

THE GENERAL

Warfare in the Napoleonic Era

by Ian Williams



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For Helen, Rebecca and Jenny.



1.Loading Instructions

Type LOAD "" and press ENTER (128 owners should select 48K mode). After loading, you will be asked whether you wish to restore a previously saved game position. If so, press "L".

To start a new game, press any other key. On Side 2 of the tape you will find the start-up code for new games. You will need to load this if you wish to start again from scratch after a Quit or End of Game.

2.Difficulty Levels

When starting a new game, you will be prompted to select a difficulty level. Simply press '1', '2' or '3' for the level you require. The levels are in ascending order of difficulty:

1. Duke (introductory)
2. Prince (intermediate)
3. Emperor (difficult)

The difficulty levels affect the initial strengths and morale of both armies as well as the enemy General's strategy and other factors such as the effects of visibility on the relaying of orders and reports. The level you have chosen appears beside the watch on the main screen.

3.The Scenario

The game is set during the Napoleonic Wars. An enemy army is poised to invade your small central European state and it is up to you, as General of the Grand Army, to resist it. Although your force is vastly outnumbered by the enemy, a narrow valley affords the only access to your beleaguered land, and this means that only a small proportion of the attacking force can cross the border into your country at once.

Control the valley, therefore, and the day may yet be won...

4.The Game

In “The General” you see the conflict unfold before you from a first-person point of view. Distant troops are only identifiable by using a telescope, units may be obscured by buildings, orders take time to reach the units to which they have been issued and reports from your Brigade Commanders may be lost on their way back to you.

These features, along with many others, make “The General” more than just a wargame - the standard “bird’s-eye view” has been replaced by the “General’s-Eye View” and communication problems added to give the player a taste of the real difficulties faced by the generals of the time.

5.Victory Conditions

There are two farms in the valley and it is these farms that are the key to its control. The battle is won by the side which:

a) Occupies both farms, and has lost fewer units than the enemy or

b) Reduces the number of enemy Infantry units to less than two (in which case they can no longer occupy both farms).

6.The Armies

Both armies are made up of 7 Infantry brigades, 5 Cavalry brigades and 3 Artillery units - 15 units in all. The initial strength of each of these units is randomly set at the start of the game. Average strengths are as follows:

Infantry - 2000

Cavalry - 1000

Artillery - 450

These initial strengths will vary according to the difficulty level you have selected.

7.Time

The game is divided into turns, each of which represents 10 minutes, starting in the pre-dawn twilight at 7:30 AM. If there is no outright winner by 7:00 PM the battle is declared indecisive and the game ends.

8.Options

There are two main menus - you can toggle between them by pressing "S". The following options are available each turn:

USE TELESCOPE

ISSUE ORDER

LIST ORDERS

INSPECT UNIT
READ REPORTS
CONTINUE
SAVE, LOAD or QUIT (ACCESS MENU)



9.Using the Telescope

The telescope is used to identify units on the battlefield. It can be moved around by the cursor keys and focused by pressing 1, 2 or 3. When you focus on a unit, a view of the unit will appear in your telescope view at the bottom left of the screen. You will then see a flag bearing the unit's identity.

This will be in the form of a letter and a number - for example, "I3" for 3rd Infantry, "A1" for 1st Artillery. A flag drawn in inverse (yellow on a black

background) shows that you have focused on an enemy unit.

Beside the flag you will see an estimation of the unit's current strength. This takes the form of a range in which its strength lies - for example, "500 to 600".

The range varies according to how far away the unit is and the visibility. It is much easier to estimate the strength of a unit which is near to you in good visibility than to judge that of a distant unit through clouds of smoke.

When you focus on a unit in the near or middle distance, it makes no

difference which of the three focusing keys you press (1, 2 or 3). When focusing on distant units, however, you will notice that the telescope cursor can be over up to three units at once, and the key pressed will dictate which unit is focused on - '1' for the nearest unit (at the bottom of the cursor), '2' for a unit in the middle of the cursor and '3' for a unit at the top of the cursor.

