

THE BATTLE OF AUSTERLITZ AND THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

By Jack Sigler, FINS

*Marshal Soult will give orders for three divisions to take places beyond the ravine at seven o'clock in the morning, in such a manner as to be prepared to commence operations of the day, which is to be a march to the front by echelon, the right wing in advance. Marshal Soult himself, report to the Emperor at his Headquarters at seven-thirty in the morning.*¹

The Battle of Austerlitz is one of the greatest and most-studied battles of history. But great battles are made up of small ones. This paper is an attempt to illustrate the eight Principles of War, as developed and taught today by the United States Army, through the study of one such small one.

The Principle of Simplicity (Clear, uncomplicated plans and clear, concise orders to insure understanding.)²

Marshal Soult reported as ordered to the Emperor at his headquarters on Zuran Hill. There, he met the other commanders -- Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte commanding the 1st Corps; Marshal Louis-Nicolas Davout commanding the 3rd; Marshal Jean Lannes, the 4th; Joachim Murat, the Cavalry; Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bessieres, The Guard; and Marshal Berthier, the Chief of Staff.³ At this morning meeting, Napoleon made some

adjustments to the plan he had worked out the previous night, the most significant of which affected Soult's 4th Corps. Soult's 3rd Division commanded had been skirmishing that night along the lower Goldbach and was already engaged with the enemy. This morning, Napoleon confirmed Soult's deployment of Legrand's division along the lower Goldbach, and instructed him to make the initial attack using only his 1st and 2nd Divisions, commanded by General Saint-Hilaire and General Vandamme respectively. Soult had moved these troops across the Goldbach earlier that morning in accordance with Berthier's orders of the previous evening.⁴

As the other Marshals received their orders, saluted and departed, Napoleon held Soult. A report had arrived that the Allied troops had left the heights of Pratzen undefended. According to General Thiébault,⁵ Napoleon asked Soult: "How long do your troops need to get to the top of the Pratzen?" Soult is said to have replied that he required no more than twenty minutes.⁶ Napoleon

¹ "Disposition Générales Pour la Journée Du II, 1 Dec 1805," *Correspondance de Napoleon Ier publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III* (Paris, 1858-1869). No. 9535. XI, 537

² All the "Principles of War" are from U.S. Army *Field Manual 3-0 [Operations]*, (Washington, 2001), Section 4, 11-15.

³ Philippe Paul Ségur, *An aide-de-camp of Napoleon* (New York, 1895), 246.

⁴ Ibid., 247. In 1847, Baron Adolphe Thiébault, in his article "Passage du Goldbach" argues that the troops did not cross the stream until 0800 hrs based on his reading of his father's notes. However, review of the testimony of Ségur, the official *Relation du Depot de la guerre*, another possible interpretation of General Thiébault's own notes (quoted by the Baron), and analysis of elapsed times and distances involved, together indicate that the troops of Saint-Hilaire and Vandamme were on the east side of the Goldbach before daylight. Also see: "Rapport de la bataille d'Austerlitz par Soult" in Alexander Berthier, et. al. *Relations et rapports officiels de la bataille d'Austerlitz* (Paris, 1999), 17.

⁵ Thiébault, III, 457.

⁶ If this conversation is accurate, Soult was only slightly optimistic. From flats on the eastern side of the Goldbach in

replied: "Very well. We'll wait another quarter of an hour." Fifteen minutes later, he said: "Go." Soult returned to the flats east of the Goldbach, where the morning mist and the smoke of campfires still hid Saint-Hilaire's and Vandamme's divisions.

