

The Battle of BORODINO

Borodino Dismembered by Roy Gibson
Part 1

Let me say at the start that 'Borodino' is one of my favorite SPI games, played more frequently than any other single game - in case anyone might get the notion I don't like the game!

There are, however, certain departures from the historical battle in the simulation. I feel that these crept in at the playtest stage, when historical reality is often balanced against 'playability' to achieve a workable game system - I hesitate to suggest that SPI didn't do their historical homework.

Shortly after receiving the simulation, I acquired Dr Christopher Duffy's excellent book "Borodino" - which is a must for anyone playing the SPI simulation. (The paperback cost 60p in 1972).

Fact v Simulation

1. The Bridge at Borodino

During the morning of September 7th, the Russian Lifeguard Jaeger Regiment retreated across and burnt the wooden bridge across the Kolocha river, effectively preventing pursuit.

No provision for this is made in the rules: I suggest the following:-

OPTIONAL RULE - BRIDGE BURNING

1) Any bridge may be burnt by:-
a) placing one unit in an adjacent hex to the bridge on the 'enemy' side of the river AND b) maintaining that unit in that hex from the end of the Movement Phase in which it arrives until the start of the next Movement Phase (Friendly), without suffering retreat or destruction. (The unit may be unsuccessfully attacked without negating these conditions).

2) Provided these conditions have been fulfilled, the bridge is covered by a 'destroyed' marker similar to that used in 'Combat Command', and the destroying unit may then retreat (before ultimate destruction of the bridge) at half movement allowance, thus catering for the disorganisation and confusion such a retreat would cause.

2. The Four Pontoon Bridges

These are marked on the game map on the Kolocha River between Borodino and Fomkino. In fact, they did not exist until the late afternoon of September 6th, as they were built by French pontooneers during the preceding 24 hours. Historically, they were nearer Borodino; only the bridge nearest Borodino is correctly placed, the others should be on the next three hexes

towards Borodino. Further complication is added by the fact that the infantry divisions of Moraad and Friant forded the Kolocha River due South of Valvyma on Sept. 5th.

OPTIONAL RULE - BRIDGE BUILDING

1) The bridges as marked (except that at Borodino) are covered with spare counters (mark them according to your artistic ability).

2) Add a counter to the French O.B. marked "Pontoon Train" - Combat Strength (1), defensive only, and movement allowance of 3. Place it on the reinforcement chart at Game Turn 8 (Sept. 5th) arriving on an 'A' hex.

3) This unit can build up to a maximum of six bridges i.e. it only has materials for six bridges.

4) Bridges are built or dismantled by remaining in a riverside hex from the end of one 'friendly' Movement Phase to the beginning of the next 'friendly' Movement Phase, provided that :-

- a) the unit is not attacked
- b) there is no enemy unit on the opposite bank within 2 hexes of the bridgehead hex, i.e. the bridgehead hex (on the opposite bank) is neither occupied or controlled (ZOC) by the enemy player.

5) The original bridges can be uncovered as they are 'built', or new bridges can be 'built' with new counters.

6) The pontoon bridges may be cut adrift by the Russian player sitting on one end for the period required for burning.

7) Pontoon bridges cut adrift may be 'rebuilt' by the same process as building, i.e. paragraph 4) above.

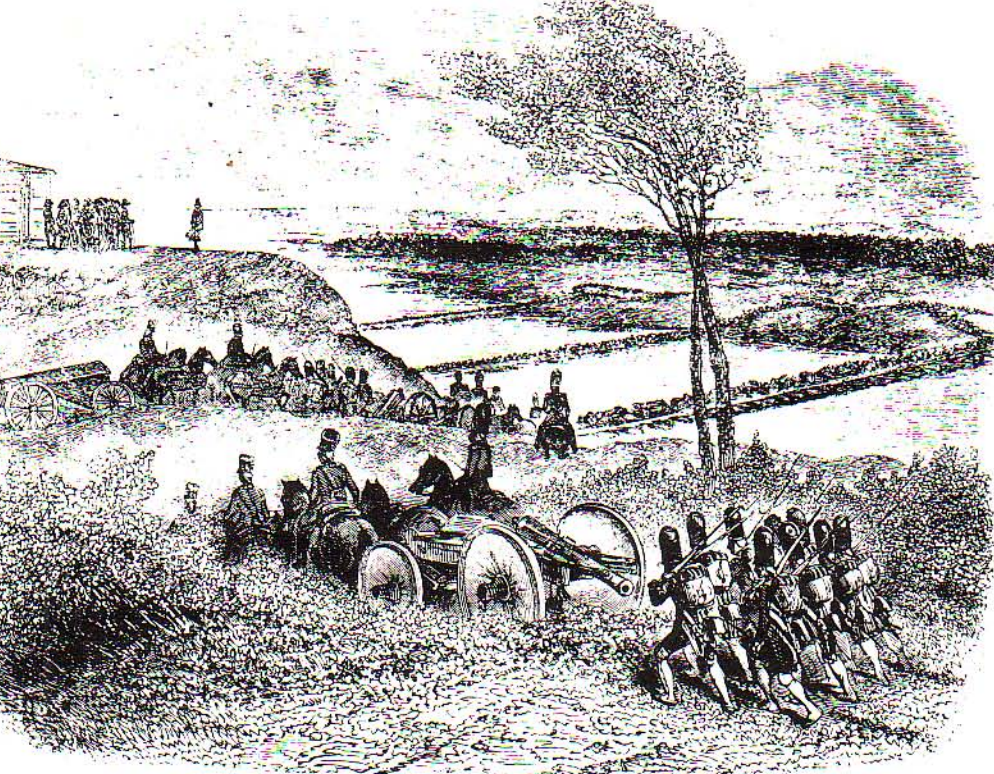
8) Pontoon bridges may be burnt as described in the optional rule on burning bridges. To burn a bridge, the Russian player must be on the French side of the bridge.

N.B. The situation may arise where the Russian is faced with French units on either side. In that case the 'French' side is the side which the French player can reach first with either piece. If both can reach it in the next French movement phase, the bridge cannot be burnt.



Comments of a constructive nature are invited on these optional rules, especially from those who are also prepared to put them to the test.

Part 2 will cover optional movement and combat rules for the three arms i.e. infantry, cavalry and artillery, and space allowing, an alternative opening for the French player based on the actual strategic plans devised at the time of the battle. Let's hear from you!



Napoleon watches, at the start of his 1812 Campaign, as his army crosses the Neimen River on pontoon bridges.