

The Neumarkt Operation, 1809

A mini-campaign After Action Report

A few weeks ago the Gentlemen Wargamers participated in an all-day mini campaign set during the 1809 campaign season, using 10mm miniatures and the Napoleonic Command grand tactical rules. The event was run in the usual "ATF" style, with a selection of quality adult beverages (consumed moderately, of course), good tobacco (a couple of the Gentlemen are dedicated pipe smokers, but most of those who are not are still fond of the occasional fine cigar), excellent cheeses and an impressive repast (thanks to our host's formidable culinary skills) partaken of during the mid-game break.



A fine selection of beverages.

The game, designed and hosted by the redoubtable Elliott James, consisted of a series of map moves followed by the tactical resolution of whatever forces were deemed to have met as a result. See the appendices at the end of this document for the instructions given to each side, and a summary of the forces available.



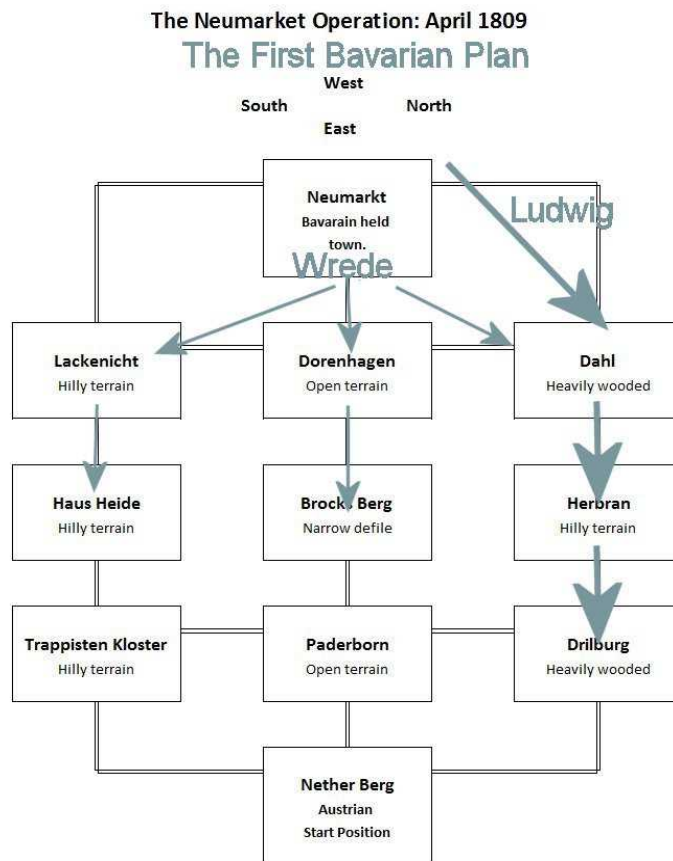
Some of The Gentlemen Wargamers in their pre-game warmup.

For the narrative of what transpired, read on . . .

The Neumarkt Operation, 1809

For most people in Neumarkt April 12th the day began too early. The Duke of Danzig had called a staff meeting to discuss the day's operations. Meanwhile, sleep deprived troops began striking camp and cooking a too-early breakfast. The horse lines were a hive of activity as mounts were saddled and prepared for the day. As always the artillery worked harder than everyone else having not only themselves and their mounts to prepare but also the guns and equipage. The townsfolk who were deprived of sleep by the commotion in the streets roundly cursed the war, the King, the Austrians and both Emperors and wished the troops were somewhere, anywhere else but here.

