First Empire

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La Colonna (1).JPG

out in zug and company columns at 105 paces to the minute.

Deployment from open company column was to the right flank when formed on the left. The leading, left flank company stood fast whilst those behind executed a quarter pivot to the right and marched diagonally to their places in the line, where they performed a further quarter pivot to the left to face their front. An illustration is at Figure 17. When the column was formed on the right, the method of deployment was on a centre company to both flanks, similar to that used by a British column of subdivisions. The centre company stood fast whilst those behind it deployed on it to the left flank as described above, by means of a quarter pivot and diagonal march. Those to the front, however, had to march backwards into line and to do so they executed a pivot placing the companies in the retired position. They then marched diagonally into place in the line at which point they were still retired and performed another pivot to bring them back into the advanced position. Zug columns deployed similarly

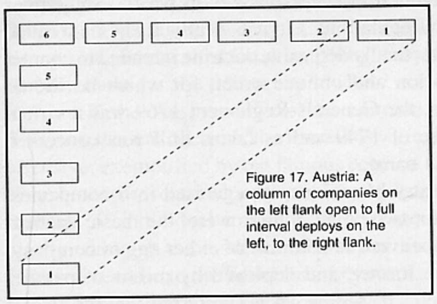

Figure 17. Austria: A column of companies on the left flank open to full interval deploys on the left, to the right flank.

Formation of column from line was performed the same way in reverse of that described above.

Two other columns need to be examined. Both were essentially manoeuvring closed squares designed to counter cavalry, whilst affording a degree of movement not possible with an open square.

The first was the bataillonsmasse, simply a closed column of companies.

The other was the divisionsmasse which took one of two forms. The first consisted of three companies formed in closed company column, the second consisted of two companies formed in closed zug column. Thus, the battalion could provide either two or three small closed columns that operated separately from each other, but not so far apart that they could not deploy together into a single line.

The bataillonsmasse is said to have been used regularly,

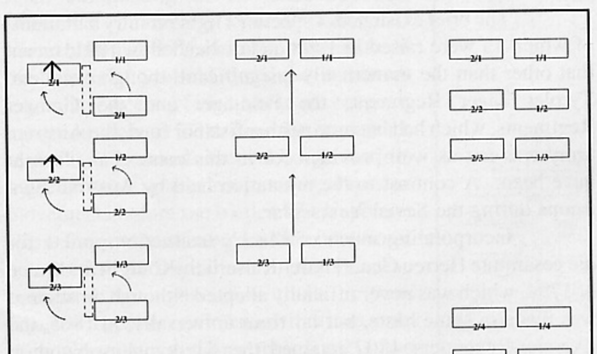
Figure 18. Austria: A zug colonne on the right open to full interval forms divisionsmassen each from three companies

including for the advance to contact, becoming, to all intents and purposes, the Austrian equivalent of the divisional manoeuvre column. The divisionsmasse, on the other hand, appears to have been less popular.

The divisional column on the centre in the in the style of the French colonne d'attaque or Prussian angriffs colonne, did not exist.

Formation of a three-company divisionsmasse from open zug column was achieved by alternate züge wheeling first to the left and then to the right, followed by a forward march until the ranks were closed right up. This would proved two divisionsmassen one behind the other, only one is illustrated. An illustration is at Figure 18.

Formation of divisionsmasse from line required the centre division to pivot and retire sufficiently to make room for the remaining sub-units to form on its front. The immediate flanking companies moved next, executing a pivot followed by a diagonal march into position in the column. The extreme flanking companies moved next in similar fashion. An illustration is at Figure 19. This does not bear comparison with equivalent conversions used by the French and others.

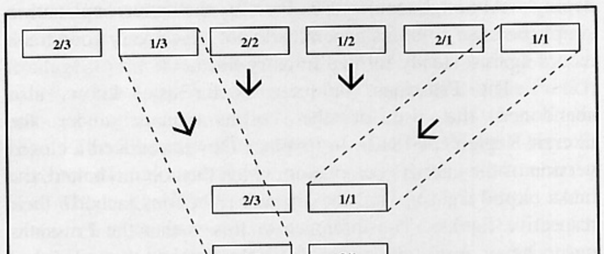

Figure 19. Austria: A divisionsmasse with three companies formed from line.

Formation of a two-company divisionsmasse was achieved simply by having the respective züge close right up into three individual divisionsmassen. An illustration is at Figure 20.

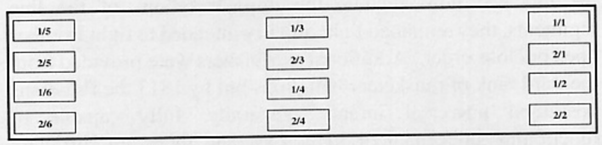

Figure 20. Austria: A battalion formed in divisionsmassen, each from two companies

The three rank line continued to be used for musketry and the assault.

Although the Austrians exhibited more tactical versatility in the latter part of the period, they did not adopt the flexible concepts of Napoleonic warfare as enthusiastically as they might. The Exercier-Reglement 1807, to quote Krieg 1809, retained many of the "artifices of Frederician drill", an accusation which could be levelled at many, if not all, Napoleonic regulations to one degree or another, and one which has been interpreted as evidence that the Austrians continued to use the rigid linear tactics of the previous Century. This is not correct. As I hope I have already established, 18th Century regulations do not necessarily mean 18th Century tactics and a cursory examination of Austrian tactics at Aspern-Essling and

La Colonna (10).JPG

Wagram reveals that the precise choreography of 18th Century linear infantry tactics had been abandoned.

