

Alea Special Wargames Issue #1

Introduction

Ever since the first issues of our magazine, the editors envisioned publication of special issues, which would deal with specific themes concerning the development of the Spanish army. This effort crystallized with the publication of our game on the battle of Medillín (**Alea # 16**), which this issue continues. The game utilizes the standard series of rules, with the same theme and scale as *Medillín*, with special rules for the scenarios.

The development of the "Shadow of the Eagle" system takes the middle road between the hyper-realism of some titles, such as the "La Bataille" series by Clash of Arms and the recent SIMTAC publication *Sagunto*, and the classic operational level games which featured brigade-sized units.

This series does not well on the same level of detail as the aforementioned games, but rather emphasizes important aspects of the period such as command structure, formations, and unit morale without resorting to an extremely

complicated system, achieving a balance between playability and historical accuracy.

Special mention and thanks must be made to the designer of the system and the scenarios, Jose Antonio Vargas-Zúñiga, who collaborated on the magazine during our early years, and to the Dragon Club of Madrid for their help in playtesting and development.

With reference to the historical material covered in this issue, some portions of the material have been presented elsewhere. We do not wish to repeat a standard academic treatment with the simple exposition of dates and statistics, or to compare yet again the types of weapons utilized. What we have done is to present a mixture of the historical and the "novel," and detailing the most relevant actions of the battle of Castalla by including the point of view of an officer of one of the Spanish regiments that participated in the battle.

Campaign Diary: Between the Lines Castalla 1813

By Javier Hoyos

The story that follows has as protagonists the men that filled the ranks from both sides during the struggle of the Napoleonic period. It is a history rarely seen, and literally done "*on the job*." It is from the perspective of a Spanish captain, but relies on experiences written on extensively by men of many nationalities; Castalla was written about in some detail, and some slight modifications have been made in order to join the narrative together. That it is a literary account, without exception, does not detract in any way from the historical faithfulness of the story.

A light breeze began to blow in the valley. The smoke was suspended before the French canons, acting as a faithful weathervane, hanging docile and ragged at the mercy of the wind. On the high ground located opposite the French battery, the air acquired more force from the heights. The rippling of the banners was muffled, partly, by the impact of the artillery projectiles against the ground. Another of the metal balls collided against the stony floor lifting up splinters of rock and iron. Captain Xavier Castro showed interest in the round that passed nearest to his position, as it began to spin overhead before ricocheting erratically on the hillside. The salvo had been directed at Second Burgos, the battalion that lay on their right. Mentally he calculated the position

of the French battery and the trajectory of their last shot, and concluded that it was very not very probable that they should worry about the canons, at least momentarily. Their battalion was clearly outside of angle of fire and it seemed that the French gunners were clearly off target.

From the lines of the Second Burgos came shouts and catcalls. The enthusiasm spread to the thin line of the Guadalajara battalion, the third Spanish unit deployed on the Allied flank left. It stood immobile 200 yards behind the end of the battle line, next to the battalions of Burgos and Córdoba. Castro turned and looked in the direction of the battle's din. The Grenadier company of Guadalajara could be seen, unmistakable with

their soldiers enthusiastically raising their muskets, on whose ends were the captured French shakos. The commandant of the Córdoba regiment didn't want his battalion firing less and so shouted to their drummers:

"Boys, play me a good martial air that teaches the Froggy gentlemen who owns the front!"
[Translator's note: Yes, it was a slur even then]

Within seconds, the summit of the mountain range vibrated as a thousand throats cheered the beating of the drums.

Good sign of morale, thought Castro, as he waved his bicorne in the general celebration. The expression was more directed to instill confidence in the men than to celebrate. Optimism was a far feeling after three years of war. He had the occasion of feeling this way before, only to end up fleeing in torrential disorder. He learned perfectly that the party was not over before it had begun and, realistically, they seemed so abandoned having only the three battalions of their division in that mile of front.

A thunder in the valley announced the imminent reply of the French artillery. The Spanish shouting was silenced when the projectiles hit the sky blue lines of the battalion of Burgos, leaving it with dying and wounded. The shouts of jubilation ceased and were replaced with groans of pain. With speed the officers made their men reorganize the lines and ordered the wounded towards the rear. Only the sound of the drums was constant, beating still stronger.

Lieutenant Hernaiz approached Castro with concern and, waving his hand, pointed to a small overhang that ran part way up the hillside. There below one could observe the advance of the French infantry. To the left and practically flanking their position, a cloud of infantry was assembled by companies. They ascended the sheer slope like a wave and their shakos were topped with yellow and green plumes that they made an attractive contrast to their dark blue uniforms.

"Light infantry. All of one battalion deployed in skirmish," Hernaiz murmured. "And steady, they don't come alone. To their right form two columns of light troops."

"Yes," agreed Castro. "They equal our force in front and almost overlap our flank. Bad things will happen today."

Both officers exchanged a knowing look. Hernaiz swallowed his words and threw a fleeting glance toward the place where the Brigadier and his staff stood. One could see to the superior officers gesticulate and pass the telescope to each other. The Brigadier, calm on his mount, dictated rapid instructions to two couriers. Unable to contain himself any longer, Hernaiz mumbled:

"If General Whittingham stands here with the remainder of the Division instead of going for a walk, God knows where, they would give those Frenchies a very lousy day," and with a questioning tone added, "Mister, the men don't understand the reason why our other three battalions have been retired behind the line and, I, frankly, do not either."

Castro scanned their view for the valley, now in full activity, as more French battalions began to maneuver toward the Allied front. He looked to a distant point, to some two miles towards the northwest, where a great cloud of dust marked the movement of a group of cavalry towards the west. Without removing his gaze from that cloud of dust and horsemen, he said to the Lieutenant with an absent voice:

"Ignacio, if the captains or the lieutenants could know what reasons move our generals when they dictate their orders, we would know as much as that God that you now invoke. Our function is to be mere executors, sometimes in a literal sense, and get our soldiers to follow us where we order them, avoiding those friends or enemies we fire at in the process. We are no more than pieces that make the pawns move."