Marshal Lefebvre, recalled from Spain in disgrace the previous year, had been put in charge of the Bavarian Corps. He was anxious to regain the Emperor's favor. Conscious of the fact that he owed his baton more to political reasons than for independent command performance, now he had a chance to shine at last. The orders he had received from an obviously panicked Berthier did not bode well for France and her allies. So it was left to him, the Crown Prince, and Baron Wrede to come up with a master plan. When, several hours later, they emerged from their breakfast they congratulated themselves on a job well done. The plan was both aggressive in the style of the Emperor and would catch the Austrians at a disadvantage. The plan was simple, yet the Marshal felt, effective. The division under Kronprinz Ludwig would advance along the northern route from Dahl to Herbran and ultimately Drilburg. With luck they would meet the bulk of the Austrians in the more open country around Herbran. With two regiments of light horse scouting to their front they should have ample warning of the white coats' approach. Meanwhile, Baron Wrede's division would advance to Dahl and form a strategic reserve. One cavalry regiment of Wrede's division would the scout each of the other two routes via the Brocks Berg and Haus Heide. On paper, it could not fail.

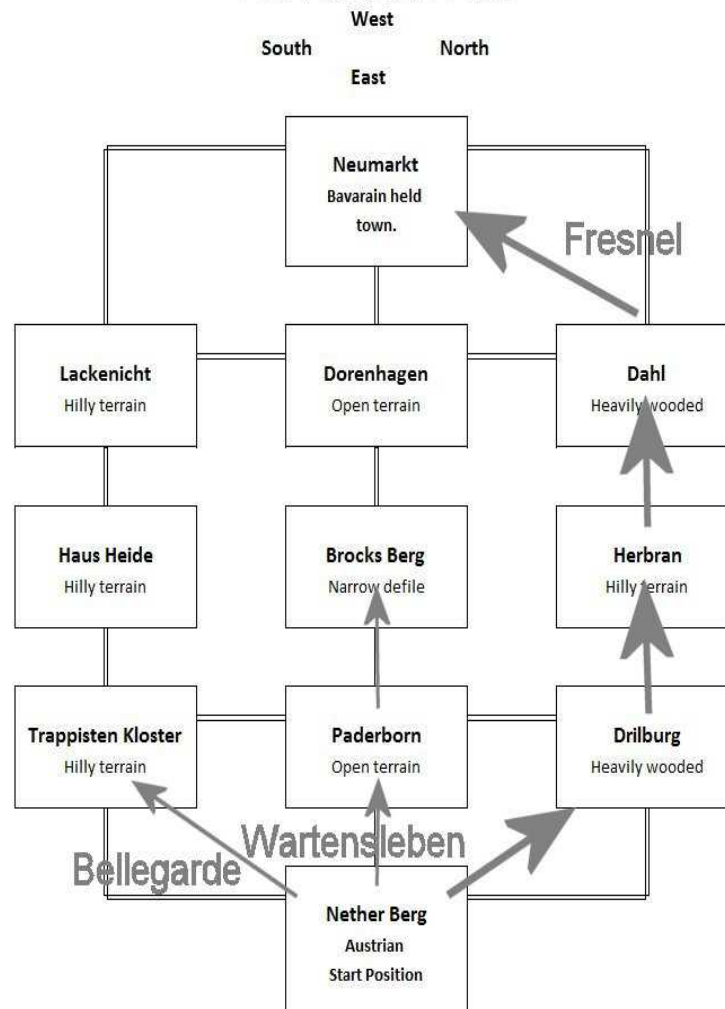


Meanwhile, General der Kavallerie Bellegarde was just starting his work out his orders for the day. At Nether Berg, Graf Bellegarde sniffed the air; no hint of the light snow that had fallen the day before and made the march so unpleasant, but in his bones he felt it would be another grey, cold day in the hills of the Franconian Jura. Drawing his cloak more tightly about him, he re-entered his lodgings in the coach inn that served as his headquarters. Here at least was a blazing fire which would make his discussions with his senior officers comfortable. For all their skill they were going to walk right into Lefebvre's trap.

The Austrian plan was to use the northern route with the bulk of their forces. Bellegarde himself would accompany the Division of von Vogelsang to Trappisten Kloster. The crack hussar regiment under General-Major Wartensleben would attempt the ascent of the Brock Berg. Both these forces were merely to observe and then fall back in the face of superior forces whilst the bulk the army under Feldmarshall-Leutenant Graf Fresnel would advance towards Dahl hoping that the northern route would allow the Austrians to employ their excellent light troops to their best advantage. So it was, as Bellegarde finished his conference, the Duke of Danzig's Corps were plunged into confusion.

