DRAFT

FOMBIO & LODI 1796: CROSSING OF THE PO

Date: 5-10 May 1796

History: A week after the battle of Mondovi, the armistice between France and Piedmont was signed on 28 April. In the course of the following week, Beaulieu's Austrian army therefore fell back behind the Po to cover Milan. It might have been wiser militarily to fall back further and faster, but it was politically impossible for him to do so.

The French army followed and concentrated around Valenza. Napoleon feigned as if preparing to cross at Valenza, but instead launched a bold right hook to outflank the extended Austrian line. His advance guard raced to Piacenza, where it and La Harpe's division crossed the Po in boats on 7 May.

Beaulieu's response was slow and incoherent, some forces still screening Milan, others withdrawing behind the Adda, leaving Liptay with insufficient strength to confront the French. Liptay was therefore defeated at Fombio, which caused Beaulieu to withdraw entirely behind the Adda.

The French pursued to Lodi. Napoleon did not really need the Lodi crossing. Nevertheless, he ordered an attack across the single bridge into the teeth of an Austrian gun line. The demoralized Austrian rearguard folded easily. The propaganda impact of this astonishing success was far greater than its military significance, and made Napoleon's name echo around Europe.

Victory Conditions: Victory is decided at the end of the game. It is a complex equation, as Beaulieu is politically obliged to hold Milan and the territory west of it as long as he can, but has to balance that against protecting his line of communications and preserving his army.

FRENCH ORDER OF BATTLE
Army of Italy
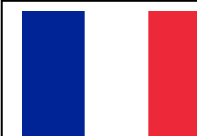
Napoléon Bonaparte (C-in-C)			Anywhere.
General Jean-Mathieu-Philibert Sérurier (Division Sérurier) *(10,800)*			S of Po, within 6" of Alessandria or Valenza.
4	Vet SM	Brigade Guieu	"
4	Vet SM	Brigade Fiorella	"
4	Vet SM	Brigade Pelletier	"
General André Masséna (Div Masséna) *(8,400)*			S of Po, W of Scrivia, within 6" of Sale.
4	Vet SM	Brigade Dommartin	"
4	Vet SM	Brigade Joubert	"
General Charles-Pierre-François Augereau (Division Augereau) *(6,800)*			Within 6" of Novi.
4	Vet SM	Brigade Victor	"
4	Vet SM	Bdes Rusca & Beyrand	"
General Amédée La Harpe (Div La Harpe) *(6,350)*			In or between Voghera and Tortona.
4	Vet SM	Brigade Menard	"
4	Vet SM	Brigade Robert	"
(Advance Guard) (5,200)			
4 A	Vet SM	Dallemagne	S of Po, within 6" of Valenza or Voghera.
(Cavalry Divisions) (3,550)			
2	Trnd Cav	Kilmaine	S of Po, within 6" of Tortona or Alessandria.
2	Trnd Cav	Beaumont	"

Total (12 units): 40 infantry bases, 4 cavalry @ 750 men per base

VPs Earned for Holding River Lines

North of the Po there are four river lines: the Agogna, Terdoppio, Ticino and Adda. The Austrian player earns Victory Points by holding these at the end of a given turn. A river line is held so long as there is an *Austrian unit west of it*, and the French do not hold any *Bridges on or east of it*. For this purpose Pizzighettone counts as a Bridge. A Bridge is held by whichever side last crossed it. All Bridges north of the Po are Austrian-held initially.

The Agogna line must be held at the end of Turn 3; the Terdoppio, Turn 4; the Ticino, Turn 5; the Adda, Turn 8 (game end). Milan is also worth a Victory Point if held on Turn 6.

Note that a line must be held "at", not "until". Thus, say the French capture Pizzighettone on Turn 3 and the Austrians retake it on Turn 5: no VP would be earned for the Agogna or Terdoppio lines, but a VP could still be earned for the Ticino or Adda lines.

VP for Preserving the Army

The Austrians gain 1 VP if at game end, they have at least *5 non-Spent Austrian units* that can trace a Line of Communications. To trace LOC, a unit must be within 6" of a road that then runs to the eastern board edge without passing through a French unit's ZOC.

Austrian Victory: Austrians score 5 VPs or more.

Draw: Austrians score 4 VPs.

French Victory: Austrians score 3 VPs or fewer.

Game Length: 8 turns (5-10 May).

(Most game turns represent a whole day, but there are a couple of extra turns because there were some night marches and days of particularly intense action.)

Scenario by Chris Pringle

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SCENARIO RULES

1. Because of the scale of the game, cities and towns are represented as Towns and Villages in game terms. The small Hamlets have no terrain effect and are landmarks only.

2. Any unit touching a Road ignores movement deductions for crossing Bridges while it is following the Road. Roads do <u>not</u> increase movement distances, but are vital for Lines of Communication.

3. <u>Crossing the Po</u>. The Austrians may not cross the Po. The French had to collect boats to cross. Limited boats, and command and control limitations, mean they may only set up two crossings, one east of the River Scrivia and one west of it, at least 18" apart.