You can also focus on the farms, in which case you will see the western end of the farm in your telescope view. If the farm is occupied there will be a flag protruding from the window - red if the occupying unit is yours, blue if it is an enemy unit. You will be able to identify the unit but will be unable to estimate its strength.

After focusing on a unit or a farm, press any key to return to the main menu. The identity of the last unit focused on will appear under your telescope view - red for your army, blue for the enemy. You will find this especially useful when issuing "Engage" orders.

10. Issuing Orders

This is achieved by means of a series of single keypresses. You will first be prompted for a unit to which the order is to be issued. Press "I" for Infantry, "C" for Cavalry, "A" for Artillery or "G" to issue a General Order to the whole army. If you have specified a unit type you must now press its number, or "G" to issue a General Order to all units of that type.

Examples: "I5" = "5th Infantry" "C3" = "3rd Cavalry" "G" = "General Order to whole army" "IG" = "General Order to all Infantry units" "AG" = "General Order to all Artillery units"

To exit from the Issue Orders screen, press <SPACE>.

11.Orders

The following orders are available to you. You will notice that most of them can only be issued to certain types of units. For example, only Infantry units can be ordered to "Occupy Farm".

Orders marked with an asterisk (*) can be issued as a General Order to the whole army. Also note that your view-point is from the south of the valley, looking north; units moving north will be moving away from you.

Commands available:

Command	Key
Move	M
Hold	H
Engage	E
Fire	F
Occupy Farm	O
Abandon Farm	A
Form Defensive Square	S

MOVE *

All units.

Keypress: "M", followed by a direction.

e.g. "MN" = "Move North" "MSW" = "Move Southwest"

Notes: Units are not able to move off the battlefield. Units under a

Move order will attempt to go round farms and other friendly units. If their way is blocked by an enemy unit there is a chance, depending on their current morale, that they will engage (see 19-Combat).

HOLD *

All units.

Keypress: “H” Appears on orders list as “HLD”

ENGAGE

Infantry & Cavalry.

Keypress: “E”, followed by an enemy unit.

e.g. “EC1” = “Engage 1st Cavalry” “EI7” = “Engage 7th Infantry”

Notes: Cavalry units under an “Engage” order are considered to be charging and move at twice their normal speed. A unit under orders to engage an enemy unit will sometimes engage other enemy units which block its way (see the “Move” order)

FIRE

Artillery.

Keypress: “F”, followed by an enemy unit.

e.g. “FC1” = “Fire on 1st Cavalry” “FI7” = “Fire on 7th Infantry”

Notes: An Artillery unit under a “Fire” order will fire on its designated target unless:

-
- 1) The target is out of range (about half the length of the battlefield);
 - 2) Its line-of-sight is obstructed;
 - 3) The target unit no longer exists.

When an Artillery unit fires it flashes yellow and its target flashes white if a hit is scored. Whether or not the target is hit depends on range, visibility and the firing unit's morale.

OCCUPY FARM

Infantry.

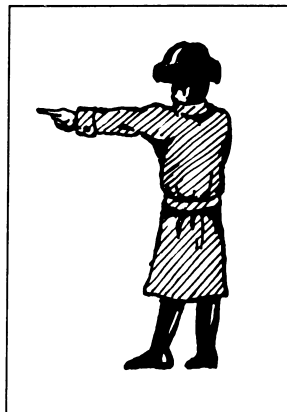
Keypress: "O", followed by "N" for the North Farm or "S" for the South Farm.

e.g. "ON" = "Occupy North Farm"

Appears on orders list as "ONF" or "OSF"

Notes: An Infantry brigade under this order will move towards the farm which it has been ordered to occupy. When it reaches its destination it will enter the farm as long as it is currently unoccupied. If the farm contains a friendly unit it will remain outside until the occupying unit leaves.

