

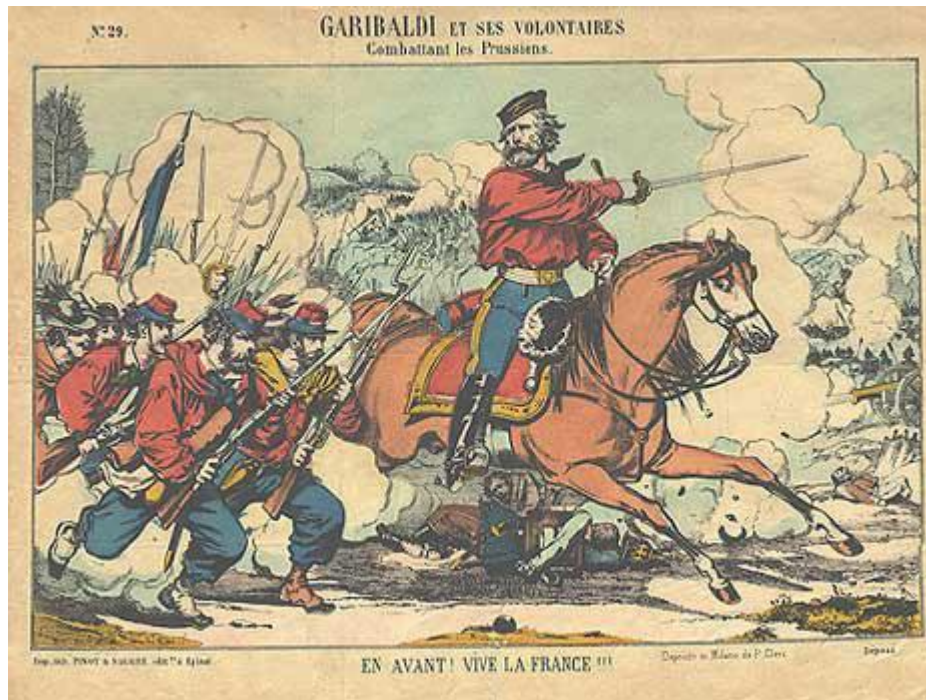
# Report from the Vosges Mountains

## By Jim Rohrer

During the Franco-Prussian War, the Emperor of France was captured by Prussian forces and a new republic was formed, still in conflict with Prussia. Garibaldi, the famous freedom-fighter, brought an international force of Redshirts to the aid of the French republic (Arquilla, 2011). They fought in the Vosges Mountains against General Edwin von Manteuffel who later praised Garibaldi for the speed of his movements and the intensity of his attacks.



Garibaldi was known throughout his career for brilliant use of guerrilla warfare tactics, not least of which was ‘swarming’, in which small detachments would strike quickly in unexpected locations and sting hard. Defenders using conventional tactics would find themselves exhausted and demoralized, eventually withdrawing despite their numerical advantages. Theorists call this the ‘force divisor’ principle because the numerical superiority of the conventional force must be dispersed to diverse locations and unexpected times with relentless frequency.



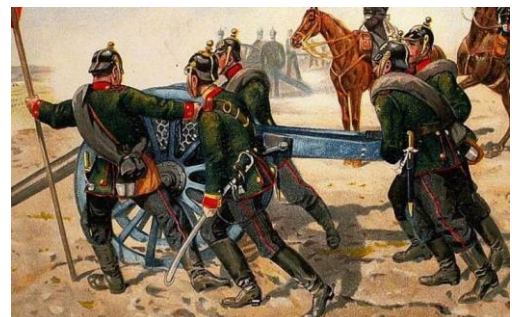
## Scenario and Order of Battle

In this scenario, the Prussians are charged with taking a bridge (see picture). The bridge had one artillery unit and three infantry units to defend it, all under cover. The Prussians had six infantry units and one artillery unit. In addition, they hoped for the arrival of three units of reinforcements. The balance of forces seemed reasonable, especially since the opponents were a ragtag bunch of irregulars. The Prussian commander elected to launch the attack.