Whilst it is true that the Exercier-Reglement 1807 was probably the most unusual of neo-Napoleonic regulations it was not the 18th Century document it is sometimes represented to be. On the other hand, the use of quarter pivots and diagonal marches for deployment, rather than a half pivot and flank march by files, or simple 45° wheel, introduced unnecessary complications to what were comparatively simple conversions elsewhere. This could hardly be calculated to encourage tactical flexibility. Although the basic evolutions were similar to those used by the French and Prussians during the latter part of the period, the ways in which they were executed were eccentric.

Russia.

I have deliberately left the subject of the Russians until last for the simple reason that, other than modern authors' interpretations, I have never seen any Russian Napoleonic infantry regulations. Not that it would be much help if I had since my knowledge of modern Russian, let alone early 19th Century Russian, could be inscribed on the fly button of a cossack's long johns. I do not even know what they were called properly although I have seen reference made to the Military Code Concerning the Field Service of Infantry 1796 and Tactical Rules for Military Evolutions 1797 in the Men at Arms booklet by Phillip Haythornthwaite. These are said to have been the responsibility of Tsar Paul I and consisted of "Prussian-style linear tactics" but more that he does not say.

Of the later regulations, Zweguintsov quotes the Regulation for Recruits and Company School 1811, whilst Rothenberg, another, more recent, secondary source refers to Barclay de Tolly's Code on the Conduct of Major Military Operations. Unfortunately neither of these authors examine the regulations in question in any detail.

The nearest, as far as I know, that any modern author has come to finding a set of Napoleonic Russian regulations is George Nafziger, who produced those of 1837, called the 1837 Drill Regulation, School of Battalion, in Part IV of a quite superb comparative time and motion study of all the major regulations of the period in Empires, Eagles and Lions some eight years ago. These are, to all intents and purposes, virtually identical to the Prussian Exerzir-Reglement 1812 with the addition of columns of divisions formed on a flank as found in the French Règlement of 1791, and open squares. Conversions were carried out at between 100 and 110 paces per minute.

As far as early Russian regulations are concerned, the only clue I can offer is that as the 1837 Regulations use an identical method of deploying a column of platoons, to that prescribed for a zug colonne under the Prussian Reglement of 1788. It may well be, therefore, that early Russian regulations were also similar to the Prussian; it will be remembered that the Prussians retained this method from the Reglement of 1788 in their Exerzir- Reglement 1812. Any conclusions on my part in this context must, nevertheless, remain conjecture.

What modern authors are agreed upon is that prior to about 1810 the Russians fought in the 18th Century Prussian style and after that date with neo-Napoleonic regulations, including the attack column formed in divisional frontage on the centre. This would appear to be confirmed by the evidence of the 1837 Regulations. Modern commentators are also agreed, to one degree or another, that Russian tactics remained somewhat 'conservative', Paret quoting Wittgenstein's deployment at Grossgörschen in 1813 as an example of what he describes as "antiquated concepts". This must be something of a generalisation for elsewhere, Borodino for example, the Russians used columns, lines and skirmishers in a tactical fashion which, although hardly subtle, was a complete departure from the rigid linear tactics of the 18th Century. Russian skirmishing tactics have also been the subject of considerable criticism by many authors, yet the Prussians who fought them in 1812 considered that they skirmished competently and at Borodino, and at Bautzen in 1813, they were able to deploy grenadiers as skirmishers.

All this of course is very generalised, but it seems reasonable to infer that the Russians followed the tactical trends developing elsewhere.

SUMMARY.

Although one frequently finds columns in a tactical environment, a phenomenon not by any means unique to the French, they were not intended for combat, only movement. The principal innovation in the use of columns by the French was that they were used for movement during the advance to contact, under fire, through the zone of artillery fire and into the musketry zone where they were supposed to deploy. That, at least is the theory of it. The 18th Century linear school required columns to deploy beyond the range of effective fire, the advance to contact being conducted entirely in line.

Columns, nevertheless, were not formations, by their

La Colonna (11).JPG

very nature, in which soldiers could fight. When column met line in normal circumstances, there were only three possible scenarios.

1. The column deploys into line and a fire fight follows until one side or the other has had enough.

2. The enemy are intimidated into flight, in which case the column has no need to deploy and the unit takes its objective in that formation.

3. The column is surprised and cannot deploy or attempts to fight as it is and is, invariably, defeated.

Although it is perfectly true that columns could be used as a tactical formation, and doubtless they were, this was a reflection of the difference between the theory, implied, in regulations and tactical doctrine, the latter being further modified in tactical practice. The difficulty here, as I hope is already abundantly clear, that neither tactical doctrine nor, especially, tactical practice get much coverage, in comparison to the mechanics of drill, in any of the official manuals or regulations of the period. Indeed, tactical practice gets no cover whatsoever.

It has been accepted, primarily, it would seem, as a result of Peninsular analysis, that the column was only used tactically in the shock role which, apparently, was the only possible option open to it by virtue of its configuration, in other words it could not develop musketry to a useful degree is certainly true, which is patently obvious.

Except, however, where terrain or buildings prevented the use of lines, where the enemy was already in flight or unsteady, or where the training of one's own troops was suspect, there was no sensible use of the column as a tactical formation. All the evidence is that against steady formed troops in line, the likelihood of success of a column as an instrument of shock, was hardly better than that of cavalry charging infantry squares.

The concept of its use as an intimidatory tactic is another matter, but here a gamble had to be made on the enemy being persuaded into flight. If he did not all the evidence is that the column, if it could not or did not deploy, would be defeated. Be all that as it may, the fact remains that columns were neither designed nor intended for a tactical role in normal circumstances.

The flexibility of French formations, adaptable to every contingency, and their speed of conversion from one formation to another under fire, particularly in the context of grand tactics, that is to say regimental and Brigade level and above, allowed fire and movement throughout the zones of effective enemy fire, to an unprecedented degree. It was this remarkable ability, the result of training combined with accumulated battlefield experience, and nothing whatever to do with columnar tactics intrinsically, that gave the French their tactical superiority so particularly marked at Austerlitz, Jena and Auerstedt. It is also true that it was never to be repeated to the same degree.