Napoleon's plan was to permit the Allied Army, some 86,000 Russian and Austrian troops serving under their own monarchs, Alexander I and Francis II, to attempt to flank him on the right. Then, while Davout's 3rd Corps which had begun arriving on the right held them, Napoleon would in turn attack the Allies' right and rear with most of his army. The key to the battlefield was the Pratzen heights, the high ground above the village of Pratze (Prace in Czech) -- a roughly five-kilometer ridge that run southeast from Stare Vignohrady ("Old Vineyards") (290 meters altitude) through a saddle above the village to Pratzenberg (Pratze Hill) (325 meters). This high ground separated the area south of the Brunn-Austerlitz road, which was to be Napoleon's main axis of attack, from the villages of Augezd, Tellnitz, and Sokolnitz, which marked the Allies' intended route.

front of Kobelnitz where St. Hillary's Division was formed to the top of the Pratzenberg is approximately 2000 meters. The same conversation is reported in the official "Relations de la bataille d'Austerlitz" prepared by the *Depot de Guerre* in 1847 (Berthier et. al, *Relations et rapports officiels*, 92) and by Ségur in *An aid-de-camp of Napoleon*, 247. However, Ségur reports that Soult replied: "ten minutes," an improbable time, even from the advanced line of departure.

Much of the Allied army, operating under a plan proposed by Major General Franz von Weyrother, the Austrian Chief of Staff, had camped on and to the east of the Pratzen Heights on the night of 1-2 December. Organized in four roughly corps-size columns under the overall command of Russian General Mikhail Kutuzov, they had begun moving during the night. By 0800 the last of first three columns had cleared the Pratzeberg and was beginning to descend towards Tellnitz in the lower Goldbach valley some two miles south of General Saint-Hilaire's Division.



LE MARÉCHAL DAVOUST
(Prince d'Eckmühl)

Soult's second division under General Vandamme was on the left, massed in front of the village of Jirzikowsitz. Its mission was to clear the northeastern edge of the Pratzen Heights and maintain contact with Bernadotte's 1st Corps on its left. General Saint-Hilaire's Division -- 6,800 strong -- was drawn up along a three-kilometer front east of the villages of Puntowiz and Kobelnitz. Its mission was to clear the Pratzen Heights and serve as a pivot for the Army.

General Saint-Hilaire's division was organized into an advanced guard⁷ and two brigades. The

⁷ The Advance Guard of the 1st Division, 4th Corps had originally been designated the 1st Brigade. When General Thiébault had joined the unit on 12 September 1806 at Germich in Austria, he had complained to Marshal Soult that as senior *général de brigade* he was entitled to command the 1st Brigade. Soult laughed, and redesignated Morand's unit "The Advance Guard" thereby giving Thiébault the 1st (senior) Brigade. (Thiébault, II, 126).

Advanced Guard, commanded by *Général de Brigade* Charles Morand, was composed of a single, two-battalion regiment, the 10th *Léger* (1,500 men) under Colonel Pierre Pouzet. The 1st Brigade was commanded by *Général de Brigade* Paul Thiébault, an officer more noted for his staff work for Marshal André Massena than for his command experience. It was composed of the 14th (1700) and 36th (1700) *Lignes*. Each regiment had two battalions in the field. The 2nd Brigade (3,500), commanded by *Général de Brigade* Louis Varé, was composed of the 43rd and 55th *Lignes*.

The Principle of the Objective

(Direct every military operation towards a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective.)

When Soult returned from Zuran Hill, he issued his final orders to his division commanders as the troops were finishing the last of a triple ration of brandy. General Saint-Hilaire relayed Soult's orders to his subordinates. The 2d Brigade, on the division's left, was to seize the peak of Stare Vinohrady and then operate in conjunction with Vandamme's division. The two battalions of the Advanced Guard were to seize the Pratzberg, while the 1st Brigade cleared the village of Pratz in the saddle between the two peaks and then joined the Advance Guard on the Pratzenberg. General Saint-Hilaire would accompany the Advance Guard. Several days before, Napoleon had given instructions to Marshals Soult and Bernadotte as to how he wished each division to be formed. The first regiment was to be deployed in line; the second in closed battalion column, behind the first, in order to have both the firepower of the line and the shock of the column available.⁸ At this time, a French battalion consisted of nine companies each with an actual strength of approximately 80-90 men. One company was organized as an elite (*voltigeur*)⁹ company for skirmishing, while the

others were grouped into two-company divisions.¹⁰ The usual maneuver formation in battle was a closed battalion column of divisions, each division in three ranks one pace apart; each division three paces behind the other. This resulted in a block of

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Page 257.