Captain Castro was face to face with the young lieutenant. The grimace of surprise on the face of Hernaiz contrasted against the more candid view of the one which their few years and inexperience obligated. The captain knew that his words had broken the youthful idealism of the lieutenant with more success than a stable full of cavalry. Conscious that it was not moment for sarcasm, he changed the tone of the conversation towards a less sour note.

"And now, gentleman, go and make arrangements to fulfill your duty. I fear that the courier that approaches the battalion will make us enter into the task soon."

The last words of the captain were dotted by the sharp notes of a bugle. Taking advantage of the last moments of relative calm, Castro extend his hand towards Hernaiz.

"Give me your hand and have luck on this day." Both realized that they might have reached the end of the journey.

"Thank you, sir. I only hope that there is enough glory for all." A strong squeeze of hands said good-bye to the officers.

What irony! The flank that we thought might be overpowered might turn out to be our own. This thought was repeated constantly in the mind of Captain Castro as he directed the company during the oblique turn maneuver that headed towards the mass of French skirmishers that had ascended the hillside.

Meanwhile, the battalion of Burgos had corrected their position laterally in order to better accommodate the approach of the two columns of light infantry that were having difficulty following their orders. The battalion of Guadalajara stayed in reserve, only slightly changing their position. The Spanish formations toiled to link once they had reached their new positions. The companies that formed in front of Córdoba wavered, extending and then contracting again in the comic and ridiculous lateral displacement that forced them shoulder to shoulder with other soldiers. Captain Castro, like the remainder of officers with control of a company, supervised the maneuver of their unit. The steel of their sword was extended from their outstretched arm, marking with a metallic shine the imaginary line on which they should form their men. The two nearest soldiers advanced to the blade of the weapon until it touched their chests and there remained immobile. Platoon after platoon imitated them as the sergeants shouted the last corrections with imperious voices:

"Pass ahead, platoon!"

"Join on my shoulder, loafers!"

"Two Passes! Lateral left! Quickly! I said quickly!"

Finally, the line looked good: static, willing and silent. *Silence. That sensation is out of place in a battle*, thought Captain Castro. He did not like it, and treated each fleeting moment of calm that happened as a way to dilute the echoes of the shuffling from the hundreds of shoes and the rhythmic symphony of the clashing of canteens, backpacks, cartridges and muskets. Included in this din were the hasty curses and shouts of abuse by dozens of mouths, little accustomed to the subtleties of language, but soon they had been silenced. The distance between the Spanish lines and the blue mass that had ascended the rough

hillside had been shortened enough to give details to the mottled and diluted French formation. The reverberation of the hot air distorted parts of the spectacle, but here and there dark brown pants broke the uniformity in the same manner that the deformed gray and brown sheaths that covered many shakos challenged the somber black of the majority of the French helmets. A company of jaegers had been advanced to the movement of the regiment in order to protect to the Spanish redeployment and harass the French progression. Their dispersed figures were sprinkled over a small fringe of the hillside, hardly 100 yards in front of the main line. The Spanish soldiers observed the relentless enemy advance with growing apprehension. A group of the jaegers shouldered their muskets instinctively, expectantly awaiting the order to open fire.

Leaning against the rocky outcrops, kneeling or stooping on the ground, searching for the minimal protection that the hillside provided, the jaegers didn't seem to be a serious opponent for the French tide.

This is uneven. They are going to overrun them, thought Captain Castro. The result of the imminent firing didn't leave any doubts. Outnumbered by 6 to 1, they would only succeed in delaying the French advance by minutes. The Spaniards knew it and perhaps that is why their hands clenched their muskets with fervor as they looked to their officers. The Frenchmen also were conscious of their crushing superiority and didn't lessen the pace. In the conflict of wills, the scale had tipped to the most numerous side. An isolated voice thundered with a "Fire!" command, which vibrantly fluttered over the jaegers. An almost uniform discharge, almost simultaneous, was the reply. More and more Spanish soldiers joined in the shooting. The mechanics of loading, aiming and firing were repeated again and again, the cadence which accompanied the first volleys was lost and converted into an intermittent backfire. In little more than a minute a blue smoke filled the space between the combatants, blocking a clear sight of what was happening. Through the artificial fog there were distinguishable flashes of powder nearer and nearer to the first Spanish company. The French advance had not stopped more than momentarily, in order to respond with fire to the fire, and now was renewed.

The intensity of the Spanish volleys decayed quickly. Brief shouts could be heard over the hammering of the muskets.

"Withdraw! First line, withdraw!"

"Secondary lines, cover the position!"

In a matter of seconds a procession of jaegers began to run across the hill, in contrast to the steady front line of the Córdoba battalion. Ten, twenty, thirty, Captain Castro could not count after forty men. They ran with smutty faces and bloodshot eyes, the result of the gunpowder and the smoke. Some limped and others practically crawled. Many had shiny and smoky marks streaked on their uniforms. Some 30 yards behind the vanguard one could distinguish a delicate line of backs that were retiring, giving way to the approaching enemy. Leaving the smoke, almost in the Spanish footsteps, came the threatening blue lines of the French infantry, dotted by the menacing shine of the bayonets that crowned their weapons.

The French wave ascended evenly but rapidly, following the retreating Spaniards. Two more paces and the soldiers that covered the retreat turned and began to jog for the high ground and joined the flanks of their unit. There was security, at least momentarily. They had already done their job. That they took their measure of Frenchy volleys! A new thunder rose from the French lines and the lead they collected was their tribute to life. A half dozen bodies remained, deposited where they fell without running, practically giving the coat of valor to the men of the Córdoba battalion. The skirt of the hill appeared to blossom from the blue of the French uniforms and those of the Spaniards. The fight had not been one-sided, and dozens of bodies fallen on the ground attested to that.

Memories flashed through the mind of Captain Castro, like a succession of rapid images in view of the death toll. A stone house in Castille. The harvest. Immobile features disordered on the very dry earth. Miniature soldiers knocked down, simulating the result of a child's imaginary battle. The lively discussion between two children to determine a winner. His older brother and the playing of war at once already distant. Now his brother had earned two meters of good Castilian earth in the forest of Gamonal, where the helmets of the cavalry converted you into the losing figure of a very royal game.