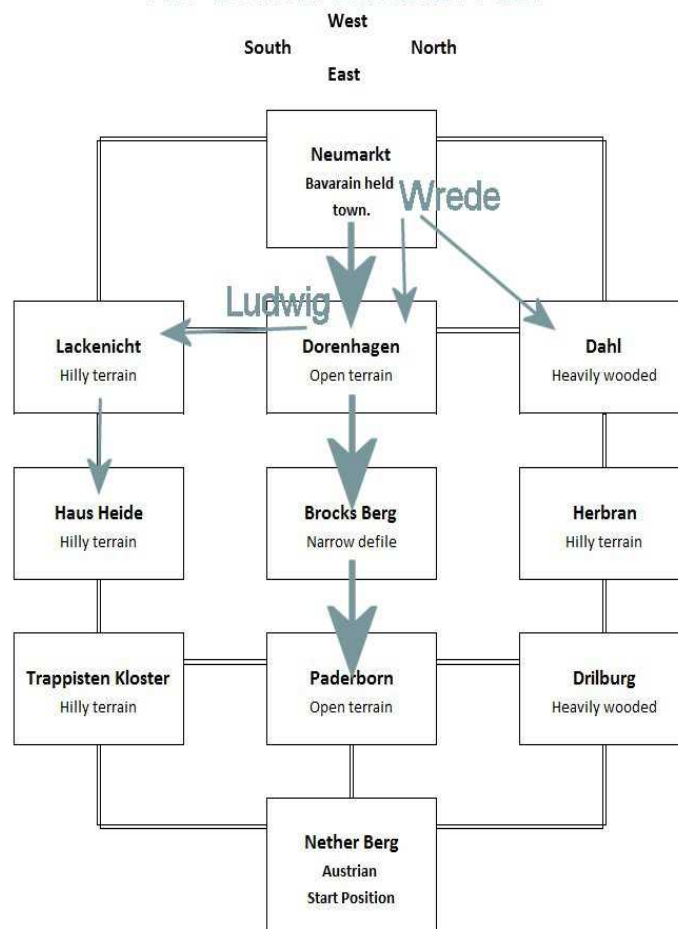
The Neumarket Operation: April 1809

The Austrian Plan



No troops like an early morning start and marches started before dawn are doubly unpopular. So at 5am the lead elements of Lefebvre's now sullen troops moved out into a land still in darkness with low cloud blocking whatever moon or starlight that may have aided their movements. It was now that things started to go wrong . . . badly wrong. The Duke of Danzig turned to his Chief of Staff d'Albignac, "Colonel, stop the columns, I am changing the direction of march! Get me the Crown Prince and Wrede! Now!" The unfortunate d'Albignac hurried off to send his gallopers to do the capricious Marshal's bidding. As the lead elements of the columns ground to a halt, the Crown Prince, the Baron and three chiefs of staff met with the Marshal. To his stunned subordinates, Duke outlined his new plan; "I have considered our situation, we can destroy the enemy in detail and this is what we will do. The Division of the Crown Prince will march with me via Dorenhagen to the Brocks Berg. I will send out one regiment my cavalry ahead of me and another to scout the southern route through Haus Heide. Baron, your troops will march to Dorenhagen and wait there. Send out what cavalry you consider necessary and scout toward Dahl. When we know which route those people are taking, we can react accordingly. If they come at me, I will hold them in the Brocks Berg and you Baron will march to my assistance using which ever route is most lightly defended. You will then fall upon their rear. If those people take either the northern or southern routes, Baron you will march to either Herbran or Haus Heide and hold them. I will then march to your assistance. Either way those people will find themselves attacked in the rear! Now gentlemen, make it so!" It was Wrede who spoke first, "You know Sir, that plan might actually work." The Crown Prince concurred. The staff of the three generals now busied themselves writing new orders.