From a peak when it marched east from the camps along the Channel coast in 1805 and during the campaigns of that year and 1806, it is generally accepted that the tactical skill of the French infantry started to decline as less experienced and well trained conscripts, ever increasingly replaced the veterans of those years. By as early as 1807 the performance against the Russians was already markedly less good. The French infantry that fought the decisive campaigns of 1813 in Germany was largely unrecognisable in comparison. Be that as it may, the concept that the French always fought in column of one kind or another is as false as the concept that the British could only fight in line.

Despite efforts in recent years to denigrate the achievements of the British infantry, there is no avoiding the fact that the British Army never had to fight the Grande Armée in its hey-day, commanded by Napoleon himself. Nevertheless, from 1809 onwards, under Wellington, there is also no avoiding the fact that it consistently defeated, with what were essentially 18th Century Prussian linear regulations, soldiers of what was then the most formidable army in Europe. The British, far from adopting French doctrine, were unique in not doing so. British infantry fought under regulations firmly rooted in the linear concepts of the previous century but, retaining and adapting them, found their own unique solution to the tactical problem. Maximilien Foy, commanding the French 1st Division at Salamanca, said of the Wellington's conduct the battle, "He kept his dispositions concealed for almost the whole day, he waited until we were committed to our movements before he developed his own, he played a safe game, he fought in the oblique order - it was a battle in the style of Frederick the Great".

It is received wisdom that the defeats inflicted on the Austrians, Russians and Prussians between 1805 and 1806, the campaigns of Ulm, Austerlitz and Jena respectively, resulted, principally, from the inability of infantry trained under 18th Century linear regulations to compete on equal terms with those trained in the allegedly columnar regulations of the French Réglement of 1791. This cannot be right.

Let Colonel F.N. Maude, writing in 1909 of the 18th and 19th Century tactical experience as a whole, have nearly the last word. "It is now clearly established that in all essentials the training and tactical methods of the old pre-Jena period - ie, from 1800 to 1806 - was identical in spirit with those in use in the British Army at the same date and for many subsequent years, and our ample experience in the Peninsula, at Waterloo, and in India, is there as sufficient justification both for ourselves and the Prussians".

What he seems to be saying in so many words is that Hohenlohe, because his conduct of the battle was flawed, would have fared no better had he commanded British infantry at Jena. Similarly, Wellington would have been just as successful in his Peninsular battles had he commanded an army of Prussians. The causes for those Prussian, and other, reverses must be sought not in the infantry regulations, not even, perhaps, in the infantry tactics, but the higher levels of grand-tactical command, organisation and leadership.

La Colonna (12).JPG

Had it been possible for Wellington to be present on the field of Gettysburg, 50 years after Waterloo, other than the sight of Buford's cavalry fighting dismounted with breech loading carbines, little, if anything, in the context of tactics would have been unfamiliar to him. Columnar tactics in the age of black powder musket armed infantry, if they ever really existed at all, were illusory and enjoyed but a brief period of popularity. By the middle of the 19th Century formed infantry was moving and fighting in lines again.

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La Colonna (14).JPG

Columns and Other Things on the Same Lines (Part 2)

(Or move to the left in file, right turn).

John Cook, U.K.

France.

Although provisional regulations appeared subsequent to it, the French infantry used only one basic document throughout the period, the Règlement concernant l'exercise et les manoeuvres de l'infanterie du premier août 1791. These regulations had their origins in a work by the Comte de Guibert, Essai General de Tactique, published in 1770 and far from being a revolutionary work, it espoused all that was best in the Prussian regulations of the day, indeed it was in large part inspired by them, particularly the principal of deploying from column of companies perpendicular to the enemy line 'en tiroir'.

It has been claimed, but not by Guibert himself, that he was the first to recognise the advantages of the perpendicular flank march of files for deploying a column on the head but, as we will see, the Prussians had been using it since 1752. What he did advocate, however, was that the column should be allowed for assault as well as manoeuvre. This needs qualification for it has been interpreted as a column designed to function as an instrument of shock, but there is no evidence that Guibert ever intended the assault column as such. It is perfectly clear that the assault columns advocated by Guibert were ones of manoeuvre, but ones intended for the advance to contact at which point they were to deploy. This was in contrast to manoeuvre columns elsewhere at the time, which deployed well outside the range of effective fire.

He defined their advantages as rapidity of manoeuvre over ground which might be difficult for the line and as having certain morale benefits, adding confidence to one's own troops whilst intimidating the enemy. He was also aware that the column had a number of disadvantages which he gave as a tendency to disorder under fire when the natural instinct of men was to crowd together, a factor also evident even when a position was carried by a column, which made it vulnerable to counter attack. He was also of the view that, contrary to popular belief, a column was harder to control than a line as it was more difficult to convey orders in the former, which also made it harder to rally.

Guibert advocated that columns and lines should be used in combination, in accordance with tactical circumstances for which there were no doctrinaire solutions. The essence of his concepts was speed of manoeuvre and conversion from one formation to another. Perhaps as important as anything, it was his view that all infantry should be capable of fighting in either close or skirmish order.

Despite such innovations, Guibert retained the three rank line as the principal tactical formation for formed infantry.

During the latter part of the 18th Century there was much debate in France over the respective advantages of linear and columnar tactics, the result of which was no less than 11 provisional règlements between 1750 and 1791. That of 1764, however, was the basis for all those which followed, culminating in, after considerable experimentation, the Règlement of 1776. This document remained essentially linear but conceded that columns, of either peleton (company) or division (double company) frontage, could be used for assaults where circumstances dictated.

