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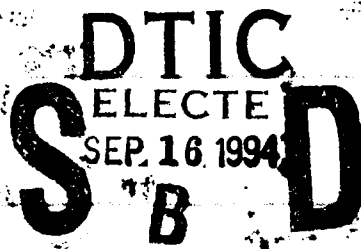
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Marshal Louis N. Davout and the
Art of Command

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This paper involves an in-depth study of the art of command at all three levels of warfare. It examines this art through the eyes of one of Napoleont Marshals, Louis N. Davout. The paper addresses and accomplishes three primary goals. First, it ~~first~~ ^{examines} the art of command and shows its relevance to modern day warfare. Second, the paper shows that Marshal Davout was the best of Napoleon's generals and had an art of command that rivaled the Emperor himself. Finally, the paper demonstrates how Davout was instrumental in winning the battle of Abensberg-Eckmuehl.

The study proves that Marshal Davout displayed an art of command at Abensberg-Eckmuehl that ensured success for Napoleon during the early phases of his Austrian campaign of 1809. It does this through a detailed analysis of his actions throughout the five days of fighting from April 19 to April 23, 1809. The study then draws conclusions to help define the art of command from Davout's actions.

Art of Command, Louis N. Davout, Abensberg-Eckmuehl,
Napoleonic Warfare

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1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves a clear understanding of the context and the specific information required.

2. Once the problem is identified, the next step is to gather relevant information. This can be done through research, consultation with experts, or by analyzing existing data.

3. After gathering information, the next step is to analyze the data and identify patterns or trends. This involves a critical evaluation of the information and a synthesis of the findings.

4. The final step in the process is to draw conclusions and make recommendations. This involves a clear and concise summary of the findings and a proposal for action based on the analysis.

5. It is important to remember that the process is iterative and may require revisiting previous steps as more information is gathered or as the analysis evolves.

6. The process is a continuous cycle that allows for the refinement of ideas and the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the problem.

7. The process is a key component of many fields of study and is essential for the advancement of knowledge and the solution of complex problems.

8. The process is a fundamental skill that is used in a wide range of contexts, from scientific research to business decision-making.

9. The process is a critical part of the scientific method and is used to test hypotheses and develop theories.

10. The process is a key component of the engineering design process and is used to develop and test new products.

11. The process is a fundamental skill that is used in a wide range of contexts, from scientific research to business decision-making.

12. The process is a key component of the scientific method and is used to test hypotheses and develop theories.

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A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

JOHN M. KEEFE, MAJ, USA
B.S., United States Military Academy,
West Point, New York 1979
M.A., Central Michigan University,
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, 1983

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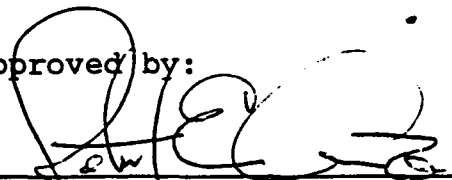
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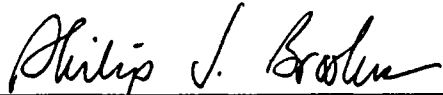
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

MARSHAL LOUIS N. DAVOUT AND THE ART OF COMMAND
by MAJ John M. Keefe, USA, 149 pages.

This paper involves an in-depth study of the art of command at all three levels of warfare. It examines this art through the eyes of one of Napoleon's ablest Marshals, Louis N. Davout. The paper addresses and accomplishes three primary goals. First, it defines the art of command and shows its relevance to modern day warfare. Second, the paper shows that Marshal Davout was the best of Napoleon's generals and had an art of command that rivaled the Emperor himself. Finally, the paper demonstrates how Davout was instrumental in winning the battle of Abensberg-Eckmuehl.

The study proves that Marshal Davout displayed an art of command at Abensberg-Eckmuehl that ensured success for Napoleon during the early phases of his Austrian campaign of 1809. It does this through a detailed analysis of his actions throughout the five days of fighting from April 19 to April 23, 1809. The study then draws conclusions to help define the art of command from Davout's actions.

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CHAPTER 1

BUT WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY EXPERIENCE?

The art of command is a topic which has been debated throughout history. It is certainly a most difficult subject to define. After his forced retirement Napoleon attempted to provide a definition; "The art of warfare on land is an art of genius, of inspiration. It is by the eyes of the mind, by reasoning over the whole that the generals sees, knows, judges."¹ Is this the art of command today? Or can the art of command truly be defined?