The Neumarkt Operation: April 1809 The Second Bavarian Plan



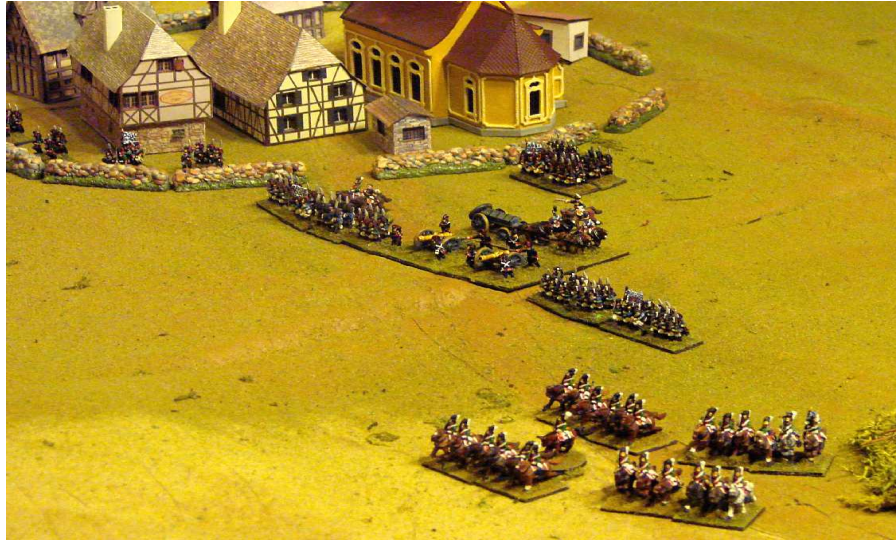
The Bavarians now had to sort out their order of march, whatever advantage they may have gained from their early start was now lost. It took until 6:30 before the units marched out on the correct roads.

The morning wore on, grey and blustery. Five hours after the initial advance, couriers began to arrive at Lefebvre's headquarters. The Austrian forces had been identified and their main thrust was marching via Herbran; so they were using the wooded hills to the north after all. The Division of Kronprinz Ludwig was now well into the Brock Berg although rear elements were struggling up the slopes into the high-pass through the limestone hills. The Marshal blew on his chilled hands as he listened to the reports, when they had finished their reports he turned to the Crown Prince, "They have fallen into my trap! The Emperor will reward us both. Forward!" he said "We'll march on to Paderborn, turn north and then double back, by coming on through Herbran we'll catch them in the rear! Send word to Wrede he has to hold on until we come up." Noting the rate of progress the Division had made that morning an ashen faced Colonel d'Albignac turned to the Marshal "Sir, are you sure?" The curt reply from Frenchman was "Yes, make it so!"

Receiving the reports of the Austrian advance at Dorenhagen, Baron Wrede had ordered his troops to march on Herbran, via Dahl. He had committed both cavalry regiments to scout the route ahead and knew that he would have a fight on his hands since the Austrians were advancing in force. It was some time later on the road that a message from the Duke of Danzig arrived setting out the position of the other Austrian forces and stating the Crown Prince's Division was now marching to his assistance and would fall on the Austrian rear. Handing the message to his Chief of Staff Oberst von Comeau he casually asked that they be written up in the memorandum book. As Wrede considered how best to meet the Austrians he was interrupted by von Comeau, "Sir, you realize based upon their estimated current position, proposed route and rate of march, I do not think the Crown Prince will be here for at least another seven hours and that will be after dark." Looking at his watch, the Baron noted that it was now 1pm and the full horror of his situation slowly dawned on him. "Scheisse! Someone has blundered!" was all he could say.