According to Duruy, the Règlement of 1791 was virtually a repetition of the Règlement of 1776. Not having seen a copy of the latter, I cannot confirm this except to say that I do know that the, very small, part of the former dealing with skirmishing is said to be lifted from the latter verbatim.

The Règlement of 1791 allowed manoeuvre columns on peleton and division frontage, conversions being carried out at 120 paces per minute. Prior to 1808, the battalion consisted of nine peletons, one of which was the grenadier peleton, usually detached to form composite grenadier battalions, and another, after 1804, the voltigeur peleton. As is well known, the Règlement of 1791 illustrates an eight peleton battalion throughout.

Deployment from colonne par peleton to a flank was executed on the head, which could be either the left or right flank peleton, from a column open to full interval. The leading peleton remained stationary whilst those behind it made a 45° wheel to the right followed by a diagonal march to their place in the line, dressing into position by means of a further 45° wheel to the left. An illustration is at Figure 6. Deployment to the left flank would be a mirror image and normally conducted from a column formed with the head on the right flank peleton.

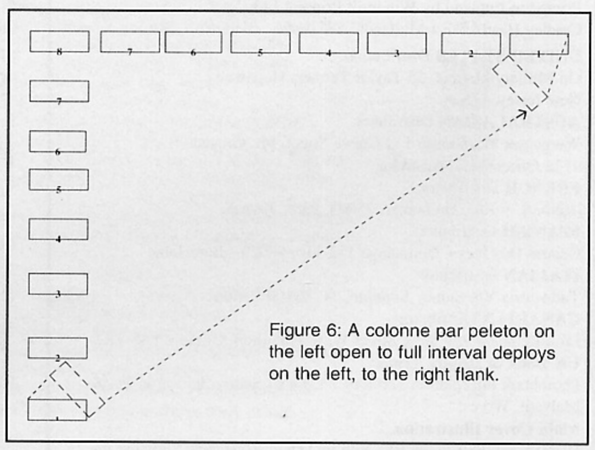


Figure 6: A colonne par peleton on the left open to full interval deploys on the left, to the right flank.

Deployment from colonne par division could also be executed to either flank but by means of a variation of the 'en tiroir' manoeuvre. Each division made a half pivot to the deploying flank and marched in file to the place opposite their position in the line, made a further half pivot and marched forward dressing into line on the leading division of the column which had stood fast. An illustration is at Figure 7. Here we see a colonne par division formed on the 1st division, consisting of the 2nd and 1st peletons, deploying to the left flank. Deployment to the right would have been a mirror image with the column formed on the 4th division.

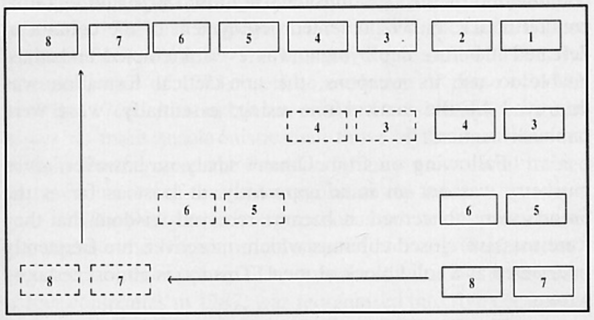


Figure 7. France: A colonne par division on the right open to half intervals deploys on the right, to the left flank

Conversion from line to column was achieved by the simple expedient of having soldiers in the sub-units execute a half pivot and wheel in file back into position in the column. This could be executed on any sub-unit, the one in question standing fast whilst the remainder formed on it. An illustration is at figure 8 showing a line forming colonne par division on the 2nd division.

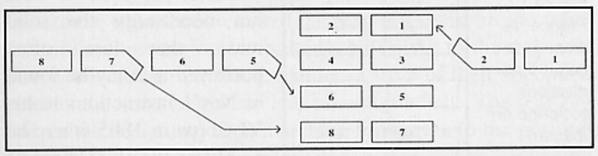


Figure 8. France: A line forms colonne par division on the right open to half interval, on the right centre.

The colonne par division with its head on the centre division was known as the colonne d'attaque.

Deployment from colonne d'attaque was also by means of the flank march of files, already described, but to both flanks at once. An illustration is at Figure 9.

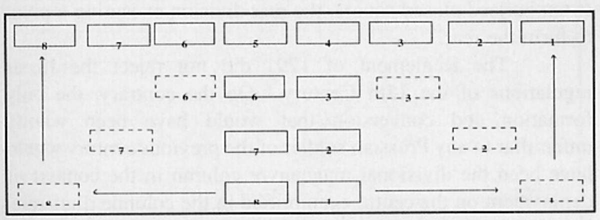


Figure 9. France: A colonne d'attaque open to half interval deploys

Although deployment from colonne d'attaque was faster because the longest distance travelled by any sub-unit was shorter than in a column formed on a flank division, it is very possible that it was actually used less than is usually imagined. The reason for this is simple.

Battalions approached the battlefield in columns of route, forming into manoeuvre colonnes par peleton as they got close. A colonne par division could be formed from colonne par

peleton, right in front for example, by having the even numbered peletons march to their left flank by files and dress forward onto the odd numbered peletons, as already described for forming a column of grand-divisions in the British service. This would result in divisions, front to rear, formed from the following peletons, 2nd and 1st, 4th and 3rd, 6th and 5th and 8th and 7th.

The colonne d'attaque, other than the leading division, consisted of divisions composed of different peletons from those of the divisions of the line, front to rear 5th and 4th, 6th and 3rd, 7th and 2nd and 8th and 1st. This was necessary in order to maintain linear hierarchy when the colonne d'attaque deployed. Thus, under the Règlement of 1791 the only way to form colonne d'attaque was via line. The colonne par peletons had first to deploy into line and then form into colonne d'attaque, all of which required time and space, the latter, incidentally, being a much overlooked factor in the context of the examination of conversions.