Le Maréchal Soult.

men approximately fifty by twenty-five meters, with a front of about 50 men.¹¹ In a regimental column, the leading battalion would be followed by the second at a distance of approximately 50 meters. Apparently, Saint-Hilaire and Thiébault modified Napoleon's order-of-battle instructions slightly (as did the other divisions of Soult's command) with the 10th *Léger* deploying in line,

⁸ "Vues de l'Empereur au sujet d'ordre de bataille" (26 Nov 1805). *Correspondance de Napoleon 1er*. No. 9527. XI, 531.

⁹ The organization was adopted for light infantry battalions in March, 1804 and for line battalions in September, 1805. See

Col. John Elting, *Swords Around the Throne* (New York, 1997), 209.

¹⁰ These two-company divisions (c. 180 men) should not to be confused with divisions of a corps, which averaged 6,000-8,000 men.

¹¹ David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York, 1966), 342.

and the 1st Brigade following in a line of regiments in battalion column.¹²

The Principle of the Offensive (Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.)

At about 0830, the columns began to move. General Morand's 10th *Léger*, deployed in line, angled slightly to the southeast towards the Pratzeberg. Behind the 10th, Thiébault's brigade marched up the gently rising slope in a line of battalion attack columns. As the Brigade crossed the 240 meter contour, Thiébault ordered the left-hand battalion, the 1st Battalion of the 14th *Ligne* (1/14) under the regimental commander, Colonel Jacques François Mazas, to clear the village of Pratze on their left. Deploying into a line of companies, but without sending forward skirmishers, the battalion moved to the edge of a ravine through which a branch of the Goldbach brook flowed, separating the battalion from the village. As it reached the edge of the ravine, a Russian battalion concealed on the other side of the ravine stood and fired a volley that broke the battalion. It turned and fled back behind the rest of the brigade, and for a short time, only two guns of the 5th Foot Artillery, which had accompanied the battalion, remained to oppose the Allied buildup south of the village. The Russian reserve battalion, the Apsheron Musketeers, reinforced by three additional battalions of the Little Russian Grenadiers, charged three times. Twice, the gunners drove them back. The third time, they abandoned their guns.

Thiébault reacted:

¹² Brent Nosworthy, *Battle Tactics of Napoleon and His Enemies* (London, 1995), 137-138

*...I rode forward, calling to Mazas to rally his battalion. Then, having dismounted and ordered the 36th (his right two battalions) to march on the village ... and charging at the head of the 2d battalion of the 14th, which deployed as it ran, I flung myself into the ravine where my horse could not have got down, attacked the Russians with the bayonet and routed them....*¹³

Thiébault at the head of the 2/14th routed the two Novgorod battalions while the 36th under Colonel Houdar de Lamotte deployed into line and into the four Russian battalions south of the village, recapturing the guns, wounding two Russian generals and capturing one. The six routed Russian battalions fled to the northeast, disordering the remaining five battalions of the Russian portion of the 4th Column. General Kutuzov attempted to rally the, and for his pains was slightly wounded by a musket ball fired by someone in the 36th. The Tsar, also in that portion of the field, sent his physician to help. Kutuzov told the doctor: "Assure him (the Tsar) that I am not badly hurt," and then, pointing towards the Pratzen Heights he exclaimed, "That is where we are really hurt."¹⁴

The Principle of Surprise (Strike the enemy at a time or place, or in a manner for which he is unprepared.)

If Colonel Mazas' first battalion had been startled by Russian fire, this surprise was far less destructive, at least in the long run, than the surprise the Russian commander in that area of the battlefield received. General Kutuzov, although in nominal command of the entire army, had

¹³ Thiébault, III, 468.

