

The Anglo-Russian landings in Holland, 1799

by Geert van Uythoven, Netherlands

One of the lesser known campaigns that took place during the Napoleonic Wars was the Anglo-Russian invasion of Holland in the latter half of 1799. Although it is not very known, this campaign renders many useful possibilities for the wargamer for the following reasons:

a. The battles and combats that took place were of a very limited scale, both in number of troops and space. The cause of this is the ground on which the battles took place. Even these battles can still be broken down into separate actions, for the same reason.

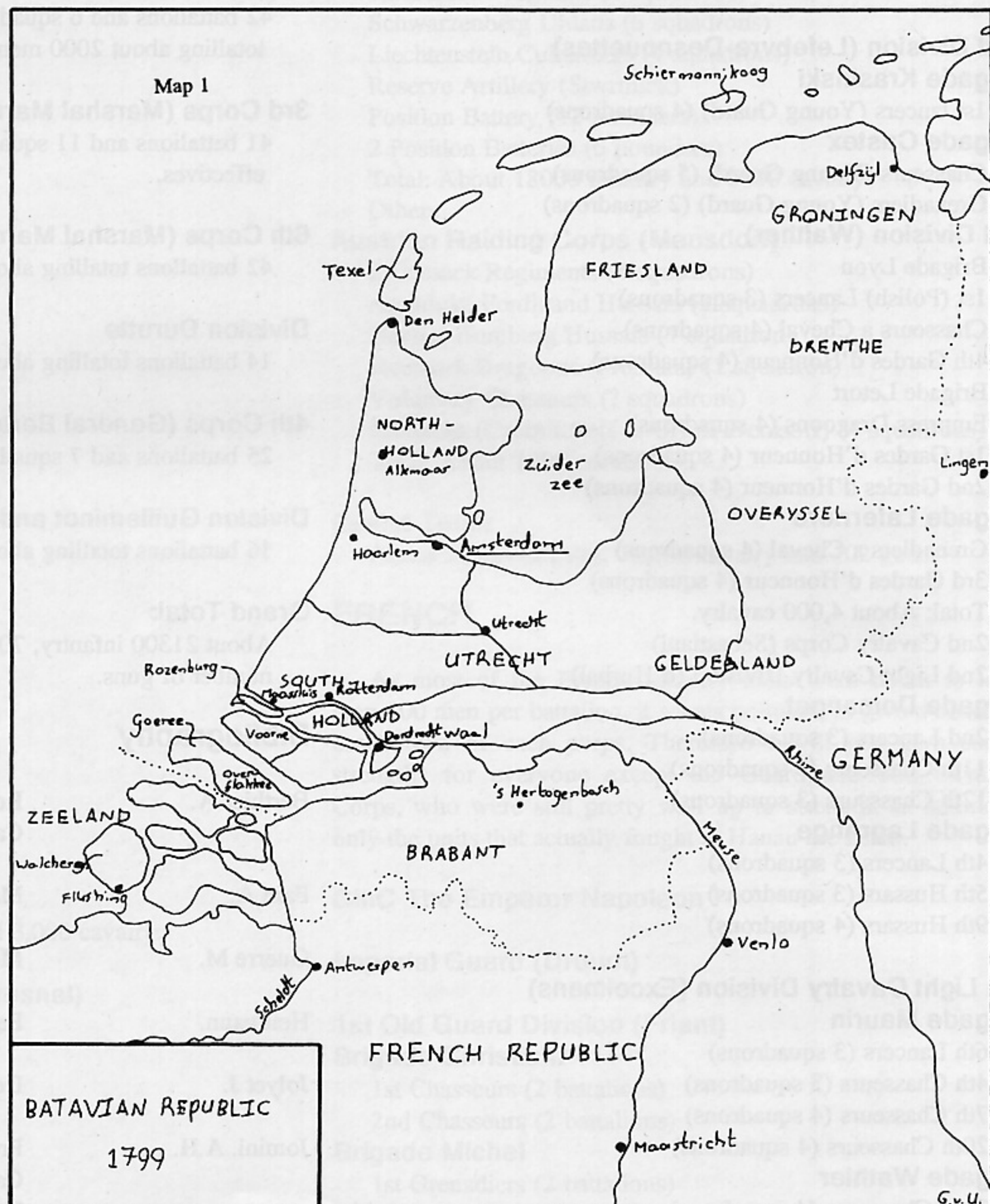
b. The whole campaign took place on a very small part of Holland, and is on three sides bordered by sea. So even in a wargame campaign there is only one direction to go for the Anglo-Russian player(s): The same way York had to go in 1799.

c. The campaign was fought by four nations with very different characteristics: On the offensive were the British and Russians, and the defenders were the Batavians and the French.

d. Both sides the troops were commanded by a whole range of commanders, rated from very good to very bad. And all these commanders had to act independently on many occasions because of the terrain on which the actions took place.

e. Many lessons can be learned from this campaign by wargamers. Not only how to handle your troops, but also how not to handle your troops.

In this article I will try to give enough information to prove what has just been stated, but I also hope to make clear that the Napoleonic Wars can render us much more than just the Peninsular, Waterloo and Leipzig campaigns. I will write the series mostly from the Franco-Batavian point of view, because I think this will give you the information that is most difficult to obtain for most of the readers.



Background

Even before the Revolutionary wars the situation in this part of Europe was very confused. A series of civil and religious reforms by the Austrian Emperor Joseph II provoked in the Austrian Netherlands a major uprising, the Belgians, inspired by the events taking place in Paris at that time formed a volunteer army of 'patriots', and after much confused fighting this army became in 1790 a national army of over 20,000 men. Enthusiastic but undisciplined, the patriots had no chance against the Imperial Austrian forces. One battle (called the Battle of Falmagne by the Austrians) was enough to crush the patriots. Many patriots escaped to France, and there joined the revolutionary armies to continue the fight against Austria. One of them was Jean-Baptiste Dumonceau, who we will

meet later.

The population of the Dutch Netherlands was very divided between the Orange party, which supported the cause of the Stādtholder Prince William V of Orange, and the patriots who wanted to go back to the situation of the old republic without a stādtholder. The worsening economic situation was, in 1787, nearly the cause of a civil war between the patriots, who were counting on support from France, and the Orange-men. The support from France never came, so when on 13th September an army of 20,000 Prussians invaded the Netherlands to reinstall William V, the patriots had no chance of winning. In nearly a month the revolt was crushed, and the patriots had no choice then to take flight to France. These patriots also joined the revolutionary armies, and later formed a Batavian Legion under the command of Herman Willem Daendels, who we also will meet later.

What nobody thought was possible, happened. The French general Dumouriez and his ragged untrained soldiers succeeded in stopping the Allied armies at Valmy (1792), and then defeated them at the battle of Jemappes. This victory led to the conquest of most of the Austrian Netherlands. This increased the tension with the Dutch Netherlands and Great Britain. After some diplomatic moves France declared war on the Dutch Netherlands in February 1793, and invaded them before Great Britain could intervene. Luckily at this moment the Austrians invaded the Austrian Netherlands and defeated the French army at Neerwinden. This caused the French to retreat, and gave the Dutch Netherlands some much needed time.