Furthermore, It is also the case that when the Voltigeur company is detached, colonne par division, of any type, is impossible because the battalion is reduced to an uneven number of peletons. When a company was detached, the Règlement of 1791 prescribed colonne par peletons. The logical upshot of this must be that either entire battalions were earmarked for skirmishing whilst others remained formed, or that colonnes par peletons were used much more than is realised. The custom of having an entire sub-unit in the light role is clearly less good that in the Prussian and Austrian services where each sub-unit earmarked its third rank as skirmishers, thus avoiding disruption of battalion symmetry when they were detached.

The reorganisation of 1808 resulted in a six peleton battalion, the 1st being the grenadier and the 6th the voltigeur. With the change of size of the individual peleton, the division became that of a single peleton divided into two sections, producing 12 tactical sub-units. An illustration is at Figure 10.

The most common columnar formation from this later period however, dating from approximately 1812/1813, appears to have been one of double division frontage, representing a reduction in depth to nine ranks plus intervals, and is the formation most frequently

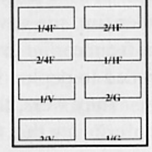


Figure 10. France: A close colonne d'Attaque (colonne serré) c. 1808

La Colonna (5).JPG

illustrated by modern commentators. This does not exist as such in the Règlement of 1791. An illustration is at Figure 11. Despite these changes, the methods laid down in the Règlement of 1791 were unchanged.

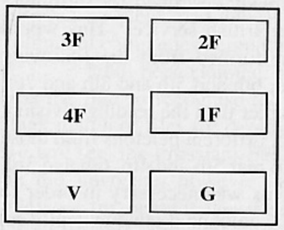


Figure 11. France: A closed colonne d'attaque formed in double divisions c.1812

In late 1813, prior to the Battle of Leipzig, it was ordered that the infantry should form in two ranks but it is not clear to what degree this was applied, if at all. This increases the frontages of division and double division columns to and 143 and 286 feet respectively and represents an even more marked tendency towards a linear rather than columnar formation, with all the difficulties associated with lines in the context of poorly trained troops, which is what a significant part of the French infantry was at this time. It would not appear, therefore, that the double division frontage column, especially with sub units formed in two ranks, was a particularly appropriate arrangement for most of them.

Despite the apparent disadvantage of lines, multi-battalion columns, apparently composed of a number of battalions deployed in line, usually supported by others formed in column, had already started to appear in the French repertoire. MacDonald's at Wagram and d'Erlon's at Waterloo are typical although the precise nature of the latter has been subject to some conjecture. In the case of the former, however, there is primary evidence which shows that the leading regiments were formed in two lines of deployed battalions, that is to say four battalions, in three ranks, in each, supported by battalion columns. Although given the name 'column', it is hardly an accurate description for this is clearly a linear grand tactical arrangement.

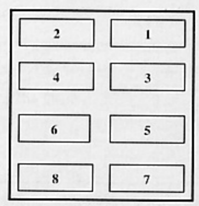
Returning to battalion columns, the evidence of the Règlement of 1791 really leaves no doubt whatever that the French colonnes par divisions were non-tactical formations intended for manoeuvre only. That they were intended for manoeuvre under fire, the advance to contact, is clear and this was a departure from earlier practice, but it is also very clear that they were intended to deploy into line for combat once contact had been made. They were, therefore, non-tactical formations.

It is unfortunate that Oman's analysis of French use of manoeuvre columns in the Peninsula, has left an impression of columnar shock tactics. This analysis was accepted, virtually without question, by generations of historians from Fortescue to Weller. More recent analysis, however, has left little doubt, that on contact with the British line, the French frequently attempted to deploy battalion manoeuvre columns into lines. The combination of surprise, musketry at close range and vigorous counter attack, either prevented deployment of the column or defeated it before deployment was even attempted and, thus, unable to use its weapons, the non-tactical formation was destroyed by the tactical one using, essentially, what were 'ambush' tactics.

Following on from Oman's analysis, however, since musketry was not an issue apparently, at least as far as the French were concerned, it became received wisdom that they were massive closed columns which, moreover, are frequently interpreted as a solid block of men. This too is almost certainly wrong.

The Règlement of 1791 allows closed, quarter, half interval and full interval columns. The close column, or colonne serré however, is illustrated at quarter intervals, that is to say, the interval between succeeding sub-units is one quarter of their width. This is repeated by Colin. French divisional manoeuvre columns were not necessarily a phalanx like formation, as illustrated by David Kilburn in his letter in First Empire No12. This is the closed column, the colonne en masse, essentially a closed manoeuvring square. An illustration is at Figure 12.

Figure 12. France: A closed column par divisions (colonne en masse).



Further evidence that colonnes par division were not necessarily the solid mass they are often portrayed as, may be found in Ney's instructions to his VI Corps in 1805 where he amplifies the Règlement of 1791 in the context of open squares. Ney recognised that there might not be sufficient time for a "column with intervals by peletons or divisions" to form an open square, from which it is possible to infer that manoeuvre columns were usually open to one degree or another. In such a case he ordered that they "close up in mass", the flanking three files half pivoting to form the left and right face of the extemporised closed square, the rear division executing a pivot to form the rear.

The Règlement of 1791 did not reject the linear regulations of the 18th Century. On the contrary, the only formation and conversion that would have been wholly unfamiliar to any Prussian soldier of the previous century would have been the divisional manoeuvre column in the context of deployment on the centre exemplified in the colonne d'attaque. He would, on the other hand, have been quite unfamiliar with French tactics. It was not the letter of the regulations that was particularly different, but the way in which they were applied.

