the troops so ingloriously retreating in his centre and to dissuade the enemy lancers from following them. It was just after midday, and the sun was shining.

With the time bought so gloriously by Kotztöter's cavalry, Marcklenburg gathered sufficient gunners from the unthreatened sections of the defences to man bastion c, and allocated troops to protect the breached section of the wall. These were the Mauerhalt Landwehr, mostly young boys and old men. Faltenland's Uhlans had not yet finished their day's work, and the 1st squadron swung about to face the enemy cuirassiers. The gunners in bastion b were outstanding at this juncture, and knocked out two of von Durchschnit's 12pdrs in redoubt C. The 2nd squadron of Uhlans regrouped on the north bank of the stream while their quarry, the 12th Musketeers, continued in flight up the hill opposite them. At this time, their comrades in the 1st squadron ploughed into the Garde Kürassiere, taking their heavier opponents somewhat aback.



Von Durchschnit was in something of a quandary, and could have saved himself the trouble of sending an order to the 3rd and 11th Musketeers to recross the stream and return to the attack. Needless to say, the messenger never reached them. This left the 1st Musketeers and Garde isolated, deploying to assault the main gate.

Marcklenburg, however, had by now decided to play his trump, and took no chances, riding out to the Vielficken Hussars to set them in motion, one squadron to the east and one to the west of Mackenbach.

Having recovered from their shock, the Garde Kürassiere were beginning to assert themselves over the Kotztöter Uhlans whose lances were now more of a hindrance than a help, whilst on the far right, von Arschloch, eager to redeem himself, was closing in upon the main gate with the 1st Musketeers, the Garde in close support to his left. These moves, however, allowed bastion d to open fire with canister, and the musketeers suffered some casualties.

At last, after a fierce struggle, the Garde Kürassiere made a determined push and put the enemy light horse to flight, and von Durchschnit was further comforted by the arrival on his left flank of the 4th Musketeers. In the centre, however, yet another courier sent to get the advance restarted was rendered *hors de combat*. On the right, the situation became perilous as the 1st Musketeers and Garde were shocked by the sudden appearance of the previously concealed Vielficken Hussars. Von Arschloch responded well, and took his unit swiftly to the protection of the hedges lining the fields to his rear, whilst the Garde wheeled to face the oncoming horsemen. Infuriated by the delays, von Durchschnit rode down from his vantage point to the centre and ordered the 3rd and 11th across the Kleinpinkeln with the von Schicksal Chevaulegers in support. As soon as these units began to move, they started to take casualties from the fortress guns. (See Map 2.)

Believing that they could now rest, the Garde Kürassiere were content to bundle the 1st squadron of Kotztöter into the stream, but no sooner had they done so than they were set upon by the 2nd squadron of lancers, who had moved across to support their brothers in arms. As this was going on, the 2nd squadron of Vielficken hussars, after receiving an ineffectual volley, thundered into the Garde Grenadiere and so ferocious was their onset that the Garde actually scattered and ran for their lives.

Poor von Durchschnit was virtually at his wit's end, in spite of the arrival on his far left of the 5th Musketeers. Being deep in the woods, they could neither see, nor be seen by the C-in-C, and the one-eyed colonel of the regiment, von Nichtweiss, was a man of notably few talents. The upshot was that the unit moved blindly through the woods to find a way out.

There's more. The 3rd Musketeers, having waded across the Kleinpinkeln, were greeted by a hail of lead and iron and ground to a halt. The 11th Musketeers, seemingly unable to think for themselves this day, followed their example. Von Kleinhirn's dragoons, moreover, took it upon themselves to join in the fight on the left

flank, and in moving thither managed to mask the fire of the 6pdrs in redoubt A, much to the annoyance of the battery commander.

The Garde Kürassiere were being rudely handled by the 2nd squadron of Kotztöter Uhlans, but their impeccable discipline enabled them to hang on; their household brethren of the Garde on the far flank, however, were being sabred as they fled pell-mell towards the bridge, and Vielficken were not troubled in the least by the timorous volleys fired by the 1st Musketeers behind the hedges. The Kleinhirn Dragoons now made themselves useful by crashing into the flank and rear of the 2nd squadron of enemy lancers, engaged to their front with the cuirassiers. This rude shock sent them packing back over the stream, only to be replaced by the 1st squadron again, now joined by the 1st squadron of Vielficken Hussars, the latter taking on the Kürassiere and the former assaulting the dragoons.

While this whirling duel was taking place, von Durchschnit's right flank was yawning wide open, with the annihilated Garde and their pursuers being on the bridge itself, and the advance in the centre had been stopped dead in its tracks. Von Schicksal Chevaulegers were sent to cover the bridge (yes, the message got through!) but the 4th and 5th Musketeers were still utterly useless on the left flank. To their front, the Garde Kürassiere, weary but proud, were trading blow for blow with Faltenland's hussars, but Kleinhirn's dragoons were being worsted by their lighter opponents. Foolishly, the dragoons attempted to break off the fight, this giving the Uhlans another chance to couch their lances and in a few moments von Kleinhirn's men were routed.

With the Garde Grenadiere now cut to pieces, the 2nd squadron of Vielficken hussars broke off the pursuit and rallied south of the bridge. Von Vielficken, a man of great audacity, at once realised the potential and placing himself at the head of the squadron, drew his sword and charged at the guns in redoubts C and D, these being unable to respond to a flank attack owing to the fieldworks which contained them. The 1st squadron of the hussars, however, had succumbed to the heavy metal of their foe, and were forced back of the Kleinpinkeln by the weary cuirassiers. Next to them, however, the 1st squadron of Uhlans were giving no quarter to the fleeing dragoons, who themselves crashed in panic into the 4th and 5th Musketeers, these having just come to their senses and decided to make themselves useful, and the whole lot went tumbling away to the rear. In the centre, the isolated 3rd Musketeers, now threatened by the reformed 2nd squadron of Kotztöter Uhlans, could stand no more and fled. On the right, von Schicksal Chevaulegers tried to interpose themselves between the gun positions and the onrushing enemy hussars, but the Prunklanders were given a bloody nose and Vielficken Hussars rode on into the gun positions to sabre many of the gunners who had so troubled the garrison of Mackenbach. Even 3rd Musketeers could not escape, and with a distinct feeling of *deja-vu*, von Durchschnit watched his men being hounded by Kotztöter Uhlans as they sought to gain refuge on the south bank.

Thus ended the ill-fated attack on Mackenbach, with von Durchschnit's forces in ruins (see map 3). When the news reached King Wilhelm, he was seized by a fit from which he never fully recovered. When Ludwig acceded to the throne, he undertook a thoroughgoing reform of the army and purged many of the most incompetent officers, including those who had contributed to this shameful defeat.

On the other hand, Luzian Marcklenburg was feted as a hero and was created Graf von Mackenbach. The militia had been blooded and Faltenland's light cavalry gained great fame for its initiative and bravery. Von Vielficken and von Kotztöter were both awarded the Goldene Kreuz for their part in the action.

I hope that the foregoing may inspire you to set up a fictitious war of your own, and perhaps I may also have shown that you can have fun by NOT being all-powerful on the wargames table. Go on – be brave, and good luck! Let us know how you get on and any good ideas you might have.