   To set up a crossing is simple: at the end of its movement, a French unit within 3" of the south bank of the Po declares that it is crossing, and is then placed within 3" of the nearest point to it on the north bank. Place a Crossing marker there. A second unit may cross at the same place in the same way on the same turn. A third unit may do so if it rolls 3+ on D6.

   On subsequent turns, up to 3 more units per turn may cross in the same way.

   A cavalry unit counts as two units and must roll 3+ to cross.

4. <u>Retreating across Rivers</u>. Normally in BBB units may retire across Bridges without penalty. In this scenario, because of the scale of the game and size of the rivers, any unit that retires across a Bridge or Crossing over a River (not a Stream) loses a base.

5. All infantry and cavalry units <u>only use</u> "In Depth" formation. There are no formation changes and no use of Line or Column of March.

6. Beaulieu's ineptitude means he has a Command Radius of 0", and all Austrian units are Passive.

7. Because of the preceding series of defeats, many of the Austrian infantry are Fragile.

8. Napoléon Bonaparte acts as a General, adding +1 to Movement Rolls for units within 6"; this is <u>in addition</u> to the +1 they may receive from their divisional commander.

9. The French advance guard unit of converged grenadiers is Aggressive.

10. <u>No Firing!</u> Because of the scale of the game, omit the normal BBB Fire Phases. Combat is by Assault only.

AUSTRIAN ORDER OF BATTLE

Feldzeugmeister Freiherr Beaulieu de Marconnay (Austrian C-in-C)	Within 6" of Valeggio & Ottobiano. NB Command Radius of 0".
Vukassovich (4 bns, 4 sqns = 2,800) 4 P Trnd SM	N of Po, within 6" of Valenza.
Liptay (8,000) 4 P Trnd SM 4 F,P Trnd SM 4 F,P Trnd SM	W of Agogna, within 6" of Valeggio/Ottobiano. " "
Sebottendorf (9 bns, 10 sqns = 6,450) 4 P Trnd SM 4 F,P Trnd SM 2 P Vet Cav	E of Agogna, within 6" of Valeggio/Ottobiano. " "
Schübirts (Hilfskorps) (4 bns, 4 sqns = 2,800) 4 F,P Trnd SM	"
Roselmini (8 bns, 6 sqns = 5,300) 4 P Trnd SM 4 F,P Trnd SM	Between River Ticino and Terdoppio stream. "
~550 men/bn, 150/sqn *Total (10 units): 36 infantry bases, 2 cavalry @ 750 men per base*	*Austrian positions are those of 4 May, before Liptay moved east on 4 May.*

11. Austrians deploy first. After French deployment, the Austrians then get a free movement phase for one Formation only. (A Formation being, for example, Liptay's three units, or Roselmini's two.) Each unit of the chosen formation may make a movement roll and move normally.

12. After the Austrians' free movement phase, French move first on Turn 1.

CAMPAIGN/SCENARIO OPTIONS

<u>Better Austrian command</u>: Assume Beaulieu was incapacitated or replaced, and almost any commander could have done better. Give the Austrian General a 6" Command Radius; better leadership could also justify removing the Austrian troops' Fragile and/or Passive penalties, and even making their Cavalry Aggressive.

<u>Bold Austrian strategy</u>: Remove the Austrian political inhibitions and let them cross the Po just as the French can. Ignore all standard Objectives. Instead, if either side inflicts two more enemy units Spent or Destroyed than it suffers itself, it wins; otherwise the game is a Draw. As an extra spin on this option, for umpired games or with the French players' permission, allow the Austrians to choose from this or the standard option, but do not tell the French which until game end.

<u>Flexible French crossings</u>: Allow the French more but smaller crossings: any number of crossings at least 12" apart, but limit of 2 units per turn instead of 3, and the second must roll 3+ to cross.

<u>The Stradella Option</u>: Napoleon himself said Beaulieu should have fortified a bridgehead at Stradella. Add a Bridge acros the Po by Stradella, and let the Austrians deploy one of their units in Stradella and another in a Redoubt (1 cover) just north of the Bridge.

SCENARIO NOTES

The standard scenario makes Napoleon's right hook the obvious French plan, but a subsidiary crossing near Valenza could also be useful. A left hook or frontal assault or pinning attack would be radical but might work, depending on how the Austrians deploy and react.

Austrian players may be tempted to follow Beaulieu's plan but might react more aggressively to French moves, and/or pull back earlier and more decisively.

The real interest of this scenario lies in exploring some of the scenario options for both sides to see just how differently it could have turned out.

2 players: 2 hours

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NORTH

1 grid sq = 10,000m

Austrian line of communications

Austrian line of communications

Austrian line of communications

Cremona

Adda River

Pizzighettone

Po River

Duchy of Parma

Lodi

Fombio

Piacenza

MILAN

Trebbia River

Pavia

Stradella

Po River

Ros

Ticine River

Casteggio

Terdoppio Stream

Seb

Dall

Voghera

Valeggio & Ottobiano

LaH

Mortara

Sch

Lip

Sale

Agogna stream

Vuk

Mass

Cav

Tortona

Aug

Po River

Valenza

Scrivia River

Alessandria

Novi

French line of communications

Sér

Casale

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Legend:
- Town
- Village
- Hamlet
- Po River
- river
- stream
- road
- bridge
- Objective