## Rules and Procedure

One figure represents one unit, which is assumed to be composed of ten soldiers (Featherstone D and Curry J, 1973).



Thirty event cards were randomly drawn from the deck, leaving six unused. The event deck consisted of the following cards: *No Event*-Nothing happens (10 cards); *Confusion*-1-3 units may not move this turn (4 cards); *Ammunition Shortage*-1-3 units may not shoot this turn (4 cards); *Demoralization*-1-6 hits (2 cards); *Initiative*-A single unit may either move twice, move and then shoot, or shoot twice (4 cards); *Rally*- Remove 1-3 hits (4 cards); *Enemy Panic*-A single enemy unit acquires 1-6 hits (2 cards); *Sniper*-Sniper unit attacks from left (2 cards); *Sniper*-Sniper unit attacks from right (1 card); *Help Arrives*-1 reinforcing unit arrives (3 cards). (Note: Lone Warriors can make their own event cards that are specific to a given scenario. They even can be printed on regular playing cards for easy shuffling.)

Defenders were awarded one hit for each roll over three. Attackers only got a hit if they rolled a six, since targets were under cover. Each unit can absorb only fifteen hits. I commanded the Prussians. All actions by the Redshirts were determined by the cards except for firing. I assumed they would shoot at the Prussians every round until the unit was removed.

## **Game Report**

The six Prussian infantry units advanced toward the bridge, leaving the artillery unit to fire from their rearward position. By the time they were within range, a Redshirt sniper unit had popped up on the left under cover. Two Prussian units rotated ninety degrees left so that they could return fire. Both sides fired away for a few rounds. Then, another sniper unit popped up in another stand on the left. By this time one Prussian infantry unit had been wiped out.

One of the expected reinforcing units arrived back at the artillery unit and began advancing toward the bridge. When it was near the second sniper, it rotated to the left and prepared to fire.

A second reinforcing unit arrived back at the artillery unit. One of the defending units at the bridge was wiped out but so was one of the attacking units. When the second reinforcing unit got into range of the sniper on the left, another sniper unit had popped up on the right. When the thirtieth card had been played, the situation was as shown in the second picture. Only one Prussian unit was left firing toward two infantry units and a gun unit behind the barricade. A sniper unit was on the right (not shown) so the sole Prussian unit facing forward was under attack by four units from under cover. Four Prussian units were firing toward two sniper units under cover on the left. The force divisor principle was at work.

The last card had been played. The third reinforcing unit never arrived and the first two arrived later than was hoped, which might have been expected when fighting Garibaldinis. The objective (the bridge) was not taken. Losses were four out of nine units for the Prussians and one out of seven units for the redshirts. Elapsed time: twenty minutes.

The battle might have turned out differently if the Redshirt snipers had arrived late or not at all, or if the Prussian reinforcements had arrived sooner, or if the dice had rolled differently. In this run-through, the game reflected history. Garibaldi was the only general on the French side who was never defeated by the Prussians, despite being outnumbered.

For an excellent account of how irregular warfare has been decisive in the past, see the very readable book on the subject by John Arquilla (Arquilla, 2011). The book is written as a series of biographies. Not much detail of any particular engagement is described, but the general principles of successful irregular engagements are presented. The author argues that surges do not work against insurgents and warfare in the future will have to be irregular.

At this point it is worth observing that most wargames with a focus on “special operations” are skirmish games. That is fine but it fails to take into account the fact that the commanders of irregular units were directing many such units simultaneously. Battles between irregulars and regulars are not won in a single skirmish. The One Hour Wargames rules allow for this dimension of wargaming (Thomas, 2014).



#### References

- Arquilla, J. (2011). *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits: How Irregular Warfare Shaped our World*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.
- Featherstone D and Curry J, D. F. (1973). *Donald Featherstone's Solo Wargaming*. London: Kayle and Ward.
- Thomas, N. (2014). *One Hour Wargames*. Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd.