

REPORT

Franco-Prussian War Battle Game

Recreating the War of 1870 with model armies.

By Nic Birt with assistance from friends at the Solo Wargamers Association during 2001-2002

Week 1, August 1870.

Week beginning: The Prussians launched an attack against Strasbourg. The first Bavarian corps along with the Wurttenburg and Baden divisions attacked the northern fort in the first battle of Strasbourg. The 5th and 11th Prussian Corps attacked the northeastern fort. These forts were defended by the French VII corps. The Germans were repulsed from the northern fort with considerable loss while the Prussians managed to secure the northeastern fort in the second battle of Strasbourg (2). Total German casualties were 10200 and French casualties 5300.

Midweek: The French III corps abandoned Saarbrücken in the face of the Prussian Guard and 10th corps advance with the flanking movement of 3rd and 4th corps. The French IV corps digs in southeast of Thionville.

The V corps arrived at Strasbourg relieving VII corps that immediately attacked the Wurttenburg & Baden divisions taking up occupancy of the newly won

northeastern fort in the third battle of Strasbourg (3). The French attack constantly pushed the German forces back but was never strong enough to secure the fort. Exhausted, VII corps fell back to Strasbourg. The French lost 4200 casualties and the German losses amounted to 1600.

Weekend: The Prussian 8th & 9th Corps dig into defensive positions to the west of Trier. From Saarbrücken the Guard and 4th Corps advance to attack III Corps with support on their flanks by 10th and 3rd Corps. The III Corps holds its position and accepts the attack from the Prussian Guard and 4th Corps while the French Guard and I Corps support its flanks by engaging the Prussian 10th and 3rd Corps.

In the ensuing battle of Saarbrücken the French right remained stationary facing the Prussian right which made a feeble probing movement towards the French. Meanwhile the French right attacked the Prussian center seriously weakening the Prussian line. The Prussian reserve, the Guard came to the rescue by

attacking the French right flank. The French right received support from I Corps which clashed with the guard but was unable to break through. The French retired covered by their artillery and cavalry. French losses were 5800 and Prussian losses 13600.

Prussian forces around Strasbourg increase and siege guns begin to bombard the town to no effect. The 5th Corps moves to extend the cordon around the town by advancing on the southern fort.

French IV Corps falls back to Thionville.

French II Corps attacks part of Prussian 12th Corps defending the south-west approaches of Bitsch. The French were met with stiff resistance in the battle of Bitsch and retired with 2200 casualties. The Prussians lost only 100 troops.

Week 2, August 1870.

Week beginning: The French were in retreat everywhere except for I and III Corps which launched a second attack towards Saarbrücken. They came into contact with

the Prussian 3rd Corps and part of the Guard Corps. The Prussian 4th Corps and the remainder of the Guard corps were on the Prussians right flank but at a distance. The 2nd battle of Saarbrücken started at 0600. The French advanced rapidly against the Prussians who held their ground for a while. Finally the French cavalry managed to breakthrough the Prussian center while more cavalry and artillery wheeled around the Prussians right flank. The Prussian line crumbled and suffered heavy casualties. The Prussian cavalry counter charged and won enough time for the last remaining Prussian units to escape. Prussian losses were 6100 while French casualties were 1600.

The Prussians continue to encircle Strasbourg trapping the French V Corps in the city. The VII Corps was also present holding open an escape route to the west. The Prussian siege guns continued to bombard the city but without result.

Midweek: Despite their success near Saarbrücken the French withdrew as the Prussian 1st and 2nd Corps advanced on the area.

The French VII Corps withdrew away from Strasbourg leaving the V Corps completely surrounded in the city and under bombardment. Counter battery fire from the city caused one of the Prussian batteries to move.

Weekend: The French V Corps remained surrounded

in the city and under bombardment. However counter battery fire from the city caused the remaining Prussian batteries to move away along with the 2nd Bavarian Corps and so the encirclement was broken.

The French VII Corps retreated to Saarburg pursued by the Prussian 5th and 9th Corps.

In the center the Prussians continued to strengthen their hold around Saarbrücken.

To the north Prussian 7th and 8th Corps began to threaten IV Corps at Thionville.

Week 3, August 1870.

Week beginning: The battle of Saarburg occurred when the Prussian 5th and 9th Corps attacked the French VII Corps near the town of Saarburg. The Prussians managed to push the French away from the town. However the French withdrew with their reserve entirely intact while the Prussians were now too weak to risk further attacks. Prussian losses were 3000 and French casualties 5900. Strasbourg continued under bombardment.

Midweek: It is revealed that Strasbourg has 11 months of food supplies as the town is now effectively isolated. Bombardment was increased as a second siege train arrived.

The French II and VII corps engage the Prussian 2nd Corps southwest of Saarburg.

The Prussian 4th and 10th Corps attacks the French I Corps northeast of St. Avold.