

Playing Prussia

Notes from the Field

By Norman Furlong

So you paid your money, crowned yourself king and you can't wait to make the world safe for Prussians. Prussia's historic role in the Napoleonic wars, combined with a good starting position and army make it an excellent choice for the beginning player. What follows is a bit of advice for the first-time Kaiser. You can find splendid advice on the chat site <AusterlitzPBM@yahogroups.com>. Take what I have to say, mix them with your own intuition about strategy and tactics, and you will derive much joy and satisfaction playing Austerlitz for years to come.

If you do the math (and do well in the game), you're going to be playing for a few years. A few Austerlitz games have lasted until 1818; the median in game duration for the first 120 Au games is victory by late 1813. At a turn every two weeks, you're playing at roughly double real-time, so look forward to two to three years of rewarding effort steering Prussia to victory!

I am the first servant of the state.

OK, so Frederick lived in a different century, but he's easily the most famous Prussian leader and I can't resist quoting him. The strategy and tactics may have drawn you into playing. But Austerlitz strikes a fine balance between the three pillars of imperial rule: diplomacy, economics and military might. They all play an important part; don't let anyone tell you otherwise. We'll explore each of these areas briefly and their particular implications for success with Prussia.

I begin by taking. I shall find scholars later to demonstrate my perfect right.

Easily the most important aspect of the game, it has nothing to do with the rules or battles, or anything else you paid for. However, if you fail on this front, you can count on an early exit from the game. As Tom points out in his brilliant treatise on the matter, you are surrounded by powerful neighbors. An immediate alliance with one or more of them is therefore a necessity. Fortunately, many of the veteran players are willing to bend over backwards to help you, giving you much needed, honest advice. However, caution is advised. Even the most celebrated veteran player is capable of turning on you and breaking an alliance when you least expect it. I had to learn this the hard way in my first game. My observation is this, veterans are most helpful in answering questions, but other newbies make the most stable allies.

I have no fault to find with those who teach geometry. That science is the only one which has not produced sects; it is founded on analysis and on synthesis and on the calculus; it

does not occupy itself with probable truth; moreover it has the same method in every country.

While you and your allies are plotting world conquest, you need to keep your house in order. The economics of Au are sufficiently rich to provide a good measure of realism, so you need to take what I call the Fred Hanes crash course in Au logistics. In short, you need to build the right mix of production sites in order to achieve equilibrium of raw materials consumption with finished goods production. A longer text is required to give the matter justice, but your two ore mines will support three factories, which will in turn require four lumber camps, two weaving mills and sixteen sheep farms to feed them.

You start with a surplus of wood and textiles. The ore you start with will feed two factories, so you might just go ahead and build the two mines and two factories on the first turn. You will immediately run out of textiles if you don't build sheep farms. Take advantage of the higher-producing special squares ('v' and 'p' on the Regional map), to build your first sheep and horse farms on.

Here's the catch. Production sites cost money and citizens, and you can only build ten of them a turn. What game would be fun without the element of scarcity? You'll quickly have to make critical decisions about how much money and citizens to put into production sites vs. your armies. The faster you build your army, the sooner you'll have them fully-trained, ready to fight and the sooner you'll reach your full complement of ten commanders. Eight brigades of 5 battalions each cost 32,000 citizens. Ten production sites cost 15,000 citizens to build. Since a million population will generate 30,000 citizens a turn, on turn two you'll have to decide whether to generate more EC points or go for a larger army. Raise population, you say? Excellent choice, but that costs citizens as well. Don't forget that the larger your army, the bigger the payroll and train fees.

I speak French to my ambassadors, English to my accountant, Italian to my mistress, Latin to my God and German to my horse.

Forget about speaking German to your horses. They won't win your battles for you. Your military strength rests squarely on the shoulders of your two-legged troops. Sure, you need to create a balanced, combined-arms force, but when the chips are down, it's your infantry that will tip the battle in your favor and you have the best foot soldiers on the planet! Build the units with a higher EF early on, including your Avant Garde, since they take longer to train to full effectiveness.

In the beginning, you'll be fighting mostly Math battles where you'll need high numbers of men to soak up casualties. Your VR are great in this role. You need some of each troop type, but since your Fu and artillery are effective for both Math and Sim battles, I'd concentrate on building them to start out with. VR are also useful in forming roaming columns of 10 brigades each, to conquer enemy territory.

I have just barely scratched the surface in these pages, and no words can come close to describing the nervous anticipation of submitting your turn, the eagerness at opening your mail from TBA, the frustration of entering an order wrong, or the pure joy in out-foxing your opponent or winning your first Sim battle. Take pride in your gamesmanship and Prussia will reward you with victories on and off the battlefield.