After the declaration of war from France on the Dutch Netherlands Great Britain had no choice then to enter the war, and British diplomats lost no time creating the First Coalition, formed by Austria, Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, Spain and the Dutch Netherlands. A British expeditionary force landed in Flanders, and Dumouriez defected to the Allies. Once again the situation looked very bad for France, but this time the lack of cooperation between the allies saved them. The French National Convention ordered the 'levée en masse' and the French armies became stronger and stronger. Already the First Coalition began to crumble, and in the battle of Fleurus (1794) the French under Jourdan succeeded in defeating the Allies. The Austrians now retreated to Germany behind the River Meuse, while the Anglo-Dutch troops retreated to the Dutch Netherlands, followed by the French under Pichegru. Once again the French had conquered the Austrian Netherlands. A very cold winter helped Pichegru to conquer also the Dutch Netherlands: the main protection of Holland, the rivers and inundations were worthless now, and even the Dutch fleet at the roads of Texel was captured by a regiment of cavalry! The princely family took flight to England, and the Patriots proclaimed the birth of the Batavian Republic.

The Batavian government had to meet the following conditions of the French to stay 'independent':

1. Payment of 100 million guilders.
2. Renunciation of Dutch Flanders, Dutch Limburg with the cities Venlo and Maastricht.
3. Tax free French shipping on the rivers the Scheldt, Meuse and Rhine.
4. French occupation of Flushing.
5. To place at the disposal of France 12 ships of the line and 18 frigates.

6. To place at the disposal of France half of the Batavian army.

7. To feed, clothe and pay 25,000 French soldiers.

The Batavian Republic now was nothing more than a French satellite, and the result was British declaration of war against the Batavian Republic on 15th September 1795.

Preliminaries

In December 1798 the British diplomats succeeded in creating the second coalition, formed by Great Britain, Austria and Russia. An attempt to recruit also Prussia and Sweden failed. Once more things looked bad for France:

- a. Napoleon Bonaparte with 35,000 of the best French troops was held up in Egypt after the defeat of the French fleet by Nelson.
- b. Early in 1799 the Austrian army recovered most of Germany and Italy. The French were heavily engaged in Switzerland by an Austro-Russian army.
- c. The French Republic was again divided. The Vendee was once again restless.
- d. Uprisings took place in Italy. Switzerland and the Batavian Republic were very restless.
- e. France had big financial problems, mainly because of the huge armies she had to maintain.
- f. Great Britain was master of the seas. The French fleet was no threat, the Spanish fleet (Allies of France at this time) was locked up in Cadiz, and the Batavian fleet was blockaded at the roads of Texel.

To defeat the French decisively Great Britain and Russia came to an agreement to send an expedition to Holland (15th July 1799). Russia would deliver 17,000 soldiers who would be paid by Great Britain. Great Britain would deliver 20,000-25,000 men (part militia) and 6,000 cavalry, and deliver part of the horses needed by the Russians. Most of the Russians would be transported by British ships. As shown above Great Britain would take care of the largest part of the invasion, so that the influence of the Russians wouldn't be to great.

The chances for a successful invasion of Holland looked good. The people were divided. The presence of the French troops was a great financial burden. The French had developed a special system for the 25,000 troops the Batavian Republic had to feed, clothe and pay. Ragged troops from the front line armies were sent to the Batavian Republic. Here they were fed, paid and clothed again. After some time the troops left to the front, fully equipped and rested, and a new ragged and hungry contingent arrived. This situation was stimulating the hatred against the French increasing the likelihood that a national rising would occur to aid the Allied invasion. Once the Netherlands were conquered, the House of Orange could be reinstated. The Dutch and Austrian Netherlands would be transformed into a strong bastion, that could stop French expansion forever.

Military resistance was expected to be minimal. The Batavian army was weak and badly trained. The same could be said of the French troops, numbering at that moment about 18,000. These troops were spread all over the Netherlands. Coastal defence was nonexistent.

At the beginning of June preparations were made for the

invasion. Commander in Chief was to be the Duke of York. In 1794 he was Commander in Chief of the British forces in the Netherlands, where he didn't show very much talent. This time he had to perform the difficult task of leading an Anglo-Russian army. To keep the French guessing about the destiny of the invasion troops the concentration took place at Southampton. At the end of July they moved to Deal, Ramsgate and Margate, where the assembly of the transport ships was taking place. These were insufficient to move the army all at once, so the army was divided into three parts (echelons). The British considered themselves to be strong enough to start the invasion without the Russians. Also it was feared that the Prussians, who now were negotiating with the French, would occupy the Netherlands by way of treaty. So time was running out for the Coalition. These were the reasons that the British took the chance to send the first echelon of troops about two or three weeks ahead of the others. The danger was even greater because, with the use of sailing ships, no certainty could be given when the supporting echelons would arrive.

To ensure an uprising in the Netherlands, a group of Orange officers and soldiers, commanded by Prince William Frederick of Orange assembled at Lingen in Germany (see map 1). These troops had the task of invading the Netherlands from the east and starting the uprising. In this way a great part of the Franco-Batavian army could be pinned down in the eastern and northern parts of the Netherlands.

The opening of the campaign

The first echelon would consist of the following troops:

16 battalions infantry

600 men artillery

2 squadrons dragoons

Totalling about 12,000 men, commanded by General Ralph Abercromby.

These troops embarked between 8-12th August, and the fleet set sail on 13th August. The troops were transported by 100 transport vessels, and protected by 26 ships of the line, 13 frigates, 16 brigs and 22 smaller vessels, under the command of Admiral Mitchell.

Abercromby received two different orders. The first one, dating from 3rd August, directed him to the mouth of the Meuse, to occupy Goeree, Overflakkee, Rozenburg and Voorne (see map 1). After the arrival of the next echelons the provinces north of the Waal would be occupied. To achieve this, a bridgehead on the mainland was needed. The choice was Abercromby's, but exceptionally useful for his purpose would have been the capture of Maaslandssluis, Schiedam, Rotterdam and Dordrecht, in the event of the need to maintain communications with the Prussians if they could be persuaded to enter the Coalition.

When news of the negotiations of the Prussians with the French (7th August) had been confirmed, Abercromby received new orders on 10th August. These orders told Abercromby to act quickly. They still gave Goeree as the primary object, but it was for Abercromby to see if he could try an attack on Voorne. If not, he had to try to take Den Helder or Texel 'with the probability of obtaining the disposal of the Dutch navy'. If he found it impossible to achieve this he

had to take Delfzijl, in order to capture the provinces of Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe. Finally the orders gave him free hand to change all these plans and to make another one in consultation with Admiral Mitchell (Isn't this the order every wargamer would want to receive!?).

The day after setting sail a council of war was being held. Although the council preferred an invasion at the mouth of the Meuse, Abercromby and Mitchell made the decision to attack Den Helder, to capture or destroy the Batavian fleet. This decision was made 'in relation to the situation in Holland' (Whatever they would mean by this!) and the fact that the Prussians were not participating removed the need to capture Voorne.

To deceive the enemy, demonstrations would be made against Walcheren and Schiermonnikoog. Warships of the fleet received orders to capture every vessel that could warn the enemy of the movements of the fleet.