¹⁴ From Aleksandr Ivanovich Mikhailovsky-Danilevsky's *Relation de la campagne de 1805* (Paris, 1847), 184. Quoted in Christopher Duffy, *Austerlitz 1805* (London, 1977), 116, and Scott Bowden, *Napoleon and Austerlitz* (Chicago, 1997), 346.



remained with the 4th (and last) Column. At about 0800, a Russian staff officer, Major Carl F. Toll, riding through the village of Pratz in advance of the 4th Column observed for the first time Saint-Hilarie's division's advance. Toll galloped back to the commander of the Russian co-commander of the column, Lieutenant-General Mikhail Miloradovich, who sent forward the only troops at hand -- three weak battalions (two of the Novgorod Musketeers and one Apsheron) totaling only 750 men plus a few hussars and two guns. One battalion stayed in reserve, another deployed south of the village, and the third -- the one that surprised Colonel Mazas -- ranged along the bank of the ravine. All of these battalions were routed by Thiébault's counterattack. An Austrian officer in his account of battle described the impact upon General Kutuzov:

A massive column of French infantry was suddenly descried in a bottom, in front of Pratzen. ... General Koutousoff (Kutuzov), whom this movement of the enemy had taken by surprise, (thinking himself the assailant, and seeing himself attacked in the midst of his combinations and his movements, felt all the importance of maintaining the heights of Pratzen against which the French were moving. ... It was the summit of the heights of Pratzen which decided the fate of the day.¹⁵

Principle of Maneuver

(Place the enemy in a disadvantageous position through flexible application of combat power.)

While Thiébault reestablished the division's left flank, Morand's light infantry arrived at the crest of the Pratzeberg and almost immediately came under attack from rear brigade of the 2nd Allied Column under Russian Major General Sergei Mikhailovich Kamensky. A traffic jam had delayed Kamensky's brigade earlier in the morning when the Austrian cavalry, finding themselves in the wrong position, simply cut through the 2nd Column in an attempt to return to their proper position. Kamensky saw the French on the Pratzeberg as his

brigade descended into the lower Goldbach valley. He faced his troops about and marched with 4,000 men towards Morand's 10th *Léger* deployed on the crest. Kamensky sent one battalion to his left, nearly outflanking the 10th. General Saint-Hilaire, the division commander, saved the situation by bringing the 1/14th at a run from the rear where Colonel Mazas had rallied it, and put it in line on the right of the 10th.

Thiébault, having cleared the left flank, marched the three battalions still under his direct control (1/36th, 2/36th, and 1/14th) towards the left of the 10th. As he was doing this, however, he saw a body of troops moving towards the Pratzeberg from the east, to his left and rear. As they came closer, one called out: "Don't shoot, we are Bavarians." Thiébault halted his column and General Saint-Hilaire joined him. They had a short discussion as to the true nationality of the troops. They were, in fact, the Austrian brigades of General-majors Franz Jurczek and Heinrich Rottermund under Lieutenant-General Johann Karl Kollowrath, the Austrian co-commander of the 4th Column. Thiébault rode forward for a closer look. As he did so, he met General Morand, who was also concerned about the identity of these new troops on his left flank and rear. While they were trying to identify the new troops through their spyglasses, they saw a "Bavarian" officer ride to make contact with an officer from Kamensky's Brigade. That was evidence enough.¹⁶

Thiébault brought up the 1/36th on the left of the 10th to act as a pivot. He then posted the 2/36th in line facing east towards the new arrivals. On the far left of his line he posted the 2/14 in attack column formation "so as to have a mass which I could oppose, if necessary, to those that were advancing against us and a force with which I could, without disturbing my line, meet cavalry or other corps that might try to surround us."¹⁷

Thus was formed the "hook" -- the "*crochet*," as Austrian General Karl Stutterheim called it. The

¹⁵ Karl Freiher von Stutterheim, *A Detailed Account of the Battle of Austerlitz* (London, 1807), 98-99.

¹⁶ Thiébault, III, 471.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 470.

French line now extended from slightly west of the highest point of the Pratzeberg east for about 800 meters, then turned north and ran for perhaps another 800 meters down towards the village of Pratzen, where the line was anchored on the village church. The French battalions in line required a frontage of about 200 meters. A battalion in assault column (2/14th on the left) needed about 50 meters. Even with the necessary intervals between the battalions, they were stretched thin. But the battalions did not simply stand still -- "The French generals" wrote General Stutterheim, "maneuvered their troops with that ability which is the result of a military eye, and of experience, taking advantage of the inequalities of ground to cover their troops from fire, and to conceal their movements."¹⁸

Principle of Mass

(Concentrate the effects of combat power at the decisive place and time.)