To help solve this problem it is essential to look at success in battle through the minds and eyes of past commanders. One has to crawl into the commander's head and discern what attributes have made him successful and how they can be applied today. The simple presentation of a series of attributes would do nothing more than provide a laundry list of undefined characteristics. Even a detailed discussion of leadership and its abstract qualities would result in something equally meaningless. These attributes cannot be placed on a slide and viewed under a microscope. They must be viewed in the context of

the dynamics of battle.² One must, therefore, look into the leader's actions to gain a perspective on his abilities and attributes.

This historical study of leadership then can provide a context to help guide the modern leader in his future actions. This study must be a detailed and comprehensive look at the leader's actions. It must penetrate as deeply as possible into the details. For this purpose the particular knowledge of a few engagements or a few leaders is much more useful than a broad knowledge of a great many battles or wars.³ Simply looking at the subject in general terms and making specific conclusions can be a technique fraught with many hazards.

But what can these past conflicts fought with spears and clubs tell us about fighting in today's technologically advanced battlefield? It is true that technology has changed the face of battle. However, we can learn certain lessons and principles from the study of the past. These lessons can then be applied today as long as one remembers the context in which they are studied. Even the United States Army's modern warfighting doctrine draws its premises from principles practiced by Napoleon almost two-hundred years ago. Suffice to say that the study of history can be, and is, applied to modern warfare. However, the real lessons of warfare go beyond

the study of simple strategy and tactics. The real lesson that pervades the centuries of warfare is that war is essentially an encounter of human beings. It is the study of human beings that will unlock many secrets to successful combat and the art of command.

On the other hand it may be argued that the only way to learn the art of command is through experience. However, even experience in war does not necessarily ensure that one learns how to conduct war. One who participates in war without reflection does not necessarily gain the experience of war. Does not one who studies war and examines its causes and results have the greater experience? In Theorie des Grossen Krieges Count York von Wartenburg sums this point up very well.

It is true, war can only be learned by experience; but what are we to understand by experience? Who will gain experience, the man who has been present during this or that event, but has never thought about it, either before or after it, or while it took place or the man who may possibly not have had any personal experience whatever of such matters, but who studies a great number of wars, and who has always and everywhere examined the causes and results and learnt from them that certain results recur, if they had been preceded by the same causes, and who this has come at last to formulate his views and to deduce great principles? Has not the latter experience and the former none. Shall I not by such experience alone learn to know war, whilst by the other I shall remain altogether ignorant of it?⁴

The best way to prepare for war, or learn this occupation of soldiering, is through the comprehensive and detailed study of past conflicts and their leaders.

Marshal Louis N. Davout and his actions at the battle of Abensberg-Eckmuehl illustrate and begin to define the art of command. His actions during the events preceding the battle and the four days of fighting allow one to view the art of command through the eyes of one of history's most victorious leaders. His actions will help define the art of command and identify the essential attributes or characteristics necessary for battlefield success. The study of Marshal Davout will help to provide more form and body to the very amorphous topic of the art of command. This examination of Marshal Davout will not only unlock some of the secrets of the art of command, it will do so in the context of the dynamics of battle. It will also show how his art of command influenced the outcome of the battles leading to the French victory in April 1809.

As one of the more underrated of Napoleon's lieutenants, Davout deserves much more credit than he is given. Ask any student of history to name five of Napoleon's Marshals and the normal answers will be Michel Ney, Louis-Alexander Berthier, Jean Lannes, or Joachim Murat. Most will overlook or not even remember Davout. One of the reasons is his lack of flamboyance and panache as compared to the other marshals. He spent less time talking about his reputation and more time earning it.

This fact becomes even more obvious should one visit the famous cemetery *Pere Lachaise* in Paris. The map of famous people buried at the cemetery is missing the name of Marshal Davout, although it does contain other members of Napoleon's Marshalate of much less quality such as Emmanuel de Grouchy, Gouvian St Cyr, and Francoise Kellerman. How can history overlook such a great leader as Davout? This paper will endeavor to clear up any misconceptions about the true abilities of Louis N. Davout. He was the best of Napoleon's subordinate commanders and had talents as rich if not richer than the Emperor himself. To put it in simple terms--he was never defeated.