The Batavian defence.

The defensive forces of the Netherlands were part Batavian, part French. The Batavian army totalled about 25,000 men, including the garrisons. The field army consisted of 2 Divisions. The 1st Division, commanded by Lt-Gen Herman Willem Daendels, 11,900 men, defended North and South-Holland. The 2nd Division, commanded by Lt-Gen Jean-Baptiste Dumonceau, 11,900 men, was spread over Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe, Overijssel and Gelderland. Also in South-Holland there were 2 regiments from Waldeck and 1 regiment from Saxe-Gotha.

The French troops totalled 17,800 men, from which the 1st Division (General Gouvion), 3700 men, was stationed in Hertogenbosch and Utrecht, the 2nd Division (General Reubell), 5300 men, was stationed in South-Holland, and the 3rd Division (General Desjardins), 8800 men, was stationed in Zeeland. Commander in Chief was General Guillaume Marie Anne Brune.

The Batavian fleet consisted of 8 ships of the line, 3 frigates and 1 corvette (626 guns and 4380 men).

By this time the invasion was already anticipated. However, the time where the advantages to be gained by commanders that concentrating their troops was still to come (This was a lesson that Napoleon was still to teach Europe!). So in order to defend all conspicuous landing places (Zeeland, Goeree, North-Holland and Groningen) Brune spread his troops over the whole of the Netherlands. This was also done to prevent any Orange uprisings. The reason for the strong occupation of Zeeland is the fact that an invasion in this place was the most threatening for France. Attempts to strengthen the army with National Guards totally failed. Only a thousand volunteers came forward, and these were used for auxiliary duties.

Schiermonnikoog

The British demonstration near Walcheren and at the mouth of the Meuse consisted of the appearance of some British warships. The British really landed (15th August) at the Isle of Schiermonnikoog.

The defence of the island was formed by 26 men with 2 3pdr guns, commanded by Lieutenant Pieter Rutger Broers. The landing was carried out with armed boats under cover of fire from a Batavian brig which had been captured four days earlier.

Broers was on the beach with his force to expect the enemy, but after the first shot the civilians drivers of the ammunition caissons took flight. Broers now had to retreat and choose to make a stand in front of the village. There the villagers tried to force Broers to end all resistance. Under the threat of setting fire to the village, they allowed him to defend his position. This position proved to be so strong that the British left the island after taking some vessels from the harbour. The citizens of Schiermonnikoog were punished later for their behaviour this day.

On 21st August the British fleet reached the Texel estuary. On the same day Abercromby invited Colonel Gilquin, who with 1,800 men was at Den Helder, and Rear Admiral Story, commander of the Batavian fleet, to surrender to the British. They were told that the British had already landed 20,000 men, which of course was not true. They refused to surrender, however, the British succeeded in making contact with the crews and gave them assurances that the only aim of the British was the reinstatement of the Stādtholder William V of Orange. The consequences of this we shall see later.

The landing was planned for the 22nd, but a sudden storm prevented this. Weather remained bad for the following days, and only on the 27th could the landing really take place. The appearance of the fleet on the 22nd made it very clear to the Franco-Batavians were the landing would take place, and gave them 5 days to reinforce the troops already in North-Holland.

The invasion plan

The chosen site of the landing was the coastline of c. 7km between Grote Keeten en Huisduinen (see map 2), this was a strip of dunes about 650m wide and 15-20m high (and in the middle of it the Franco-Batavian telegraph was situated). The east of the dunes ended at the Sand dike, where the road to Den Helder is situated. East of this road was the marshland called Koe-gras, separated from the road by a ditch. The Koe-gras was intersected by ditches and creeks, and was flooded at high tide.

The hamlets, Groote Keeten and Kleine Keeten, were of no tactical value. These were nothing more than two groups of shacks to give shelter and for the storage of tools for the workmen of the dike-reeve. Den Helder was at that time nothing more than a village, with some batteries along the coast. There was no protection against an attack from land.

The reason why Abercromby chose this place for the landing is not very clear. The peninsula is very narrow on this section, and it would be very easy for the Franco-Batavian troops to seal it off. The only advantage is that it is very easy to prevent support reaching Den Helder, so it seems that Abercromby only planned to take Den Helder and the Batavian fleet.

During the night before the landing a boat from the ship of the line 'Romney' (4th rate 50 guns) with a raiding party of a lieutenant and 12 men was sent to the coast to take a prisoner for some useful information, but they failed because of the numerous patrols.

In the morning of 27th August the 1st echelon would land. This echelon would consist of 2 divisions:

The southern division, commanded by

Lt-General James Pulteney:

1st Brigade (Major General Coote)

2nd Rgt Foot 680

27th Rgt Foot 680

29th Rgt Foot 680

85th Rgt Foot 680

69th Rgt Foot 680

5th Brigade (Colonel MacDonald) (reserve)

23rd Rgt Foot 680

55th Rgt Foot 680

Total: 4760

The northern division, commanded by

Abercromby:

1st Guards Brigade (Major General Doyle)

Guard Grenadiers 1000

1st Rgt Guards 1000

2nd Guards Brigade (Major General Burrard)

2nd Rgt Guards 1000

3rd Rgt Guards 1000

2nd Brigade (Major General Moore)

14th Rgt Foot 680

21st Rgt Foot 680

49th Rgt Foot 680

79th Rgt Foot 680

92nd Rgt Foot 680

Total: 7400

The southern division would be the first to land. Their mission was to drive the enemy from the dunes, to penetrate into the marshland of Koe-gras and then to advance south. The northern division, commanded by Abercromby would embark in the designated corvettes, luggers and boats immediately after the southern division set off. These vessels would approach the beach as near as possible, the troops would then embark in the landing boats that had returned from landing the southern division, so that they didn't have to go the whole way back to the transport vessels. Every soldier was supplied with 60 cartridges, and food for two days. The smaller warships took up positions on both flanks of the landing zone, and then approach the coast as near as possible, to support the landing with their guns.