The Engagement at Dahl

Wrede found himself at Dahl with a single division, facing the bulk of the Austrian forces. His instructions required him to hold there until Lefebvre could come to his aid by a roundabout route which Wrede well knew would take far too long. He deployed his forces around the town of Dahl, located in a valley surrounded by wooded hills. Wrede's handful of light troops occupied the town itself, while the cavalry and infantry deployed in the open ground to either side, and he called for the single brigade of reinforcements available to him.



Wrede's division deploys at Dahl.



A single Bavarian battalion prepares to defend the town.

Meanwhile, Feldmarschall Fresnel had been made aware by courier reports that Austrian forces elsewhere were conducting successful delaying actions against the vast bulk of the Bavarian corps, aided by the difficult terrain to which the Bavarian command had committed their columns, apparently unaware of the serious delays this would cause. Fresnel decided that he must be facing only a token force (in which he was entirely correct) and was confident that a determined advance would drive them off and leave him an open road to the Bavarian base of operations at Neumarkt.

He chose an approach from the southeast for his two infantry divisions, which would bring them together in the immediate vicinity of Dahl, while the advance guard would work their way through the broken terrain to the north of the town to get into the Bavarian rear.



The Austrians approach Dahl in two columns, from the northeast and southeast.

It quickly became apparent to Baron Wrede exactly how inadequate his available forces were to hold the tide of Austrians about to break against his position. There were two divisions closing in on a single regiment of cavalry holding the defile to the south of Dahl, so he directed the brigade coming up from Dorenhagen to reinforce that gap.



Uhoh . . . here comes trouble. A single Bavarian cavalry regiment faces massive columns of Austrians.



Zandt's Cheveau-Legere are tied up by Austrian Uhlans while the infantry work around their flank.

The cavalry regiment north of Dahl was sent to slow down the flanking movement of the Austrian advance guard, hopefully arriving in time to catch them in ground that would prevent that force of all arms from deploying effectively . . . if that happened, his cavalry would be helpless against them. As it turned out, the Bavarian cavalry arrived just in time to see the Austrians deploying from the road through the woods. Too late! Now it would be a real problem to contain them, and prevent them from threatening Baron Wrede's flank and rear.



The Austrian avant-garde reaches an open deployment area just in time.

At this point, the overall situation looks like this:



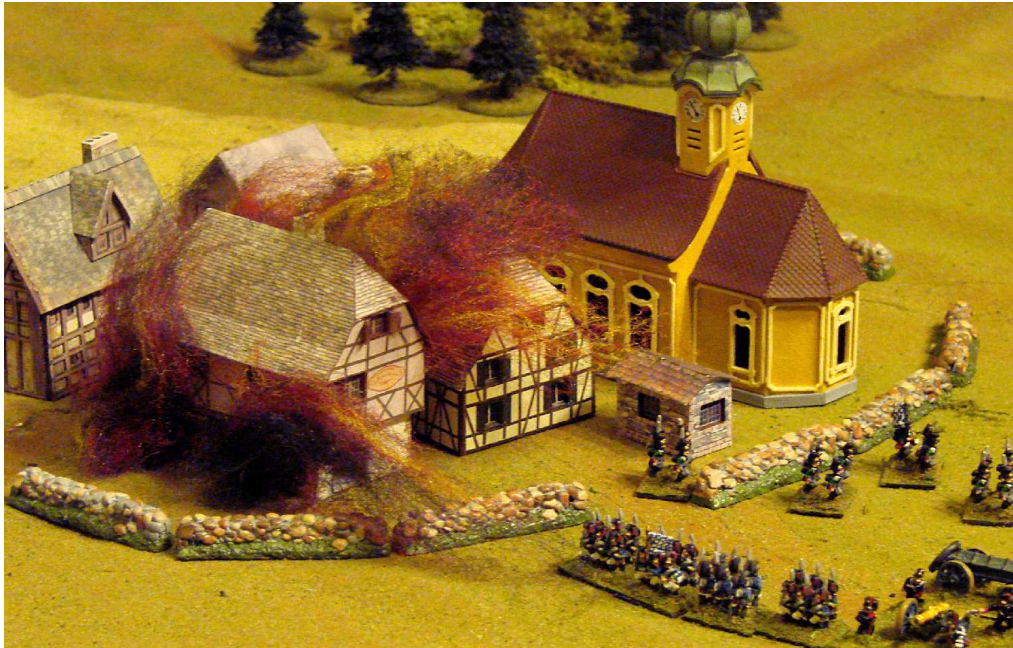
Beyond the town of Dahl, two Austrian columns close on the front and flank of a Bavarian cavalry regiment, while Wrede's reserve brigade enters from the west (right). On the near side of the town, an Austrian column divides, with the left half pinning the Bavarian infantry from the front while the right hand portion makes its way through the wooded areas to emerge in the enemy's rear.