Rather than choosing ground to suit the formations, thus restricting tactical methods to a minimum, as had been the norm previously, French infantry formations were chosen in accordance with the ground as it happened to be, indeed, in accordance with tactical circumstances as a whole. The commander at tactical level was able to choose whatever formation he saw fit, so long as it was appropriate to his particular situation or mission.

It was, in other words, tactics and doctrine that set the French apart.

Prussia.

The Prussians fought the early campaigns, including that of 1806, using the Reglement für die Königlich Preussichen Infanterie 1788 and Reglement für die Königlich Preussichen leichte Infanterie 1788. The Prussian Reglement of 1788 was essentially that of 1773, itself an evolution of those of 1743, 1748 and 1766. Although it has received considerable criticism, it was no more anachronistic than those of the Austrians and British. Furthermore, the Prussian infantry was as well trained in the evolutions of their own regulations as most.

The Prussian infantry manoeuvred at 108 paces to the minute, like the British, in columns of half zug (half section), zug (section) or company. The musketeer battalion, established at four companies in 1787, was reorganised into five companies in 1799. Grenadier battalions retained the four company structure. The tactical sub unit, however, was always the zug, of which there were two in each company, ten tactical sub-units in each line battalion exactly as we saw in the British service.

Deployment into three rank line was performed, outside the range of effective fire, from a closed zug colonne to either flank as required, on either the head or rear zug, by means of a flank march of sub-units in files "en tiroir", so called because the sub-units were pulled out of the column much as one might drawers from a chest, tiroir being the French for a drawer.

Deployment from close zug colonne formed on the right to the right flank required the rear, left flank, zug to stand fast whilst those in front executed a half pivot to the right and marched by file to the flank, halting in front of their appointed place in the line and making half pivot to the left. The rear zug had, in the meantime, been marching forward onto the position where the line was to deploy and halted. The remaining sub-units marched forward and dressed into line on it. An illustration is at Figure 13. Inverted deployment to the left flank was allowed and was a mirror image. This is the 'en tiroir' innovation, identical to that used by deploying British columns of grand divisions and variations of which were adopted by the French, as seen already.

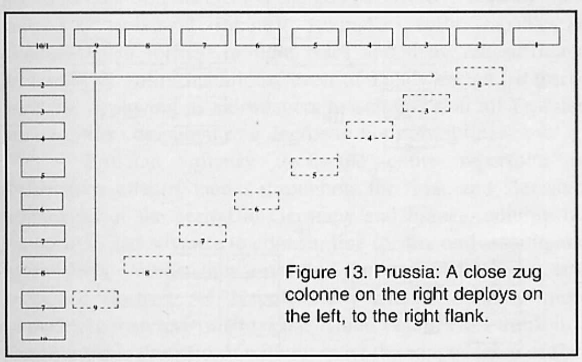


Figure 13. Prussia: A close zug colonne on the right deploys on the left, to the right flank.

Deployment from close zug colonne formed on the left to the left flank required the rear, right flank, zug to stand fast whilst those in front executed a half pivot to the left and marched by file to the flank, halting in front of their appointed place in the line and making half pivot to the left. This placed them in the retired position. They then dressed into line on the right flank zug which had stood fast, performing a further pivot placing them back in the advanced position. An illustration is at Figure 14. Inverted deployment to the right flank was a mirror image.

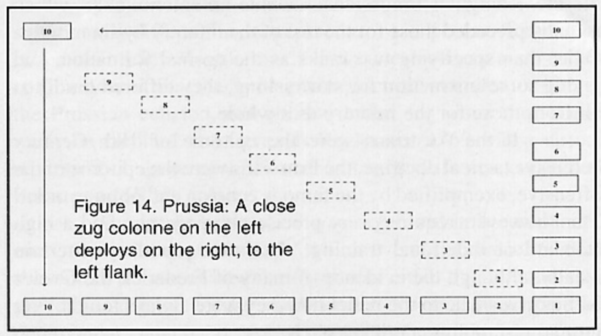


Figure 14. Prussia: A close zug colonne on the left deploys on the right, to the left flank.

The 'en tiroir' method of deployment perpendicular to the enemy line had been introduced into the Prussian army in 1752 as an alternative to the more common parallel deployment, in which an open zug colonne wheeled to the right, presenting its left flank to the enemy line, and then halted whilst the sub-units effected a 90° left wheel into line. It was this method of deployment which impressed Guibert.

The Prussian company column was formed on a double zug frontage and appeared identical to the British column of grand divisions already described. It was formed in similar manner and deployed as described above. The principal columnar formation in the Prussian service, however, remained the zug colonne

Line to column conversion was achieved by having the sub-units make a left or right half pivot into column of files, to whichever flank the column was being formed on, and wheel by files back into position behind the stationary flank sub-unit, as has already been seen in the British and French service.

Musketry and assaults were delivered in three rank line although one of Ruchel's regiments at Jena was formed in two ranks. This, however, does not appear to have been the tactical innovation it is sometimes described as, for what Ruchel actually did was strip away the third ranks and form them into two additional extemporised battalions which were left as part of the garrison in Weimar. The result was that Infantry Regiment Treuenfels arrived on the field at Jena under strength and in an unfamiliar structure.

There is some evidence of manoeuvre columns being used tactically where ground precluded the deployment of lines, such as in villages. Assault columns, however, as understood by the Règlement of 1791, are not reflected in the Reglement of 1788 although Scharnhorst is clear that experiments had been made with them at least as early as 1804.

Each line infantry battalion initially provided ten rifle armed schützen from the third rank for skirmishing, increased to 50 schützen in 1799. The use of the entire third rank for skirmishing had already been given consideration but was not official practise, although at Jena there is at least one example of an entire company being deployed as skirmishers, repeated by elements of L'Estocq's Corps at Eylau. The deployment of entire companies in open order, however, must be considered the exception rather than the rule for the bulk of the rank and file were not expected to function in this way.