In the macabre game that is now developing it is now your turn. A little more than 100 yards in front of the Spanish lines the captain saw the French infantry finally stopped. The hunting horns of the voltigeurs sounded orders and the enemy soldiers began to form small groups. He imagined the magnificent sight of the line that the Frenchmen formed. Five hundred men, shoulder to shoulder,

formed in two thin lines in order to cover the greatest possible front. In the distance the serious, splendid slaughter. The dispersed formation of the French light infantry made them difficult to fire at, and there was little precision with aiming the muskets anyway. Fortunately the cursed slope permitted that their secondary line could fire over the heads of the first line.

Castro consulted his watch. Only 15 minutes had passed since the beginning of the battle. The group of drums from the regiment broke to beat again. It was a slow rhythm, interspersed with breaks and a brief double-time, that marked the imminence of action. Adjusting the silk sash that wrapped around his waist, he turned toward the lines of his company and forcing a loud voice he appealed to his troops over the din of the combat:

"Attention company! Prepare to open fire on my order!"

"Discharge by sections! First line, then second line!"

"From right to left! On my command, section leaders!"

The sabre of the captain rose toward the sky until it was vertical. Sergeants, sub lieutenants and lieutenants repeated like an echo the orders from their superior. From his position the captain could see a forest of muskets rise pointed to the front. Above the weapons an apparently infinite succession of collars extended, standing out from the colored cloth stood a solitary gold C letter. The identification of the Córdoba regiment. Red fists thrust from white sleeves grasped the muskets. Leaning close to the musket butts were the raging lions that adorned the shakos of the Spanish infantry. And under them, tense faces, trembling lips reciting one last prayer or a deaf curse. But above all what impressed him were the dead-set eyes, peering towards the front with an expression of grim determination. Hundreds of men with loaded weapons waiting for the word that would spring their triggers, all willing to kill - and probably to die.

The hypnotic vision of the perfect lines of battle broke. The roar of the firing proceeded in a fraction of a second, barely perceptible, with the collapsing of those first hit. The precise formation of the Córdoba regiment trembled under the impact of the French volley. The first bodies carpeted the ground near the feet of the fusiliers. A soldier bellowed near the end of the line while his right forearm swung uselessly from the remainder of his arm with a grotesque bloodstained stump and fragments of splintered

bone. The 30 grams of lead of a French bullet had blown off the elbow. The men of the second line hurried to move towards the rear those that seemed to be only wounded, while the dead were pushed forward so that they were not obstacles. Like a reflective act, the captain waved his sabre, cutting the air. The sergeant ordered the section on the right to fire and the company began to return the fire, section by section, in a volley that moved from right to left. The mechanical choreography of the shooting involved the entire company. As the soldiers fired, they lowered their muskets and extracted a cartridge from their bandolier. They rabidly bit one of the ends of paper from the cartridge and poured a small quantity of gunpowder into the firing pan of the musket. Spitting black saliva, they poured the remainder of the gunpowder down the musket barrel and then placed the lined bundle of the cartridge and the heavy sphere of lead that was the bullet in the barrel of the musket. They then leaned the butt on the ground. With twitching hands they took out the metallic ramrod from the stock and began to frantically ram the mixture towards the bottom of the barrel. In order to save time, the majority of the fusiliers stuck the ramrod into the ground, or placed it in the groove of their shoes. With a wave movement, they threw the weapon to their shoulders again and armed the of flint of the weapon. Pointing in the general direction of the enemy, they waited for the order to fire a new round.

The chorus of urgent shouts and encouragement from the officers added to the sour exclamations of the troops. Everything was urgent, everything should be quick. They were immersed in a race against time and the first place was but lead, and rapidly nearer came the mass of French soldiers. How many volleys could they loose before the fire was returned? Captain Castro observed attentively the ascent and the firing of the muskets of their men, similarly becoming agitated like the oars of a galley. Mentally he counted the time that lapsed between each volley...59, 60, 61, 62, then thunder from muskets. Three discharges in little more than a minute, a good rhythm of fire.

The French shooting was aimed at the center of the main Spanish line. Clearings of two and three men could be seen at their front and a growing number of unarmed men marked the disorder of the lines. Another hailstorm of lead rained on the central company. The forsaken waving and throwing the hands to the face as the line collapsed and the flag bearer fell from view. Savagely it is ripped and falls to the ground. *The flag falls!* It was the voice that rippled like a stream

through the Spanish lines. Jubilant cheers exploded through the French lines. With the cloth already laying on the ground, the fall stopped. All Córdoba could see the vague figure of a young lieutenant surrounded by cadavers and the wounded as he grasped the staff and energetically danced with the colors.

Between the veils of smoke, Castro recognized the silhouette of Lieutenant Hernaiz. The young officer would have made a striking pose for a statue, immortalized in his moment of glory. His expression had galvanized the troops, and with determination began to rally around the flag. The French officers were running up and down their formations pointing with their swords to the Spanish flag that again waved in the breeze. A French soldier with a fierce mustache imitated Hernaiz and shouted instructions to his men, shaking a small green bandolier with a yellow fringe on top of the bayonet of his musket. At the center of the cloth was distinguishable a blurred yellow hunting horn. Their harangues were distorted and unintelligible to the deafened ears of the Spanish infantry. But a translation was not necessary. The acts of the voltigeurs were sufficiently eloquent. The Frenchmen began to advance. Deployed as partners, one soldier fired while another loaded. The fire flared up and the rattle of the musketry echoed loudly off of the hillside.

"Present! Fire!"

This refrain was incessantly repeated along the Spanish line. Giving a nudge to the companion to his side, a fusilier with a blackened face shouted, *"Manuel, the point has come for combat with the bayonet."*

With a nod of the head, Captain Castro took the moment and proceeded to load his pistol. Those like Manuel stretched their necks, pointing the barrels of their muskets towards the front.

"Don't bet on them, peasants, because you would lose. Now we will stick the pens to those frogs at least 70 times - aargh!"

