

Scorched Earth: Masséna's Retreat from Portugal

A Scenario for *Sharp Practice 2*



Masséna's army has been repulsed by the Anglo-Portuguese forces manning the lines of Torres Vedras at the Battle of Sobral, and begins his long and painful retreat back into Spain. His enemies have ravaged the land, making sure that his troops starve. Guerillas and Anglo-Portuguese patrols harry his forces, making their already-miserable existence worse still. Many of the French troops and those of their allies are starving.

A single chicken or pig is a prize of great value, and death in the competition for such a prize is common.

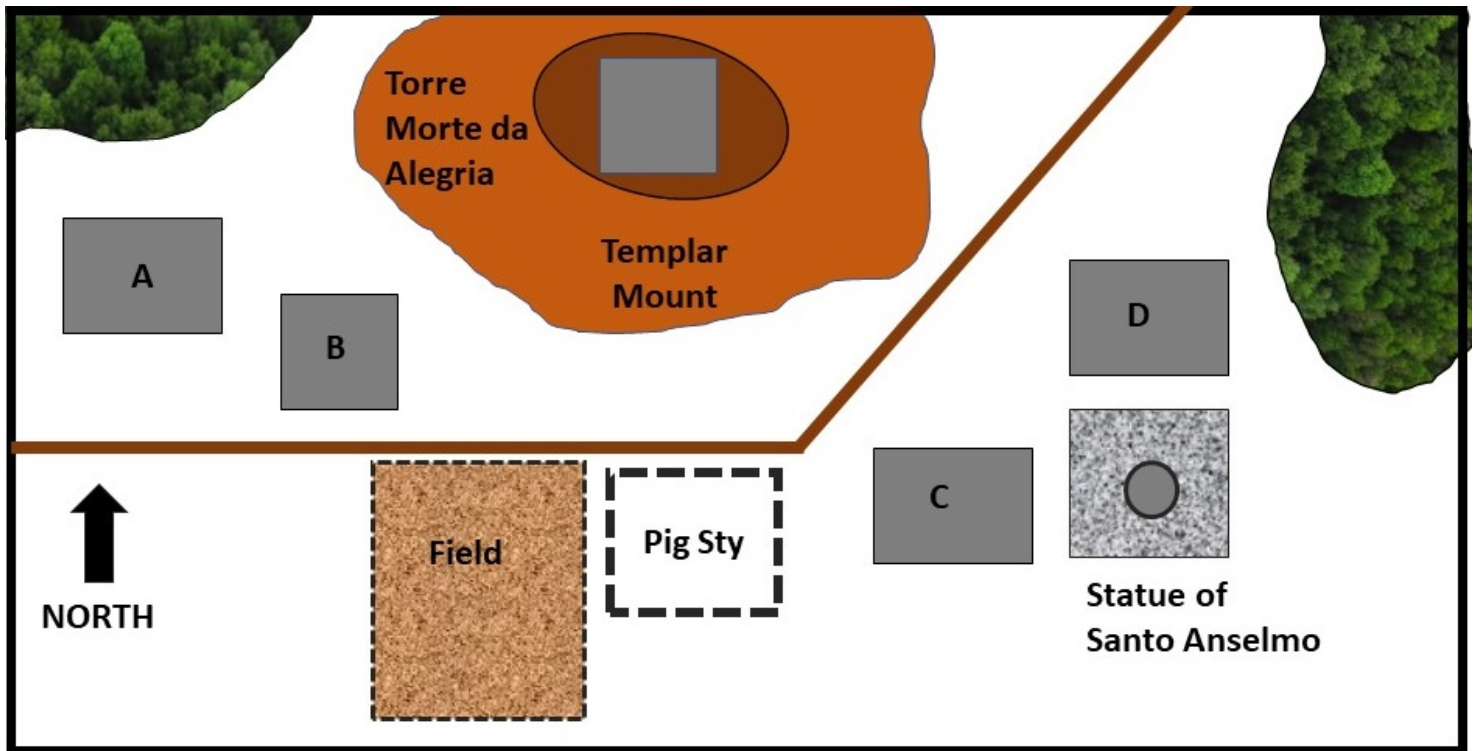
High up in the Serra de Estrela, above the Mondego River, a party of foraging French troops encounters their enemies in a complicated situation involving livestock, guerillas, French and German looters, and Anglo-Portuguese scouts meeting in a small and relatively untouched village high in the mountains. To complicate matters, the village is the site of a decaying Templar castle, where rumor has it that the sacred banner of the revered Santa Esmerelda is hidden, in the keeping of an old Portuguese family of once-royal blood. Wellington has identified this banner as a key to rousing the Portuguese and Spanish against the French invaders. If the French do not capture the banner - or at least find themselves something to eat - they are in trouble!



The sacred and somewhat equivocal banner of Santa Esmerelda. (When one of the French officers learned of it, they questioned whether any soldier in their right mind would die for a "goose on a stick." Their superior's answer was immediate: "I don't know about that, but I'm certainly hungry enough to kill for one.")

The Tabletop

The map below depicts the village of Santo Anselmo:



The woods, field, and the whole of the Templar Mount are considered Broken Ground. The Field is surrounded by a low wall and hedge which provides soft cover and counts as a Minor Obstacle. The Pig Sty is surrounded by a wall which also counts as a Minor Obstacle, but provides hard cover. The houses and the tower all give hard cover as well. There is assumed to be at least a single window in any building face, even if this is not reflected by the models on the table. The Statue of Santo Anselmo is situated in a paved courtyard which is open ground, and which will not provide significant cover.

The French will enter from the west along the road in whatever formation or order they choose.

The Anglo-Portuguese forces will enter from the road exiting the table to the north or in the clear terrain around it, except as otherwise arranged by the game master.

