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FRENCH ARMY 1870-71 FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR 1 IMPERIAL TROOPS

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INTRODUCTION

Louis Charles Napoleon, later Napoleon III, was born on 20 April 1808. Son of Louis, King of Holland and nephew of the first Napoleon, he lived, in common with the rest of the Bonaparte family, in the shadow of his illustrious uncle. After the death of Napoleon's only son he became the head of the family, and from this time on assumed the grave and serious air of a man of destiny. An incurable romantic, he attempted two coups against King Louis Philippe, both of which failed miserably. On the second occasion he spent six years in prison before escaping to England. The revolution of 1848 provided him with another opportunity to re-enter the political scene. Elected to the Assembly by popular vote, he became President of the Republic later the same year. By 1852 he was Emperor.

The Second Empire was a reaction against the bourgeois age of Louis Philippe in spirit as well as in deed. The army, elevated from tactful obscurity, was re-modelled on Napoleonic lines, and its neglected iconography revived in the form of the eagle, the crowned 'N' and the Imperial bee. What was needed to complete the resurrection was victory in the field. It is hardly surprising that Napoleon and the army were mindful of the great Napoleonic traditions and were anxious to emulate them. Their first real opportunity came with the Crimean War. In this muddled campaign the army acquitted itself well, despite Napoleon's interference, finally forcing the issue at Sebastopol by storming the Malakoff Fort. In 1859 it was again successful, this time against the Austrians, with a couple of fumbling and costly victories at Magenta and Solferino. The next adventure unfortunately did not go so smoothly; a protracted anti-guerrilla struggle in Mexico, 1863–67, ended in a humiliating withdrawal. Meanwhile, back in Europe, Prussia was fast emerging as a challenge to France's military pre-eminence. In concert with Austria, Bismarck first crushed Denmark before turning on Austria herself. The victory at Sadowa in 1866 stunned Europe, and in Paris Napoleon and his advisers set to thinking of a way to counter this new threat.

In November 1866 a conference was held at Compiègne, attended by France's leading politicians and soldiers. The objective was to examine the nation's preparedness for a war that was being seen as

Sous Lieutenant *of the* Cent-Gardes *in full dress, wearing here the Cuirass, helmet and breeches not used during the campaign. (Private Collection)*

increasingly inevitable. It soon became apparent that there was much to do, and that there existed a deep division of opinion. One faction, which included the Emperor himself, was in favour of universal short-term military service as practised in Prussia. The other group, led by Marshal Randon, then Minister of War, objected to the use of such means, preferring rather to rely on a smaller force of professional soldiers. In this he was supported by many politicians of the Left, who had no wish to see the strengthening of an institution that could one day be used against them. Indeed, the trend for some years had been towards a reduction in defence spending and troop cuts—the recent Mexican fiasco did much to strengthen this view.

The reformed Army

The solution to this dilemma was a compromise. In order to increase the number of men liable to serve the military legislation was altered. As before, the annual intake of recruits was divided into two parts: the 'first portion' served with the colours for five years (reduced from seven), followed by a further four in the newly formed Reserve. The 'second portion' served for only five months before transferring to complete its term in the Reserve. It was hoped that by 1875 the regular army would be increased to some 800,000 men. By July 1870, however, the reality fell far short of this.

To support the regular army a further body was also created. The *Garde Nationale Mobile* was to

CHRONOLOGY

15 July War credits voted by French government. Troops directed to German frontier. King of Prussia orders mobilisation.

16 July Mobilisation of Bavaria and Baden.

17 July Mobilisation of Wurtemburg.

19 July France officially declares war on Prussia.

2 August Action at Saarbrucken: A minor skirmish in which elements of the French 2nd and 3rd Corps pushed back a greatly outnumbered Prussian observation force. The French press greatly exaggerated the 'victory' claiming that three Prussian divisions had been overwhelmed.

4 August Battle of Wissembourg: General Douay's division of 1st Corps is overwhelmed by elements of four German Corps.

6 August Battle of Spicheren: French 2nd Corps defeated by elements of 1st and 2nd Armies. Battle of Froeschwiller: French 1st Corps severely beaten by 3rd Army, losing almost half its strength. This decisive battle resulted in the confused retreat of MacMahon's troops (1st, 5th and 7th Corps) to Châlons thereby splitting the French army into two parts; the remainder (Imperial Guard, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th Corps) under Bazaine withdrew to Metz.

7 August Paris declared to be in a state of siege.

12 August Bazaine takes command of the army in Metz.

14 August Battle of Borny: a bloody but indecisive struggle between the Prussian I and VII Corps and the French 3rd and 4th Corps. Its main significance was the delay it imposed on the French withdrawal westwards.

16 August Napoleon leaves the army at Metz. Battle of Mars-la-Tour: Prussian III and X Corps succeeded, at very heavy cost, in pinning down Bazaine's entire army. Its subsequent withdrawal back towards Metz effectively isolated it from the rest of the country.

18 August Battle of Gravelotte-St. Privat: the first action in which the bulk of both armies operating around Metz were engaged. The Germans succeeded in turning the French right at St. Privat after several frontal attacks had been bloodily repulsed. This battle resulted in the permanent immobilisation of Bazaine's army.

21 August MacMahon's army leaves Châlons for Rheims in an attempt to extricate Bazaine.

29 August Action at Nouart: an indecisive engagement between the Saxon (XII) Corps and the French 5th Corps.

30 August Battle of Beaumont: the French 5th Corps was surprised by the Prussian IV Corps with Bavarian and Saxon support.

31 August–1 September Battle of Noisseville, east of Metz. Bazaine's first attempt to break out of his encirclement is frustrated.

1 September Battle of Sedan: MacMahon's army (1st, 5th, 7th and 12th Corps), is surrounded and defeated by two German armies.

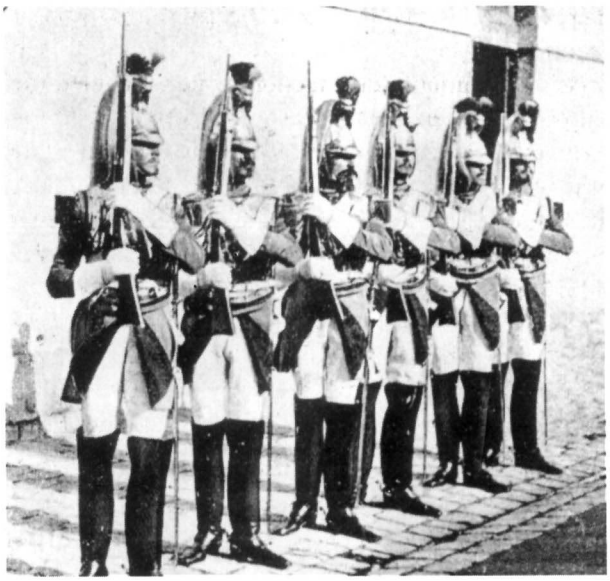
2 September French army at Sedan capitulates.

4 September Fall of the Empire.

consist of men who had avoided military service in one way or another. The annual contingent was to be fixed by the government, and it was hoped that a further 500,000 men would eventually become available in time of war. In the event the army proved unwilling to provide the necessary funds and support which, combined with political opposition, effectively ruined the scheme. The men were only to be subjected to a fortnight's training a year, to take place a day at a time, although those who could demonstrate some military knowledge were exempted even from that. When war came the *Garde Mobile* was little more than an armed mob.

Trained manpower was not the only problem to beset the army of the Second Empire. Its weaknesses, hidden from all but the most perceptive by earlier successes, were to be tragically highlighted in 1870. It is only by reference to them that the débâcles of Sedan and Metz can be fully understood. Perhaps the most deeply rooted of these weaknesses was the uneasy relationship between the army and society as a whole. This relationship had played a key rôle in the coup of 1851 and remained the Empire's most vital buttress for the next 19 years. Unfortunately, the resulting political ramifications were in no small measure responsible for retarding much-needed reform.

A central tenet of the Second Empire's military philosophy was that the army and the people should be kept strictly apart. The separation of the two began on the recruit's first day of service and was continued and deepened throughout that service. The fear that one day the troops would be required to fire on rioting crowds was always in the mind of the Emperor and his generals, who felt that only long-service professionals could be relied upon to obey. This argument was used by the opponents of universal conscription to some effect. It was felt that the best way of achieving this separation was by regular garrison rotation, whereby regiments moved around the country on average every two years (though this varied considerably). It was hoped that this would protect the men from potentially seditious influences. In the event of mobilisation this had unfortunate consequences, as recalled reservists had first to report to the regimental depot to draw their equipment before being forwarded to their regiments. In July 1870 no less than 65 out of 100 Line

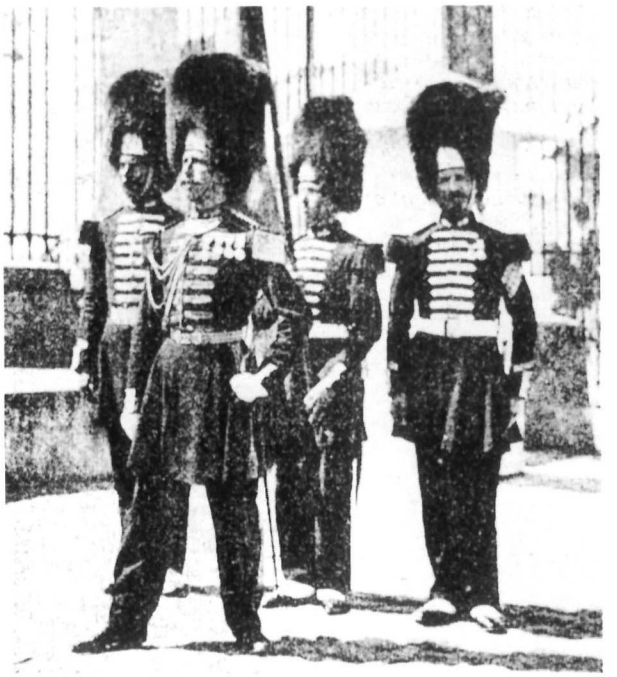


Cent-Gardes *at the ready. They are carrying the breech-loading carbine peculiar to their corps, designed by Captain Treuille de Bealieu. (Private Collection)*

regiments were stationed in towns away from their depot. This resulted in enormous confusion, as thousands of erstwhile civilians travelled the overloaded rail network in search of their units. In the event many of them never made it, which left some regiments seriously under strength. This tended to affect cavalry and artillery units less, as they had higher peacetime strengths.

The inadequacy of this system was equalled by the peacetime organisation of higher formations. For many years leading figures such as Gen. Trochu and the military attaché in Berlin, Col. Stoffel, had been arguing for permanent formations to be set up, comparable to the regional corps structure in Prussia. As things stood, units were cobbled together into improvised divisions and corps as the need arose. Consequently the generals appointed to command them often knew nothing of their subordinates or their troops. In 1870 it did prove possible to mobilise some corps from units stationed near to each other; for example, the troops in and around Paris were formed into the 3rd Corps, while the Imperial Guard was kept in a permanent state of readiness. This, however, was far from universal.

The failure to institute a permanent system is particularly curious considering that it enjoyed the support of both the Emperor and the Minister of



A group of Grenadiers of the Guard in the Tuilleries Gardens. This photograph was taken around 1865 and shows the new model 1860 uniform. The bearskin underwent less change than the rest of the uniform, merely losing its cords. The third from the left is holding his regiment's eagle; those flags carried by the first two regiments of Grenadiers and Voltigeurs bore the names of eleven victories won under the First Empire, in addition to those of Sebastopol, Tracktir, Malakoff, Magenta and Solferino. The 3rd Grenadiers and the 3rd and 4th Voltigeurs only had these last two inscribed on their colours. (Private Collection)

War. Again, political considerations were largely responsible. Many in parliament were opposed to what they regarded as the militarisation of the country, especially as regional organisation carried with it an internal security function. Indeed, some were of the opinion that there was no need for an army at all, and that a citizen's militia would be more desirable. Many in the army and the country at large were also far from convinced that thorough-going reforms were needed at all. In support of their case they could point to a record of success that seemed to suggest that all was well. The financial burden of such changes would also be heavier as ancillary services, which tended to be run down in peacetime, would be needed permanently. With regard to the internal security function of the army, it should be noted that the fears of the authorities were not entirely groundless. At the outbreak of war the deployment of both 6th and 7th Corps was delayed due to the need to keep an eye on Paris and Lyon.

Another factor which was to have unfortunate repercussions was the interference of the Emperor himself in military affairs. He clashed on many occasions with the various Ministers of War, and was quite willing to side-step them altogether in order to get his own way. He also placed excessive reliance on the advice of a coterie of Imperial aides-de-camp. In both 1859 and 1870 he took a direct hand in military operations in the field, on neither occasion with conspicuous success. In July 1870 he completely altered the army's order of battle and command structure, the results subsequently proving to be unworkable; the consequent confusion, and further ill-advised changes, caused considerable problems. His unwelcome presence at headquarters also tied the hands of the army's newly appointed commander, Marshal Bazaine, who continued to behave as though the Emperor was still in charge. Indeed, it was in large part due to the Emperor's interference that the Army of the Rhine was compromised at Metz.

However, it would be unfair to deny that the Emperor did have an occasionally beneficial influence. Pressure from him greatly helped in the adoption of the excellent Chassepot rifle in the teeth of strong opposition. He also supported the development of the mitrailleuse, funding the initial stage of the project out of his own pocket after a parsimonious legislature had refused to do so.

Concomitant with the Imperial presence was an evil inherited from the First Empire: centralisation. At the outbreak of war it was naturally assumed that Napoleon would command in person, as his uncle had done. That being said, his generals would act as his advisers and finally as the executors of his wishes. This led to a dangerous lack of initiative which contrasted strongly with the assertiveness shown by quite junior officers in the Prussian army. When the central will was lacking—as it was to a painful degree in 1870—there was no one on hand to assume control.

In the lower echelons of the army there were also a number of problems that adversely affected its efficiency. The status and pay of junior officers were low in comparison with comparable civilian careers. The prospects for promotion were also poor, although influence undoubtedly helped. These fac-

tors did much to discourage many able young men from joining the army in the first place and encouraged many others to leave. It also discouraged diligence, as study was no guarantee of advancement. Similar problems existed in the NCO structure, where many soldiers, unable to integrate themselves into society, re-enlisted, thereby forming a blockage to further promotion, which resulted in NCOs becoming increasingly old and disillusioned. Nor was the lot of the common soldier an enviable one. Over 90 per cent of them were conscripts unfortunate enough to draw a 'bad number' in the ballot held annually to decide who would become liable to serve. Their situation was worsened by the fact that their service would invariably be spent many miles from their homes, unlike their Prussian counterparts, who enjoyed the advantages of territorial recruitment. Desertion was common. The pernicious system of purchasing a replacement to carry out one's military service also engendered a sense of class injustice, as the burden of conscription inevitably fell on the poor.