Manuel didn't get to finish the phrase. The words died in his throat in a grotesque gurgling. The captain saw the shako of the soldier on his side fly off and noted the languid embrace as the body clutched at the earth. A vermilion rosette soaked the neck of his uniform. The bulging eyes of the fusilier looked at him without seeing and a dissonant whistle surged from a mouth filled with blood. Kneeling beside the wounded man, Castro looked around in search of aid. Sergeant Umbria

had already run between the lines in order to offer assistance.

"Get up, sir! Direct the troops! Entrust me with this soldier!"

The captain got up, understanding the urgency of the sergeant. A dozen silent bodies lay piled on the surrounding ground and, judging by the screams of pain, many more were wounded. The first line of the company had recoiled, and then another, as if leaving the cadavers of their comrades behind they could escape the lottery of death and mutilation. Without thinking, Castro ran towards the nearest soldiers.

"Soldiers! The enemy has not turned their backs. This morning you burned with desires of combat, competing with those heroes of yesterday that were with Commander Adam at the Pass of Biar. If you want to give a beating to the Frenchmen, make it now. It is our opportunity. Give them a just answer of lead!"

Two sub officers ran parallel to rear of the line shouting like they were possessed and threateningly brandished their pikes. The convincing liberality of many blows on the shoulders and the legs, punctuated the words of the captain and the movement stopped. The second line of the company remained immobile and solid. Captain Castro faced towards the static soldiers and pointed with his sword toward the enemy front with orders to fire. The peal of a discharge to their backs and the whistle over their heads of the friendly bullets convinced the doubtful fusiliers to swiftly emulate their companions.

Captain Castro maintained his mask of fake imperturbability, the code of honor demanded it, but the void in his stomach reminded him clearly how much fear he had felt. He had succeeded in re-establishing order in the company but had only skirted disaster. If his men thought of flight, their weakness would not only have been a personal disgrace, but rather would have dragged all the regiment into the vortex. And even having overcome the crisis, their situation was still very delicate. Some 50 yards ahead he could distinguish the mass of enemy voltigeurs perfectly. The peculiar sound of the French hunting horns captured his attention towards the right. Further on he saw the end of their formation, and a dark and compact column of attacking Frenchman before the regiment of Burgos. The captain takes sudden notice of the battle that has been raging around them, the reduced world that was his company and his regiment. All of one French battalion,

converted into a human ram, thrown against the pathetic and thin line that they was the infantry of Burgos. At the head of the ghastly attacking mass waves the tricolor cloth and gilding of an imperial eagle. Flanked by two halberds festooned with red pennants, the winged standard acts as a dauntless guide for the attack. The French column advances unalterably, without responding to the fire, willing to collide against the left half of the Spanish formation and resolve the matter at the point of the bayonet. Between the remnants of the confusion they approached the flank of the Burgos infantry. It seemed as if their formation could contract and expand at will. Behind the captain a voice rises among the troops.

"This is Guadalajara! Unite for the fight! They are forming beside Burgos!"

It is certain. With a slow and resolved advance, the two lines of Guadalajara progressed towards the front and joined with the flank of Burgos. Revolving as if closing a great door, the new Spanish regiment began to angle until the infantry of Guadalajara covered the flank of the French column completely. An eruption of grayish smoke momentarily engulfs both of the nearest bodies of soldiers. The continual eruption of muskets was the only way that one could perceive the clarity of the combat. That and the flags of each unit as they stood out between the clouds of smoke. The external vision of the combat was a colorful and terrible show, loaded with tension and of epic feeling. The same as the images of that squares and engravings of so many popular battles. However, all missed in the same manner. They didn't transmit the sensation of the chaotic and uncertain tragedy that prevailed when one was within the square. In this there was agreement, as with British officer Thomas St. Clair, who was devoted to painting the war as it was fought. The previous night at Albuera he had shared the heat of the battle while he sketched.

The men of Guadalajara were the reserves of the Division. *Their inclusion in the vortex of combat leaves us only to our own forces*, reasoned Captain Castro. *If the line it of battle breaks there is nothing behind that could support us or delay the enemy. Certainly we have arrived at the decisive moment*, he concluded. *Them or us.*

A horseman arrived at a gallop at the position of the colonel of Córdoba. Panting, he delivered a stained paper note to the commander. Without uttering a word, he seriously studied the meaning of the scribbles before him. Throwing it aside, he shows a great smile.

"Answer, gentleman?" asks the messenger as he struggles to retain the mettle of his restless mount.

"This height has a name, Lieutenant. War Mountain. Here we will follow many, giving until those appreciated friends that you announce have arrived," was his response.

Opening a path between the soldiers, the colonel stopped in the existing space between the two lines of fusiliers. Erect on his prancing horse, he raised his left arm up, shaking the dirty paper in his hand.

"Soldiers! This piece of paper that you see announces that General Whittingham is on the road. From one moment to the next we will see them reaching the summit to our backs. This mountain is Spanish and will not be given lightly. That of which we speak will be of pride to our troops!"

Cheers and hurrahs surged through the Spanish lines. Although the ruin of the Spanish formation was painfully evident and their lines were dangerously irregular, a stoic enthusiasm encouraged the men. That effort provided effect. The exchange of musketry delayed the French advance again. Frenchmen and Spaniards were already at such a short distance that they could ask each others names before killing them, but some had already begun to know that the tide had already turned.

The beating of marching drums became audible. Some voltigeurs marked a point above the battered Spaniards. A line of infantry with yellow facings and blue pants emerged from the beyond the peak of the mountain range. The firing against the Spanish formations began to slacken in time as rapid consultations occupied the French officers. A quivering series of brief bugle notes, and an agitation spread through the French units. They had realized it. The Frenchmen prepared for retreat. Captain Castro knew what would follow.

It will be a maneuver by the book, he thought. The nearest voltigeurs to our lines will lose one last volley and then will run to take refuge behind a second body of formed troops some 50 yards to their rear. We will return the fire but won't pursue them. Organized pursuit will be hard to carry out with the losses we have taken. That task remains for the regiments of Mallorca, Murcia and the Grenadiers that now should be taking positions to our backs. "There won't be pursuit!" He repeated, "There will not be pursuit!" It ran like a ripple through the Spanish fusiliers.