When the division had moved out in the morning, General Saint-Hilaire had allocated half of the divisional artillery, two eight-pound guns and a howitzer, to General Morand, and the other half, two four-pound guns and a howitzer, to General Thiébault. It was the two four-pounders that had been lost and regained in the fight over Pratzen village. In his new position, Thiébault placed his three guns between the two battalions of the 36th. At that moment, *Chef de bataillon* Hippolyte René Fontenay arrived with the 4th Corps's reserve artillery, six twelve-pound guns.¹⁹ These guns Thiébault placed in three-gun sections on each flank of the 36th. He then masked the guns with squads of infantry and ordered them to load with a combination of round and grapeshot. Fontenay complained that this would ruin the guns;

Thiébault replied: "It will be all right if they last ten minutes," and ordered the guns laid for a range of thirty or forty meters [*toises*].²⁰

Approaching Thiébault's three battalions and gunners totaling some 2,600 men were 16 Austrian battalions over 8,000 strong. They were not, however, Emperor Francis' best. The Austrian battalions were formed mostly of unhealthy soldiers or untrained recruits from the 6th (depot)²¹ battalions of their regiments. Thiébault ordered his men to shoot for the white cross belts of the Austrians. When the Austrians approached to a distance of forty yards, the infantry masking the guns fell back. Thiébault wrote:

*Their fire (the guns) vied with that of my line, which was the best infantry in the world for standing firm, aiming straight and knocking over the enemy with perfect coolness. ... I saw every round tear large square holes through these regiments till they retired in a flying mass from the attack on my three battalions. I had not lost a single man...*²²



As Thiébault's three battalions prepared to receive the Austrians, Kamensky's Brigade was pushing Morand's men slowly back over the hill -- the French infantry firing by volley while the artillerymen manhandled their guns to the rear. But as the Austrians on the left broke and fled, the Russian attack also slowed. "The ardor of this attack soon evaporated... the enemy, and his steadiness, soon changed it to a slow uncertain

¹⁸ Stutterheim, 104.

¹⁹ Fontenay was a cousin of Thiébault's childhood friend and later pharmacist to Napoleon, Charles Cadet-Gassincourt.

²⁰ Thiébault, III, 471.

²¹ Depot battalions were normally left at the regiment's home base to train new recruits. In this instance, the Austrians had them with the field army, possibly because so many Austrian depots had been already overrun by the French.

²² *Ibid.*, II, 162.

pace accompanied by an ill-directed fire of musketry."²³

Now, the hinge of Austerlitz swung, and the door began to close on the Allies in the lower Goldbach valley. Thiébault swung his troops to the right to face south, aligning on Morand's men. Then, all six battalions advanced down the slope of the Pratzberg, driving Kamensky's troops down the slope to the south and capturing three of his guns and two flags.²⁴

The Principle of Unity of Command
(For every object, insure unity of effort under one responsible commander.)

During a brief lull in the fighting, the three generals on the Pratezberg looked around for support. None was apparent. Except for the timely arrival of Fontenay's guns, nothing had been heard from any higher headquarters.

*We had no news either of the Imperial headquarters or of Marshal Soult, and it was with a certain anxiety that we had become convinced of our isolation. We held the heights, but we were not done with having to defend them.*²⁵

If the French were having command problems, theirs were nothing compared to those of the Allies. Three brigade commanders had been wounded. The co-commanders of the Allied 4th Column (Kollowrath and Miloradovich) had been defeated by fighting individually and without effective coordination. Kamensky's brigade was fighting independently of its senior headquarters (Prschibitschewski's Division), and the other units of the Allied 3rd Column were under growing pressure from Davout's Corps now arriving on the French right. Even the senior leadership of the Allied Army was fragmented. Tsar Alexander, who had originally taken his post on the top of