Despite all these problems, the French army that took the field in 1870 was a formidable fighting instrument, which in the hands of a commander worthy of it might have inflicted serious damage on the enemy. That the opportunities for doing so (and they were many) were let slip was no fault of the rank and file, who often fought magnificently under the most trying circumstances. The responsibility for the demise of the Second Empire lay at the door of others.

A Voltigeur of the Guard in campaign dress, July 1870. In a few days he would return his shako to the depot in exchange for a képi or bonnet de police. *With this exception we have here an accurate picture of how members of the corps would have appeared in action. From the photograph it is clear that this man is on active service—the tent and camping utensils were rarely issued on simple manoeuvres. (Private Collection)*

The Emperor's Military Household

At full strength this body consisted of 14 permanent and two honorary aides-de-camp, ten of whom were generals of division, five generals of brigade and one an admiral. There were also 12 *officiers d'ordonnance*, one of whom was a naval officer, who took it in turns to attend the Emperor. There was also a small topographical section supervised by Gen. de Béville, one of the Imperial aides. The Household as a whole was controlled by Marshal Vaillant, an old companion of Napoleon and one-time Minister of War. A total of eight aides-de-camp were present at the beginning of hostilities, including Gens. Ney, Reille and Pajol—names reminiscent of the First Empire. These officers were often used for military and diplomatic tasks of considerable importance; Reille, for example, carried Napoleon's letter of surrender to the Prussian king at Sedan, while Gen. Lebrun took command of an entire army corps when its previous commander was assigned to other duties. Napoleon relied heavily on the advice of his aides, sometimes circumventing proper channels in the process.

Attached to the Military Household was the squadron of Cent-Gardes. Formed by a decree of 24 March 1854, it was charged with the task of escorting the Emperor and carrying out guard duties in the Imperial quarters. Originally the squadron comprised ten officers and 137 other ranks drawn from the cavalry. To be eligible for entry it was necessary to have served at least three years with the colours and to have a further three years still to serve. The Cent-Gardes took precedence over all other troops in the army, including the Imperial Guard; and were resented for it. Apart from palace duties they also escorted the Emperor in the field; at the battle of Solferino in 1859 several, including their commander, Col. Verly, were wounded while protecting him. In 1870 a detachment accompanied the Imperial suite throughout the short campaign. One troop

surrendered along with the rest of the army at Sedan, although the other, which escorted the Prince Imperial to the Belgian frontier, was able to return to Paris.

Also attached to the Military Household was the mounted squadron of Gendarmes. Created in August 1854, this body originally belonged to the Imperial Guard. In April 1864, however, it took the title Gendarmes d'Élite and was placed under the control of the Marshal of the Imperial Household, where it served alongside the Cent-Gardes, with responsibility for palace security. In 1870 the squadron, under Capt. Révial, took the field as part of the Emperor's escort.

THE IMPERIAL GUARD

By a decree of 1 May 1854 Napoleon decided to reform the Imperial Guard, in an attempt both to emulate his uncle and to provide a nucleus of ultra-loyal troops to maintain his own position. For this purpose the regiments of the Line were instructed to provide a quota of men of good character and experience.

Initially the Guard formed a mixed division comprising a brigade each of Grenadiers and Voltigeurs, each of two regiments of three battalions, a single Chasseur battalion; and a cavalry brigade consisting of a regiment of Guides and another of Cuirassiers, each with six squadrons. A regiment of Gendarmes à Pied (two battalions), one of Horse Artillery (five batteries) and an engineer company completed the establishment. Unlike the troops of the Line, the Guard was permanently organised in peacetime, being quartered in and around Paris. The Guard served with distinction in the Crimea and in Italy, and by 1870 it had been expanded into an entire corps, consisting of:

Sergeant Ducros of the Chasseurs à Pied of the Guard in the uniform worn at Metz in 1870. The tunic was dark blue, piped in yellow with the traditional green chasseur epaulettes. In 1860 nine loops of yellow braid were added. The trousers were blue-grey and probably worn tucked inside the gaiters as in the other Guard infantry regiments. As in the Voltigeurs, the shako was laid aside at the start of the campaign in favour of the bonnet de police *or képi. The képi shown here was blue with yellow piping and horn. (Private Collection)*

1st (Voltigeur) Division

Two brigades of two regiments, each of three battalions plus the Chasseur battalion. Divisional troops comprised two batteries of 4-pdrs. and one of mitrailleuses from the Guard Field Regt., and a Line engineer company (the Guard Engineers having been disbanded in 1865).

2nd (Grenadier) Division

Also composed of two brigades, the first with a Grenadier regiment (three battalions) and the Guard Zouave Regt. (two battalions); the second brigade had the remaining two Grenadier regiments. Divisional troops were the same as in the Voltigeur Division.

Cavalry Division

The Guard Cavalry had three brigades each of two regiments: a Light Bde. (Guides and Chasseurs), a Medium Bde. (Dragoons and Lancers) and a Heavy Bde. (Cuirassiers and Carabiniers). The division also had two batteries from the Guard Horse Artillery Regiment.

Corps Troops

These consisted of the remaining four horse batteries plus a squadron of artillery Train and a further squadron of *Train des Equipages Militaires.*

Each infantry battalion had seven companies, of which six served in the field; the only exception to this was the Chasseur battalion, which had ten companies, with eight in the field. All Guard cavalry regiments had six squadrons, of which five were active in time of war. All artillery batteries had six guns.

Whether the revival of the Imperial Guard was a wise move was hotly debated at the time. It certainly

served as a core of reliable and experienced troops upon whom the Emperor could call in a civil emergency—its political rôle was certainly not lost on the Left, who regarded it with suspicion. Militarily it was looked upon as a *corps d'élite*, which could be used to play a decisive role on the battlefield, very much in the tradition of the First Empire, and generals were repeatedly reminded not to commit it piecemeal or unnecessarily. In 1870 this advice seems to have been disregarded when, at Mars-la-Tour (16 August), it was dispersed across the battlefield and thus had a limited effect. At Gravelotte-St. Privat two days later it was hardly used at all, although its intervention could easily have won the day.

As under the First Empire, the existence of an élite reserve had certain negative effects on the rest of the army. Its higher pay and privileges, and the favouritism it enjoyed under an Emperor who took a keen interest in it, were understandably resented. As the Guard grew in size it required more and more recruits, who generally came from the Line regiments, although by 1870 some were absorbed directly from the annual intake of conscripts. In action the friction between the Guard and the Line increased considerably. As Canrobert's troops retreated from St. Privat after a doughty resistance against heavy odds they encountered the Guard Grenadiers coming belatedly to their support. The *lignards*, understandably bitter, were heard to shout 'Rotten Praetorians' as they fled. The situation deteriorated further during the siege of Metz, the Line claiming that the Guard received an unfair share of the available rations (although when the surrender took place the Guard was noted to be better disciplined, helping to maintain order within the city).

Regiments of the Guard

Grenadiers

In July 1854 the first two regiments were formed, each Line regiment being required to furnish 20 selected Grenadiers with at least three years' service. Due to manpower shortages some cavalrymen and gunners were also incorporated. After distinguished service in the Crimea a third regiment was formed by Imperial decree in 1857. Two years later all three regiments fought against the Austrians in Italy, fighting particularly well at Magenta. As part of Bazaine's Armée du Rhin they saw action at Rezonville, where they helped shore up the army's left flank; casualties in the three regiments totalled over 1,200 men. The 3/3rd Grenadiers formed part of the Emperor's escort and took no part in the battle, but were taken prisoner at Sedan two weeks later. The remainder were captured after the fall of Metz in October.

Voltigeurs

The 1st and 2nd Voltigeurs were also created in July 1854 from selected men of the Voltigeur companies of the Line. They fought alongside the Grenadiers in the Crimea, where they lost over a thousand men assaulting the Russian defences at Sebastopol. In 1857 two further regiments were created. In Italy all

Maréchal des Logis of the Guard Cuirassiers in full dress. He is wearing the model 1854 Cuirass (see plate F1). On campaign the breeches would be replaced by red trousers. (Private Collection)

A group of the Cuirassiers of the Guard during the siege of Metz, survivors of their regiment's heroic but futile charge at Rezonville. Note the wide use of the bonnet de police, *which in the case of the Cuirassiers was dark blue with white band, tassle and grenade and red piping. (Private Collection)*

four regiments formed a division and fought well at Solferino, although they saw little action in 1870.

Chasseurs à Pied

This battalion was formed in June 1854 around a nucleus of 20 privates first class from each Line Chasseur battalion and a selection of the most experienced officers. It received a bloody baptism of fire at Sebastopol, where it lost its commanding officer and over a hundred men. At Solferino Cpl. Montellier captured an Austrian flag, for which feat the battalion was awarded the *Légion d'Honneur*, the only Guard unit to be so honoured. It was also the first battalion to receive the new Chassepot rifle in the summer of 1866. In 1870 the battalion saw some severe fighting at Rezonville, where it lost almost 200 men.

Zouaves

Formed in the Crimea in 1855 from elements of the three Line regiments, they soon distinguished themselves in the storming of the Malakoff Fort, losing over half their number in the process. In Italy they fought alongside the Grenadiers, winning ten Crosses of the *Légion d'Honneur* and 50 *Médailles Militaires* at Magenta. (One of the latter was awarded to Madame Rossini, the first woman to receive a medal in the history of the French army.) In 1870 the Zouaves were engaged at Rezonville, losing 95 men from a total of 1,200.

Guides

In April 1848 eight squadrons of Guides were created for staff and communications duties, but by November 1850 this number had been reduced to only two. At the suggestion of Col. Fleury, equerry to the Emperor, these remaining squadrons formed the core of a new regiment of Guides, similar to that which had served the first Napoleon. The regiment had six squadrons, organised in the same way as a regiment of the Line, and received the finest horses and equipment available: the horses, all bays, reputedly cost two or three times those of an ordinary Line unit. There was such a feeling of resentment in the rest of the army that Napoleon was obliged to postpone the re-constitution of the Imperial Guard until the trouble died down. When the Guard was eventually re-formed, the regiment was transferred to it and brigaded with the newly formed Cuirassier Regiment. During the reorganisation of 1855 new regiments were created, the Guides being joined by the Chasseurs à Cheval to form the Guard Light Cavalry

Brigade. They first saw action in Italy, where the regiment was sharply engaged at Solferino. In 1870, however, the regiment saw no serious action; one squadron formed part of the Emperor's escort when he left Metz, and was taken prisoner at Sedan, while the remainder stayed with the Guard. The Guides were similar to many contemporary British cavalry units, having a sumptuous mess and unashamedly élitist attitudes. Their privileged status was underlined by the fact that mess furniture and plate were paid for by the Emperor.

Cuirassiers

Napoleon departed from his uncle's precedent of never having a Cuirassier regiment as part of the Imperial Guard. The regiment, created in 1854, was originally composed of 20 selected men from each of the Cuirassier, Carabinier and Dragoon regiments of the Line. A second regiment was raised the following year, together forming the Heavy Cavalry Bde. of the Guard. In 1865 they were amalgamated into a single regiment due to budgetary constraints. At Rezonville they were ordered to arrest the progress of the advancing Prussian infantry; met by a withering fire at close range, the regiment lost over 250 men within minutes.

Dragoons

Created in 1855 during the expansion of the Guard, the regiment was composed of men drawn from the army's Line Dragoon regiments. Following the precedent of the First Empire the regiment took the title 'Empress Dragoons' in 1857. Together with the Lancers they formed the Medium Cavalry Bde. of the Guard. In 1859 they saw service in Italy, where a number of them carried a prototype of the Chassepot, the first troops in the army to be so equipped. In 1870 the Dragoons were engaged in the great cavalry battle at Mars-la-Tour; in the confused mêlée that followed they lost nearly 70 men.

Lancers

Created at the same time as the Dragoons, the Guard Lancers were a singularly unlucky regiment. On 14 January 1858 the Emperor, escorted by a troop of Lancers, was on his way to the opera when an attempt was made on his life. The resulting explosions left him untouched, but injured 13 of the 28 men escorting him. In Italy the following year the Lancers, in their famous white tunics, were fired on by their Piedmontese allies, who mistook them for Austrians. This resulted in the adoption of the light blue undress jacket in the hope of avoiding any repetition of this error. In 1870 the regiment's colonel, Latheulade, suggested that the same policy be followed in the coming campaign in order to avoid spoiling the pristine whiteness of the men's uniforms; this was endorsed by the Emperor, and in due course had very unfortunate consequences. During the cavalry action at Mars-la-Tour the Lancers charged a regiment of Prussian Dragoons, with whom they became embroiled in a lively hand-to-hand fight. In the confusion French Dragoons entering the mêlée mistook them for Uhlans and killed and wounded a number of them. As one NCO noted, this accident could scarcely have occurred if the regiment had been wearing its white tunics, as all the army knew that only the Lancers of the Guard were dressed in white. In this action the lancers lost some 140 men.

Chasseurs à Cheval

The first four squadrons of the regiment were formed in the Crimea in April 1856 from the 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique and detachments from the other three regiments plus elements of the 1st and 4th Hussars. The remaining two squadrons were organised when the regiment returned to France. The Chasseurs saw service in Italy and again in 1870, on neither occasion playing an important role.

Captain Surget of the Dragoons of the Guard in captivity in Germany (see plate B2). (Private Collection)

Brigadier-fourrier *of the Lancers of the Guard in the sky blue veste worn during the campaign (see plate B3). (Private Collection)*

Carabiniers

Regarded as the élite of the Line cavalry, two regiments were in existence at the start of the Second Empire. For many years there had been considerable pressure to abolish the Carabiniers due to the expense of their upkeep and their largely ceremonial and nostalgic function. Instead, Napoleon decided in 1865 to merge them into a single regiment and admit them into the Guard. In the 1870 campaign they were not engaged.

Artillery

The Guard Horse Artillery Regt. comprised five batteries of 4-pdrs. and was formed in May 1854 under Col. Soleille (who was to command the army's field artillery in 1870). In March of the following year a Field (*Montée*) regiment was added, along with a sixth battery for the Horse Regiment, making a total of twelve batteries in all. (In the field two kinds of batteries were employed: *artillerie à cheval* and *artillerie montée*. In the former all the gunners rode horses, whereas in the latter they rode on the limbers and waggons.)

Train

The *Train d'Artillerie* of the Guard was composed of a single squadron of two companies, one for each regiment. It was responsible for manning the vehicles of the artillery park and for the reserve ammunition.

Train des Equipages Militaires

In 1855, at the suggestion of the Minister of War, a separate Guard squadron of three companies was created, which would carry out supply and administration duties within the expanded Imperial Guard. It served in every campaign in which the Guard took part.