The Fusilier battalions, of which there were 27 battalions by 1800, retained the four company structure and were trained in both open and close order drill, hence the Reglement für die Königlich Preussichen leichte Infanterie 1788 which actually preceded those for the rest of the infantry by six months. Other than specifying two ranks as the normal formation, and giving some instruction for skirmishing, they differed hardly at all from those for the infantry as a whole.

If the Austrians were the epitome of 18th Century defensive tactical doctrine, the Prussians were the epitome of the offensive, exemplified by the famous echelon and oblique order. This, however, required very precise choreography and a high standard of individual training. It also required open terrain ideally, although the evidence of many of Frederick the Great's battles gives a lie to the belief that they were always fought over ground resembling a cricket pitch.

Probably as important as anything else, however, was Frederick's cavalry, particularly in the later campaigns when the quality of his infantry had declined through casualties amongst the highly trained soldiers, a problem Napoleon was to encounter, increasingly from about 1807 onwards. It was the dominance of this arm that allowed the Prussian infantry to continue to manoeuvre as it did. By 1806, in terms of organisation and level of training, this vital ingredient no longer existed.

The Prussians emerged from the Revolutionary Wars with more success than they are generally credited and even during the 1806 campaign, at the tactical level, where battalion fought battalion on the line of battle, Prussian infantry does not seem to have been at any particular disadvantage and the concept that French skirmishing was a decisive factor by itself holds little, if any, water. The initial fault lay with strategic mistakes, the principal ones being, in very general terms, the failure to go to war in 1805 alongside the Austrians and Russian, and the erroneous belief the following year that Prussia was numerically strong enough to fight the French alone.

The felony was compounded by some examples of gross grand tactical ineptitude resulting, for example, in the piecemeal defeat of Hohenlohe's army at Jena, culminating in the destruction of Grawert's Division in front of Vierzehnheiligen. The catastrophic nature of the defeats at Saalfeld, Jena and Auerstedt might have been avoided had it not been not for serious defects in the Prussian command, control and grand tactical organisation, indeed, so extraordinary were Prussian movements before the battles that Napoleon was quite unable to interpret their intentions, a reflection of the failure of the Prussian command to agree. I think it was Clausewitz who commented that the only thing worse than dividing one's army in two in the face of the enemy, was dividing it in three.

It has been customary to attribute the scale of these defeats to 18th Century infantry tactics on the part of the Prussians. Whilst there is a grain of truth in this, it is a shallow interpretation of what actually took place and entirely ignores the blunders made at grand tactical levels of command which placed Prussian soldiers in impossible tactical situations. What the Prussian infantry were actually capable of when properly led was demonstrated at Eylau in 1807, where attacking Prussian regiments of L'Estocq's Corps handled the French very roughly indeed.

The Prussians grasped the tactical relationship between the skirmisher, column and line rather better than most and the resulting Exerzir-Reglement für die Infanterie der Königlich Preussischen Armee 1812, hereinafter the Exerzir-Reglement 1812, which replaced both 1788 reglements, is considered to be, not only the best, but also the most succinct infantry regulations to emerge from the period.

The reorganisation of 1808 reverted to a four company battalion throughout although the zug remained the tactical sub unit, of which there were now eight in each battalion. The Exerzir-Reglement 1812 retained the zug colonne, which deployed as it had done under the Reglement of 1788, and added the angriffs colonne, formed on a double zug (company) frontage, to the infantry's repertoire.

The angriffs colonne was the equivalent of the French colonne d'attaque formed in divisions, each consisting of two züge. The divisions of the Prussian column, like the French, were not all composed of the same züge as the divisions when in line. The leading division consisted of the 5th and 4th, as it did when in line, the second division, however, consisted of the 6th and 3rd züge, the third division the 7th and 2nd, and the rear division the 8th and 1st.

Deployment from angriffs colonne to line could be made on the centre to both flanks simultaneously, exactly like the colonne d'attaque. The leading division stood fast whilst each zug behind it made either a left or right pivot and marched in column of files to the left or right flank, halting opposite its

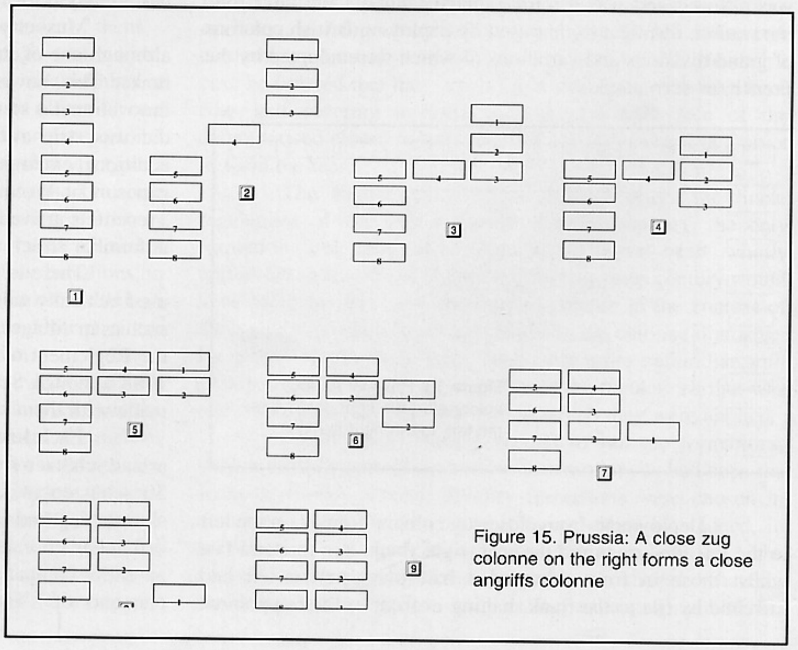


Figure 15. Prussia: A close zug colonne on the right forms a close angriffs colonne

place in the line. Each then made a right or left pivot and marched forward, dressing into line on the leading division.