Forces

Note that all leaders may command any of the units on their side, except as noted. All appear in this scenario on foot.

French

The French have two goals: the first is to secure as much provender as possible, with orders to bring it back intact to the main body of the army (troops who are pillaging in an undisciplined fashion can be assumed to consume whatever they find on the spot.) The second goal is to secure the Banner of Santa Esmerelda, in order to deny possession of this sacred artefact to the Portuguese. While it may be a subject of merriment among the rank and file, it is taken very seriously as a political symbol by the high command. After these things have been secured, the French must exit the table in the direction from which they have come, and return to the main body of their army.

Chevalier Maurice du Montluc: He is a Status III leader, and officer in the Grenadiers à Cheval, the senior cavalry regiment of the Imperial Guard. He carries sword and pistol, but operates on foot for this scenario. He is the only gently-born leader among the French on his side (von Ubermeyer also has pretensions to nobility, but

he is a German - as if the two could actually be combined!). He is known to be quite imposing and arrogant, but people often respond to his demands as a result of these factors.

Captain Louis Benoit: He is a Status II leader in command of the grenadier company. He also carries sword and pistol.

French Grenadiers: Three groups of French Grenadiers, 1809-1812.

Lieutenant Alphonse Durant: A Status I leader in command of the Legère skirmishers. Armed with sword and pistol.

French Legère Skirmishers: Two groups of French Voltigeur Skirmishers, 1809-1812.

Brevet-Major Klaus von Ubermeyer: With a stronger force of Confederation of the Rhine troops committed to the French escorting party, this Status I leader has been assigned to command them. He is armed with sword and pistol, and is a nobleman by birth if not by habit. He may only command the Confederation of the Rhine groups.

Schwarzburg-Sonderhausen Company: Two groups of Confederation of the Rhine troops, classed as French Line 1809-1812.

Anglo-Portugese

The Anglo-British contingent is lead by Major Samuelson, an exploring officer. He has enlisted the aid of a band of the local guerillas and their famous leader. The force is otherwise made up of a mixed group of Portugese light troops, and British and Portugese line. They are under orders to deny any forage to the French, and further to secure the sacred Banner of Sanat Esmerelda for themselves, to be returned to Lisbon and used in propaganda exercises conducted by the Church.

Juan "El Empecinado" Martin Diez: Although some distance from his usual stomping grounds in the Duero valley, this famous Status II leader has promised to help Patrick Whelan in his last-ditch attempt to save the spy. He is armed with sword and pistol. Such is his reputation that he is able to command any non-British group (the British have a habit of mistaking him for "just another wog"...) He has won noble status for himself (his line was awarded the nickname - "the Undaunted" - in perpetuity in gratitude for his service against the French). Civilians tend to react negatively to him, however, as he is quite full of his own accomplishments.

Guerrilla Skirmishers: One group classed as Spanish Guerrilla Skirmishers.

Sergeant Hodges: A Status I leader, known for his strict sense of discipline, Puritanical views, and dislike of drink in particular. He carries sword and pistol. He may only command the British soldiers, who all despise him for what seem to be excellent reasons.

British Scouting Party: One group of British Line infantry.

Major Edgar Samuelson: A British exploring officer, who is technically an adviser to the Portugese, but is in fact the overall commander of the Anglo-Portugese forces, due to his knowledge of the skeletons hiding in various closets, and the application of a few well-placed bribes. He is a Status III Leader of gentle birth, and is considered handsome and charming by all who meet him. He carries sword and pistol.

Colonel Francisco da Silveira Pinto da Fonseca Teixeira: A Portugese nobleman who has been tasked with escorting El Mercùrio to her rendezvous with the British, in command of the Portugese forces. He is a Status II leader and carries sword and pistol.

Crack Portugese Line Infantry: Three groups of Portugese Fuzileiros, 1811.

Luis Joaquim Barreto: A gentleman in command of the Portugese Cazadores Atiradores, and a Status I leader. He is armed with sword and pistol.

Portugese Cazadores Atiradores: Two groups of rifle-armed Cazadores Atiradores in skirmish.

Neutrals

The Contessa: A Portugese noblewoman whose family owns the long-abandoned Templar tower, and is reputed to be the caretaker of the sacred banner. Her family has long since lost its standing and fortune, but she acts as the leader of the small community since the death of her parents some years ago. She is an imposing and attractive younger woman, with strong Catholic sentiments and a hatred of the French invaders.

Leonor: The Contessa's younger brother. He is the keeper of the livestock in the village, and is known for sharp dealing. Much against his sister's advice, he aims to make a profit from the armies passing through the locale by selling them food and information, however he can. He may be foolish, but he is also fearless.

Joaquim Pascoal da Barquinha: An aging and long-winded man, he likes to wave a sword but is taken seriously as a combatant by no one. He has served the Contessa's family for many decades, and is familiar with all of the local lore, although it can take some time to get him talking. (Once started, however, he is difficult to shut up...) He is devoted to the Contessa, and sees himself as her protector.

Estrela: She is the Contessa's maid, and is privy to all of the secrets of the small community. She can be easily charmed by those of the male persuasion, and is not subject to any particular pangs of devotion to her mistress.

Victory Conditions

The capture of the Banner of Santa Esmerelda outweighs any other concerns: food can be found in many places (well, possibly not *that* many these days) but there is only one sacred banner. Possession of the banner at the end of the game conveys victory. It must be carried off the table by its possessor at the point where they entered the table.

For the French, the location of provender is a necessity, and they will be judged as victor or otherwise based on how much they are able to carry back to the main army. The Anglo-Portugese will attempt to minimize what they are able to obtain.