L'ARMÉE D'AFRIQUE

The origins of this body went back to the expeditionary force sent to Algeria in 1830. Before long indigenous units were formed from native volunteers around cadres of French officers and NCOs. It was initially planned to employ these troops only in Algeria itself, but in time they were called upon to serve both in Europe and further afield. Unlike the rest of the army they were not subject to conscription, which ensured a high level of *ésprit de corps*. Unit strengths also tended to be higher, such was their popularity. They soon gained a reputation as a *corps d'élite* within the French army, earning considerable praise from the commanders under whom they fought. Indeed, many of France's most distinguished generals—such as Canrobert, MacMahon, Bazaine, Bosquet and Saint-Arnaud—first gained fame in the ranks of the *africains*.

Zouaves

Formed in October 1830 from native volunteers of the Zouagha tribe, the corps had been completely Europeanised by the time the 1st Regt. was created in 1842. They soon made a favourable impression on soldiers and civilians alike. On 13 February 1852 an establishment of three regiments was laid down, one per province, each formed around a battalion of the original regiment. They saw action in the Crimea, in Italy, the Lebanon and Mexico. The 2nd Regt., 'The Jackals of Oran', was the first in the army to have its eagle decorated with the *Légion d'Honneur* for its conduct at Magenta; while the 3rd Regt. drew the admiring (and much quoted) observation *'furia francese'* from their Piedmontese allies at Palestro.

In the war against Germany the Zouaves greatly distinguished themselves, especially at Froeschwiller. The 3rd Regt. began the battle with 65 officers and over 2,000 men; by nightfall only 24 officers and 415 men answered the roll call. The 1st Regt. was the last to leave the field, withdrawing under heavy fire as though on parade. Four weeks later at Sedan the majority of the remaining Zouaves were taken prisoner along with rest of the army. Each regiment had three battalions, each of nine companies, six of which served in the field.

Tirailleurs Algériens (Turcos)

Formed in 1833 from various groups of Arabs and Turks, these troops were at first considered rather wild and undisciplined by the French. All of the men and most of the NCOs were natives, as were about half of the officers up to the rank of lieutenant. The Turcos also absorbed the native element of the Zouaves when they were transformed into a European corps, although all the senior officers and some key NCOs were French. In 1841 they were officially organised into three battalions, one from each of the provinces of Algiers, Oran and Constantine. They gained their first laurels fighting tribesmen in Algeria, later distinguishing themselves in the Crimea, especially at Inkerman. In 1855 the Emperor was sufficiently impressed to increase their establishment to three regiments. In 1859 a provisional regiment of three battalions saw action in Italy, where they again fought well, if somewhat savagely, reputedly cutting the throats of even dead enemies. Elements of the corps also fought in Senegal, Indo-China and Mexico. So great was the demand for acceptance into the Turcos that in 1865 the Emperor decreed that each regiment would be increased to four battalions. As further recognition of their conduct, from 1863 until 1870 a battalion was attached to the Imperial Guard, serving alongside the Guard Zouave Regiment.

In 1870 the three regiments, each of three field battalions, formed part of MacMahon's 1st Corps. In the first serious engagement of the war at Wissembourg (4 August), the 1st Regt., of Gen. Douay's 2nd Division, defended the railway station against waves of attacking German infantry, losing over 500 men in the process. Two days later at Froeschwiller all three regiments were engaged and suffered heavy losses. Again it was the 1st Regt. which particularly distinguished itself. Ordered to protect the Reserve artillery from the rapidly closing German infantry, they surged forwards waving their rifles above their heads and yelling. Three times they were led forward and each time they were decimated by rifle and artillery fire. When they eventually pulled back, more than 800 of their number were casualties. So closely were the dead and wounded thrown together that their light blue jackets reminded one observer of a field of flax. In common with their comrades in the Zouaves

Sous-lieutenant *de Chezelles of the Lancers of the Guard in full dress, wearing the regiments white kurtka. (Private Collection)*

the Turcos were practically annihilated at Sedan. In August 1870 each battalion had seven companies, of which six served in the field. Each regiment left one battalion and its depot companies in Algeria.

Chasseurs d'Afrique

In 1830 a body of native cavalry was raised under the title Chasseurs Algériens. The following year they were incorporated into the two new regiments of Chasseurs d'Afrique, formed from three squadrons of Chasseurs à Cheval serving with the expeditionary force and from volunteers from other regiments in metropolitan France. By 1841 there were four regiments, which fell to three between 1856 and 1867, when the 4th was re-formed. They served extensively in Algeria and also in the Crimea, where they helped to extricate the Light Brigade following its disastrous charge at Balaclava. They also saw action in Italy, where they were heavily engaged at Solferino. Elements of the corps also fought in China, Syria and Mexico. In the latter campaign the 1st Regt. received the honour of being the first cavalry regiment to be awarded the *Légion d'Honneur*, and earned the nickname of 'the Blue Butchers' from their Mexican opponents.

Lieutenant Anfrye of the Guard Horse Artillery in the uniform worn during the campaign. Note the five rows of buttons which distinguished it from the Field regiment, which had only three. (Private Collection)

In 1870 all four regiments saw action. The 2nd was engaged in the great cavalry action at Mars-la-Tour, whilst the 1st and 3rd Regts. escorted the Emperor to Châlons from Metz. The 4th Regt. arrived late in France, but joined the 1st and 3rd in time to fight at Sedan. The charges launched by them formed the most spectacular and tragic episode of the battle. Despite sabring a number of Prussian skirmishers they were unable to break through the main enemy lines. According to the French Staff History of the war, the three regiments between them lost 35 officers and 438 men. Unlike most Light Cavalry regiments it appears that the Chasseurs d'Afrique only fielded four squadrons per regiment instead of the usual five. The remainder were kept in Algeria.

TROOPS OF THE LINE

The *lignards* bore the brunt of every major battle under the Second Empire, forming as they did over 80 per cent of the available combat troops. In August 1870 they were divided between seven army corps and two (the 2nd and 3rd) reserve cavalry divisions, plus the artillery and engineer reserves. (1st Corps also contained the Zouaves and Turcos. The 1st Reserve Cavalry Division was composed of the four regiments of Chasseurs d'Afrique.) Three corps (1st, 3rd and 6th) were commanded by marshals, and for reasons of prestige and seniority were larger than the rest, having four infantry divisions and a large cavalry division of three brigades. The corps commanded by generals had three infantry divisions and a cavalry division of two brigades. The corps reserve artillery had eight and six batteries, respectively. An infantry division had two brigades each of two regiments, the first brigade usually having a battalion of Chasseurs, although in the event there were not enough to go round. A cavalry brigade usually had two regiments, though some had three.

Infantry:

The French infantry in 1870 found itself in the process of re-evaluating its tactical doctrine. The offensive spirit shown under the Revolution and the

First Empire had been reaffirmed in the Crimea and in Italy. Nevertheless the widespread introduction of the breech-loader and its recent use in 1866 prompted many officers to reappraise their whole approach to battlefield tactics. A lively debate ensued between the advocates of fire and those of shock, whilst those responsible for deciding the matter eventually took a middle course, emphasising the increased importance of firepower while admitting that the natural *élan* of the French soldier was an enormous asset. The new 1869 drill book, barely in circulation when the war broke out, had the effect of confusing many officers as to the proper methods to employ, and discouraged many from launching the kind of bayonet charges that the French infantry was famous for and which the Germans rightly feared. This tendency was reinforced by the long range of the Chassepot and the obsession with strong defensive positions. Although the range advantage enjoyed over the needle-gun was a very important one, the erratic nature of French marksmanship and the positional attitude it engendered had the effect of surrendering the initiative to the enemy.

Line Infantry

At the start of the Second Empire the infantry was divided between 75 Line and 25 Light regiments. In December 1854 the latter were abolished, becoming numbers 76–100 of the Line, their role being taken over by the Chasseurs. A total of 50 regiments fought in the Crimea and 49 in Italy. In the latter campaign the 76th took an Austrian flag at Solferino, for which feat it was awarded the *Légion d'Honneur*. This distinction was also given to the 51st and 99th for taking enemy standards during the Mexican campaign.

Each Line regiment had three battalions each of eight companies, six of which served in the field. The 7th Co. and the 8th Co. of the 1st Bn. of a regiment formed a fourth depot battalion, which by a decree of 19 July were ordered to form provisional *régiments de marche*; these consisted of the 4th Bns. from three different regiments. By the fall of the Empire 27 of these units had been formed. By a further decree of 13 August two extra companies were formed by each regiment to bring the 4th Bns. up to strength. The 8th Companies of the 2nd and 3rd Bns. served as the permanent depot. Regimental commanders were instructed that field battalions, wherever possible, should consist of serving soldiers, reservists only being used where necessary. Unfortunately, due to chronic problems during mobilisation, regiments which should have numbered 2,000 men were often only 1,300 strong or even less, necessitating the embodiment of many poorly trained reservists. Many of these men literally joined their regiments on the battlefield. At Spicheren a group from the 2nd Line only arrived in time to cover the French retreat, and a similar thing happened at Wissembourg.

Some regiments were unable to take part in the initial phase of the campaign due to commitments

Cantinière of the Guard Horse Artillery. These ladies were attired in more feminine versions of the uniform worn by their regiment. In this case she is wearing the white dolman also sported by the regimental trumpeters. (Private Collection)

Lieutenant d'Esparbes de Lussan of the 2nd Battery, Guard Horse Artillery Regiment. Following the repulse of the Guard Cuirassiers at Rezonville his isolated battery was overrun by Prussian Hussars and he was killed in its defence. (Private Collection)

elsewhere. Two regiments (the 35th and 42nd) were in the Papal States, while four (the 16th, 38th, 39th and 92nd) were retained in Algeria. A further four (the 22nd, 34th, 58th and 79th) were held at Toulouse to watch the Spanish border, though they were later able to join the Army of Châlons in time for the Sedan campaign.

Chasseurs

In 1837 an experimental light infantry company was set up at Vincennes by the Duc d'Orléans. So satisfactory were the results that three years later ten full battalions were created. Known as the Chasseurs d'Orléans after their creator, they distinguished themselves in Algeria in numerous desert encounters. From 1848 the corps was known simply as the Chasseurs à Pied. In 1853 Napoleon was so impressed by their dash and marksmanship that he doubled the number of battalions to 20. Twelve battalions served in the Crimea and ten in Italy, where the 10th took an Austrian flag, a feat which earned the *Légion d'Honneur* for the eagle of the Chasseur corps. They were also engaged in China, Syria and Mexico.

Regarded as an élite corps, they fought well in the opening campaign against the Germans. At Froeschwiller (6 August) four battalions were practically wiped out, the 13th losing over 700 officers and men. They were organised in the same way as the infantry of the Line, with eight companies per battalion of which six usually served in the field.

Cavalry

Following the precedent set under the First Empire, the French cavalry was divided into three categories: Reserve, Line and Light. The Reserve Cavalry consisted of the Cuirassiers, the Line of the Dragoons and Lancers and the Light of the Hussars and Chasseurs. The *cavalerie d'Afrique* (Chasseurs and Spahis) were regarded as light cavalry. Traditionally each branch had a specific function: shock action, general service including dismounted action and reconnaissance.

In 1870 the Reserve Cavalry still expected to produce decisive results through the close-order charge, a belief that the disasters of Morsbronn, Froeschwiller and Sedan did little to eradicate. Nor was the French cavalry particularly adept at what should have been its primary function—reconnaissance. In 1868 a ministerial report suggested the attachment of a Line or Light cavalry regiment to each infantry division, as practised in the Prussian army. Unfortunately this scheme was not adopted, due in part to the reluctance of cavalry commanders to place themselves under the control of infantry officers. Instead a cavalry division was attached to each corps, in addition to the formation of three independent reserve divisions. In practice this failed to provide either adequate reconnaissance or a decisive effect on the battlefield. The flexibility offered by individual cavalry regiments at a lower level of command could not be matched by inadequately led divisional masses, which as often as not remained behind their own lines. The surprise

attacks mounted by the Germans at Wissembourg, Mars-la-Tour and Beaumont were the direct result of negligent laxity on the part of the French cavalry. During the short Sedan campaign the hard-pressed French infantry were furious at the way that their movements were regularly monitored by impudently blatant German cavalry patrols while their own cavalry did nothing to intervene.

The use of firearms by the cavalry was also a vexed question, being opposed by the school of 'shock action', who felt that they detracted from a unit's *élan*. Although there were examples of such use, such as that by the 12th Dragoons at Spicheren, the French cavalry in general remained true to the sabre. In fairness it should be pointed out that the standard of marksmanship was generally low.

At the outbreak of war the French Line cavalry consisted of 50 regiments: ten of Cuirassiers, 12 of Dragoons, eight of Lancers, 12 of Chasseurs and eight of Hussars. Reserve and Line regiments each had five squadrons, while the Light regiments had six. Of this number one remained in the depot. When hostilities began, five of these regiments were committed elsewhere: the 1st and 9th Chasseurs and the 8th Hussars were in Algeria, the 8th Chasseurs and three squadrons of the 7th were on the Spanish frontier, and the remaining two squadrons of the 7th were in the Papal States. A brigade of the 7th Corps, comprising the 6th Hussars and the 6th Dragoons, were unable to join the field army due to political unrest in Lyon.

Cuirassiers

Designed primarily for shock action on the battlefield, the Cuirassiers saw no serious campaigning under the Second Empire until 1870. Indeed, their last encounter with the enemy had been at Waterloo (a brigade composed of the 6th and 9th Regiments did serve in the Crimea, but was not engaged). Perhaps because of this their attitudes had changed relatively little in the intervening 50 years. This tactical inertia was made the more complete by a deliberate policy of withholding the Cuirassiers from service in Algeria. The effect on those regiments which had been posted there was noticeable in their more pragmatic approach to campaigning. The fact that the Cuirassiers' junior officers did not see service with the other branches of the cavalry also prevented the dissemination of new ideas.

Gen. du Barail offers an illuminating insight into the character of a typical unit of the period. At the beginning of his tenure as colonel of the 1st Cuirassiers he was disconcerted to find how 'parade-oriented' his new regiment was. An inordinate amount of time seemed to be spent on polishing cuirasses and helmets, and he soon discovered that some of the men did nothing else. When he abolished the practice there was an insurrection among the officers, who were outraged at this heresy—although the men were delighted! As though confirming their special status, a division of Cuirassiers was permanently maintained at Lunéville and a further brigade at Versailles. Of the ten existing regiments six were attached to the army reserve, the remaining four providing a brigade each for 1st and 6th Corps. Their swan-song was at Froeschwiller, where Michel's brigade was massacred in the streets of Morsbronn. Bonnemains' reserve division of four magnificent regiments was bloodily repulsed by Prussian rifle fire later the same day.