Plan of defence

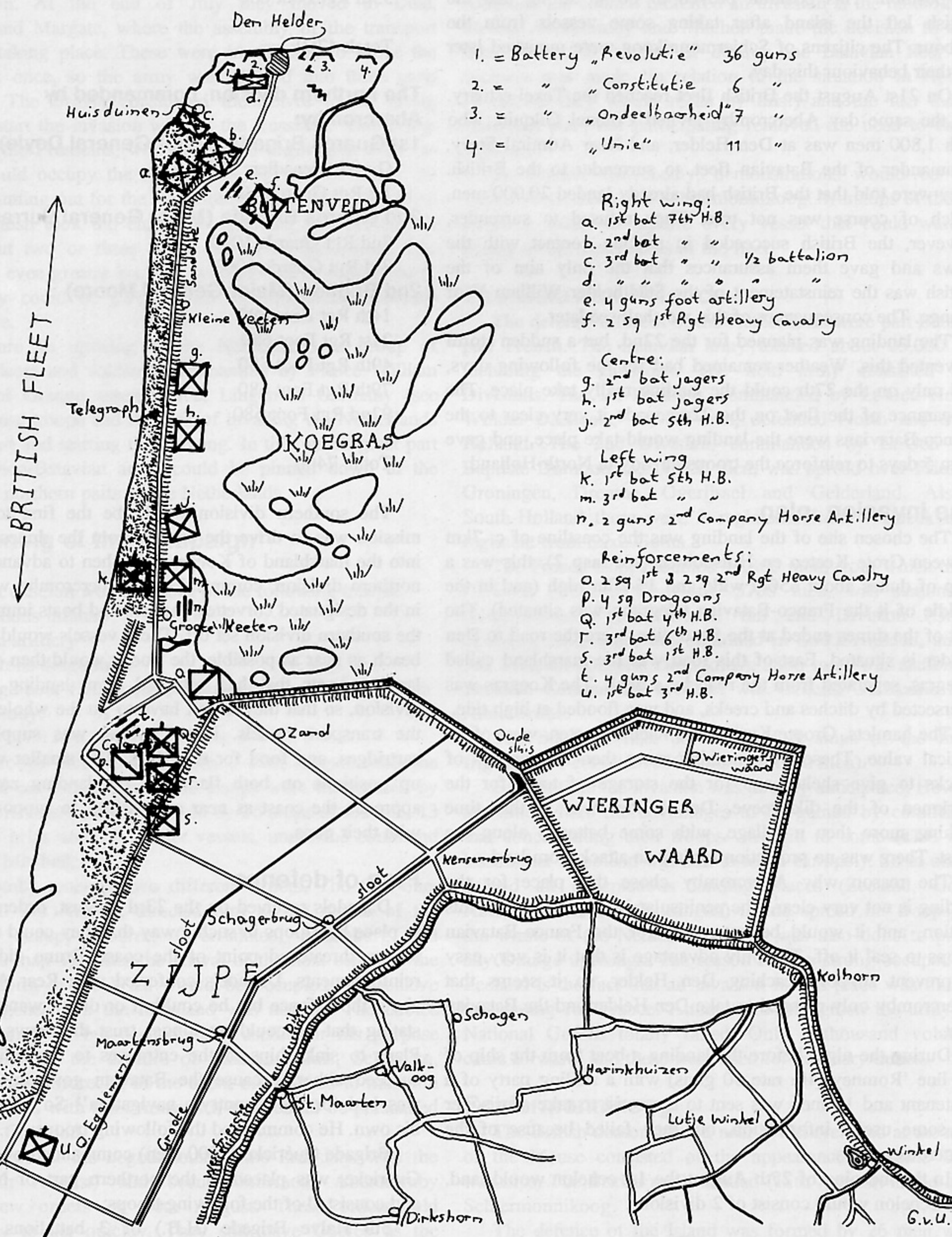
Daendels received on the 23rd August, orders from Brune to place his troops in such a way that they could move quickly to any threatened point of the coast. Brune didn't send any reinforcements. Daendels conferred with Rear Admiral Story about the defence but he couldn't or didn't want to cooperate, stating that he could no longer trust the crews of his ships! Plans to sink ships in the entrances to the Zuiderzee didn't succeed either, because the Batavian government thought it was bad for the 'country's navigation'! So Daendels was on his own. He commanded the following troops:

Brigade Guéricke (5000 men) commanded by Gen-Maj van Guéricke, was placed in the northern part of North-Holland and consisted of the following troops:

5th Halve Brigade (H.B.) of 3 battalions (1801 men) commanded by Col Crass, located at the Wieringerwaard.

7th H.B. of 3 battalions (1815 men) commanded by Col Gilquin, located at Den Helder.

2nd Bat Jagers (674 men) commanded by Lt-Col David



disposition of the troops commanded by Daendels, 27th August 4 p.m.

Hendrik Chassé, located in the dunes between Kleine Keeten en Groote Keeten.

4 squadrons of the 1st Rgt Heavy Cavalry (411 men), located at Den Helder (2 sq) and Schagen (2 sq).

2nd Company Horse Artillery (101 men, 4 6pdr guns, 2 24pdr howitzers) commanded by Captain Nicolaas Francois d'Anguerand at Schagerbrug.

Brigade van Zuylen (5,000 men) commanded by Gen-Maj van Zuylen van Nyevelt, was distributed around Haarlem, Alkmaar, Camp-Petten, Schoorl, Groet.

On 26th August the British fleet was sighted off the coast between Huisduinen and Groote Keeten. Daendels immediately reported to Brune and pointed out that, because the British could protect the landing with their naval guns, a landing could not be prevented. He chose to attack the 1st echelon after the landing and drive them into the sea. Even this plan would be a problem, because if the British could advance some hundreds of metres, the defender would have to fight in a bad position with the Koegrass at his back.

For this reason Daendels decided to defend in front with weak forces, and to defend both flanks strongly to prevent a British advance in these directions. He then wanted to counterattack when the time was right. In these attacks the beach and forward dunes had to be avoided because of the British warships.

The centre would be formed by the 1st and 2nd Bat Jagers (see map 2) (The 1st Bat Jagers (741 men) came from Brigade van Zuylen and was commanded by Lt-Col Georg Willem Luck). Their task was to engage the British and lure them inland. The commanders were urged to keep their battalions together and to retreat if the pressure became too great. To support their retreat the 2nd bat/5th H.B., commanded by Lt-Col Johan Georg Herbig, was placed on their left flank near Groote Keten.

The right wing was commanded by Gen-Maj van Guericke and consisted of 7th H.B. (3 bats), 2 squadrons from the 1st Rgt Heavy Cavalry and 4 guns Foot Artillery. His orders were to take a position south of Huisduinen, with his cavalry and artillery at Buitenveld, and to wait for further orders. To get these orders he was to keep in contact with the left wing. Guericke was not informed about Daendels' plans. His relationship with Daendels was not very good.

The left wing was commanded by Colonel Christiaan Louis Crass and consisted of the 2 remaining battalions from the 5th H.B. with 2 guns of 2nd Company Horse Artillery. He would be reinforced with the troops of Gen-Maj van Zuylen van Nyevelt, who was marching from Alkmaar and Haarlem.

Next Issue Part 2

27th August 1799, The first British landings

Dispatches

from First Empire Readers

Opponents Wanted....

Dear Sir,

May I ask that you publish the following:

Opponent wanted in the Plymouth area, using Avalon Hill's 'Napoleon's Battles'. I have figures and terrain but no transport. If interested please contact Kevin Summers on Plymouth (0752) 491255.

Kevin Summers

Plymstock, Plymouth.

Po and Paints...

Dear Mr. Watkins,

Two requests please if possible. With regard to the very good article on painting by Ian Barstow; Humbrol Acrylics seem almost impossible to get hold of locally (unlike their enamels), could you suggest/recommend a reliable source of these paints? Secondly I'm particularly interested in the 1809 Campaign in Germany and Austria, but I am struggling to find out the uniform details of the Tirailleurs du Po. Could you or a member of the readership please help.

Phil Winfield

Morcambe, Lancs.

Editor: Well, a timely phone call to the Iron Duke, twenty minutes before he got on the plane to Greece to research the Greek Light Infantry, (his wife thinks they are going on holiday!), revealed that his favourite source is Paul & Theresa Bailey, of Keep Wargaming, The Keep, Devizes, Wilts.