Stare Vihonhrady, had been swept along by the Russians retreating from their defeat in Pratz Village. General Kutuzov, bleeding from his head wound and unable to rally the Russians, had moved on to join first Kollowrath's forces and, finally, Kamensky's Brigade. At the end of the day, he confessed "that he could not report on the conduct of his officers 'since my location on that day did not permit me to see in person what was happening elsewhere on the field'."²⁶

Despite the destruction wrought upon Kollowrath's Austrian troops of the 4th Column and the repulse of Kamensky's brigade, the Russian and Austrian officers, including Kutuzov and General Weyrother, rallied these regiments and launched one more desperate attack on the hill, attacking on a wide front up the southern slope. Slowly, the French were pushed back towards the crest. As they reached the crest, there was another pause, and General Saint-Hilaire called over Thiébault and Morand, and proposed that the division withdraw to a more defensible position. The three officers were standing behind Colonel Pierre Pouzet of the 10th *Léger* Infantry, who overheard them. Colonel Pouzet turned to the group and said:

*Retire, general? If we take one more pace to the rear, we are done for. There is only one way to get out of this with honor, and that is to put our heads down and go at everything in front of us and, above all, not allow the enemy time to count our muskets.*²⁷

The commanders returned to their units, and for the next half-hour, the battle for the crest raged. Thiébault had two horses shot from under him. Colonel Mazas of the 14th *Ligne* was killed, as was Thiébault's aide. Colonel de Lamotte of the 36th

²³ Stutterheim, 105.

²⁴ Thiébault, Adolphe. *Rôle de la Brigade Thiébault à la Bataille d'Austerlitz* (Paris, 1847), 14.

²⁵ Thiébault, III, 473.

²⁶ Quoted in Duffy, 121.

²⁷ Thiébault, III, 475. Although Thiébault is sometimes accused of somewhat colorful, after-the-fact writing, a separate account of this incident from the *Journal des opérations du 4e corps* recounts that Pouzet told Saint-Hilaire: "General, we must advance with the bayonet or we are lost." To which, the General replied: "Yes, forward." (Quoted by Bowden in *Napoleon and Austerlitz*, 353).

Ligne and General Saint-Hilaire, the division commander, were wounded.

At this juncture that a representative of a higher headquarters finally appeared. He was Colonel Alexandre de Girardin, aide-de-camp to Marshal Berthier, the Chief of Staff. Although Girardin's duty was simply to determine the situation and condition of Saint-Hilaire's division and return to headquarters, he remained, "riding incessantly to and fro from end to end of our lines, pushing the men's knapsacks, as one may say, he gave powerful aid in supporting and cheering them on..."²⁸

The Allied attack wavered and fell back. The French advanced in a final effort, driving them off to the southeast, capturing three more guns and two flags, and pursuing them with cannon fire. General Saint-Hilaire went to the rear to have his wound dressed, and Thiébault became the acting division commander.

**The Principle of Economy of Force
(Allot minimum essential combative power to
secondary efforts.)**

The true economy of force achieved at Austerlitz was Napoleon's decision to defend initially the lower Goldbach from Koblenitz to Tellnitz (a distance of about three kilometers), with Legrand's thinly spread Third Division of Soult's 4th Corps. Hard-marching reinforcements -- the leading elements of *Général de Division* Victor Friant's division of Davout's 3rd Corps -- began arriving at 0600, about the same time Kienmayer, leading the advance guard of the 1st Allied Column, opened the battle with attack on Legrand's single regiment, the 3rd *Ligne*, garrisoning Tellnitz. Davout's buildup continued until 1300, when together with Soult, he launched the final assault on the Allies.

On the Pratzberg, Thiébault's hinge continued to swing to the south and west. As his force faced

west from the heights, he was joined by *Général de brigade* Victor Levasseur's 3rd Brigade of Legrand's Third Division marching down the Goldbach from below Kobelinz. At this point, Levasseur's Brigade was one of the very few brigades in the Army that had not been engaged. Thiébault placed this brigade on the right of his own, with Morand's 10th *Léger* Infantry on his left. At about the same time, General Saint-Hilaire returned with further orders, and long-absent 2nd Brigade of Saint-Hilaire's division arrived on the right flank of Vandamme's division which had crossed the Stare Vinohrady, completed the rout of Kollowrath's Allied 4th Column, and then wheeled to the south to join Saint-Hilaire.