The Guard Horse Artillery Regiment emerging from the Bois de Saulnay near St. Privat. The regiment helped to cover the retreat of Canrobert's 6th Corps at the end of the battle. Note the trumpeter in the white dolman on the right. (Watercolour by Marchetti)

The 1st Zouaves after the battle of Froeschwiller. The regiment was the last to leave the field, withdrawing under heavy fire and in perfect order. (Watercolour by Marchetti)

Dragoons

The Dragoons also played a minor role in the early campaigns of the Second Empire. Apart from the war of 1870 they only saw action in the Crimea, where the 6th and 7th Regts. distinguished themselves in the action at Kanghil, defeating a large force of Russian cavalry. In the war against Prussia all 12 regiments took part, although the 6th Regt. was unable to join the field army in time for the initial campaign. It was the 3rd Regt. that was responsible for the tragic error concerning the Guard Lancers at Mars-la-Tour, though the Dragoons themselves emerged relatively unscathed. They were also capable of performing their traditional dismounted role, as was demonstrated at the battle of Spicheren: two squadrons of the 12th Regt. with a body of engineers and a couple of hundred reservists occupied some hastily dug trenches near the village of Forbach, and successfully held the Prussian outflanking force in check. After delivering a heavy if not particularly accurate fire the Dragoons mounted up and charged with the sabre. This action, minor though it was, helped to cover the French retreat.

Lancers

Only two Lancer regiments, the 1st and 4th, saw action prior to 1870, fighting with Canrobert's corps at Solferino. In the opening campaign against Prussia all eight regiments were involved, seeing heavy fighting. Two squadrons of the 6th charged with Michel's brigade at Morsbronn, whilst the 3rd joined the attack of the Guard Cuirassiers at Rezonville. At Sedan the 1st and 7th Regts. were shattered as they tried to break through the German lines. Elements of the 2nd and 6th managed to battle their way through before the ring finally closed, to fight on under the Republic.

Hussars

On coming to power Napoleon inherited nine regiments of Hussars, although one of these was disbanded in 1856 due to the expansion of the Imperial Guard. The eight remaining regiments saw considerable service under the Empire: the 1st and 4th fought in the Crimea, where the 4th charged with the Dragoons at Kanghil, taking several Russian guns. So pleased was the Emperor with its conduct that he ordered the name of that encounter inscribed on its colours. As a further mark of Imperial favour it was garrisoned in Paris for a time after its return. In the 1859 campaign the 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Regts. were all present, while the Hussars were also represented in the Syrian and Mexican expeditions. In the short 1870 campaign they were heavily engaged. The 2nd and 7th Regts. were the first on the scene in the great cavalry battle at Mars-la-Tour. After breaking through a regiment of Prussian Dragoons they were counterattacked by fresh cavalry and their brigadier, Montaigu, was wounded and captured. At Sedan the 1st Regt. played a prominent part in the cavalry charges with the Chasseurs d'Afrique, losing 239 officers and men. The 3rd Regt. succeeded in breaking out from the encirclement.

Chasseurs à Cheval

Like the Hussars, the Chasseurs were used extensively in Algeria, furnishing the original cavalry component of the French invasion force. Four regiments (the 2nd, 4th, 7th and 10th) fought in Italy, while the 3rd was engaged in defence of the Papal States, and the 12th in the Mexican expedition. At the start of the 1870 campaign eight of the 12

regiments were with the field army, although two others, the 7th and 8th, rejoined in time for Sedan, where they formed part of the cavalry division for the new 12th Corps. The 6th Chasseurs were also roughly handled in their charges with the 1st Hussars. Of the four regiments present only the 11th succeeded in escaping.

Cavaliers de Remonte

On 11 April 1831 *Le Service de la Remonte Générale* was formed, with the task of providing draught and riding horses for the army. By the start of the Second Empire there were ten *dépots de remonte* in France and three in Algeria, plus various minor branches. They drew their horses from certain specific areas; e.g. Normandy provided those for the Heavy Cavalry and Dragoons, Brittany the draught horses for the artillery, and the south-west the mounts for the Light Cavalry. The *dépots* were serviced by men on attachment from their regiment, as well as those about to leave the army after their term of service. In 1852 the *cavaliers de remonte* were set up, formed from four companies of veteran cavalry; each new company had five officers and 196 other ranks. In June 1854 the number of companies was increased to six, each of 274 officers and men. Later the same year a further three companies were raised for Algeria. In March 1856 a further company was raised to service the military academy of St. Cyr and the cavalry school at Saumur. In February 1862 the total number of companies was reduced to eight, three of which were in Algeria. Throughout the Second Empire there was a constant shortage of good horses and it often proved necessary to buy inferior stock. In 1870, for example, French cavalry horses were notably inferior to those of their German counterparts.

Colonel Détrie; in Mexico he rose from lieutenant to chef de bataillon *in only two months in recognition of his distinguished conduct. He commanded the 2nd Zouaves at Froeschwiller and finally retired with the rank of général de division*

* * *

The Blue Division

The initial French plan of campaign envisaged an incursion into northern Prussia by a strong amphibious force, which would join up with the Danes for further operations against Hanover. Unfortunately the double defeat of Spicheren-Froeschwiller effectively ruined the implementation of the scheme. Consequently, on 7 August the 'Blue Division' of marines under Gen. de Vassoigne was directed to Châlons, where it was embodied into the new army which was to form there under Marshal MacMahon. The division, some 10,000 strong, distinguished itself at the battle of Sedan, holding the village of Bazeilles against heavy Bavarian attacks, and losing a quarter of its effectives in the process. In one episode a detachment of the 2nd Regt. barricaded itself inside a house on the outskirts of the village, from where it held up the enemy advance with accurate rifle fire, only surrendering when completely surrounded and after having expended all its ammunition. The survivors (including a future Marshal of France—Galliéni) were congratulated by the Bavarian commander, Gen. von der Tann, and the officers were allowed to keep their swords. The house they occupied, known as 'La Maison de la Dernière Cartouche', is now a museum.

During the brief Sedan campaign, the 'Blue Division' was composed of four provisional regiments of marine infantry, each of three battalions of six companies.

ARTILLERY

As the favoured men of the First Napoleon, it was only natural that his nephew should show an interest in its development. Conscientiously hard-working, the Emperor had studied the technical as well as the tactical aspects of artillery, and had written a worthwhile study on the subject. He had also helped design a field piece—the 12-pdr. Napoleon—much used in the American Civil War. Under his patronage the artillery was kept well in the forefront of new developments, introducing rifled cannon in time to fight the Austrians in 1859. Curiously, he failed to fully appreciate the advantages of the new Krupp breech-loaders when they were offered to him by their inventor, despite disquieting reports from senior officers about their accuracy and range. The able Gen. Lebrun believed that this was partly due to the Emperor having been largely responsible for the development of the existing French guns. Consequently in 1870 the French artillery was to find itself at a severe disadvantage.

The artillery in peacetime exerted a considerable influence through its Artillery Committee, which was responsible for vetting new military inventions. Its impartiality towards projects emanating from other arms was suspect to say the least and in 1858 it rejected outright the introduction of the Chassepot breech-loader. Ten years later it also rejected the Krupp guns. The artillery was also well represented on the various defence commissions, which met periodically to consider national defence policy. Proportional to their numbers this influence seemed excessive to many infantry and cavalry officers, although to be fair most artillery officers were academy-trained, rather than ex-rankers, and therefore usually better educated. Napoleon himself avowed that only officers of the special arms could be relied upon to perform a task properly. Another privilege enjoyed by the artillery was the existence of a special *état major*, which was responsible for specialised planning and general administration, which were exercised through its 11 regional commands. In wartime this body had a very important role, which included the vital job of supplying the reserve ammunition not only to the artillery but to the infantry as well. In 1870 this task fell to Gen. Soleille, whose responsibility it was to keep the C.-in-C. informed. After the battle of Mars-la-Tour he misled Bazaine regarding the army's ammunition situation, which was in no small part responsible for his decision to fall back towards Metz. He also failed to keep an accurate record of the available ammunition during the subsequent siege.

Lieutenant of Zouaves in campaign dress, 1870. His tunic, supposedly dark blue is in fact black, as is the képi band. His rank is indicated by the elaborate Hungarian knot (2 strands) on each sleeve. (Private Collection)

The efficiency of the artillery arm during the opening weeks of the war was also less than satisfactory. Its administration was made difficult by the fact that many regiments were split up between the different corps, unlike in the Prussian army, where each corps had its own integral artillery regiment. Efforts were made to keep such dispersal to a minimum, though this was often not possible. (The 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th Field Regts. were kept intact within a single corps, the 13th Field and 18th Horse Regts. in the Army Artillery reserve.) The 17th (Horse) Artillery Regt., for example, had batteries in 2nd, 3rd and 4th Corps, while the 6th (Field) Regt. was divided between 1st, 5th and 7th Corps. Nor was the situation made any easier by the absence of the *Grand Parc de Reserve*, which reduced the ammunition available per gun by almost half from the regulation figure of 440 rounds. There was also a serious shortage of trained horses, the artillery being almost 9,000 short. Nor was the artillery handled to its best advantage in action. Many guns, including

the heavy 12-pdrs., were kept in reserve for the decisive moment. This Napoleonic practice, valid at Wagram and Borodino, proved a grave mistake in 1870, allowing the Germans to quickly gain fire superiority. Nor were the French guns used *en masse*, an expedient which might well have ameliorated their technical inferiority.

At the outbreak of war there were 20 regiments of artillery: 15 Field regiments (numbered 1–15), one regiment of *Pontonniers* (number 16) and four Horse regiments (numbered 17–20). Each Field regiment contained 12 batteries of guns, eight of which were mobilised for the field armies. The remaining four were Foot batteries which remained in the depots and fortresses. The regiment of *Pontonniers* had 14 companies plus a depot and was responsible for the construction of pontoon bridges. The Horse regiments each contained eight batteries, all of which were mobilised for service in the field. Of this total five Field batteries remained in Algeria, with a further two in the Papal States. The total strength of the artillery amounted to some 30,000 men and 16,000 horses. In support were two regiments of Train, each of 16 companies, which were responsible for transporting the reserve ammunition and equipment. There were also ten companies of *ouvriers* and six of artificers. Two companies of Train and one each of *ouvriers* and artificers were deployed in Algeria at the outbreak of war.

Engineers

Like the artillery, the engineers exercised an influence out of all proportion to their number. Their *état-major* controlled the 27 regional commands, which were responsible for France's considerable number of fortresses, as well as construction and maintenance work. In wartime they were responsible for the construction of semi-permanent bridges and for demolition, as well as the provision of entrenching tools for the infantry. In 1870 the army's engineers were under the command of Gen. Coffinières de Nordeck, who displayed a complete lack of initiative. He failed to order the demolition of bridges south of Metz, which were subsequently seized intact by the Prussians and used by them to outflank and finally encircle Bazaine's army. He also failed to ensure that sufficient crossings were available as the army retreated over the Moselle following the battle of Borny. This failure is particularly reprehensible when one considers that the home of the engineer school and its central supply depot was the city of Metz.

Sergeant of the Tirailleurs Algériens. Note the rank stripe on the cuff. The turban shown here was not worn in action. (Private Collection)

At the outbreak of war the engineer arm numbered some 7,000 men, divided into three regiments based at Metz, Arras and Montpellier. Each regiment had two battalions of eight companies plus a single company of *sapeurs conducteurs*. In August 1870 six companies were stationed in Algeria and one in the Papal States. One company of engineers was attached to each infantry division with a further one or two companies in the corps reserve. There was also an army engineer reserve of three companies.

COMMAND, STAFF AND LOGISTICS

The *Etat-Major Général de l'Armée* was created in 1839 and was composed of all the marshals and generals in the army. A maximum of six marshals was allowed in peacetime, which could be increased to 12 in the event of war; in August 1870 there were eight, along with 80 generals of division and 160 generals of brigade. Of the marshals only four held field commands: MacMahon (1st Corps), Bazaine (3rd Corps), Canrobert (6th Corps) and later Leboeuf (3rd

Sous-lieutenant *Reverony of the 1st Chasseurs d'Afrique, who served as an* officier d'ordonnance *to General Margueritte during the battle of Sedan. (Private Collection)*

Corps). The remaining corps commanders were generals of division, not technically superior to their own divisional commanders, of whom 58 were initially employed, along with 96 generals of brigade.

By 1870 the vast majority of these men had already seen considerable active service in the Crimea, Italy, China, Mexico and, of course, Algeria. This wealth of experience and their imposing service records led them and others to believe that they were at the forefront of their profession. At the outbreak of war many pundits were predicting a rapid French offensive and a repeat of the victorious Jena campaign of 1806. Yet within a month of the first encounter the French army had been almost totally eliminated as an effective fighting force. Much of the blame for this débâcle was rightly laid at the door of the French High Command. Nevertheless many post-war critics, anxious to apportion blame while salvaging what they could of national and professional pride, were often unjust in their criticisms.

Some blamed the 'Algerian experience' for France's defeat, claiming that her generals had forgotten how to fight a European war after 40 years of pursuing the wily tribesmen of North Africa. This is hardly true. Three-quarters of the generals active in 1870 had seen action in either the Crimea or in Italy, and over a third had served in both campaigns, including MacMahon, Bazaine and Canrobert. It is certainly true that many of the lessons learned there were less than fully relevant by 1870: unlike their German opponents the French had no experience of a war fought with breech-loading weapons, although they were aware of the theoretical changes in tactics that they had wrought. Nevertheless, they were well accustomed to commanding large bodies of men in the field, and to the difficulties inherent in moving and supplying them.

Where the French commanders were deficient was in the area of training and outlook. The lack of a comprehensive training programme for high-ranking officers tended to throw them back on their own experience. Not unnaturally this led them to believe that the methods employed so successfully in earlier campaigns were perfectly adequate and in no need of profound revision. The pervading anti-intellectual bias in the army—exemplified, in French minds at least, by contempt for what they saw as bespectacled Prussian 'book' generals—led to a degree of smugness which inhibited innovation and critical reappraisal.

The Emperor himself was sufficiently concerned about practical training to create a huge camp at Châlons for the purpose of holding regular large-scale manoeuvres. In the event it proved to be of little use to the generals, although it was certainly valuable for regimental officers. The manoeuvres themselves were usually scripted in advance (the side representing the French army invariably emerging the winner), which required little in the way of planning or initiative from the commanders involved—one year the battle of Austerlitz was re-enacted! On another occasion a group of visiting Prussian observers noted that similar exercises were 'a superb military spectacle that had nothing to do with war'. The idea was that each year two sets of two to three divisions would train for two months at a time. Unfortunately only some 30 generals a year could make use of the facilities—scarcely one-eighth of the total.

The shortcomings of their practical education might have been ameliorated had they been willing to subject themselves to a course of theoretical study. This was particularly true at a time when technological developments were revolutionising strategy and tactics. Despite the plethora of material available, both from past masters and contemporary writers, there is little evidence that a lively intellectual debate flourished among the higher echelons of the army. This is not to say that there were no perceptive and thoughtful soldiers around. The able Gen. Trochu published a work entitled *l'Armée Française en 1867*,

which highlighted many of the weaknesses inherent in the French military structure. The book was a best-seller, but earned its author considerable criticism and Imperial displeasure.