On the second point I've dug out the following from the 'filing shed'... absolutely nothing. I am without PO! So its over to the you, the readership, to see what you can dig out!

German Legion 1814

Dear Sir,

Further to James Field's article in the last issue, I thought your readers might be interested in the order of battle for the Russo German Army Corps in February 1814. Part of this corps took part in the operations in the Netherlands.

The Russo German Army Corps

Commander Lt. Gen Count Wallmolden Gimborn

Chief of Staff Lt Col von Clausewitz

Commander of Artillery Colonel Monhaupt

1st Brigade (Gen Maj Tettenborn) Russians

Cossack Regt (Col Grebrow II)

Cossack Regt (Col Komissanow)

Cossack Regt (Gen Maj Sulima IX)

Cossack Regt (Gen Maj Denissow VII)

2 guns of Horse Battery No5.

2nd Brigade (Gen Maj Ahrenschildt) Russo German Legion

Cavalry (Lt. Colonel v.d. Goltz)

1st Regt Hussars (Commander nominally Goltz, actually Maj von Reusser) 4 squadrons

2nd Rgt Hussars (Maj Count Dohna) 4 squadrons

1st Regt Infantry (Lt. Colonel von Natzmer), comprised of,

1st Bat Line Infantry (Maj von Schaper)

2nd Bat Line Infantry (Maj von Firks)

3rd Bat Line Infantry (Maj von Dobschutz)

2nd Regt Infantry (Lt. Colonel von Wardenburg), composed of,

1st Bat Line Infantry (Maj von Horn)

The Anglo-Russian landings in Holland, 1799

by Geert van Uythoven, The Netherlands

Part 2

27th August 1799, first landings

At 5.00 a.m. the first troops, about 2500 men, were landed. Weather was good, and they were supported by strong naval gunfire. This gunfire forced the outposts from the jager battalions out of the forward dunes, and prevented them from interfering with the landing. The first battalions ashore entered the dunes and fiercely attacked the jagers. The commanders of these battalions didn't keep them together as ordered, but had them dispersed in skirmish order. The jagers didn't have a chance against the more formed attackers and were quickly routed. The commander of 2nd Bat Jagers was killed. Lt-Col Herbig, commander of the 2nd Bat/5th H.B., saw the routing jagers, and tried to counterattack the British, instead of providing the jagers with support in order to rally as ordered. This battalion had also no chance against the superior British, and was also routed after the death of Lt-Col Herbig. The survivors of the centre were thrown back to the south, into the Koegras marshes. The jagers continued the fight from there for sometime, while the survivors of 2nd Bat/5th H.B. retreated in the direction of Kleine Keeten (to the north!), where they joined 2nd Bat/7th H.B. The centre of Daendels' army ceased to be a real threat.

Meanwhile the British landing passed very successful. After 3 hours 7000 men and some sailors had been put ashore. Abercromby arrived with part of his division, but limited his action by immobilising the Batavian troops near Huisduinen and Kleine Keeten. Pulteney left some troops facing Koegras to engage the jagers, and advanced south.

Gen-Maj Guéricke had observed the rout of the jagers. He could do nothing but watch the British build up their forces, and after some time his mere 2100 men were facing about 5000 British. Every half hour he dispatched a staff officer to Daendels, to ask permission to engage the British, but didn't receive any answer. After hours waiting, he left his positions with part of his force on his own initiative and moved into the Koegras with 2nd Bat/7th H.B. and his 2 squadrons of cavalry to support the jagers, leaving 1st and 3rd Bat/7th H.B. and the artillery, commanded by Col. Herman Jan Gilquin, to defend Den Helder. Naturally he couldn't do much in this marshy terrain.

The British now had consolidated their positions, and were already advancing in great force in the direction of Groote Keeten. Pulteney had been reinforced by the 1st Guards Brigade. It was too late now for Daendels' counter-attack plans. Instead of attacking immediately after the first landings, he had postponed the counterattack to 1 or 2 p.m. At that moment it was already too late. The reason why Daendels postponed his counterattack is not known. When he at last gave the order to attack, Gen-Maj Guéricke couldn't take part any more (with half of his force in the marshes), so the attack was only made by the left wing.

The 2 battalions (1st and 3rd Bat/5th H.B.), supported by the 2 guns from the horse artillery, and under the command of the capable and brave Colonel Crass, attacked vigorously, and

succeeded in driving back the British some kilometres! Daendels was also in the front line all the time without an escort. Eye-witnesses recorded him "standing in a rain of bullets". The artillery, commanded by Captain d'Anguerand and protected by a squadron of dragoons, inflicted heavy loss on the British troops, and a shot from these guns killed Lt-Col Hay (Commander of the engineers), who was watching the Batavians through his telescope. The other 3 squadrons of dragoons couldn't take part in the combats that took place. The British troops took their positions on the crests of the dunes, and couldn't be reached because of the loose sand. The attacking battalions at first drove back the British, but were then stopped by the gunfire from the supporting ships, who were covering the open spaces between the dunes, and shot at in the flank by British infantry who were occupying some dunes near the beach under cover of the gunfire. Losses were heavy. The British received reinforcements, but so did the Batavians by the arrival of 1st Bat/4th H.B., 3rd Bat/6th H.B. and 1st Bat/3rd H.B., but without the simultaneous attack from the other wing a decision could never be reached.

The Batavian retreat.

At about 3.00 or 4.00 p.m. Crass was forced to retreat and give up the captured terrain because of the heavy losses sustained. At this time the British had disembarked two field guns. With these guns, manhandled by sailors, the 1st Guard Brigade, commanded by Gen-Maj Doyle, attacked Crass and his troops along the beach. But Crass reformed and received the attack, which was beaten back. After this he resumed his retreat to Groote Keeten. The fighting ended at about 6.00 p.m. after which the Batavian troops retreated to Calandsoog.

Gen-Maj van Guéricke had left his troops in the Koegras and went to Daendels in person to ask for orders. He found Daendels still alone in a "rain of bullets". Daendels, knowing that Den Helder was not to go to have to be defended against an attack from the land-side, ordered van Guéricke to evacuate Den Helder, after nailing the guns and throwing the powder in the water, and to join him. Van Guéricke now returned to his troops still in the Koegras and ordered his A.D.C., Captain C.H. Schober to deliver, with an escort of 1/2 squadron cavalry, the above order to Col. Gilquin. Schober told his commander that such an important order, not written and given without the presence of any other officer (because Daendels was all alone), could be a great risk. Van Guéricke would be held responsible and had no defence if Daendels were to be killed (something that was very likely, taking into account the way Daendels was exposing himself to enemy fire). Knowing that Schober was right, van Guéricke with his A.D.C. went back to Daendels, to ask him a written order. Daendels now went into a rage, but let the order be written down. Schober now went to the 3 squadrons of dragoons still in the dunes, and took 30 dragoons with him as escort. The time was 2.00 p.m. On his way back he had to cross open terrain, where the British had posted a field gun. Here he released his escort so as not to expose them to enemy fire and

continued with a sergeant and an orderly.