Captain Castro advanced slightly his left leg and extended a straight arm toward the front, pointing with his sword directly towards the retreating enemy. His left hand rested on his hip, touching the silk of his sash, then shouted: "Last discharge!"

A burning blow. A horrifying crack. A reddish veil falling on the landscape. An explosion and a sinking feeling inside. A void of sensations. A bodiless feeling. A hollow blackness, total and sudden.

That afternoon of April 13 of 1813, when the burial crews traveled to the battlefield at Castalla, of the 400 Allied bodies that were picked up, one belonged to a captain with a great wound and a disfigured face. Nobody could repair the torn paper that slipped from his sash when they hoisted him into the mortuary wagon. The wet night diluted the small written traces on the sheet. The breeze blew the note away, scattering it and ending up on the branches of a small bush. Caught like a sail in the masts of a ship, it lay calm in the sun. Those chattering letters that survived were the involuntary epitaph of some and of others.

"...if you come to read these lines, my friend, have certainty that the scythe of the well-known old woman has reaped me in some field, and that nobody should remember except for the suffering that was lived."

Biographies: Gallery of Personalities Suchet, Blake, and Murray *By Jose Antonio Vargas-Zúñiga*

After six long years of war, the peninsula had seen many combat leaders marching through the country. Some of them laid claim to fame in this contest, while others suffered ignominious defeat and disappeared from history. Suchet, Blake, and Murray are examples of the disparities of fortune

that accompanied these leaders. The first demonstrated valorous leadership in exercise of command and leadership of the army, while Blake failed in initiative, and Murray proved incompetent in successive actions until the coming of Wellington.

Suchet (1772-1826)

Louis Gabriel Suchet was a distinguished divisional leader of the Imperial army. He was born in Lyons, the son of a rich manufacturer. He enlisted in the army in 1793, a Republican volunteer, and rose rapidly in rank due to his intelligence, bravery and character: a battalion captain at 23, colonel at 26, brigadier general at 28 and divisional general at 29. Suchet took part in the Italian campaigns of 1796 and 1797, and the brief Swiss campaign of 1798. In 1799 he acted as chief of staff of the army in Italy, carrying out the successive orders of Joubert, Moreau, Championnet and Massena.

At the beginning of 1800, and having become a general of the army, he commanded a group of divisions along the Var line against Austrian general Melas. Suchet served with First Consul Bonaparte at the front of the Reserve Army, and maneuvered against the rear of the Austrians at the San Bernardo pass, contributing significantly to the great victory at Marengo.

In 1801, Suchet was named Inspector General of Infantry and in 1803 became commander of the 4th Division with "Le Grande Armee" at the Camp of Boulogne. The 4th Division became, in 1805, the 1st Division of the 5th Corps (under Marshal Lannes, later Marshal Mortier). At the front, Suchet and his division contributed to the triumphs of Ulm, Austerlitz, Saalfeld, Jena, and Pultusk. He was finally transferred from Silesia to Spain in October of 1808, and contributed to the reduction and surrender of Saragossa.

At the age of 39, Suchet finally had his first independent command, in an army that was well stocked with good leaders, and replaced Junot as commander of the III Corps in the Army in 1809. He won an uninterrupted series of triumphs in Aragón and Catalonia. He was rewarded with the title of Marshal in 1811, and named Duke of Albufera in 1812 after the fall of Valencia. But the following year saw his fortunes wane at Castalla, and later during the evacuation of Catalonia.

During the 100 Days Suchet commanded an army corps on the Swiss frontier, where he defeated the Austrians while Napoleon was losing at Waterloo. He returned to Spain in 1823 with the Duke of Angulema's expedition. When he died at Marseilles in 1826, both the governments of Catalonia and Valencia sent delegates to his funeral, a good example of the debt both these regions felt.

Blake (1759-1827)

Of Irish origins, Joachim Blake was born in Málaga. He participated as a second lieutenant in the attack on Gibraltar in 1779, and in the reconquest of Minorca in 1782. He took part in the Pyrenees campaign under the direction of General Caro, in many varied actions, and was named Sergeant Major and Quartermaster. He ascended to the rank of colonel in 1795 and to brigadier in 1802. He proposed to Godoy the creation of the post of chief administrator of the army, but without result. He organized the 1st Regiment of Infantry-Engineers, and published much on military matters.

In 1808 the Junta of Galicia named Blake Quartermaster General of the Kingdom, and he contributed to the formation of the Army of the Left (in Galicia), commanding little until moving to León and becoming Lieutenant General. He was involved in the battles of Medina de Rioseco, Valmaseda, and Espinosa de los Monteros. After the last defeat, he was placed under the command of the Marquis of Romana.

In 1809 he moved to serve the Kingdom of Aragón, where he organized the 2nd Army of the Left, and campaigned against General Suchet. After his defeat at Belchite, he was relieved and transferred to Cádiz.

In 1810 Blake was named Regent to the King, and Inspector General of Infantry and Militia. He commanded part of the 4th Army at the Battle of Albuera in May of 1811, then returning back to Cádiz. He ascended to rank of Captain General, and was given command of the Expeditionary Army. With this army he moved into the Kingdom of Valencia, and in October fought the Battle of Sagunto against Suchet. In January of 1812 he surrendered the stronghold of Valencia, and was taken prisoner by the French. He was jailed at the Castle of Vincennes until the fall of Napoleon in 1814. He returned to Spain, and was named by Ferdinand VII to be Inspector General of Engineers. But arguments with the King led to his renunciation by the President and the State Council, and he retired to Valladolid where he died.

Sir John Murray (1768-1827)

Enrolling as a skillful youth in the 3rd Guards Regiment (later the Scots Guards), he rose rapidly to the rank of captain. In 1793 he went to Flanders as an aide-de-camp, and participated in various actions. Near the end of 1794 he attained the

command of lieutenant colonel of the 2nd Battalion of the 84 Regiment of the Line (York & Lancaster), and participated in the expedition to the Cape of Good Hope in 1796. Following this, he led a small force to the Red Sea, and occupied Perim Island in the Straits of Bab al Mandab (the southern exit of the Red Sea).

