

### Periodic Blog #3...**Meditations On The Guard...by James G. Soto**

Here we are again with our Periodic Blog as we open March and sales keep chugging along...after a brisk January, our February slowed down a little...a few sales to Japan; France and finally Berkeley now brings us to 60 or so copies left...who knows, we may be done by the time we go to Tempe at the end of June. Dennis wants to go to a convention in San Marino, the dainty republic surrounded by the mountains in central Italy in May...sounds like a good idea, but it may require the purchase of a winning Super Lotto ticket and one of the three of us having some fluency in Italian...but you never know!

We have noticed a spirited debate on the CONSIM Napoleonic/La Bataille site on whether the French Guard could be committed early in a battle rather than late. David Mignerey, a good friend of ME and a solid player who is scheduled to be one of the participants in the annual Duel in the Desert, was playing Ligny and decided to commit the Guard early in his contest with very good results for the Imperial player. David had reasoned there was no reason not to commit the Guard as the French player—at least there was nothing in the rules—and there appeared to be no other reason to stop the French from making the most of the possibilities that opened up with the French gaining the initiative with their best troops.

Most of the ME games have no specific prohibition to the French using the Guard. In a few games, there are some relatively minor penalties for losses incurred to the Guard, but nothing in the game mechanics to stop the Guard from being used.



***Napoleon And His Guard---A Special Bond***

History is filled with stories about Napoleon's reluctance to use the Guard early in any battle. Until the Waterloo campaign, the instances where the Guard was utilized were relatively small affairs---and the cavalry would be more likely than the infantry to be used. At Aspern-Essling, Rapp used a few battalions of Young Guard infantry to retake Essling and assist his fellow aide, General Mouton, from almost certain defeat. At Hanau, after Leipzig in late 1813, the Guard was used to bulldoze the Bavarians from their positions on the road back to France, but those were desperate times and the survival of Napoleon was at stake.

Napoleon was reluctant to use the Guard. His marshals encouraged him to release the Guard at Borodino at a crucial part of the battle. But the Emperor was wary of committing his last reserve in the steppes of Russia with much of the campaign to come. Whether that was a strategic mistake or not, there is a debate which rages. Though Borodino was a marginal victory, his Guard was intact. But almost everything that was

French vaporized in the weeks after the evacuation of Moscow. So no one will ever know.

There is an excellent article by George Nafziger in the Napoleon Series website about use of the Guard. Nafziger said there were six reasons why Guard was created and kept relatively intact---only two were tactical and battlefield related. Four reasons could be described as social and political. Nafziger's reason would suggest special rules prohibiting what our friend Mr. Mignerey did...but then again, La Bataille is not really involved in the political...or should it be? As Nafziger maintains, the Guard promoted social cohesion and diplomatic prowess, but that becomes too non-military for La Bataille to consider.

This month, our ME man of the moment is a true hero of the Revolution, Marshal Count Guillaume Brune. We were reminded of General Brune after reading a post from Nigel Barry. Nigel announces himself as thinking of other projects. One of those projects is Helder in 1799. The hero of Helder is none other than General Brune, one of the more obscure Marshals. Gaining his reputation mainly in the revolution, Brune served in Italy with the Young Bonaparte, and made his most significant contribution in the Wars of Revolution in preserving the Batavian Republic by forcing the evacuation of a Russo-British army and fleet from Northern Holland. Coalition casualties were nearly three times those of the Franco-Batavian forces. We would argue that the nomination of Brune as a marshal was probably more political. Brune was probably one of the more republican of the marshals, and never truly a subscriber to the imperial mode of thinking.



### **Marshal Guillaume Count Brune, ME's *Man Of The Moment***

Brune served with minor distinction early in the Empire, but Napoleon shelved him after 1807. Brune did come back and served the Emperor during the 100 Days as the commander of the Army of the Var. His death after the second fall of Napoleon remains shrouded in mystery. His widow contends he was assassinated by a White Terror mob in Avignon on August 2, 1815. But the official royal inquiry did not confirm the cause for his death. Till next time...Marshal Enterprises...