For these reasons Davout will be the centerpiece of this paper. The objective is to go beyond the simple analysis of leadership attributes and look specifically at the art of command. This paper has four primary goals. First, and foremost, it will look at Davout in a specific situation to help provide an acceptable definition of the leadership attributes that make up the art of command. Second, it will demonstrate how the characteristics or attributes of the art of command contribute to success throughout the three levels of warfare. Third, the paper will show how Davout ensured success through his application of the art of command. In other words, it will show how his actions or his particular art of command

were the essential ingredient in the army's success. Finally, it will show how Davout influenced the outcome of the battles.

Defining such a large topic as the art of command using one leader in one specific situation can be considered rather myopic. Some may argue that the characteristics will only be applicable in a similar narrowly defined situation. However, this detailed view is essentially what is needed to provide some sort of definition to the art of command. Certainly another leader or another set of battles could be chosen. But this leader and the selected battles leave little doubt about the art of command.

The battles represented allow the art of command to be examined in all three levels of warfare: strategic, operational, and tactical. The strategic level refers to that level of warfare which involves the national interests. The art of command at this level involves the art and science of employing military power to achieve or secure goals of national interest. Davout does this during 1808 when he is the senior man in the German theater of operations.

The second level of warfare is the operational level of war. Many argue that this level of warfare is more of a modern creation. However, its presence is noted in Napoleonic times but is more commonly referred to as

the grand tactic. Operational warfare or grand tactics are major campaigns within a theater used to accomplish strategic objectives. It is more or less a link between the tactical and strategic level of warfare. This is the period of time when Davout is the commander of all forces of the Army of Germany before the arrival of Napoleon. Finally the tactical level is the art of fighting battles and engagements. The period of 19 through 23 April 1809 provides numerous opportunities to examine Davout's art of command at this level.

Davout's leadership here not only allows one to witness the art of command, it saved the French army from defeat at the hands of the Austrians along the Danube River in Bavaria. Davout certainly did not defeat the Austrians by himself, there were other factors such as the superior quality of his subordinates and the high caliber of his soldiers that contributed to the French victories. However, it will become obvious that without Davout victory may not have been attained as easily as it was. Left to Napoleon it quite possibly could have met defeat, possible intervention by Prussia, and quite probably the end of the French Empire six years early. Fortunately for the French, Davout displayed an art of command at Abensberg-Eckmuehl that ensured success during the early phases of Napoleon's 1809 campaign.

CHAPTER 2

YOUR MARSHAL MUST BE SEEING DOUBLE

Louis Nicholas Davout was an unlikely leader; he lacked the martial bearing and personal magnetism of such men as Michel Ney or Joachim Murat. He was of small stature and did not possess the natural flamboyance of most of Napoleon's marshals. His baldness and glasses, worn for nearsightedness, did nothing to enhance his image. Of the twenty-six marshals he was the least liked as a man, the most feared by his adversaries, and the ablest commander.¹ His appointment as marshal in 1804 astonished Parisian society. Many believed Davout became a marshal because of his relationship to the Emperor by marriage. Napoleon's sister, Pauline, was married to General LeClerc. Davout had married LeClerc's sister Aimee. However, it soon became evident that he was the best commander in the Grand Armee. His troops were the best trained, cared for, and disciplined in the army, and they could fight. Napoleon himself remarked that Davout had the two finest qualities of a soldier: courage and firmness of character.²

Although of minor nobility, Davout was a product of the Revolution. His family was poor and lived in the

Burgundian countryside. He was born in a rented farmhouse on 10 May 1770. This made him about a year younger than the Emperor and the youngest of the original marshals. His father was killed in a hunting accident when he was eight years old and his mother and maternal grandmother raised him. He had come from a long line of soldiers and was destined for a career in the military. It was said when a Davout is born a sword leaps from its scabbard.³ He was deeply intelligent and began studying the art of war at an early age. The works of Chevalier Charles Folard, Gustavus Adolphus, and Charles XII influenced his early life.

In 1788 he received his commission into the Royal Champagne Cavalry Regiment at Hesdin. As the revolutionary movement began to gain momentum he quickly rallied to its support. He associated himself with the revolution not for personal reasons, but because he truly believed in its principles. A few weeks after the fall of the Bastille it was Davout who suggested that a deputation of officers should go to Paris and pledge the loyalty of his regiment to the new government.⁴ In fact, Davout represented his regiment, but upon his return he was jailed by superior Royalist officers.