Another important factor was the constant interference of the Emperor. His assumption of supreme command relegated them to the status of supporting actors whose will to command (such as it was) ebbed away whilst he held centre stage. This often had dire consequences both on strategic decision-making and on battlefield tactics. Time and again the Germans presented the French with the opportunity for victory, only to be spared the consequences of their folly by their unenterprising opponents, who held back their all too eager men for lack of a formal order. The contrast with the adventurous (though not always intelligent) assertiveness of often quite junior German generals is stark. Excessive centralisation and a tradition of absolute obedience to superiors must also bear some of the responsibility for the lack of initiative shown by many French generals. One brigade commander at Gravelotte, who witnessed the rout of the Prussians in the Mance ravine, declined to exploit the situation, noting: 'I did not think I should pursue them having been ordered to remain on the defensive.' Earlier in the campaign Gen. Bonnemains was instructed to move his division; instead of immediately complying he asked headquarters whether this included his artillery and provost, which were not specifically mentioned in the order. . . .

A further excuse often seized upon by post-war critics was the age of many senior French commanders. While the average age was certainly higher than it had been in the Crimea or in Italy, it was still lower than that of their German opposite numbers. Corps commanders in *l'Armée du Rhin*, for example, averaged some 59 years of age, two years younger than their German equivalents; whilst Moltke was 70 and Steinmetz, commander of 1st Army, was 73. In reality the issue was one of health rather than age: prolonged service in unhealthy climates had taken its toll of the young *sabreurs* of earlier days. Many were incapable of prolonged physical effort, including the Emperor, who suffered agonies during the campaign. Such a situation could hardly be expected to facilitate cool, reasoned thought and decisive action.

Valid though these observations may be, they should not be overstated. Most commanders, even those in doubtful health, led from the front and suffered a high proportion of casualties: between 4 August and 2 September 16 generals were killed and a further 45 wounded. The problem was rather one of attitude. Against an opponent as aggressive and enterprising as the Germans, and under the unaccustomed gloom of early defeats, many felt themselves to be out of their depth. Gen. Bourbaki, the youngest of the French corps commanders, complained on the night of Mars-la-Tour: 'We are too old for a war like this.' It is scarcely surprising that they were defeated.

The Staff Corps

Created by Marshal St. Cyr of First Empire fame in 1818, this was intended to open the Staff to men of ability rather than those of influence. Entry was

An infantry lieutenant, August–September 1870. Dress practice became increasingly loose as the campaign progressed; this officer is wearing a soldier's greatcoat and carries a non-regulation sabre. (Private Collection)

restricted to the annual pick of *St. Cyr* plus a few from the *École Polytechnique* and the occasional ex-ranker. After studying for two years at the *École d'Application d'Etat Major* and on passing the exams, a candidate was promoted to full lieutenant and attached to a regiment of each of the three main arms—infantry, cavalry and artillery—to gain practical experience. This was followed by a further promotion to captain and an assignment to staff duties. The size of the Staff Corps was rigorously controlled, being set at 580 officers. Its responsibilities ranged from intelligence, archival and statistical work and the study of foreign armies, to staff work in the regional commands and at corps level, and as ADCs to generals. This last role was often not appreciated by the generals concerned, who were obliged to choose their ADCs from the Staff Corps regardless of their own preferences (though some were not above bending the rules). A few also served as military attachés abroad.

Although membership of the Staff Corps was seen as a privilege, it could be an expensive one. Officers had to buy all their own uniforms, including those of the regiments to which they were attached. They were also the object of much jealousy from Line officers, who often regarded them as well-connected young gentlemen rather than real soldiers. To a degree this was true: some officers worked so long behind a desk that they lost touch with the realities of life in the field, including such fundamentals as good horsemanship. By comparison their Prussian counterparts enjoyed a much broader education.

A great weakness of the French staff system, and one that made it much inferior to the Prussian model, was the almost totally subordinate role which it played. Bazaine, echoing Berthier's complaint under the first Napoleon, treated his chief-of-staff, Gen. Jarras, as little more than a glorified clerk. After the hard-fought battle of Mars-la-Tour all he could think of was to set Jarras to work drawing up a list of promotions to replace those officers incapacitated during the battle; meanwhile the withdrawal towards Metz was carried out in appalling confusion as no proper march tables had been prepared.

This habit of centralising authority in the hands of the commander, virtually shutting out the staff from the decision-making process, put a great strain on the generals concerned—a strain that many of them were not capable of bearing. (In the Prussian army staff officers acted as trusted advisers to corps and army commanders and influenced and shared in their planning and decisions.) This led to a lack of initiative in the French Staff Corps and the waste of the talents of its members. This was made worse by the dual nature of a corps commander's staff, which was divided into two distinct parts. The *Corps d'Etat-Major*, commanded by a *général de brigade* with a colonel or lieutenant-colonel as second in command, and between five and eight staff officers, was imposed on the corps commander by the Minister of War (sometimes against the express wishes of the general concerned, as in the case of Jarras' appointment as

Bugler of the Chasseurs à Pied. In addition to the basic Chasseur uniform, this musician would have a tricolour* galon de fonction *next to the piping on collar and cuffs. This took the form of white hollow diamonds edged in blue with small red diamonds in the centre on a background of white wool. This photograph originally formed part of the collection belonging to the celebrated military artist Alphonse de Neuville. (Private Collection)

1: Cent-Garde in campaign dress, August 1870
2: General of Brigade, August 1870

1: Guide in campaign dress
2: Captain, Dragoons of the Guard in campaign dress
3: Brigadier-Fourrier, Lancers of the Guard

B

1: Grenadier of the Guard, Metz, September 1870
2: Voltigeur of the Guard, August 1870
3: Maréchal des Logis, Horse Artillery of the Guard

C

1: Zouave
2: Tirailleur Algérien
3: Chef de Bataillon, Tirailleurs Algériens

D

1: Brigadier 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique
2: Sous-lieutenant, Chasseurs d'Afrique
3: 'Marsouin', Marine Infantry

E


1: Cuirassier, 2nd Regiment, Froeschwiller, 6 August 1870
2: Dragoon, 3rd Regiment, August 1870
3: Lancer, 2nd Regiment, July 1870
1
2
3
BURN

F

1: Maréchal des Logis, 2nd Hussars, 1870
2: Chasseur à Cheval, 12th Regiment
3: Gunner, Horse Artillery

1: Line Infantryman
2: Sous-lieutenant of Infantry
3: Chasseur à Pied, campaign dress

H

Bazaine's chief-of-staff). Secondly there was the '*Cabinet*', a group of officers selected by the general himself, which often included relatives or close personal friends. Many commanders tended to transmit their orders through the '*Cabinet*' rather than the staff, reducing the latter to the status of bureaucrats.

Another weakness of the French system was that the army itself lacked a permanent chief-of-staff, who could serve the function of a Moltke; this constrained the detailed peacetime planning that paid such dividends for Prussia. Instead a *Major Général* was appointed as the need arose, who acted as a temporary chief-of-staff to the overall commander, i.e. the Emperor. In 1870 this led to a blurring of the areas of responsibility which added unnecessary confusion to an already difficult situation. Another area in which the Staff Corps failed to function properly was the preparation and transmission of march tables and orders. During the retreat through Metz and the ill-fated journey of the Army of Châlons the French army moved with painful slowness, encumbered by thousands of vehicles along an inadequate number of roads. The contrast with the rapid and highly articulate movements of the larger German armies was in no small part responsible for the French defeat.

The Intendance

Essentially the army's administrative service, the *Intendance* was responsible for the provision of supplies in the field and for the running of all military hospitals and prisons. In peacetime it was independent of the military authorities, being instead directly answerable to the Ministry of War. On active service it was placed under the command of the army, though this was often little more than a formality. This privileged position not only caused resentment, but gave the impression that its members were not 'real' soldiers. Indeed, considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the men to even salute officers of the *Intendance*. This did little to establish their authority for the vital tasks they had to carry out.

Its performance under the Second Empire was not, on the whole, impressive. In the Crimea it was forced to contract a commercial company to provide food for the army, while in Italy, and again in Mexico, the troops suffered considerable hardship due to the inability of the *Intendance* to keep them supplied. Similar difficulties were encountered in 1870, though not always through a lack of supplies—which were often available in embarrassing abundance—but rather through the inability to transport and distribute them. During mobilisation masses of equipment were moved towards the frontier, frequently going missing or lying piled up at over-loaded railway stations, often being re-loaded by hard-pressed and ill-informed local officials and sent elsewhere.

Movement of supplies over relatively short distances was often no easier. After Mars-la-Tour tons of equipment and food were abandoned due to a lack of transport, which had been requisitioned for the wounded. Ill-policed convoys also badly affected troop movements already made sluggish by poor staff work. The withdrawal through Metz was severely retarded by thousands of vehicles, many of which were driven by civilians due to the lack of trained personnel; their indiscipline posed severe problems. The task of the *Intendance* was made harder by poor liaison with headquarters, whose constant changes of plan made any forward planning out of the question. The consequence of this chaos was a severe increase in indiscipline and marauding amongst the troops and a deterioration in morale.

It would be easy to blame the *Intendance* for all the appalling problems encountered during the campaign, as many hard-pressed officers and men were only too happy to do. But in fairness it probably did as good a job as could be expected under the circumstances. Many of its problems can be traced back to a lack of pre-war planning and persistent under-funding. There was no full, permanent, peacetime organisation; instead reliance was placed on the *ad hoc* civilian *Train Auxiliaire*, a totally unsatisfactory system whereby civilian drivers and their waggons were used. They were completely undisciplined and liable to run away, with their vehicles, if danger threatened. The only advantage was that in peacetime there were no maintenance costs. Under the rigours of an active campaign against an enemy as aggressively mobile as the Germans (whose own system was far from infallible), it is little wonder that it broke down.

The *Intendance* controlled army transport primarily through the *Train des Equipages Militaires*, consisting of three regiments each of 16 companies,

plus four companies of *ouvriers conducteurs*, making a total, along with various *Troupes d'Administration*, of some 8,300 men and 7,000 horses—almost 4,000 men and over 10,000 horses short of establishment. A lack of trained reservists obliged the authorities to use recalled cavalrymen, who were obviously poor substitutes for trained personnel. During mobilisation matters were made worse by the excessive centralisation of the Train's vehicles, which made it difficult to prepare and dispatch them to their various destinations.

The army's medical services were also controlled by the *Intendance*, and represented, in the words of one distinguished commentator, 'the most complete triumph of anarchy'. There was a serious shortage of trained doctors throughout the Second Empire; of 1,147 army doctors available in August 1870, only 173 accompanied the field army. During the siege of Metz each one had to care for some 400 to 500 patients, many of whom undoubtedly died through a lack of proper care. There was also a serious shortage of equipment of all kinds, exacerbated by inadequate peacetime provisions and chaotic mobilisation. Most of 1st Corps did not receive its ambulances until the day before Froeschwiller. The resulting battle saw many thousands of casualties abandoned due to a lack of transport. In addition many of the doctors remained with them, further worsening an already serious shortage.

WEAPONS

The French armies of 1870–71 had at their disposal a bewildering variety of weaponry, both home-produced and imported. The Imperial forces, however, carried equipment that was relatively standard: essentially the Chassepot, the Reffye Mitrailleuse and the 4-pdr and 12-pdr field guns.

The Chassepot

Developed by Monsieur Chassepot, a government employee, this weapon had first been offered to the Emperor as far back as 1855. Although a number had been taken on the Italian campaign by the Guard Dragoons, it had been firmly rejected by the Artillery Committee the year before. In 1863, however, the order was given for the development of a breech-loading weapon and, despite determined opposition from conservatives in the army, the new rifle was finally adopted in 1866. After extensive testing at the training camp at Châlons the 500 prototypes were issued to the Guard Chasseurs, who were given the task of preparing the training manual for the weapon.

By the outbreak of war over a million were available, many of which had been made by foreign contractors due to the inability of French industry to meet demand. Sighted up to 1,200 m, it was the finest rifle of its day, considerably better than the Prussians'

The Chassepot, probably the best rifle then in service in Europe; it far outclassed the Prussian Dreyse needle-gun. Sighted to 1,200 metres and comparatively light, it proved very popular with the troops. (Private Collection)

Dreyse needle-gun in both range and penetration. During the siege of Metz some rifles were modified, being sighted up to 1,600 m and given to the best shots. This modification was made universal after the war. Its designer had succeeded in preventing the escape of gas from the breech by the insertion of a small rubber ring; this increased the muzzle velocity of the weapon to 403 mps (compared to 275 mps for the Dreyse) and gave it a very flat trajectory. The improved bolt mechanism also allowed a higher rate of fire, and its small, 11 mm calibre allowed more rounds to be carried—90 in ten boxes of nine being the full allotment. The rounds themselves were conical in shape, weighing only 25 g (compared to 31 g for needle-gun rounds). The combustible cartridges were made of paper covered in silk gauze. The Chassepot also weighed less than its Prussian counterpart at only 4.1 kg; indeed, the Prussian infantry

A kolpack of the 9th Chasseurs à Cheval, made of black lambswool, with a red pompom bearing the regimental number and brass chinscales. (Private Collection)

claimed that the needle-gun's only advantage was its usefulness as a club in hand-to-hand fighting!

The Chassepot's main drawbacks were the lack of a safety catch or half-cock position, which led to a number of accidents. It also had a severe recoil which encouraged many users to fire it from the hip. This reluctance to aim properly was reinforced by the weapon's tendency to spit powder from the breech when the sealing ring became eroded, as it often did after periods of rapid firing. The barrel also fouled quickly, the small calibre exacerbating this problem. The ammunition also tended to deteriorate, especially in damp conditions—metallic cartridges were not introduced until after the war. On the battlefield the weapon's capabilities were often not fully realised due to the long range at which targets were engaged, and the poor fire discipline and indifferent marksmanship of the average French infantryman. Indeed, many newly recalled reservists had never even seen the weapon, and had to be hastily instructed in its use.

In addition to the infantry pattern rifle, there were also artillery, cavalry and gendarme models. The artillery version was not fully in service until 1873, though some were issued prior to the war. The cavalry carbine was generally issued in 1869 and 1870 and was carried by the Dragoons and Light Cavalry; the weapon had a range of 800 metres. The *cavalerie d'Afrique* carried a longer version, similar to the infantry rifle.

