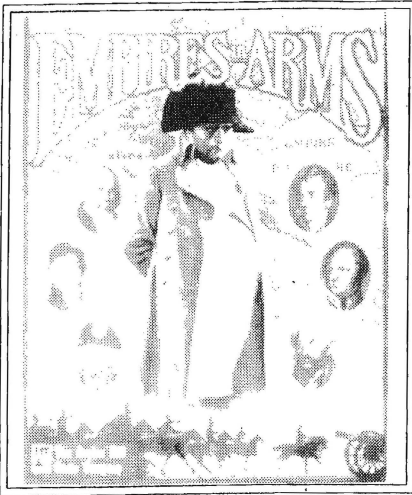


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EMPIRES IN ARMS

Strategies in Spain

by
Keith Martens

The following is an article which originally appeared in The Canadian Wargamers' Journal, Issue #7. It is reproduced with their kind permission. For more information on The Canadian Wargamer's Journal, please see their ad in this issue.

The Napoleonic Wars were fought on a continental scale. Each area of conflict took on a completely different character. Russia, with its vast expanse and frigid winters; Austria with a dense population and wide river crossings; and the home ground of France. But Spain and Portugal, the Peninsula, was the most unique campaign for many reasons.

The terrain was very rugged with a poor road system. The main avenues of advance were protected by large fortresses; especially on the Portuguese and French borders. The countryside

was poor and sparsely populated making foraging difficult.

The Peninsular War featured unusual troops (besides the two best armies of the day; the French and British). The Spanish army swayed wildly from courageous to dismal. The Portuguese army was terrible at the beginning but improved greatly after intensive British training. The Spanish guerillas brought about a fundamental change to warfare that Napoleon never did fully appreciate.

In the context of wargaming, this campaign has been difficult to simulate and its part in the overall context of the Napoleonic Wars is usually shoehorned into a typical Central European setting.

Empires in Arms is the best simulation of strategic Napoleonic warfare available. It allows the player all the major decisions of a ruler of a country including diplomacy, grand strategy, economics, corp creation and composition, leaders, tactics, supply, special units, and more than mere lip service to naval operations. As far as the Peninsular War goes, the game does a good job of integrating this campaign with a minimum of "chrome" rules to give it the right feel. One senses the difference when attacking Spain. It is not a Prussian campaign against units with yellow uniforms.

What follows is some strategy notes on fighting in the Peninsula during a game of **Empires in Arms**.

STRATEGY NOTES

Obviously, the Peninsula is just part of the whole game (unless you are playing the Peninsular War scenario) and, as such, can not be completely isolated. I will assume that a major power has designs on the area (realistically only France or Britain could mount a real threat to Spain) and invades it.

DIPLOMACY AND GRAND TACTICS

SPAIN:

In most campaigns, Spain is an Uncontrolled Major Power unless there are seven players. This is not too surprising since it has a weak army and a poor economy, which does not make playing Spain a gamers' first choice.

However, for gamers who want a challenge and think they are a master diplomat, Spain can be rewarding (you might even win!). Spain needs a strong ally as a deterrent and in the early campaigns has one crucial thing to offer, their fleet.

A French/Spanish alliance matches 106 ships to Britain's 100 in 1805. This is France's best chance to subdue the British fleet. The Spanish should seek substantial concessions early in the game from the highest bidder, but be prepared to suffer the wrath of the spurned.

FRANCE:

Why would France attack Spain? Historically, Napoleon tricked the king of Spain into a dungeon in Bayonne and basically walked in. Unfortunately, the Spanish did not take this like Brussels businessmen and the word 'guerilla' was coined.

I can think of three reasons why France (or anyone, for that matter) would attack Spain:

1. The Spanish are winning the game.
2. You feel you can defeat the Spanish quickly and gain a freehold in Spain.
3. You want to lure an enemy into helping Spain and standing and fighting (most useful for the French to lure the English into battle).

Number one is a valid reason and must be done. However, reasons two and three are fraught with peril as discussed in the upcoming campaign notes.