After his release Davout immediately sought assignment to one of the new volunteer regiments. He was quickly elected the *Colonel en Second* of the Third

Battalion of Volunteers of Yonne. His performance as a commander and leader improved with each successive battle. His patriotism again came to light in 1793, after General Charles Dumouriez tried to turn his army against the French government. Davout was instrumental in opposing Dumouriez and preventing the defection of his battalion. Davout even went as far as to order his volunteers to fire on their treasonous commander. For this act he received the rank of Brigadier General. However, the Directory soon learned of his aristocratic origins, and he was struck from the list of officers and imprisoned for a period of three months.

Upon release from prison Davout joined the Army of the Rhine under General Jean Victor Marie Moreau. It was there that he met and became good friends with a most powerful man, General Louis Charles Antoine Desaix. It was through General Desaix that Davout was first introduced to Napoleon. Though Davout did not accompany Napoleon on his First Italian Campaign he was placed on the list of generals to accompany the Emperor to Egypt in 1799. In that campaign he lead a brigade with distinction. He was not picked to accompany the Emperor back to France and, therefore, missed the Second Italian Campaign. Davout rejoined the Emperor with the Army of England in 1801.

In 1803 Davout was given command of the camp at Bruges. It is there that we begin to see the development of his administrative and training skills. He insisted upon varied and carefully structured training and published a manual on inter-arm tactics.⁵ Davout developed the reputation as a hard taskmaster. The only consolation to his subordinates was that he drove himself harder than he did his men. He continually set the example for his soldiers and endured the same conditions that they had to endure. Davout set a precedent by trusting his subordinates and their capabilities. He issued orders and did not interfere unless they failed to meet his standards. Another characteristic which set Davout apart from his contemporaries was the attention that he paid to the health and welfare of his soldiers. He continually made efforts to improve their daily living conditions. Unlike most of the other marshals, Davout lived with his troops at Bruges. On 23 September 1805, he was formally appointed as the commander of III Corps.

Davout had now spent nearly seventeen years in the army but commanded no more than two thousand men in battle. Consequently he had not yet displayed any great talents as a combat leader of any stature. This fact was to change during the period from December 1805 through June 1807. Though Davout's III Corps participated in the great Maneuver of Ulm it saw little action. However,

after General Mack's surrender at Ulm Napoleon's attention turned toward the Russians then occupying Bohemia.

Davout's first real action as a corps commander was to be at Austerlitz on a cold wintery morning in December.

After his astonishing victory at Ulm, Napoleon quickly began to move east. General Michel Kutuzov with 40,000 Russians retreated to Vienna, gathered up what was left of the Austrian army, then moved north into Moravia. Austerlitz was Davout's first opportunity since Egypt to command soldiers under the watchful eye of the Emperor. His last command was a brigade of Desaix's cavalry and now he was to command an entire corps. Not only was Davout to command a corps, but he was to have the most difficult task in the battle.⁶

On 29 November Napoleon decided on his plan of battle and sent word for Davout to join the French main body immediately. Davout and his III Corps were garrisoned near Vienna, about eighty miles south of the main French army. This message was received at 8 P.M. and in an hour and one half III Corps was on the road northward. Davout was to be in place sometime late on December 1. Napoleon's plan was to occupy the low ground, feigning weakness in order to entice the Russians to attack. He planned to strengthen his northern flank and show weakness in the south. When the enemy fell for his ruse and attempted to outflank him in the south, he would

then launch a major offensive into their weakened center. The key to Napoleon's plan was to hold on in the south long enough to attack in the center. This most important mission was given to Davout. Napoleon's entire success depended on the timely arrival of Davout.

Not only did Davout have the most difficult task of marching eighty miles in two days but also he had to march directly into battle. Once in battle he would find his 10,500 men facing General Buxhowden and 40,000 Russians.⁷ Shortly before midnight on the first of December Davout arrived at Napoleon's headquarters. He had accomplished the impossible, covering eighty miles in two days. He then promised Napoleon he would be in place by 8:00 A.M. the next morning ready for battle.

The action began at 7:00 A.M. as 73,000 Frenchmen faced 89,000 Austrians and Russians.⁸ The Allied attack went just as Napoleon had wished. General Buxhowden with one-half of the army moved forward to turn the French right and separate them from their lines of communication. The Austrians hit the southern flank as planned but Davout had not yet arrived on the scene. The very weak French right flank began to retreat leaving the village of Tellnitz to the enemy. As promised Davout's men began to enter the fight at 8:00 A.M. immediately bolstering the faltering right.