Arriving at Huisduinen he met Col. Gilquin, and told him his orders. Gilquin too had problems with obeying such far-reaching orders, and evacuating such an important position, and asked Schober to repeat these orders in the presence of all the officers that were under his command. This done Schober returned to Daendels with the answer that Gilquin would execute the orders. At 5.00 p.m. Gilquin left Den Helder, after sending a message to the Batavian fleet, and moved into the Koegras. The Batavian fleet now had no choice other than to leave the roads of Texel and to fall back to the Vlieter (roads east of Texel).

Aftermath

The troops of Gilquin now had a very difficult night. To evade the British they had to go as near to the Zuiderzee as possible. Sometimes they had to wade up to their middle through the water and mud. But favoured by the darkness, and led by Captain Jozef Jacobus van Geen with the advance guard, they reached Zand at 2.00am, with the loss of 3 howitzers (who were stuck in the mud) and only a few men.

From there they retreated with the other troops to the new positions chosen by Daendels: The right wing was at the Zuiderzee near Oude-Sluis; the left wing at the North Sea near Petten; the centre behind the Oost-Egalement-Sloot (sloot = ditch). The Head-Quarters was to be at Schagerbrug.

The first day was a disaster for the Batavian troops. 1400 men were dead, wounded or missing, including 57 officers. The British had succeeded in consolidating their positions and had gained a strong bridgehead. They captured Den Helder at little cost. Losses were small, especially for a landing: 3 officers and 54 others killed; 18 officers and 371 others wounded; 26 men missing.

Remarks

It was not very difficult for Daendels to make out where the landings would take place. But he didn't concentrate his troops near the coast. So when the landing did take place, he didn't have enough troops to make a decisive attack. And the reinforcements that did arrive had to attack immediately after their march to battlefield.

Daendels plan didn't work, because of the reasons already told. Obviously the counter-attack should have taken place much earlier. It was clear that it would be very difficult to coordinate the attacks from both wings.

The Batavians did know how essential the possession of Den Helder was. But they did nothing to protect this village against an attack from the land-side. After the failure of the Batavian attack it was only a matter of time before the British troops would take Den Helder. But it was wrong for Daendels to evacuate such an important position without any serious fighting. The Zuiderzee now was open for the British fleet, and the British could support their actions now on both sides of North-Holland by sea.

The initiative of van Guéricke to move into the Koegras with half of his total force was a bad one. He couldn't give the jagers strong support in this marshy area. And, being already outnumbered, he still divided his few troops. If he wanted to show initiative, he would have done better to have attacked the British when they were fighting the jagers. This would have been very dangerous, with the supporting fire of the British

ships, but would have had a chance of success. Van Guéricke was later relieved of his command.

Of course it was very brave from Daendels to stay in a dangerous position the whole afternoon, but also foolish. The death of Daendels would have a bad effect on the Batavian operations, and how difficult command and control became we have already seen.

Surrender of the Batavian fleet.

On the 28th August Abercromby occupied Den Helder. On the 30th August Admiral Mitchel approached the Batavian fleet in battle formation. The ships flew both the British and the Orange colours. On seeing this a mutiny broke out amongst the Batavian crews. Rear-admiral Story now held council of war, and unanimously the Batavian captains decided to surrender the fleet to the British.

Now there was no opposition left against the activities of the British fleet. The Zuiderzee was open, and the British had safe roads for their ships. But admiral Mitchel didn't embark on any ambitious activities. He restricted himself to the occupation of Medemblik and Enkhuizen. Also Stavoren and Lemmer were temporarily occupied.

The Batavian retreat to the Schermeer polder

Daendels in the meantime was busy strengthening his defence. His position was not as good as it looked. The Oost-Egalement-Sloot was filled up with dune-sand on many places. The left wing was very weak. The British could advance over the beach, under the protection of their fleet, and turn the Batavian positions. Daendels had under his command only 9000 men to hold a front line of 16 kilometres. His ammunition supply was not sufficient, and there was no chance of quick support. Lastly, the British could support their attacks with gunfire from their fleet and landings behind the Batavian positions. Batavian engineers made an entrenchment near Petten, batteries and parapets were thrown up.

But the British did nothing. Abercromby believed that the Batavians had received strong reinforcements, so he was strengthening his defences. He had reached his objective; capture and consolidate a place to land the next echelons of British and Russians, so he didn't want to take any risks. On 28th and 29th he received reinforcements: Gen-maj Don arrived with his 3rd Brigade (17th Rgt Foot (2 battalions) and 40th Rgt Foot (2 battalions)). Abercromby now had about 18000 men at his disposal.

On the 28th Daendels dispatched a message to Brune. In this he stated he would hold his position as long as he could without risking the loss of his whole Division. If forced, he would retreat slowly to Haarlem, and there unite with the Brune's forces. 5th H.B. would be detached to the southeast to cover the northern approaches to Amsterdam. On the 29th he was of the opinion that the British had been reinforced to a strength of 30000 men, with 8000 Russians about to arrive any moment. This was the reason he decided to retreat in the night from 29th-30th August, this time in the direction of Amsterdam, and to take up new positions in the line Edam (or Monnikendam) Purmerend Zaandam (see map 3).

Brune received Daendels message on the 29th. He then ordered Daendels to leave his position in the Zijpe only if forced to do so, and in that case to execute a fighting retreat, defend Alkmaar, and if necessary to fall back to Haarlem. When he heard that Daendels was already retreating, he