In 1801 he participated in the final phases of the Egyptian campaign, under the command of Baird. Murray was then dispatched to India, where he commanded a division at Bombay and met Wellesley in May of 1803. Thus began the period of his differences with Wellington, for which he would eventually be relieved. Blake participated in Moore's expedition to Sweden in 1808, and spent much time with Moore in Portugal.

In 1809 he returned to serve under Wellington, but disputes led to Wellington's request for Blake's resignation. In 1811 he intended to return to the Peninsula, but Wellington opposed this. Promoted

to Lieutenant General on January 1, 1812, he joined the army in Sicily under Bentinck. In February 1813 he disembarked at Alicante and took command of an Anglo-Sicilian-Spanish expedition that in April met Marshal Suchet's army at Castalla. Under agreement with Wellington, at the end of May he landed with almost 20,000 men at Tarragona, but showed monstrous indecision in the face of the enemy, and re-embarked on June 12, abandoning artillery and many supplies. He was relieved by Wellington several days later, and sent before a court martial, which condemned his conduct. He still held favor with the Prince of Wales (the Regent, and the future George IV), and was transferred to India where he finally made the rank of General in 1825.

Note: In the British Army the rank of General is superior to that of Lieutenant General, but lesser than that of a French Marshal.

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Designer's notes: The Why behind the rules

By Jose Antonio Vargas-Zúñiga

Many times the majority of players question the parameters and premises that the designer has used to develop a game system: the why's of some actions, and the simplification of others, and the focus on certain events. These brief points and notes answer some of the particulars, and should not be taken as a replacement for any of the rules. They should serve to enlighten, and to serve as a basis for our attempt to simulate an historical period, showing how they aided the designer in his development of the system.

Once players have become accustomed to the majority of the rules for the series "*Shadow of the Eagle*," they may seem a bit familiar. Some of the game mechanisms are derived from the "classics," and were included during the development of the rules. They have demonstrated their value over the better part of 30 years. The venerable *Waterloo* was published by Avalon Hill in 1961, *Afrika Korps* in 1962, and *Gettysburg* in 1958. These games featured alternating movement, units with movement and combat factors, stacking restrictions, zones of control, terrain effects, combat tables based on odds ratios, movement after combat, leader counters, etc..

All of these mechanisms have been used by modern designers, many times camouflaged or fine-tuned, and other times practically intact. For all of this, and having stressed the characteristics

of the period combat, I will limit my comments to the so-called "novel" aspects seen below.

Orders

There are many games that have used some mechanism in this respect. Here they are intended to reflect the major or minor degree of control that was exercised over the troops by the commander in chief and the corps/divisional leaders, as shown to a certain degree by the route column formation (the maneuver order).

Formations

I suppose, at this point, that I should not forget to remind you about forgetting the fundamental distinction between line and column. Good; also forget the differences between two- and three-man lines, company columns, division columns, mixed order, attack column with grenadiers on the right and voltigeurs deployed in skirmish order... In this aspect there are many variants and if you wish to complicate the game, go ahead. But do not forget that more complexity does not equal more historical likelihood; at times this is backwards (I do not use the term "realism" because a wargame is not realistic, Thank God).

I believe that the limitations in fire and shock contained in the rules are sufficient to reflect the differences that existed between line and column.

Stacking

Each hex on the map represents an area of 5.5 hectares (55,000 square meters), which could hold more than 80,000 men in line formation separated by one meter of distance. It is pretty well near the mark that they could "go no further," for which an officer of the period remarked, and would present an impassable obstacle for other troops. For this reason, stacking is, in theory, unlimited but limited in practice by the rules of movement, fire and shock.

Fire

The limitations of points (or units in the case of artillery), is based on the map scale (600 men or three batteries in 250 meters). There is no shortage of opinion on this matter, but these appear to be the reasonable limits of the arms and their effectiveness. The case of artillery being

more effective at a two-hex range was a design decision. Fire with grapeshot was, without a doubt, more effective at a medium distance (much like a shotgun), but has a certain limitation, particularly with its diminishing effect at longer ranges. Thus this has been applied, without resort to excessive rules, to reflect the period: that artillery may fire grapeshot effectively at the infantry as the infantry tries to advance close enough to use its own weapons. The unique solution was to shorten the infantry weapons range, or to lengthen the artillery range.

Shock

That a unit is not obligated to attack is compensation for the obligation to attack all along a continuous front if combat is desired. The player is encouraged to commit entire corps to an attack, or suffer a mutual firefight. The limitation on points uses the same logic as for fire combat, that 18 points equals three battalions of 600 men in divisional column.

Alcañiz, María, and Castalla: The true history

By Jose Antonio Vargas-Zúñiga

Alcañiz, María, and Castalla have one thing in common: the presence of General Suchet (recently promoted to Marshal), in command of the French Army of Aragón. Each of these three battles developed from different situations and different contexts because of the generals opposing him. They had different outcomes, but in each case the battle showed the superiority of French command. The Allied command, with honorable exceptions, was not able to effectively take advantage of their dispositions.

Alcañiz and María

May 23 to June 15, 1809

Following the fall of Zaragoza in February, 1809, and believing that this signaled the submission of all of Aragón, the Emperor Napoleon decided to transfer the V Corps to Castille. This left only the III Corps, under the command of Marshal Junot, in Aragón. Shortly after this, Junot fell ill, and returned to France. He was replaced by General Suchet, one of the more competent divisional commanders of the French Army. Suchet was with the 1st Division of the V Corps, which was enroute to Castille. He did not take over until May 19, when he arrived with his escort, a battalion of the 64th Regiment of the Line. His task seemed

considerable since the III Corps had suffered much attrition, and discipline had broken down.