Davout committed Heudelet's brigade of General Louis Friant's division to retake Tellnitz. This stopped the Russian advance and the immediate threat. By nine o'clock the situation again became critical. Davout realized the enemy was driving a wedge between his corps and that of Marshal Soult's to the north.⁹ He immediately grasped the tactical situation on the southern flank and realized the criticality of the situation. He then personally led the two remaining brigades of Friant's Division further north to Sokolnitz. Davout's remaining two divisions had not yet entered the fight.

The Russians advance was interrupted by the crossing of the Goldbach Stream. Seeing this Davout immediately launched his attack. Although facing superior numbers, Davout was successful in forcing the Russians back across the stream. The occupation of the villages of Tellnitz and Sokolnitz secured the French right flank. This forced the Allies to commit even more forces to the southern sector thus weakening their center. Kutusov sent General Prschibitscheski's Division and Kollowrat's Corps from the Pratzen heights to support a flank attack against Davout's forces. This was the weakening of the allied center Napoleon desired. With his right flank now secured Napoleon launched Marshal Nicholas Soult's IV corps up the Pratzen Heights, a crucial terrain feature in the allied center.

This attack then ensured victory for the French. However, it was not over for Davout in the south. The battle continued to rage as the French fought a desperate defensive battle. It must be remembered that Davout was fighting this entire action in the south without his artillery. His forced march from Vienna was so fast that the artillery train could not maintain the pace. It was fortunate for Napoleon that Davout was on the spot.¹⁰ Davout continued to ride up and down his lines pushing his men forward in an effort to gain as much ground as possible. His heroic efforts also served to occupy nearly one-half the enemy force, enabling the French to push forward in the center and the north. The French then pushed the enemy backward in a complete rout resulting in one of Napoleon's finest victories. It was the first of many victories to be made possible by the actions of Marshal Louis N. Davout.

Those who scoffed at Davout's appointment to the Marshalate now saw the wisdom behind the Emperor's choice. Davout could not have been more successful in his first battle as a corps commander. He was everywhere at once and did everything perfectly. This is our first opportunity to see the art of command displayed by Davout. His training and discipline during the last two years at Bruges paid off. He marched his corps an incredible distance and committed them to battle immediately on their

arrival. Without hesitation he surveyed the battle and made the right decisions for the commitment of Friant's brigades.

The ability to survey a battle in progress and then to decide the tactical commitment of units is one of the most important abilities of a commander. Napoleon refers to this as *Coup d'Oeil*. Clausewitz also notes this important capability in his book On War. Clausewitz's chapter on the military genius covers the subject in detail. Davout's ability to read the battle in a moment and make a quick decision was obvious. Then once he made the decision, his bold and decisive actions eventually led to success. One now begins to see Davout's art of command develop as his vision was both accurate and decisive. His performance at Austerlitz was under the watchful eye of the commander and limited in scope. However, in another ten months Davout would develop even further and show his tactical prowess on a larger scale. This next opportunity came when the Prussian's declared war on the French in 1806. The dual battles of Jena-Auerstaedt give ample evidence of Davout's remarkable abilities as an independent commander.

The Prussian Army began to mobilize in August 1806. They began this mobilization secretly but were unable to secure the support of any allies. Napoleon was aware of their mobilization but could not believe Prussia

would actually go to war. However, when Prussia moved into Saxony in mid September Napoleon decided that something must be done. Most of the army was scattered throughout Germany, but Napoleon quickly ordered a concentration on Leipzig. The French Army consolidated and immediately moved north to their first action at Saalfeld on 9 October. As the Prussians retreated, Napoleon followed closely behind. This led him to Jena where on 13 October Napoleon erroneously concluded that he was facing the main Prussian army. At 6:00 A.M. on 14 October the dual battles of Jena and Auerstaedt began.

Napoleon's command was the main effort and he planned an immediate move on Jena. Davout, with the assistance of Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte's I Corps, was to swing around to the east and take the Prussians in the flank and rear. This was to occur after Napoleon with the main army defeated them in detail. In actuality Davout and his III Corps of 24,500 infantry and 1,500 cavalry ran directly into the Prussian main army. The III Corps and their intrepid leader were to be in a fight in which all odds were stacked against them.