If the farm contains an enemy unit, it will attack. This is the only way in which a unit occupying a farm can be engaged in combat. A unit ordered to "Engage" an enemy unit in a farm will be unable to comply. Also note that a unit defending a farm receives a defence bonus (see 19-Combat).



ABANDON FARM

Infantry.

Keypress: “A”Appears on orders list as “AF”

Notes: This is the only order which can be issued to a unit in a farm.

FORM DEFENSIVE SQUARE

Infantry.

Keypress: “S”Appears on orders list as “SQR”

Notes: A defensive square greatly increases an Infantry unit's chances of surviving Cavalry attacks. It does, however, make them more vulnerable to Artillery fire. When you focus upon a unit in this formation, a small ‘s’ will appear below the unit's flag (see 9-Using the Telescope).

12.Confirming Orders

When you have typed in your order you will be prompted to press <ENTER> to confirm. If you wish to cancel the order, press <SPACE>. You will now be able to issue another order if you wish. If not, press <SPACE> to return to the Options Menu.

13.List Orders

The orders list shows the last orders issued to each of your units. Those printed in red were issued this turn and will be relayed to your troops when you next “Continue”. Those in blue have already been sent. Under the orders list you will see details of your planned

inspection, if any, for this turn. To exit, press <SPACE>.

14. Relaying Orders

Each turn, orders are relayed to your troops by mounted aides-de-camp. The time it takes for orders to reach particular units depends on their distance from you. On levels 2 and 3, the visibility (which is affected by the amount of fighting and hence the confusion of battle) will also affect the time taken.

Some orders will never reach the units to which they were issued, others will arrive too late. In general, units south of the South Farm receive orders on the same turn, units between the two farms receive theirs one turn (10 minutes) later. Troops north of the North Farm will not receive new orders until the turn after that.



15. Inspecting Units

Morale is a very important element in "The General" and the most effective way of increasing it is by inspecting your troops. The morale of a unit at any given time can be "high", "good", "fair", "low" or "poor".

Generally, the higher a unit's morale, the better it will fare in combat. In addition, units whose morale has fallen to "low" or "poor" may well retreat or rout. It is therefore important to keep an eye on morale and to boost it when necessary.

Only units in your "Inspection Area", the area occupied by your army

at the start of the battle, whose current orders are “Hold” or “Move south”, are eligible for inspection. Each unit may only be effectively inspected once - subsequent attempts to rally it will be met with cynicism. A planned inspection will be cancelled if there is an enemy unit in your Inspection Area. After all, the General's not going to risk his own neck out there, is he?

The unit to be inspected is specified in exactly the same way as in the issuing of orders. For example, to choose the Fifth Infantry brigade for inspection, you would type “I5”. As with issuing orders, too, you can confirm or cancel your choice by pressing <ENTER> or <SPACE>.

16. More on Morale

The morale of a unit will fall if, as a result of combat, it loses more men than the unit it is fighting in a single turn. The amount by which morale falls depends on the percentage strength lost. Morale is also drastically reduced by Artillery bombardment. Morale increases if, as a result of combat, an enemy unit is destroyed.

The enemy General also inspects his troops when their morale is below par and is similarly unable to do so if any of your units are in his Inspection Area (at the far north of the battlefield).

17. Reports

As a matter of routine each of your Brigade Commanders will send in a report every hour on the hour. How quickly you receive these reports depends on the distances between you and the sending units and the current visibility. Each report details the unit's STREngth and MORale and the ORDer which it is under at the TIME the report was

sent.

In some circumstances, such as when the morale of a unit has fallen so low that its commander has no choice but to order his men to retreat, special reports will be sent. These can be sent at any time.

Reports from the Farms indicate who is attacking the farm, even though the attacker may be out of sight behind the farm.

18. Reading Reports

To page through the reports, press the left or right cursor keys to go backwards or forwards one report at a time, the up or down cursor keys to go backwards or forwards four at a time. To exit, press <SPACE>.