The Bavarian cheveau-legere confront the Austrians, but as more and more of the white coats arrive, they find that they simply cannot contain them all. When GM Wintzingerode gets up a 6-pounder battery and opens fire on them, they are forced back, and the Austrians gain their much-needed deployment space. Wintzingerode leaves a brigade and a battery to keep the Bavarian light horse at bay, while sending another racing into the Austrian rear.



The Bavarian cavalry sent to slow the Austrian avant garde finds itself cut off.

With both his flanks about to be threatened and a superior force confronting him in the center of the field, Baron Wrede chooses the better part of valor. The Bavarians begin to withdraw, pulling out of Dahl entirely and leaving the town ablaze as a deterrent to their Austrian antagonists.



The Bavarians abandon Dahl, and leave it burning in their wake.

Sensing his opportunity to surround the Bavarians and destroy them slipping away, Fresnel orders an all-out assault on the center of their position. At this critical juncture Fresnel suffers an unfortunate attack of the gout (*he had to leave the game early for a prior commitment*) and Wintzingerode takes overall command of the Austrian wing. He sends jaegers into the woods on his right, where their fire contributes greatly to the erosion of Bavarian cohesion. In the open area between Dahl and the woods, the uhlans charge but are repulsed by the Bavarian gunners.



Wintzingerode's uhlans rashly charge the guns.

South of Dahl, Becker's brigade has arrived to shore up the Bavarian right, but it is a classic case of too little, too late. The cavalry regiment which had been deployed in the gap is blown and disordered from skirmishing with the Austrians, and Becker is still outnumbered two to one.



The arrival of Becker's brigade.

While Becker can keep the Austrians from completely enveloping the Bavarians from both sides of Dahl, it doesn't stop the two-pronged pincer closing in on Wrede's left flank, so he comes to the conclusion that it is time to withdraw before his infantry is forced into a disorderly rout.