The Fusil Lance

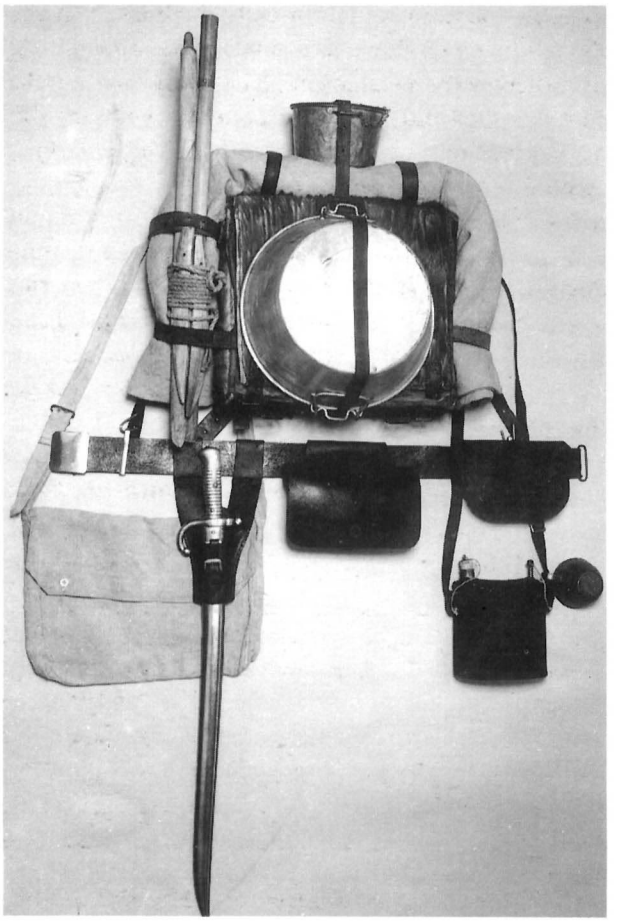
One of the most curious weapons of the period was the *Fusil Lance*. Carried exclusively by the Cent-Gardes, it was a breech-loading carbine which, with the addition of a monstrous bayonet, had the appearance of a lance. Introduced in 1856, it was the first breech-loader in service with the French army. The weapon had a calibre of 9 mm and an effective range of 700 metres. Designed by an imaginative army officer, Capt. Treuille de Beaulieu, it measured 117 cm in length and weighed 2.84 kg. The sabre bayonet weighed a further 1.4 kg and was 115.5 cm long, 85.5 cm for the blade alone!

The Reffye Mitrailleuse

On 7 May 1864 a preliminary report '*Note sur le Canon à Balles*' was sent to Napoleon by Gen. Leboeuf. In September of the following year, after due consideration, the Ministry of War authorised the construction of the necessary materials. In July 1866 its adoption was confirmed, and 24 pieces were made during the following year. Production was terminated in 1868 with a further 166 guns delivered.

From the start the mitrailleuse was shrouded in secrecy. Trials were carried out at the 'Polygon' at Versailles, attended only by a select few, who were obliged to sign a declaration of secrecy; such was the fear of spies that the gun itself was hidden in a tent, only the target being visible. Interestingly, the Prussians were well aware of the existence of machine guns, having themselves carried out field tests. They claimed to be unimpressed by the new weapon, though recognising its uses in static positions.

The mitrailleuse was developed at the Meudon workshops by an army officer, Verchère de Reffye, and funded in part by the Emperor himself, such was



The complete equipment carried by the infantry in 1870. The knapsack (model 1868) carries a rolled tent with two part pole (introduced in 1858) and pegs. On top of the tent is the individual mess tin (gamelle, model 1852) and attached to the rear of the pack, the squad version, or grande gamelle, which was issued on a regular basis from February 1870. The leather waist belt (model 1845) supports the bayonet frog (model 1867), the rear cartridge pouch (model 1845) and 'cartridge pocket' (model 1867), worn front right. The white haversack (model 1861) was worn on the left hip and the rectangular water canteen, introduced about 1856, was worn on the right. The soldier's cup was usually attached to the canteen strap. (Private Collection)

his enthusiasm for the weapon. It was originally intended to give one to each infantry battalion, at a time when they were still equipped with muzzle-loaders, in order to improve their firepower. When the Chassepot was introduced this idea was scrapped. The weapon had 25 barrels in a bank of five-by-five, and a calibre of 13 mm. The gun was charged by inserting a block containing 25 pre-loaded rounds, which were fired consecutively in a burst by rotating a handle; the maximum practicable rate of fire was five such bursts (125 rounds) a minute. The idea behind the mitrailleuse was that of producing the effects of massed infantry or canister fire at ranges beyond which this had previously been possible. The regulation firing tables extended out to 2,800 m, though 1,800 m was probably more realistic, with the effective range being somewhat less. Instructions published for the guidance of the operators laid down the maximum distances at which different targets could be engaged. For skirmishers this was deemed to be at less than 1,000 m, for lines 1,400–2,000 m and for columns 2,400 m. Artillery could be usefully engaged at a range of 1,800–2,500 m—in practice this advice was seen to be somewhat optimistic.

Unfortunately training was hampered by excessive secrecy. There were no full batteries organised in peacetime; instead they were put together as required, and insufficient men had been trained in their use. Typically, many officers who had experience of the weapon were posted to field artillery batteries due to an administrative error at the Ministry of War.

Overall the guns were disappointing in action, being badly out-ranged by the well-handled German guns. Tactically they were not used to their best advantage, taking their place often in the main gun-line rather than in an infantry support position. Consequently they were often put out of action before being able to engage the enemy infantry. The newness of the weapon and the lack of knowledge of senior commanders ensured that they were not used to their full potential—Bazaine, for example, claimed never to have seen one before the start of the campaign. Under the right circumstances they were very effective and accorded a high degree of respect by the Germans; but the guns were mechanically unreliable, the firing pins in particular being very prone to damage. Their effectiveness was also limited by a very narrow cone of fire and the lack of any real traversing ability. At the outbreak of war 24 batteries accompanied the field army.

Field Guns

The Imperial armies took the field in 1870 with two types of artillery piece: the 4-pdr. and 12-pdr. A further type, the 8-pdr., initially designed to replace the 12-pdr., was also available but did not play a part

in the opening campaign, though it did see widespread service in the Republican armies.

The rifled 4-pdr. was a relatively new piece of the 1858 *Système 'La Hitte'*, which entered service just in time to prove its worth in Italy the following year. It was a light, manoeuvrable piece, easily drawn by four horses and a considerable improvement on the smoothbores it replaced. The 12-pdr. was a smoothbore designed by Napoleon himself and later rebored. A much heavier weapon, it required six horses to draw it, and was used by the corps and army reserve. Of the 130 batteries of field guns available at the start of the war only 22 were of 12-pdrs., two in each Line corps and eight in the army reserve. Although the guns are commonly referred to as 'pounders', they were in fact graded in kilograms: see the accompanying table.

	Model	*Calibre*	*max range*	*rounds carried*	*common shell weight*	*charge weight*	*initial muzzle velocity*
4 pdr.	1858	86.5 mm	3,000 m	132	4 kg	550 g	343 mps
8 pdr.	1839/69	106.1 mm	3,800 m	96	7.25 kg	800 g	363 mps
12 pdr.	1853/59	121.3 mm	3,400 m	72	11.45 kg	1 kg	313 mps

One of the reasons often given for the German success in the crucial opening campaign of 1870 is their greatly superior artillery. There can be no doubt that this is true: in terms of range, accuracy and rate of fire, the Krupp breech-loaders enjoyed a decisive advantage over the older bronze muzzle-loaders of the French. Superior German tactical doctrine and crew training accentuated this.

The guns of the Imperial army could fire three types of round: common shell, shrapnel and canister. Unfortunately the effectiveness of the first was severely hampered by the use of time fuses, rather than the percussion fuses used by the Germans and which the French themselves had used in Mexico. They felt, however, that the dual ability to obtain air bursts and ricochets made the time fuses superior. The early battles of the war soon disabused them of this notion.

The shells used by the French contained a metal disc with a train of powder inside. By piercing one of the graduated marks on the top of the round, a hole was opened which allowed the flame of the explosion to ignite the train, and eventually the burster charge (hopefully on or above the target). The problem was that there were insufficient holes, only two for the common shell and four for shrapnel. If the round did not explode on target it would either ricochet (which could be very effective against close-order troops) or, if it struck a solid object such as a building, it might fracture, causing the fuse to malfunction. There is no doubt that this system was much inferior in practice to the technically less sophisticated German fuses which, though unable to produce either ricochets or air bursts, had a profound impact on morale through the percussive effects of their explosions.

Common Shell (obus ordinaire) In 1859 this round had had six flame holes, each of which covered a band of about 200 metres. For some reason this was reduced to two later in the same year with a considerable loss in effectiveness. For the 4-pdrs. these were set at 1,400–1,600 m and 2,750–2,950 m, and for the 12-pdrs. at 1,350–1,550 m and 2,650–2,850 m. In 1870 82 per cent of 4-pdr. and 88 per cent of 12-pdr. rounds were common shell. Ironically, at the battle of Gravelotte-St. Privat the Hessian artillery unlimbered at a range of 2,800 m from part of the French gun line, which proceeded to inflict heavy casualties on it, the time fuses for once proving very effective.

Shrapnel (obus à balles) Introduced in 1864, this round's usefulness was limited by its somewhat restricted range. With a total of four bursting bands—set at 500, 800, 1,000 and 1,200 m for the 4-pdr., and 500, 800, 1,100 and 1,400 m for the 12-pdr.—it did on occasion prove quite effective. The optimum shrapnel burst took place above and in front of the target, distributing small musket-ball-sized projectiles over a wide area. In 1870 it was in short supply.

Canister (mitraille) This round consisted of a tin container holding a number of marble-sized balls

which sprayed out when the charge ignited. Although quite lethal at close range, it was less effective than with the older smoothbores, the rifling making the dispersal pattern of the balls somewhat irregular. Its limited range also made the gunners vulnerable to return infantry fire. The round soon came to be regarded as having little real use on the battlefield.

* * *

Standards

By a decision of 31 December 1851, Napoleon as President ordered the reintroduction of the eagle on all regimental standards. Initially 190 were issued, presented at a grand ceremony at the Champ de Mars on 10 May 1852. Cast in bronze, standing 20 cm high and weighing 2.4 kg, they were considered by many to be too heavy. Consequently, in April 1855, it was decided to replace them with a lighter model, although in the event only the Guard, the Foreign Legion and two new Line infantry regiments received it.

It was not until 1860 that a new version was universally issued, and it was this *modèle 1860* that was carried by most regiments at the outbreak of war. Cast in aluminium, it weighed only 950 g, and at 18 cm in height was slightly smaller than its predecessors. The base bore the regimental number on the front and the name of the corps on the rear. Those of the Guard had the title and, where appropriate, the number of the regiment on the front and the words *Garde Impériale* on the rear. A total of 217 of the *modèle 1860* were issued, and all other eagles were sent to the *Musée d'Artillerie* on receipt of the new version. Interestingly, in 1864 the Emperor decreed that the earlier *modèle 1852* eagles damaged in action were to be returned to their regiments in exchange for the more recent issue as a mark of favour. It was also decreed after the battle of Magenta that any regiment that captured an enemy flag would receive the *Légion d'Honneur*, and have it attached to their eagle. The 3rd Zouaves received not only this honour, but also the medal *Al Valore Militare* for its services at Palestro in 1859.

The flags themselves were similar in design to those carried during the First Empire, bearing on the front the words: 'L'EMPEREUR NAPOLEON III AU .... REGIMENT ....', and on the rear the regiment's battle honours. Beneath the eagle a heavily brocaded tricolour cravat was also tied. The staff to which it was secured was painted dark blue, though it does not appear to have been of a uniform length, surviving examples in the *Musée de l'Armée* ranging from 211 to 235 cm long.

Model 1854 knapsack. Adopted on 28 April 1854 and modified on 16 May 1868, it was carried by the troops of the Guard as well as those of the Line. It was made of cowhide over a wooden frame and was fitted with three vertical and two horizontal straps by which the tent (inside which was also rolled a grey wool blanket), tent pole, pegs and cooking utensils were attached. (Private Collection)

According to the 1869 regulations, eagles were to be carried by a second lieutenant, escorted by two *fourriers* and three selected privates first class. In regiments of two battalions the eagle was carried by the first; in regiments of three or four battalions, by the second. Those battalions without an eagle would carry a fanion.

ORDERS OF BATTLE

Wissembourg (4 August 1870)

2nd Division (General Abel Douay)

1st Brigade

50th Line

74th Line

2nd Brigade
1st Tirailleurs Algériens
Divisional Troops
1 × Mitrailleuse battery
2 × 4 pounder batteries
Attached Cavalry Brigade[1]
3rd Hussars
11th Chasseurs

[1] This brigade formed part of General Duhesme's Cavalry Division (I Corps)

Douay's Division was considerably understrength on the day of the battle, having detached the 16th Chasseur Battalion and the 2/50th from the 1st Brigade and the three battalions of the 78th Line Infantry Regiment from the 2nd Brigade. Its total strength amounted to some 302 officers, 6,663 men, 1,296 horses and 18 guns.