Meanwhile, on the Spanish side, the Ruling Council had decided to create a Second Army of the Right (also well known in Aragón and Valencia). This was to be organized and commanded by General Blake, who was in Tortosa at the head of Lazán's division. This division would form the nucleus of the new army, which added contingents raised by the Kingdom of Valencia. In the beginning, Blake spent much time organizing and training the army, but sensing the French debilitation, decided to take the initiative. At the moment, his army had only Lazán's division and eight battalions from Morella under General Roca.

Blake left Tortosa on May 7 and rendezvoused with Roca. They crossed into Aragón, and on May 18 met Lazán at the village of Alcañiz. The reorganization plans of III Corps could be seen: the French were spread out. Suchet (now in command) moved to remedy the situation, and concentrated the major part of Musnier's division under General Laval near Alcañiz. Before the French reaction, Blake deployed his troops in front of Alcañiz, taking advantage of a series of hills

situated on his right. These hills culminated at the peak of Los Pueyos. Once formed, this position had the defensive advantage of the high ground, but also the disadvantage of having one's back to the Guadalupe River. The river had steep banks and only one bridge, which would be dangerously crowded in case of a retreat. Over the hills of Los Pueyos, Blake situated five battalions under Areizaga; on the left, atop the Perdiguier hills were seven battalions under General Roca; in the center he collected the majority of his artillery and three battalions under General Lazán. Finally, on the extreme left, he established a cavalry screen under General Ibarrola. The only reserve was one battalion of the América Regiment.

At six in the morning on the 23rd, the French army approached along the Zaragoza road. Suchet knew the Spanish positions and, feeling his force sufficient, intended to attack. His plan was to engage both flanks of the enemy line while holding against the center, and to isolate the flanks and force them to retreat towards the single bridge. General Laval was to carry out the attack against the Los Pueyos hills with the help of the 4th Hussars. Perhaps because of overconfidence, Suchet had attempted too much, and the attack broke down into a bitter struggle for the hills. Blake believed the attack would come on the right, and sent two battalions of reinforcements and Ibarrola's cavalry. These were ordered to charge the flanks of Laval's battalions. Unfortunately, the Spanish horsemen were countercharged by the French hussars, who stabilized the situation. The struggle for the Spanish right continued at the same time, without either side gaining the upper hand.

After the charge of the hussars, Suchet judged the moment was right to launch a major attack on the Spanish center. But as the French approached, the Spanish artillery accorded itself well and fought off the French attack. Suchet considered his exposed position risky, and ordered a retreat to the French initial positions. It was now late afternoon. Blake, for his part, decided not to counterattack as his positions limited the movement he could take. Just before dark, Suchet commenced to abandon his camp, leaving behind a rearguard. The rearguard consisted of the single battalion of the 64th Line, previously his only reserve. The retreat was begun in good order, but at the end of four hours of fighting some of the troops panicked. Possibly started by a drummer, some of the troops began to run, until Suchet himself appeared and began to restore order (in spite of being wounded in the foot). Blake did not intend to pursue, given the exhaustion of his

cavalry and the outward appearance of the enemy's orderly retreat.

Both commanders spent the next several weeks reorganizing and drilling their troops. Blake received fresh troops, which doubled his force. Suchet also called desperately for reinforcements, and struggled to raise morale. Because of the overall situation in the Provinces, including the defense of Zaragoza, the reinforcements intended for III Corps (all of Morlot's division) instead were sent to Kellerman for his offensive in Galicia.

On June 10th Blake decided to advance against Saragossa. He moved to Belchite by the 12th, and on the 13th Areizaga's division entered Botorrita. Suchet decided to defend Zaragoza and concentrated his army over the Huerva River. Behind, in the city, he left a small garrison, and deployed General Laval with five battalions at Monte Torrero.

On the morning of the 15th, Blake advanced beyond the town of María, deploying his force in two lines in the hills between the Huerva River and the plateau of La Muela ("The Millstone"). The first line contained Roca's division, Creagh's vanguard, and O'Donojú's Spanish cavalry, while Lazán's division was placed in the rear line. Areizaga's division remained, incomprehensibly, at Botorrita. Closer to Blake, on the other side of the vanguard, the French army deployed. General Habert was with four battalions on the left, while the center and the right were covered by Musnier's division (of eight battalions) and the brigades of Fabre and Harispe. This left Suchet with a reserve of Wathier's cavalry and two battalions of infantry (the 1st of the 5th Line and the 64th Line). Like Blake, Suchet was prepared for a defensive battle like Alcañiz. Suchet was in no hurry, and waited for Robert's six battalions until early afternoon. Neither side could see or scout out all of the enemy's position without beginning a major engagement. At two in the afternoon, after receiving the reinforcements, Suchet ordered a general advance by Musnier's division. This move was repulsed by the Spanish who, like the French, had sought to flank the enemy line. The movements resulted in a counterattack by Fabre, which quickly broke down into another indecisive struggle. At three in the afternoon a rainstorm fell upon the field, which ended the action.

When visibility was reestablished, Suchet decided to break through on the Spanish right, which was situated in poor terrain and covered mainly by O'Donojú's cavalry. This would be accomplished by General Habert's troops and some of Wathier's

cavalry (not including the Polish Lancers, who were screening the right flank). These forces attacked, and had no difficulty in routing the Spanish cavalry. They then fell on the rear of the main Spanish body, and forced the artillery to retire.

This decided the battle, and the remainder of the Spanish forces maneuvered and counterattacked, but were finally forced to retreat. They did so in relatively good order, but were forced to abandon many of their artillery pieces. Blake retreated to Botorrita, which was still occupied by the imperturbable Areizaga, barely harassed by the French. The next day he maneuvered from this position towards Belchite, where on the 18th of the following month he turned to confront Suchet. There was no further action at Belchite or afterwards. No real good, only much confusion, was the result of the campaign; so went the hopes of the Army of Aragón and Valencia...to the less for the moment. Thus ended Blake's attempt to recoup Zaragoza.