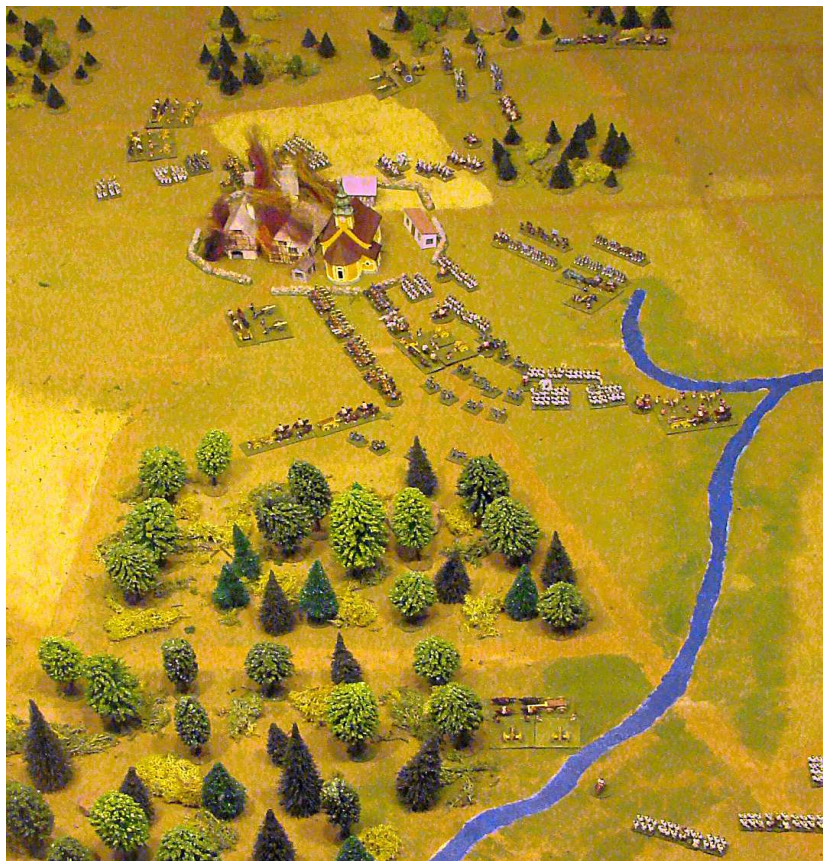


The Austrian right wing sweeps past the burning town as Wrede retires west.

Unwilling to let his opponent slip away unmolested, Wintzingerode launches his infantry into a frontal assault, which leaves his troops almost as disordered as the battered Bavarians. Wrede's troops are driven back with losses, abandoning some of their guns in the process.



In the end, Wrede received hearty congratulations from his opponents for hanging on so long in the face of overwhelming numbers, and then skillfully extracting his forces intact.



The Bavarians are ultimately overwhelmed by numbers, and driven off.

Appendices: Orders of Battle and Instructions to the Players

The Neumarkt Operation – Bavarian Briefing

The Austrians have begun a major offensive against the French and their Bavarian Allies, aided by the absence of Napoleon in Spain.

Intelligence indicates that the Austrian 1st Corp of the Army has moved out of Bohemia and is headed in the direction of Nuremberg. The best place to prevent this is the area between Neumarkt and Nether Berg.

The Bavarian army is currently encamped at Neumarkt. There are three basic routes that the Austrians can use to reach Neumarkt.

The Northern Route via Drilburg, Herbran and Dahl. This countryside has some areas of heavy forestation, particularly around Drilburg and Dahl. This approach route could hamper the use of large bodies of cavalry.

The Central Route via Pederborn, the Brocks Berg and Dorenhagen. The heights of the Brocks Berg prevent the movement of troops to and from Haus Heide in the south or Herben in the north. The hills also prevent diagonal movement out of the other 4 zones. The hills are traversed by a narrow defile, running east to west. The areas of Pederborn and Dorenhagen are reasonably open country and offer a number of good defensive positions.

The Southern Route via Trappisen Kloster, Haus Heide and Lackenicht. This terrain is hilly, noted for its valleys that run predominately along an east/west axis and hampering lateral communication and support.

The position at Neumarkt is not considered defensible owing to the terrain; remaining at Neumarkt and not stopping the Austrian advance would be considered a strategic defeat as the army would be obliged to withdraw further west.

Current Situation:

Marshal has called a council of war to determine the allocation of resources between the three routes and the nine potential zones of operation.

Required:

Allocation of forces to the ten zone together with specific orders to the forces.

Order of march.

Time that all forces leave Neumarkt. Sunrise is at 06:30

Splitting Forces

Troops may not be switched between Brigades or Divisions.

Battalions maybe detached from Brigades for specific tasks.

Squadrons (or Troops) maybe detached from cavalry regiments for specific tasks.

Specific orders to the forces under your command

Troop Quality

All troops are considered to be of Average morale and training.

Forces available:

Commander: Marshal Lefebvre, Duke of Danzig

1st Division: Generallieutenant Kronprinz Ludwig.