Captain Rozat de Mandres of the 4th Chasseurs à Cheval in campaign dress. This officer served as an aide-de-camp to General Frossard, commander of 2nd Corps. (Private Collection)

Froeschwiller (6 August 1870)

1st Corps (Marshal MacMahon)

1st Division (General Ducrot)
1st Brigade
13th Chasseurs
18th Line
96th Line
2nd Brigade
45th Line
1st Zouaves
Divisional Troops
1 × Mitrailleuse battery
2 × 4 pounder batteries

2nd Division (General Pellé)
1st Brigade
50th Line
74th Line
2nd Brigade
78th Line
1st Tirailleurs Algériens
Divisional Troops
1 × Mitrailleuse battery
2 × 4 pounder batteries

3rd Division (General Raoult)
1st Brigade
8th Chasseurs
36th Line
2nd Zouaves
2nd Brigade
48th Line
2nd Tirailleurs Algériens
Divisional Troops
1 × Mitrailleuse battery
2 × 4 pounder batteries

4th Division (General Lartigue)
1st Brigade
1st Chasseurs
56th Line
3rd Zouaves
2nd Brigade
3rd Tirailleurs Algériens
Divisional Troops
1 × Mitrailleuse battery
2 × 4 pounder batteries

Cavalry Division (General Duhesme)
1st Brigade
3rd Hussars
11th Chasseurs
2nd Brigade
2nd Lancers
6th Lancers
3rd Brigade
8th Cuirassiers
9th Cuirassiers

Chef d'escadrons *de Beauffremont in the full dress uniform of an officer of Hussars. Note the Hungarian knot with four strands which denotes his rank and the full dress plume. (Private Collection)*

Artillery Reserve (Colonel de Vassart)
- 2 × 12 pounder
- 2 × 4 pounder
- 4 × 4 pounder horse batteries

7th Corps

1st Division (General Conseil Dumesnil)
- 1st Brigade
  - 17th Chasseurs
  - 3rd Line
  - 21st Line
- 2nd Brigade
  - 47th Line
  - 99th Line

2nd Reserve Cavalry Division (General Bonnemains)
- 1st Brigade
  - 1st Cuirassiers
  - 4th Cuirassiers
- 2nd Brigade
  - 2nd Cuirassiers
  - 3rd Cuirassiers
- Divisional Troops
  - 1 × Mitrailleuse battery
  - 1 × 4 pounder horse battery

Mars-la-Tour (Rezonville) 16 August 1870

Commander in Chief Marshal Bazaine

Imperial Guard (General Bourbaki)

1st Division (General Deligny)
- 1st Voltiguers
- 2nd Voltiguers
- 3rd Voltiguers
- 4th Voltiguers
- Guard Chasseur Battalion

2nd Division (General Picard)
- 1st Grenadiers
- 2nd Grenadiers
- 3rd Grenadiers
- Guard Zouave Regiment

Cavalry Division (General Desvaux)
- Guides of the Guard
- Chasseurs of the Guard
- Dragoons of the Guard
- Lancers of the Guard
- Cuirassiers of the Guard
- Carabiniers of the Guard

2nd Corps (General Frossard)

1st Division (General Vergé)
- 3rd Chasseurs
- 32nd Line
- 55th Line
- 76th Line
- 77th Line

2nd Division (General Bataille)
- 12th Chasseurs
- 8th Line
- 23rd Line

66th Line
67th Line

Attached Brigade from 5th Corps (General Lapasset)
14th Chasseurs
84th Line
97th Line
3rd Lancers

Cavalry Division (General Valabregue)
4th Chasseurs
5th Chasseurs
7th Dragoons
12th Dragoons

3rd Corps (Marshal Leboeuf)
1st Division (General Montaudon)
18th Chasseurs
51st Line
62nd Line
81st Line
90th Line

4th Division (General Aymard)
11th Chasseurs
44th Line
60th Line
80th Line
85th Line

Cavalry Division (General Clérembault)
2nd Chasseurs
3rd Chasseurs
10th Chasseurs
2nd Dragoons
4th Dragoons
5th Dragoons
8th Dragoons

4th Corps (General Ladmirault)
1st Division (General Cissey)
20th Chasseurs
1st Line
6th Line
57th Line
73rd Line

2nd Division (General Grenadier)
5th Chasseurs
13th Line

A captain of Line Lancers in full dress (old uniform). On campaign the czapska was covered by a black oilskin cover (see plate F3). (Private Collection)

43rd Line
64th Line
98th Line

Cavalry Division (General Legrand)
2nd Hussars
7th Hussars
3rd Dragoons
11th Dragoons

6th Corps (Marshal Canrobert)
1st Division (General Tixier)
9th Chasseurs
4th Line
10th Line

An 1858 pattern Cuirassier helmet. (Private Collection)

12th Line
100th Line

2nd Division (General Bisson)
9th Line

3rd Division (General Lafont de Villiers)
75th Line
91st Line
93rd Line
94th Line

4th Division (General Levassor-Sorval)
25th Line
26th Line
28th Line
70th Line

1st Reserve Cavalry Division (General du Barail)
2nd Chasseurs d'Afrique

3rd Reserve Cavalry Division (General de Forton)
1st Dragoons
9th Dragoons
7th Cuirassiers
10th Cuirassiers

NB As a general rule each infantry division had a battery of Mitrailleuses and two 4 pounder batteries attached, whilst the corps reserve had a further six or eight batteries (4 pounder horse and foot and 12 pounders). A Reserve Cavalry Division (as opposed to a corps cavalry division), had two horse batteries. The Army Artillery Reserve was also with the army at Metz, with a total of 16 batteries. The main exception to this rule was Canrobert's 6th Corps, which had left the majority of its guns at Chalons. Most of the deficiencies were made up from the Army Reserve.

THE PLATES

The army of Napoleon III was the object of the Emperor's personal attention, particularly with regard to its uniforms, a subject in which he took great interest. There were numerous reforms designed to improve the elegance of the army's dress, which were carried through regardless of cost. The influence of the army of the First Empire was never far from the surface, although the uniforms of the Line were, above all, the product of the war in Algeria.

A1: Cent-Garde in campaign dress, August 1870

Their full dress uniform was adapted somewhat less to the rigours of campaigning than those of other units. The lack of suitable headgear obliged the squadron to use the old-fashioned *chapeau* in place of the helmet (the only troops in the French army to do so). In the interests of comfort the cuirass was also laid aside, as were the elegent but uncomfortable breeches, which were replaced by the *pantalon de ville* worn inside the boots. The full uniform of the *Cent-Gardes* was laid down in a ministerial circular of 20 September 1854 and remained essentially unchanged throughout the corps' short history.

A2: General of Brigade, August 1870

The tunic and képi had become accepted campaign dress in Algeria, but were only sanctioned officially from 1847. The embroidered képi had been introduced in 1844, and adopted the madder red crown in 1853. This officer's rank is denoted by the two five pointed silver stars on his epaulettes and the single

row of gold embroidery on his képi. Generals of division had two rows of embroidery on the képi and three silver epaulette stars. Marshals had three rows and a silver device of crossed batons.

B1: Guide in campaign dress

Created in 1848, the Guides were given their prestigious uniform in 1853, which was similar to that worn by the Chasseurs à Cheval of the Guard under the First Empire. From 1868 the sabretache was abolished for those corps that possessed it (Guides, Chasseurs and Artillery of the Guard, and the Hussars and Chasseurs of the Line). In 1870 the Guides wore the pelisse and kolpack without plume or bag. The model 1866 (Chassepot) carbines were issued shortly before the beginning of the campaign and were worn slung across the back.

B2: Captain, Dragoons of the Guard in campaign dress

The uniform for this regiment was laid down in 1856 and was distinguished above all by the splendid (and costly) brass helmet. As a concession to the rigours of campaign life the plume and pompom were not worn, and the distinctive white full dress plastron was replaced by the plain green version.

B3: Brigadier-Fourrier, Lancers of the Guard, Mars-la-Tour, 16 August 1870

The distinctive white uniform worn by this regiment was laid down by regulations of June 1856 and June 1857 and made the Guard Lancers the most easily recognisable unit in the army. At the end of July 1870 however, this dazzling but impractical uniform was returned to the depot and replaced by the *veste* shown here, although it would appear that the officers had actually started the campaign in the sky blue *habit*. This man's rank is shown by the two scarlet stripes on the lower sleeve; that on the upper is a long service chevron. *Fourriers*, or quartermasters, were charged with administrative duties, including accountancy, within the regiment and were treated as NCOs.

C1: Grenadier of the Guard Metz, September 1870

Between 1854 and 1860 the Grenadiers had worn the elegant but uncomfortable *habit*. In 1860 however the

The 7th Battery of the 20th Artillery Regiment attacked by Prussian Cuirassiers at Rezonville; during von Bredow's 'Death Ride', several French batteries were overrun. Note the short artillery pattern rifles which appear to be earlier percussion models rather than the newer Chassepot

A group of francs-tireurs of the Battalion Lafon-Mocquard*; formed in Paris from ex-soldiers and volunteers, it was attached to MacMahon's 1st Corps during the brief Sedan campaign. In this painting they are depicted as wearing a dark blue* veste *and képi with white or light grey trousers, a common enough confection amongst irregulars of the period. (Watercolour by Paris)*

uniforms of the Guard infantry underwent a profound change, partly in recognition of the inadequacies highlighted by the war in the Crimea. The model 1860 tunic was fastened with nine yellow metal buttons, to which white braid was later attached by an imperial order of 11 December. The Grenadiers began the campaign in their imposing bearskins, but these were replaced by the *bonnet de police* on 30 July, due to a shortage of képis. During the siege of Metz an increasing number of képis were worn.

C2: Voltigeur of the Guard, August 1870

The uniform worn by the Voltigeurs was no less affected by the 1860 regulations than that of the Grenadiers. At the start of the campaign they were wearing the regulation shako, which was identical to that of the line, as was the eagle plate it bore. Between 1860 and 1870 various inspectors commented on the poor quality of this headgear, which was often too pliable and rarely enjoyed its regulation life-span. The shako was replaced by the *bonnet de police* at the same time as the Grenadiers' bearskins. It was intended to supply the Voltigeurs with a blue képi with a yellow band, although in the event many wore a red képi with a blue band.

C3: Maréchal des Logis, Horse Artillery of the Guard

Following their First Empire predecessors, the Guard Horse Artillery wore an elaborate Hussar-style uniform with five rows of 18 buttons. The dolman worn by the *Régiment Montée* only had three rows of buttons with narrower braid (brandebourgs) to allow the haversack straps to fit under the shoulder loops. On campaign only the officers and NCOs wore the dolman, the men using instead the plain *veste* (see G3)

D1: Zouave

The uniform worn by the Zouaves first made its appearance in 1833, and was fixed definitively in 1853. From that time on it scarcely changed and could still be seen in parades as late as 1962, when the Zouaves were finally disbanded. The uniform consisted of the short open jacket (Shama), which had the only feature which distinguished the three regiments, namely the false pockets (Tombeaux), which were coloured madder red, white and yellow for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Regiments respectively. Headgear was the fez (Chéchia) which had a white turban wrapped around it in full dress. The uniform depicted here is that of the 3rd Zouaves at Froeschwiller (6 August). The high white gaiters worn here were fastened by 12 small buttons. Leather jambières, which were attached to the top of the gaiters were not usually worn during this campaign. Sometimes the gaiters were of madder red or dark blue cloth. Interestingly the Zouaves was the only corps which allowed their men full beards; an opportunity of which many availed themselves. The Zouaves used much the same equipment as their colleagues in the Guard and Line, although the arrangement of their packs was somewhat different, with a folded grey-blue mantle (Caban) and woollen blanket rolled inside a white or light grey tent attached one above the other to it.

D2: Tirailleur Algérien

The terror of the Prussians, the Turcos first received their uniform in 1853, the colour being that of the Constantine battalion before that date. In cut it was identical to the uniform worn by the Zouaves, though differing of course in colour. The Chéchia was scarlet, rather than the madder red of the Zouaves, and under it they wore a white skull cap, which the

Zouaves did not. The baggy Turkish style breeches in wool or cotton were worn, according to circumstances, on the order of the Colonel, along with yellow-orange jambières.

D3: Chef de Bataillon, Tirailleurs Algériens, campaign dress

The officer's rank is denoted by the four-stranded Hungarian knot on each sleeve and by the four horizontal gold stripes around the képi. The trousers were quite wide at the top, becoming narrower below the knee until they closed quite tightly around the ankle. Many fashion conscious young officers affected to wear them long to create a series of folds at the ankle.

E1: Brigadier, 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique, Sedan

This figure illustrates the Chasseurs as they would have appeared during their ill-fated charges at Sedan. Their uniform had become well known all over the world, following distinguished service in Algeria, the Crimea, Italy, Lebanon, China and Mexico. From 1862 the trousers were decorated with a sky blue stripe on either side of the piping. Typical campaign dress consisted of the full dress headgear (casquette), which was either the 1858 pattern or the lower 1862 model shown here, and the undress *veste*.

E2: Sous-lieutenant, Chasseurs d'Afrique

The dolman and trousers were of the 1862 pattern, the *houzeaux* (black leather gaiters) of the 1843 type. It would appear that there was a certain amount of diversity with regard to footwear amongst the officers, some prefering boots, others shoes. This officer's rank is denoted by the single Hungarian knot on each sleeve. He carries the much used and abused 1822 model light cavalry sabre.

E3: 'Marsouin', Marine Infantry, Bazeilles

This defender of 'La Maison de la Derniere Cartouche' wears the 1867 pattern infantry greatcoat which was issued to the marines on 20 July 1870 and adapted to distinguish its wearers. According to instructions issued, the red collar patches were to be replaced by a red anchor and the buttons were likewise to have an anchor on them. This nautical symbol was likewise to be found on the képi band and belt buckle. The black cravate is typical of the marines, who officially adopted it in 1869 for wear in France, although it was worn before this date in the colonies, where it replaced the black collar worn by the rest of the army. The trousers were identical to those of the *Garde Mobile* and *Garde Nationale*, a source of some chagrin to the marines! In order to avoid such an unflattering comparison, a report by the colonel of the 3rd Regiment in December 1869 requested the introduction of the madder red infantry trousers. This was not approved.

General Legrand, who in 1870 commanded the cavalry division of 4th Corps, and was killed in hand-to-hand fighting in the great cavalry battle at Mars-la-Tour. His epaulettes, bearing the three stars which denote his rank are to be found in the Musée de Guerre at Gravelotte and his képi, which bears the sabre mark that killed him is in the Musée de l'Armée in Paris

F1: Cuirassier, 2nd Regiment, Froeschwiller, 6 August 1870

Part of Bonnemains' 2nd Reserve Cavalry Division, the regiment suffered heavy casualties in its charges against unbroken German infantry. The tunic worn is the 1859 model, whose skirts were shortened in 1868. Unlike much of the Line Cavalry, the Cuirassiers wore a standardised uniform by the outbreak of war. The elegant 1854 pattern cuirass, designed for the Imperial Guard, was issued to the 1st and 2nd Line Regiments due to a shortage of the 1855 Line model. The sabre is the 1854 heavy cavalry issue.

F2: Dragoon, 3rd Regiment, August 1870

The Dragoon regiments had traditionally worn the green coat and copper helmet with an imitation panther skin turban. In 1868 however a dark blue tunic was introduced to replace the coat, although this conversion was far from complete at the outbreak of war. This example of the new uniform is topped with the 1858 model helmet, made entirely of brass. He also carries the 1854 pattern sabre.

F3: Lancer, 2nd Regiment, July 1870

The traditional Lancer Kurtka with reversible plastron was also replaced in 1868 by a new dark blue single-breasted tunic with yellow distinctions. By the outbreak of war however, many continued to wear the old uniform, as illustrated here. The various regiments were identified by the collar, cuffs and turnbacks, which for the eight regiments were respectively as follows: 1st—yellow, blue, yellow; 2nd—yellow, yellow, yellow; 3rd—blue, blue, yellow; 4th—blue, yellow, yellow; 5th—red, blue, red; 6th—red, red, red; 7th—blue, blue, red; 8th—blue, red, red. The 1858 model czapska is the same as that worn by the Guard Lancers, with a black oilskin cover.

G1: Maréchal des Logis, 2nd Hussars, 1870

An ambitious reform set out in July 1868 ordered a new sky blue tunic for the light cavalry (white distinctions for the Hussars, black for the Chasseurs). In the Hussars this modification was only implemented by the 1st and 8th Regiments by 1870. For the others a provisional arrangement was made in texts issued on 22 and 24 August 1868, which were in effect at the outbreak of war. In the 2nd Regiment the changes were limited to the introduction of a single sky blue stripe on the trousers and the red képi with sky blue band. It would appear that the 3rd and 5th Regiments retained the uniforms issued in the reforms of 1859–60, whilst the remaining three regiments, namely the 4th, 6th and 7th received individual items of the new dress and items discarded by other regiments.