Position of Daendels and Batavian defences

○ = Circular canal

Map 3

— = Canal

■ = Dunes

■ = Lakes and Sea

▨ = prepared for inundation or already inundated

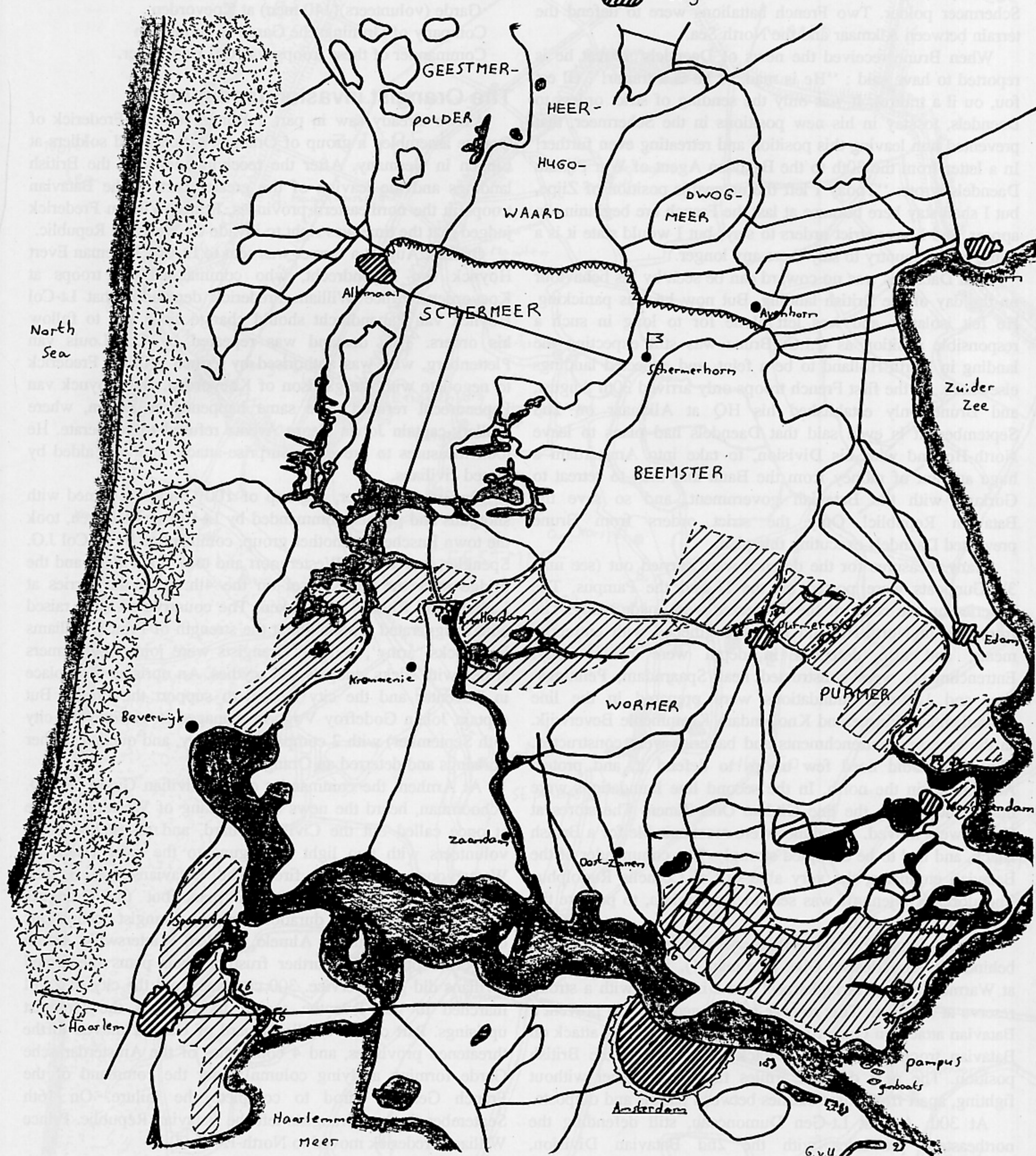
AAA = position of Daendels 30th August

⚡ = Batterij with number of guns

⦿ = Gunboat

● = Village

⦿ = City



ordered him to defend Alkmaar to the last, and, only if forced, to fall back on Beverwijk.

Daendels had started his retreat at 3.00am. After receiving Brune's orders half way along his march, and knowing that General Gouvion, with reinforcements, had arrived at Haarlem, he decided to take position with his left wing at Alkmaar, and the right wing at Avenhorn (see map 3). His HQ was at Schermerhorn. This new position was a very strong one, especially the part behind the very deep circular canal of the Schermeer polder. Two French battalions were to defend the terrain between Alkmaar and the North Sea.

When Brune received the news of Daendels' retreat he is reported to have said: "He is mad, or he is a traitor!" (Il est fou, ou il a trahie). It was only the sending of strict orders to Daendels, to stay in his new positions in the Schermeer, that prevented him leaving this position and retreating even further! In a letter from the 30th to the Batavian Agent of War Pijman Daendels wrote: "Today I left the untenable position of Zijpe, but I shall stay here because at last the French are beginning to appear, and I have strict orders to stay; but I would state it is a crime to my country to stay there any longer."

That Daendels was no coward can be seen by his behaviour on the day of the British landing. But now he was panicking. He felt isolated, and was left alone for too long in such a responsible position as C.I.C. Brune was still expecting the landing in North-Holland to be a feint, and expected landings elsewhere. So the first French troops only arrived 30th August, and Brune only established his HQ at Alkmaar on 2nd September. It is even said that Daendels had plans to leave North-Holland with his Division, to take into Amsterdam a huge amount of money from the Bank and then to retreat to Gorkum with the Batavian government, and so save the Batavian Republic! Only the strict orders from Brune prevented Daendels executing this plan.

Many measures for the defence were carried out (see map 3). Gunboats were posted on the IJ and the Pampus. The batteries on the coast of the Zuiderzee were made ready. The front line in North-Holland was strengthened with entrenchments, and also defences in depth were made ready: Entrenchments were constructed near Spaarndam, Penningsveer and Liebrug. Inundations were prepared in the line Monnikendam Purmerend Knollendam Krommenie Beverwijk. In the accesses, entrenchments and batteries were constructed. This line would need few troops to defend it, and protect Amsterdam in the north. In the second line inundations were made ready along the line Uitdam Oost-Zanen. The stores at Hoorn were moved. The dunes were most suitable for a British attack, and had to be occupied strongly. The commander of the Batavian engineers, the very able Lt-Col Cornelis Rudolphus Theodorus Kraijenhoff was sent to Amsterdam, to prepare the defence of the capital.

On 1st September the British advanced to take positions behind the Westfriesche Dike (see map 4). They had outposts at Warmenhuizen, Haringkarspel and Dirkshorn, with a strong reserve at Schagen. This reserve was placed there to prevent a Batavian attack on Oude Sluis, and to execute a flank attack on Batavian troops who would attack the centre of the British position. The next day the armies faced each other without fighting, apart from some clashes between patrols and outposts.

At 30th August Lt-Gen Dumonceau, still defending the northeastern provinces with the 2nd Batavian Division,

received orders from Brune to assemble 2/3 of his division and to march as quickly as possible to Amsterdam, to await further orders. Next day he left, leaving behind the following troops (see map 5):

2nd Rgt 'Waldeck' at Delfzijl and outposts

5th battalion 'Waldeck' at Nieuwe Schans and outposts

2nd bat 4 H.B. at Harlingen and on the islands of Vlieland, Terschelling and Ameland

Part of 3rd Bat Jagers (160 men) and the coy Vriesche

Garde (volunteers)(140 men) at Koevorden

Company of Groningsche Garde at Groningen

Commander of these troops was Col Boonacker.

The Orangist invasion (see map 5)

As we already saw in part 1 Prince William Frederick of Orange assembled a group of Orangist officers and soldiers at Lingen in Germany. After the receiving news of the British landings and the leaving of the greater part of the Batavian troops in the northeastern provinces, Prince William Frederick judged that the time was right to invade the Batavian Republic.

On 31st August a farmer was sent to Lt-Col Tieleman Evert Hoynck van Papendrecht, who commanded the troops at Koevorden. Prince William Frederick demanded that Lt-Col Hoynck van Papendrecht should change sides and to follow his orders. This demand was repeated by Col Louis van Plettenberg, who was authorised by Prince William Frederick to negotiate with the garrison of Koevorden. But Hoynck van Papendrecht refused. The same happened at Zutphen, where artillery-captain Johan Georg Arentz refused to cooperate. He took measures to prevent a surprise-attack, and was aided by armed civilians.