Castalla

April 13, 1813

Towards the middle of March, 1813, the various Allied forces facing Marshal Suchet in the Alicante area were deployed between Alcoy and Yecla. At Alcoy was the Majorcan division under Wittingham, around Castalla was the Anglo-Sicilian expeditionary force under Murray, and on the left at Yecla was the Menorca division. Finally, at Sax, Edla, and other small towns Roche's division and other detachments from the army under General Elío were stationed. Suchet decided that it was not wise to allow the Anglo-Spanish army to continue receiving reinforcements or to allow them to attack. He feared the loss of the initiative in the Yecla area, where General Harispe was having great difficulty in subjugating the local population. On April 11 the local Spanish civilian population rose up and besieged the French regiments at Burgos and Cádiz. The Spanish took many losses and lost over a thousand prisoners, including 68 officials. French losses were 18 dead and 61 wounded. Meanwhile Generals Murray and Elío advanced with a small force against Villena, where they immediately fired on by the Cuirassiers of the 13th Regiment and infantry and artillery from Habert's command. Under expressed orders from Elío, the Vélez-Málaga Regiment was left in Villena and its citadel to delay the advance of the French. This was in vain, and the regiment was forced to surrender that same day and gave up over 1000 prisoners. The next day Suchet continued his advance in the

direction of Castalla, striking with General Habert's vanguard at the forces of Colonel Adam who was defending the port of Biar. During the afternoon of the 12th the Anglo-Sicilian force maneuvered to divert the French forces, but without success and losing 100 men and two cannon. On the morning of the 13th, Murray deployed his forces, with Wittingham's Division and Adam's detachment on the left, over a series of steep hills to the west of Castalla. The center was occupied by Mackenzie's Division, deployed in front of the town and the castle and reinforced with two battalions from Roche's Division. On the right, and forming an angle to the rest of the line, was Clinton's Division, protected by a partially-flooded ravine. The reserves consisted of the remainder of Roche's Division and the cavalry. The French passed through the port of Biar, and deployed into the valley of Castalla. Suchet led a reconnaissance force of cavalry ahead of the main body towards Onil. Wittingham's Division, under the orders from Murray, had deployed too far to the west, and left too much space on Adam's left flank. Marshal Suchet lost little time in ordering an attack here, hoping to envelope the Allied line. Five battalions under General Robert were employed in this effort, but Wittingham realized what was happening and reacted. He counter-marched, without orders from Murray. Once the continuous Spanish line was reestablished with the Anglo-Sicilian forces, Robert's attack had little chance of succeeding and was repulsed. After this, and because of cavalry reconnaissance reports, Suchet was convinced that the Allied right (Clinton) was unassailable, and decided to concentrate his forces against the left. But he rapidly came to the conclusion that rapid movement across the hills was not possible, and the Allied firepower would be too strong, and so ordered a general withdrawal. Harispe's Division covered the retreat, which was done the same morning. Murray did not pursue, and indeed the Allied force was quite disorganized and could do little to interfere. Suchet had no difficulty in crossing back to Biar, leaving behind three battalions and eight guns to attack Mackenzie (who might push the matter). This attack convinced Murray to change his orders again, and no pursuit occurred.

The Allies lost 670 men, and the French probably 1000 to 1500; Suchet claimed 800 lost in three days while Murray claimed 3000, obviously an exaggeration. The battle had no real further consequences.

One curious anecdote tells of a famous duel between a British officer and a French officer who challenged him. The duel was attended by

numerous individuals from both sides, who watched while the officers fought. It ended with the Englishman killing the Frenchman.

One other small detail was that General Elío was not present during the action, remaining at Petrel with several of his battalions.

Text to accompany the illustrations:

General:

Españoles = Spanish
Franceses = French
Ejército Español = Spanish Army
bon. = battalion
Línea = Line (usually indicates a Line Regiment)
Hus. (Húsares) = Hussars
Corac. = Cuirassers
Dra. = Dragoons
Caz. (Cazadores) = Light Infantry
Granaderos = Grenadiers
Tiradores = Tirailleurs
Lanceros = Lancers
Artillería = artillery
Pesada = heavy
Media = medium
Ligera = light
Reserva = Reserve
Voluntarios = Volunteers
Unidades = units
Infantería = infantry
Caballería = cavalry

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Voluntarios Zaragoza = Saragossa Volunteers
Cazadores Valencia = Valencia Light Infantry
Armée d' Aragon = Army of Aragon (French)
Lanceros Vistula = Vistula Lancers (Polish)

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Alcañiz: May 28, 1809

1. French advance (6:00 AM)
2. Laval
3. 4th Hussars
4. Reserve (64th Line, 13th Cuirassers, Vistula Lancers)
5. Fabre
6. Harispe
7. Areizaga
8. Lazán and artillery
9. Roca
10. Ibarrola

- A. Attack of Laval's Brigade
- B. Advance of Ibarrola's Cavalry
- C. Counter attack by the 4th Hussars
- D. Attack by Fabre against Lazán

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María: June 15, 1809

1. Roca
2. Spanish cavalry (O'Donoghú)
3. Lazán
4. Creagh
5. French reserve (5th Light and 64th Line)
6. Polish Lancers
7. Wathier
8. Fabre and Harispe (Musnier's Division)
9. Habert

- A. Attack of Musnier's Division
- B. Counter attack by the Spanish and Fabre's last attack
- C. French attack (Habert aided by Wathier) against the Spanish right
- D. Spanish retreat and final French attack
- E. Arrival of Robert

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Shading indicates leaders not represented in the game (the French Divisional leaders) since the real action was at the brigade level.

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Ejército Aliado = Allied Army
Brun. = Brunswick
KGL = Kings German Legion
Alman. = German
RA = Royal Artillery
Bat. = battery
Ligero = Light

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Castalla: April 13, 1813

1. Wittingham (part)
2. Wittingham (part)
3. Adam
4. Mackenzie
5. Clinton
6. Roche
7. Cavalry
8. Boussard
9. Harispe
10. Habert
11. Robert
12. Reserve

- A. Deployment of the French cavalry against the Spanish right
- B. Movement to the west of part of Wittingham's Division
- C. Advance by Robert against Wittingham
- D. Arrival of Wittingham's displaced units
- E. French attacks against the center
- F. The French attack fails, and Suchet orders a general retreat
- G. French movement back towards the Biar road