The conversion from zug colonne to angriffs colonne was complex and no equivalent existed in the French service. It was performed on the 4th zug and involved the leading züge marching to the right and to the rear in order to assume their positions in the line. An illustration is at Figure 15.

Formation of angriffs colonne from line was achieved by means of a left or right half pivot and a wheel by files back into position behind the centre division of the line exactly as in the French service. The column of divisions formed of the right or left flank division was not used.

The Exerzir-Reglement 1812 implies the deployment of manoeuvre and assault columns into line for combat but interpretations of its use during the latter campaigns of the period, have concluded that the Prussians sometimes used the angriffs colonne as a tactical formation. If correct, the reason may have in part been the inexperience of some Landwehr and Reserve regiments and doubts about their ability to convert from column to line under fire. It may also be that many of these examples were cases of the angriffs colonne not needing to deploy. Although conjecture, I prefer the latter explanation simply because columns generally do not have a very good track record against steady formed infantry lines.

The Prussians, uniquely as far as I know, also abandoned the use of the hollow square under the Exerzir-Reglement 1812. In its place they introduced a closed version of the angriffs colonne, in which the column halted, the ranks closed right up and the left and right files faced to their respective flanks. The inference of this is that the Prussians must have used the angriffs colonne as the principal manoeuvring formation on the battlefield because there was no longer any means of formal defence against cavalry whilst in zug colonne, other than converting to angriffs colonne and then closed square, the time penalty for which must have been unacceptable.

The Prussians continued to use specialist light troops in the form of Jäger, Schützen and Fusilier battalions. Although the last had now become the third battalions of the line regiments, they remained light infantry intended to fight in either open or close order. Additional skirmishers were provided from the third rank of musketeer battalions but by 1813 the Prussians possessed universal infantry generally, fully capable of functioning in formed or light roles and there are sufficient examples of entire battalions, even of Landwehr and Reserve infantry, deploying as skirmishers to suppose that all Prussian infantry was competent to a degree in both disciplines.

Prussian infantry used the entire repertoire of Napoleonic infantry tactics throughout the final, and decisive, campaigns of the period in Germany and France, column for manoeuvre and advance to contact, line for fire and assault, and skirmishers. Whilst they embraced the tactical flexibility and offensive doctrine of Napoleonic warfare, probably more completely than any other of the Allied countries, I think it is fair to say that they did so without quite the same degree of flair as the French themselves.

Austria.

In the Austrian service the infantry fought under the Exercitium für die sämmentliche Kaiserlich-Königlichen Infanterie, Generals-Reglement 1769, hereinafter the Generals-Reglement 1769, until 1807. Although I have only seen minor parts of this document in translation it has the reputation of being over-complex, even by the standards of the 18th Century. It was certainly the most venerable infantry regulation used during the Napoleonic period. As far as the basic evolutions were concerned, nevertheless, it was not significantly different in concept to any of its peers. Sometimes called the 'Lacy Regulations', it was really Lacy's so called cordon system, a tactically defensive doctrine intended to counter the Prussian echelon and oblique order, for which he should really be credited, the Generals-Reglement 1769 was a virtual repetition of those of 1749 and as far as drill was concerned Prussian in all but name.

The infantry battalion was organised in 6 companies, each divided into two züge which were the basic tactical sub-units. It manoeuvred in columns of either zug or company, predominantly the former, and deployed by means of parallel deployment which, it seems, was preferred to the faster perpendicular method. An illustration is at Figure 16. The three rank line was the principal tactical formation for both musketry and assault.

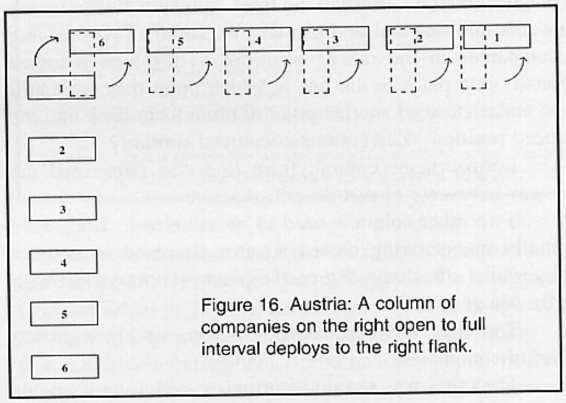


Figure 16. Austria: A column of companies on the right open to full interval deploys to the right flank.

The Exercier-Reglement für die Kaiserlich-Königliche infanterie 1807, hereinafter the Exercier-Reglement 1807 replaced the Generals-Reglement 1769. It did not incorporate the divisional assault column in the French manner but confirmed the use of the third rank as skirmishers, a practise which had already started to evolve, and devoted a proportion of its content to open order functions.

The brief existence of specialist light infantry battalions, of which 15 were raised in 1798 and disbanded in 1801, meant that other than the numerically insignificant, though excellent, Tyroler Jäger Regiment, the Feldjäger and the Grenzer Regiments, which had become neither fish nor fowl, the Austrian army was not as well provided for in this context as it might have been. A contrast to the reputation held by Austrian light troops during the Seven Years War.

Incorporating much of Mack's Instructionspunkte für die gesammte Herren Generals der Kaiserlich-Königliche Armee of 1794, which was never officially adopted although an attempt was made in some haste, but far from universally, in 1805, the Exercier-Reglement 1807 retained the six company battalion organisation through the period, and beyond. The basic tactical sub-unit also remained the zug, with manoeuvre being carried