Units which have been destroyed or have routed will have a red skull on their report.

Units which have been inspected are printed in blue.

At the end of the unit reports there is a Situation Report detailing the number of units lost on both sides. This is continually updated.

Above the reports is a description of the current VISibility (see 23-Visibility)

19. Combat

When two units are engaged in combat, the aggressor will flash yellow and the defender white, as long as they are not inside or behind a farm. The damage done by each unit to the other is calculated according to unit type, strength and morale. In addition, attacking units are given a bonus, as are units defending a farm and

units engaging an enemy unit which they have been specifically ordered to engage. Infantry brigades in square formation are awarded a defence bonus if attacked by Cavalry.

Normally, Cavalry are the strongest in close combat, followed by Infantry, then the Artillery.

20.Order of Battle

The order in which units move and fight is decided randomly each turn. There are two possibilities, either:

- a) Your Infantry (1-7), your Cavalry (1-5), your Artillery (1-3), enemy Infantry (1-7), enemy Cavalry (1-5), enemy Artillery (1-3), or
- b) the exact reverse, i.e. enemy Artillery (3-1), enemy Cavalry (5-1) etc.

21.Unreliable Commanders

Each time you play "The General" two of your units will be led by unreliable commanders. One of these commanders is impetuous and will often disobey his current orders by retaliating against enemy units which attack him. The other commander is cowardly and will probably order his troops to retreat if attacked by the enemy, regardless of his unit's current morale. You will not know which units are led by these commanders at the start of the battle - they are changed every time you play - but you may be able to identify them once the shooting starts.

22.Enemy Reinforcements

At midday the enemy will push fresh troops into the valley to replace

any units lost during the course of the morning. The number of units replaced in this way depends on the Difficulty Level you have selected.

23. Visibility

Like morale, this can range from “high” to “poor”. It is reduced the most by Artillery fire but is also made worse by Infantry volleys. When low, it affects your ability to accurately estimate the strength of units through the telescope and can also impede the relaying of orders and reports and reduce the chances of Artillery units hitting their targets.

24. Access Menu

This is used to save and load game positions and to start new games. Positions are saved as two blocks of code - simply follow the on-screen prompts.

25. Enemy Strategy

It is perhaps important to note that the enemy’s strategy and tactics are solely dependent on their objectives and the movement and actions of your units.

The enemy General has no access to the orders you send out and none of the decisions he makes are based on any such knowledge.

Instead, the enemy moves and fights according to a broad strategy, the exact details of which can be modified turn by turn according to



the current “state of play” and the recent actions of your units.

26.Designer’s Notes

“The General” was designed as a step away from the traditional computer wargame. I have tried to introduce various factors which will make it a more “realistic” experience to play than map-based games.

The most radical departures in the game are in the areas of information and communication. It is not possible in “The General” to issue an order to a unit and expect it to be carried out or even received. Furthermore, it is not possible to be quite sure what order a particular unit is obeying at any given time.

Because of this, the player has to rely more on his or her instincts than in the more chess-like “bird’s-eye view” games and it is this which, I hope, lends it a more authentic atmosphere.

Those of you who find the game confusing and frustrating can rest safe in the knowledge that such was exactly my intention. Just be thankful that my plan to introduce a time limit between game turns did not come to fruition!

Finally, this game is not intended to condone or glorify war. I find games which teach young people that Russians are “the enemy” or that violence is a justifiable solution to problems are at the best tasteless and at the worst highly dangerous.

Historical wargames are not, in my opinion, offenders in these ways - comparing “The General” to a particularly gruesome arcade game or politically suspect action game is like comparing “Rambo” and “Waterloo”.

Both films are violent, certainly, but in quite different ways and, more importantly perhaps, for different reasons - "Rambo"'s violence is largely gratuitous, "Waterloo" depicts violence as a means of telling an historical story.

Ian Williams, Nottingham, September 1989.



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Bibliography

"Waterloo - A Near Run Thing", by David Howarth

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