1st Brigade Generalmajor von Rechberg

3 Battalions Line Infantry

1 Battalion Light Infantry

2nd Brigade Generalmajor von Strengel

3 Battalions Line Infantry

1 Battalion Light Infantry

Cavalry Brigade Generalmajor Baron Zandt

8 Squadrons Cheveau-Leger (2 Regts)

Artillery

1 12pdr Battery

1 6pdr Battery

1 6pdr Horse Battery

2nd Division: Generallieutenant Baron Wrede.

1st Brigade Generalmajor Graf Minucci

3 Battalions Line Infantry

1 Battalion Light Infantry

2nd Brigade Generalmajor Graf Beckers

3 Battalions Line Infantry

1 Battalion Light Infantry

Cavalry Brigade Generalmajor Baron Zandt

8 Squadrons Cheveau-Leger (2 Regts)

Artillery

1 12pdr Battery

1 6pdr Battery

1 6pdr Horse Battery

Artillery Reserve

1 12pdr Battery

1 6pdr Batteries

The Neumarkt Operation – Austrian Briefing

The Army has begun a major offensive against the French and their Bavarian Allies.

The 1st Corp of the Army under GdK Bellegarde is tasked the taking the city of Nuremberg. Before this can be achieved it is necessary to secure the town of Neumarkt as a base and ensure a line of communication back to Bohemia.

Intelligence indicates that the Bavarians are encamped in force around Neumarkt. The exact strength is unknown.

The Austrian army is currently encamped at Nether Berg. There are three basic routes that can be taken to Neumarkt.

The Northern Route via Drilburg, Herbran and Dahl. This countryside has some areas of heavy forestation, particularly around Drilburg and Dahl. This route could hamper large bodies of cavalry.

The Central Route via Pederborn, the Brocks Berg and Dorenhagen. The heights of the Brocks Berg prevent the movement of troops to and from Haus Heide in the south or Herben in the north. The hills also prevent diagonal movement out of the other 4 zones. The hills are traversed by a narrow defile, running east to west. The areas of Pederborn and Dorenhagen are reasonably open country and offer a number of defensive positions.

The Southern Route via Trappisen Kloster, Haus Heide and Lackenicht. This terrain is hilly, noted for its valleys that run predominately along an east/west axis and hampering lateral communication and support.

Current Situation:

Bellegarde has called a council of war to determine the best means of taking Neumarkt.

Enemy Forces:

Intelligence indicates that the Bavarians have an army corps camped around Neumarkt

Required:

Allocation of forces between the three routes, together with specific orders to the forces.

Order of March.

Time that all forces leave Nether Berg. Sunrise is at 06:30

Specific orders to the forces under your command.

Splitting Forces

Troops may not be switched between Brigades or Divisions.

Battalions maybe detached from Brigades for specific tasks.

Squadrons (or Troops) maybe detached from cavalry regiments for specific tasks.

Troop Quality

All troops are considered Average except the Hussars who are veterans. The 2 Squadrons of Hussars attached to GM Wintzingerode Brigade will not raise the status of that force.

Forces available:

Corp Commander GdK Bellegarde

Advanced Guard – FML Graf Fresnel

Brigade: GM Hardegg

3 Jaeger Battalions

4 Squadrons Uhlans

1 6pdr Battery

Brigade: GM Wintzingerode

1 Jaeger Battalion

3 Battalions Line

2 Squadrons *Blankenstein* Hussars

1 6pdr Battery

Division GM Wacquant

3 Battalions Line (*Hungarian*)

3 Battalions Line (*Hungarian*)

1 6pdr Battery

Division FML von Vogelsang

Brigade GM Henneburg

3 Battalions Line

3 Battalions Line

1 6pdr Battery.

Brigade GM Wartensleben

6 Squadrons Hussars

Reserve GM Nostitz

2 Battalions Line

2 Battalions Line

1 Battalions Erzherzog Karl Legion

4 Squadrons Uhlans

1 6pdr Battery.

Artillery Reserve:

2 12pdr Battery

1 6pdr Battery

1 6pdr Cavalry Battery.