Saint-Hilaire's new orders were to advance off of the Pratzberg, now being occupied by Vandamme's division and to drive down behind the Russians and attack the village of Sokolnitz and Sokolnitz Castle. The Castle, a few hundred meters north of the village, was not truly a castle, but rather a large complex, with a chateau and a tangle of lanes, stables, massive five-story barns, and a large enclosed garden called the "Pheasantry". The Russians here were facing west, defending themselves against an attack by General Friant's division of Davout's 3rd Corps coming across the Goldbach. Suddenly, they were surrounded.

Levasseur's Brigade attacked through the Pheasantry and the fields north of it. Thiébault, leading the 36th *Ligne* and the remnants of the 14th, swept down behind the Russians attacking the Castle complex while the 10th *Léger* attacked between the Castle and Sokolnitz village (Map 5). The smoke and noise was now overwhelming, and in the confusion, higher organization began to disappear as the French troops drove in for the finish. Surrounded, the Russians fought bitterly:

"Those (Russians) who guarded the house and its outbuildings made a desperate defense. Avenues, stables, barns -- everything served them for shelter, and

²⁸ Thiébault, III, 476.

*everywhere they fought till the last extremity. A great massacre took place."*²⁹

Having cleared the Castle area, Thiébault was attempting to realign his troops with those of Morand and Levasseur when he saw a group of his men taking long shots at some Russian guns. He found a sub-lieutenant and ordered him to form the men up. He then looked around for an officer to lead an attack on the guns. "I could not see a captain -- officers were getting scarce" ³⁰ Since the guns had to be silenced before he could move the brigade forward, Thiébault resolved to do it himself. Leading his little band, he approached within 30 meters of the guns when they fired. Thiébault went down, wounded in the shoulder and arm by grapeshot. The sub-lieutenant and twenty men were killed. The others overran the guns. The battle was over for General Thiébault. Thirty minutes later, it was over for everyone (Map 6).

For the First Brigade, it had been an expensive victory. The brigade commander had been wounded. One regimental commander was dead, the other wounded, and, in all, two-thirds of the officers of both regiments were casualties. Of the 3,307 present for duty on 7 November 1805, the brigade lost 842 killed and wounded. Of the remainder of the 1st Division, the Advance Guard lost 350, and the 2nd Brigade 643.³¹

No single action or unit "won" the Battle of Austerlitz. Legrande's stubborn delaying action around Tellnitz; the timely arrival of Davout's 3rd Corps; the charge of the Imperial Guard Cavalry that defeated the Russian Guard Cavalry in the center; Lannes' 5th Corps defeat of Bagration at Santon Hill and Bosnitz -- all were critical. But, in the words of one commentator on the battle: "The decisive moment of the day ... this honor belongs to the action on the Pratzeberg"³² -- The action of the 10th *Léger* along the crest, and the 1st Brigade, 1st

Division, 4th Corps, which manned the "crochet" -- the hinge on which the French battle line turned.

And finally, it is useful to evaluate the principles of war in respect to what were, in fact, tactical operations by the smallest unit that could carry out articulated maneuvers -- the brigade of two to four battalions. While single battalions could deploy and (re)ploy from various types of columns into line and back, these maneuvers remain an expression of simple linear tactics. The brigade was the smallest unit whose constituent parts could maneuver independently. Although some of these principles were certainly more relevant than others (Napoleon's exercise of "economy of force" caused an outcome for Thiébault's brigade and Saint-Hilaire's division), this narrative demonstrates that the Principles of War can be identified and the impact of their application appreciated in the actions of a single brigade -- in this case, the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division of the French 4th Corps on 2 December 1805.

²⁹ Ibid., II, 167.

³⁰ Ibid., II, 167.

³¹ Thiébault, 22-23

³² Duffy, 133