G2: Chasseur à Cheval, 12th Regiment, Schirlenhof, 25 July 1870

The first fatality of the war was Maréchal des Logis Pagnier of the 12th Chasseurs, killed during the celebrated skirmish at the Inn of Schirlenhof with Count Zeppelin and a detachment of Baden

General Margueritte. At the beginning of the war he commanded a brigade of du Barail's division of Chasseurs d'Afrique. In late August he was promoted to général de division, *and led the 1st Reserve Division at Sedan, where he was mortally wounded*

General Frossard and his staff on the day of the Battle of Spicheren, 6 August. (Watercolour by Paris)

Dragoons. The Hussar-type uniform was given to the Chasseurs à Cheval in 1854, and was worn throughout the war. The 1868 regulations seem to have been even more retarded in the Chasseurs than in the Hussars, although it seems likely that some of the new uniforms may have been issued to men of the 1st, 6th and 9th Regiments. There were no regimental facings for the Chasseurs, although the regimental number was on the pompom. The lambswool kolpack was of a type unique to the corps.

G3: Gunner, Horse Artillery, August–September 1870

The shako with plaque bearing crossed cannon barrels was fixed as the regulation headgear for the campaign by an order of 15 July. In fact the képi was certainly worn by most regiments from the outset. As in the Guard, the men wore the simple *veste*, whilst the officers and NCOs wore the dark blue *habit* and plastron. The 1822 model sabre was also carried by the horse artillery whereas the *artillerie montée* had the musketoon.

H1: Line Infantryman

The infantry uniform was largely a product of the French experience in Algeria, which saw the introduction of the képi and the habitual wearing of the greatcoat as the only upper garment on campaign. The uniform depicted here was the latest of a series of successive modifications introduced on 2 December 1867. The greatcoat (model 1867) was woven of 90 per cent blue and ten per cent white wool. Red trousers had been worn since 1829, although those shown here were the product of the 1867 regulations which replaced the elegant but impractical chasseur type worn since 1860. The habit of tucking the trousers inside the gaiters was also a habit acquired in Algeria. The képi (model 1867) was universally liked as both practical and comfortable, although numerous modifications were made to the dimensions and the shape of the peak. The 67th Regiment belonged to the 2nd Division of General Frossards' 2nd Corps. It saw more action than most, fighting at Saarbrucken, Spicheren, Mars-la-Tour and St Privat.

H2: Sous-lieutenant of Infantry, August–September 1870

The regulation uniform of dark blue tunic (model 1867), képi and red trousers was ordered at the start of the campaign, although the tunic and képi were actually of black cloth. In the absence of epaulettes an order of 15 July stated that rank insignia were to be attached to officers' tunics in the form of gold braid stripes around the lower sleeve: one, two three or four distinguishing the *sous-lieutenant*, lieutenant, captain and *chef de bataillon* respectively. The lieutenant-colonel wore five, of which the second and fourth were silver, the colonel five, all of which were gold. The same number of gold braids also decorated the képi; note that officers' képis did not bear the regimental number.

An officer of the medical corps. The aiguillette was worn on the right shoulder (whether on campaign or not) and marks him out as a member of the Imperial Guard. (Private Collection)

H3: Chasseur à Pied, campaign dress, August 1870

The Chasseurs took the field in a dark blue tunic and

képi, despite an instruction to wear the *veste* and shako. The tunic was easily distinguishable from that of the infantry of the Line by its pointed cuffs and blue collar. The buttons also bore a horn and the battalion number. The distinctive epaulettes and trousers further highlighted a difference that the Chasseurs were proud of. The accoutrements and equipment were identical to those of the infantry with the exception of the belt buckle.

Notes sur les planches en couleur

A1 Uniforme de grande tenue comprenant le chapeau vieille mode à la place du casque. La cuirasse est omise pour plus de confort, ainsi que les hauts-de-chausses, qui sont remplacés par le pantalon de ville porté à l'intérieur des bottes. **A2** Tunique et képi brodé avec couronne rouge garance. Son grade se remarque aux deux étoiles d'argent à cinq branches sur les épaulettes et au galon doré d'un seul rang sur son képi.

B1 On donna aux Guides leur uniforme en 1853. La sabretache fut abolie à partir de 1868. En 1870, ils portaient la pelisse et le kolpack sans plume ou sac. Le modèle 1866 (Chassepot) de carabine se portait en bandoulière en travers du dos. **B2** L'uniforme réglementaire de 1856, comprenant le casque en cuivre. La plume et le pompon ne se portaient pas en campagne et on remplaça le plastron blanc de grande tenue par une version en vert simple. Les fausses bottes de l'officier étaient légèrement plus étroites que celles portées par les autres grades. **B3** La veste portée après juillet 1870, qui remplaça l'uniforme blanc caractéristique, bien que les officiers aient commencé la campagne dans leur habit bleu ciel. Sur le bas de la manche se trouvent deux rayures rouge vif qui indiquent le grade, et sur le haut un long chevron de service.

C1 Le modèle 1860 de tunique qui s'attache par neuf boutons de métal jaunes avec un galon blanc. Pendant le siège de Metz, on porta un nombre croissant de képis, ce qui fut le style d'août 1870. **C2** Uniforme de style voltigeur. Le shako réglementaire fut remplacé par le bonnet de police bien que de nombreux voltigeurs aient porté un képi rouge avec une bande bleue, avec passe-poil jaune et grenade. **C3** Uniforme élaboré de style hussard de la Maison d'Artillerie de la Garde. Seuls les officiers et les sous-officiers portaient le dolman en campagne, les autres grades portant la veste simple.

D1 L'uniforme des 3èmes Zouaves à Froeschwiller avec les fausses poches dans la couleur régimentaire jaune. La coiffure de tête était le fez et les hautes guêtres blanches s'attachaient avec 12 petits boutons. Les Zouaves étaient le seul corps autorisé à porter la barbe longue. Leur équipement était à peu près le même que celui des soldats de la Garde et de Ligne bien qu'arrangé quelque peu différemment. **D2** L'uniforme des Turcos était identique dans sa coupe à celui des Zouaves mais le fez était écarlate porté sur une calotte blanche. Les hauts-de-chausses amples étaient portés avec des jambières jaune-orange. **D3** Un uniforme très élégant, caractéristique des officiers de l'armée d'Afrique; on dénote le grade par le noeud hongrois à quatre brins sur chaque manche et par quatre rayures dorées horizontales sur le képi. Les pantalons étaient larges en haut, rétrécissant au-dessous du genou pour enfin serrer la cheville.

E1 L'uniforme des Chasseurs tel qu'ils le portèrent à Sedan. Les pantalons étaient décorés avec une bande bleu ciel de chaque côté du passe-poil. Tenue caractéristique de campagne, grande tenue, modèle 1862, casquette et veste de petite tenue. **E2** Dolman et pantalons de modèle 1862 et guêtres de cuir noir, modèle de 1843. Certains officiers préféraient les bottes, d'autres les chaussures. Le grade se remarque au noeud hongrois simple sur chaque manche et il porte le modèle 1822 de sabre de la cavalerie légère. **E3** Le grand manteau d'infanterie, modèle de 1867, avec des ancres rouges sur le col, et des boutons avec ancres. L'ancre apparaît également sur le képi et la boucle du ceinturon. Une cravatte noire est portée avec des pantalons identiques à ceux de la Garde Mobile et de la Garde Nationale.

F1 Modèle de tunique de 1859 avec jupes raccourcies, la cuirasse de modèle de 1854 conçue pour la Garde impériale, et le sabre de la cavalerie lourde. **F2** La tunique bleu foncé de 1868 avec le casque en cuivre, modèle de 1858, et le sabre, modèle 1854. **F3** Le Lancer Kurtka traditionnel avec plastron réversible et czapska Le Lancer Kurtka traditionnel avec plastron réversible et czapska de modèle 1858, avec toile cirée noire de protection.

G1 Ce personnage porte l'uniforme hussard standard de l'époque antérieure aux réformes de juillet 1868. Les seules concessions aux réformes sont l'unique rayure bleu ciel sur les pantalons et le képi rouge avec bande bleu ciel. **G2** L'uniforme standard de modèle hussard 1854 porté par les Chasseurs à cheval tout au long de la guerre. Le numéro de régiment apparaissait sur le pompon mais il n'y avait pas de parements servant à distinguer les différents corps. Le kolpack en laine d'agneau était unique au corps de régiment. **G3** Ce fusilier porte le képi et, comme la Garde, la veste simple. Il est armé du sabre modèle 1822.

H1 Képi modèle 1867, grand manteau modèle 1867, pantalons rouges réglementaires rentrés dans les guêtres. **H2** Tunique, modèle de 1867, képi et pantalons rouges avec indication du grade par une simple bande tressée et dorée autour du bas de la manche et sur le képi. Il n'y avait pas de numéro de régiment sur les képis des officiers. **H3** Tunique et képi bleu foncé de chasseur. La tunique se distinguait de celle de l'infanterie par ses manchettes pointues, son col bleu et ses épaulettes caractéristiques. Les boutons avec une corne, le numéro du régiment et les pantalons caractéristiques font encore plus ressortir les différences. L'équipement était semblable à celui de l'infanterie excepté la boucle du ceinturon.

Farbtafeln

A1 Galauniform mit altmodischem Chapeau anstatt eines Helms. Der Küraß fehlt aus Bequemlichkeitsgründen, ebenso die Breeches, hier ersetzt durch Pantalon de ville, die in die Stiefel gesteckt werden. **A2** Bluse und bestickte Kappe mit krapprotem Kopf. Rang ersichtlich durch fünf Silbersterne auf den Epauletten und die Goldschnur an der Kappe.

B1 Die Kundschafter erhielten ihre Uniform 1853. Ab 1868 wurde die Säbeltasche abgeschafft. 1870 trugen sie pelzbesetzten Mantel mit Kalpak ohne Feder oder Beutel. Der Karabiner Model 1866 (Chassepot) wurde auf dem Rücken getragen. **B2** Die 1856 festgelegte Uniform, mit Messinghelm. Feder und Pompom wurden im Feld nicht getragen, und das weiße Gala-Plastron wurde durch eine schlichte grüne Version ersetzt. Die Offiziersstiefel waren etwas schmaler als die der anderen Ränge. **B3** Die Jacke nach Juli 1870 ersetzte die typische weiße Uniform, wenn die Offiziere auch den Feldzug in einem himmelblauen Habit begannen. Am Ärmel befinden sich zwei scharlachrote Streifen als Rangabzeichen, darüber ein Winkel, der langjährigen Dienst anzeigt.

C1 Die Bluse Modell 1860, geschlossen mit neun gelben, weiß besetzten Metallknöpfen. Während der Belagerung von Metz wurden immer mehr Kappen getragen diese hier nach dem Muster von 1870. **C2** Uniform nach Voltigeur-Art. Der vorschriftsmäßige Tschako wurde durch das Bonnet de police ersetzt, obwohl viele Voltigeurs eine rote Kappe mit blauem Band und gelben Besatz trugen. **C3** Kunstvolle Uniform im Husarenstil für die berittene Gardeartillerie. Nur Offiziere und Unteroffiziere trugen im Feld den Dolman; die anderen Ränge trugen die schlichte Veste.

D1 Uniform des 3. Zuavenregiments bei Froeschwiller, mit falschen Taschen in der gelben Regimentsfarbe. Kopfbedeckung war der Fez, und die hohen weißen Gamaschen waren durch 12 kleine Knöpfe befestigt. Die Zuaven durften als einzige Einheit Vollbärte tragen. Ihre Ausrüstung war etwa dieselbe wie die der Garde- und Linienregimenter, wenn auch etwas verschieden arrangiert. **D2** Die Uniform der Turcos war im Schnitt identisch mit der der Zuaven, aber mit scharlachrotem Fez über einem weißen Käppchen. Die bauschigen Breeches wurden zusammen mit gelb-orangefarbenen Jambieres getragen. **D3** Sehr elegante Uniform, typisch für die Offiziere der französischen Afrika-Armee, mit Rangabzeichen angezeigt durch durch den vierteiligen Ungarischen Knoten an jedem Ärmel und durch vier horizontale Goldstreifen auf der Kappe. Die Hose war breit um die Schenkel und wurde unterhalb der Knie enger, bis sie eng um den Knöckel anlag.

E1 Die Uniform der Chasseurs im Sudan. Die Hose hatte einen himmelblauen Streifen zu beiden Seiten der Biese. Typische Felduniform des Modells 1862, Galauniform-Casquette und Dienst-Veste. **E2** Dolman von 1862 samt Hose, schwarze Ledergamaschen von 1843. Manche Offiziere bevorzugten Stiefel, andere Schuhe. Rangabzeichen ist der Ungarische Knoten an jedem Ärmel; er trägt den leichten Kavalleriesäbel Modell 1822. **E3** Der lange Infanteriemantel von 1867, mit roten Ankern am Kragen und Knöpfe mit Ankern darauf. Der Anker erscheint auch auf der Kappe und der Gürtelschnalle. Eine schwarze Kravatte wurde zusammen mit einer Hose getragen, die identisch mit jener der Garde Mobile und der Garde National war.

F1 Bluse Modell 1859, verkürzt, der Küraß von 1854, entworfen für die kaiserliche Garde, und der schwere Kavalleriesäbel von 1854. **F2** Die dunkelblaue Bluse Modell 1868, mit Messinghelm von 1858 und Säbel von 1854. **F3** Traditioneller Lanzenreiter Kurtka mit wendbaren Plastron und Kappe Modell 1858, bespannt mit schwarzem Ölzeug.

G1 Diese Figur trägt die Standard-Husarenuniform aus der Zeit vor der Reform von Juli 1868. Die einzige Konzession an diese Reformen ist der himmelblaue Streifen an der Hose und die rote Kappe mit himmelblauem Band. **G2** Die Standard-Husarenuniform von 1854, getragen von den berittenen Chasseurs während des ganzen Krieges. Die Regimentsnummer erschien auf dem Pompom, aber ohne Regiments-abzeichen. Der Kalpak aus Lammwolle wurde nur von dieser Einheit getragen. **G3** Dieser Artillerist trägt die Kappe und wide die Garde die einfache Veste. Er ist bewaffnet mit dem Säbel Modell 1822.

H1 Kappe Modell 1867, Mantel Modell 1867, rote Hose von 1867, mit Gamaschen. **H2** Bluse Modell 1867, Kappe und rote Hose; Rang gekennzeichnet durch einen geflochtenen Goldstreifen am Ärmel und an der Kappe. Offizierskappen trugen keine Regimentsnummer. **H3** Dunkelblaue Chasseur-Bluse und Kappe. Die Bluse unterschied sich von der der Infanterie durch die spitzen Manschetten, den blauen Kragen und die typischen Epauletten. Die Knöpfe mit einem Horn und der Regimentsnummer sowie die typische Hose betonten ebenfalls diesen Unterschied. Die Ausrüstung war dieselbe wie für die Infanterie, mit Ausnahme der Gürtelschnalle.

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