On 3rd September, a group of 100 Orangists, armed with shotguns and pistols, commanded by Lt-Col van Dongen, took the town Enschede. Another group, commanded by Lt-Col J.G. Spengler, marched to Westervoort and took this village and the bridge over the river IJssel on the 4th. Also the ferries at Lathum and Rheede were taken. The countrymen were raised with exaggerated reports about the strength of Prince William's 'army', and the Orangists were joined by farmers armed with sticks, cudgels and scythes. An uprising took place in Deventer and the city elected to support the Prince. But captain Johan Godefroy Vognetz managed to get into the city (4th September) with 2 companies infantry, and quelled further uprisings and deterred an Orangist attack.

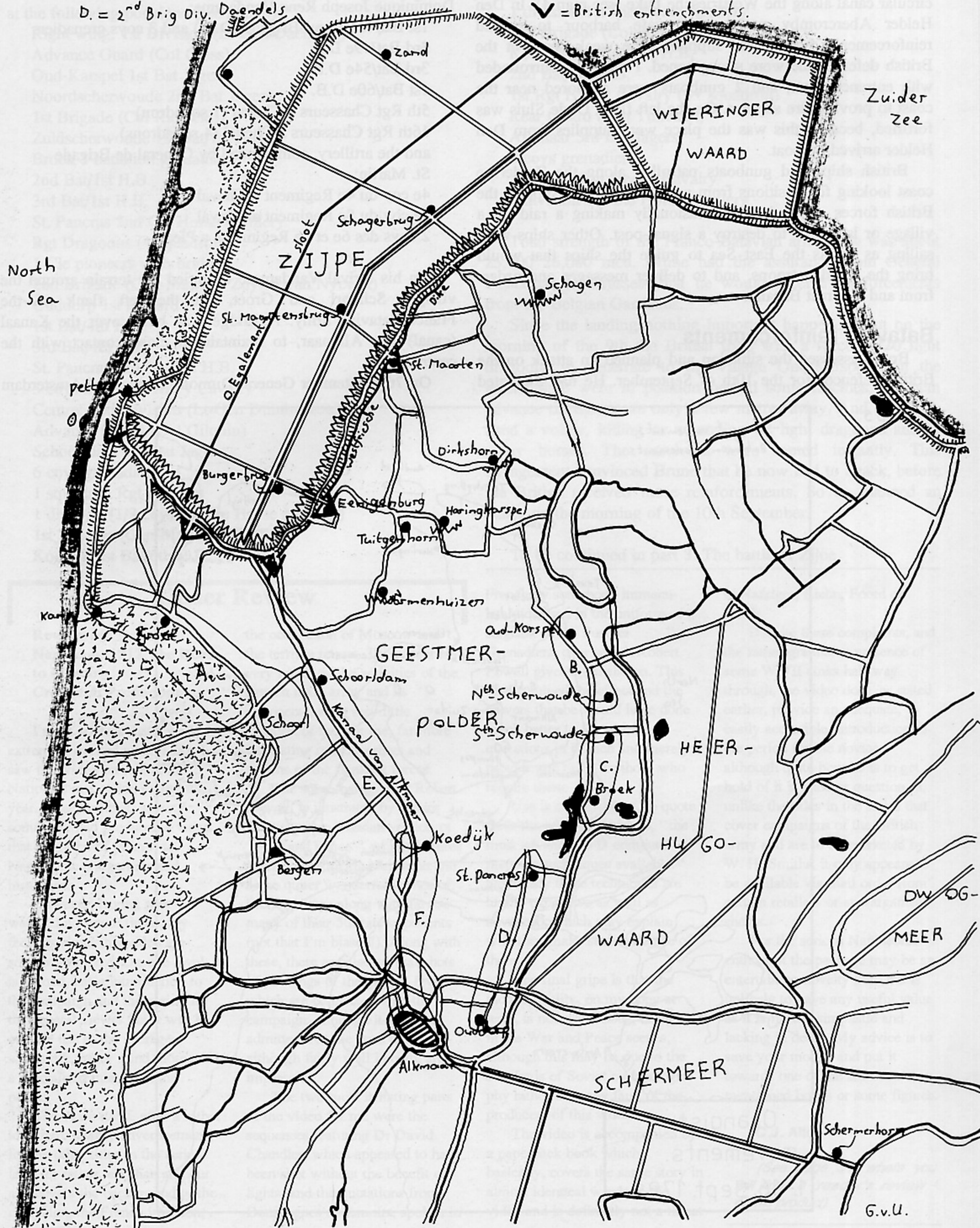
At Arnhem the commander of the Civilian Guard, Col D. Schoonman, heard the news of the taking of Westervoort. He at once called out the Civilian Guard, and dispatched some volunteers with two light field guns to the river IJssel. At Westervoort shots were fired. The Batavians had 3 men wounded, the Orangists only 1 man, but the Orangists retreated. Also of short duration were the Orangist occupations of Enschede, Oldenzaal, Almelo, Delden, Winterswijk, Aalten and other places. To further frustrate their plans the armed civilians did good service. 300 civilians from the city of Zwol marched to the Twente region to suppress the Orangist uprisings. Part of the Civilian Guard of Utrecht moved to the threatened provinces, and 4 companies of the Amsterdamsche Garde forming a flying column under the command of the French General Girod to complete the failure. On 16th September the last Orangists left the Batavian Republic. Prince William Frederick moved to North-Holland.

E. = Advance Guard + 1st Brig. Div. Dumonceau (Batavian)

F. = 2nd Brig. + Rear Guard Div. Dumonceau.

mw = British positions.

V = British entrenchments.



British and Franco-Batavian positions on 9th September 1799.

The British defence

Abercromby in the meanwhile was busy consolidating his position. His troops were placed behind the wide and deep circular canal along the Westfriesche Dike (see map 4). In Den Helder Abercromby possessed a safe harbour to unload reinforcements, horses and supplies. The weak spots in the British defence line were strengthened. Petten was surrounded with entrenchments, and 2 gunboats were anchored near the coast to provide fire support. On the left flank Oude Sluis was fortified, because this was the place where supplies from Den Helder arrived by boat.

British ships and gunboats patrolled along the Zuiderzee coast looking for positions from where they could support the British forces on land, and occasionally making a raid on a village or island or to destroy a signal-post. Other ships were sailing as far as the East Sea to guide the ships that would bring the Russian troops, and to deliver messages and orders from and to Great Britain.

Batavian reinforcements

Brune assessed the situation and planned an attack on the British defences for the 10th of September. He had estimated

the British to have a total strength of about 20,000 men. Since the landing the Franco-Batavian army was reinforced by about 7,000 French under the command of General de Division Dominique Joseph Rene Vandamme:

1st Bat/48e Demi-Brigade (D.B.) and 3 coys grenadiers
3rd Bat/49e D.B.
3rd Bat/54e D.B.
1st Bat/60e D.B.
5th Rgt Chasseurs a Cheval (1 squadron)
16th Rgt Chasseurs a Cheval (4 squadrons)
and the artillery, commanded by General de Brigade St. Martin;
4e coy du 4e Regiment a Cheval
1e coy du 8e Regiment a Cheval
2 coys des 6e et 7e Regiments a Pied

On his arrival Vandamme occupied the terrain around the villages Schoorl and Groet, on the left flank of the Franco-Batavian army. A bridge was built over the Kanaal (canal) van Alkmaar, to maintain in close contact with the centre.

On 7th September General Dumonceau reached Amsterdam

Map 5