During the night of 13 October Davout detected what he concluded was the Prussian main effort. Davout determined this after detecting large troop movements to his front and interrogating Prussian prisoners. He relayed this information to Napoleon's Chief-of-Staff

Marshal Louis Alexandre Berthier and to Marshal Bernadotte. Unfortunately, it fell on deaf ears. Napoleon was convinced that he himself was facing the main army and Bernadotte in his own unique style refused to follow the orders of another marshal. Davout then had to decide whether to remain inactive or attack a force that outnumbered him three to one. Exhibiting a great deal of personal and moral courage he decided to move forward and attack. He made his first contact about 7:00 A.M. just outside the village of Poeppel with General Charles Gudin's division. As usual Davout accompanied Gudin and the lead division. They quickly pushed the Prussians back and secured a defensive line facing west along the Lissbach Stream.

During the next eight hours Davout and III Corps literally fought for their lives. As with every battle in which Davout fought he was close to the front directing the action. His resolve and refusal to admit defeat were key factors in his success at Auerstaedt. During this first contact General Gebhard von Bluecher attacked Gudin's thin division with twelve squadrons of cavalry. Gudin had to hold because the other two divisions of Davout's corps were not yet within supporting distance. They were at least one to two hours behind. A less resolute commander would have avoided battle under such circumstances. Davout decided to stay and fight.

Bluecher made four unsuccessful attempts to dislodge the French who had calmly formed squares.

Fortunately for Davout a lull in the action took place when the Prussian commander, the Duke of Brunswick, was severely wounded. This allowed Davout time to review the tactical situation. He realized the Prussians were still attempting to retreat northward to Freiburg, and it was necessary for them to protect their flank. Davout knew that the Prussians would attack his right flank to maintain their northward mobility. Therefore he deployed General Louis Friant's newly arrived division to the right of Gudin's line. This left only one brigade to the south of the village of Hassenhausen

The Prussians resumed their attack with a frontal assault by three infantry divisions. The Prussians routed the one brigade which remained south of the village. This then created a threat to the French left flank. Davout immediately moved to the threatened location and rallied his men behind the village. He then personally led two regiments of Gudin's Division forward to halt the Prussian advance.¹¹ This was a critical decision made by the commander as his third division was still five kilometers from the battlefield. This decision was also correct in that it blunted the Prussian advance. Additionally it bought Davout the precious time he needed to stabilize his line. General Louis Charles Morand's division began to

arrive around 11:00 A.M. and was committed to the left of Gudin's division.

As in most battles the critical moment had arrived. It is this moment that a commander must recognize and seize to ensure success. It is a time when the opposing forces become the most vulnerable and success or defeat hangs in the balance. The commander must first recognize this point and then he must seize the opportunity. Next, he must make the correct decision as to what action to take. Then the commander must possess the requisite moral courage to carry out his plan.

In essence it is part of *Coup d'Oeil* and a key ingredient in the art of command. Davout seized this opportunity and used it to his advantage at Auerstaedt. The Prussians had attempted to outflank the French on both flanks. In doing so they had lapped around the edges and turned inward toward the village of Hassenhausen, still fortified by the French. Davout ordered Gudin to hold fast while Friant and Morand moved forward between the two Prussian wings enfilading the Prussian lines.¹² The Prussians were then caught between two French divisions pouring fire into their exposed flanks. The sudden offense combined with the timely arrival of the French artillery forced the Prussians to retreat.

At Auerstaedt many of Davout's key traits are displayed. It is the first time Davout was required to

fight entirely on his own. The battle challenged Davout to act both as a tactical and operational commander. The battle is operational in the sense that he is fighting with higher level objectives in mind. Davout had to consider more than the simple tactical fight in his actions. He had to direct his forces to achieve the operational objective of Napoleon which was the defeat and destruction of the main Prussian army.

His art of command seems fully developed at this point in his career and may have even begun to rival that of Napoleon. In the Fifth Bulletin of the *Grande Armee* issued the day after the battle Napoleon pays due respects to Davout: "This Marshal displayed distinguished bravery and firmness of character, the first qualities in a warrior."¹³ We must remember that it was Davout who realized he was fighting the Prussian main body while Napoleon thought he was fighting them. This same situation reappeared in 1809.

At Auerstaedt facing odds of three to one with his divisions echeloned behind him Davout had to make a key decision. This was a decision that set him apart from many other generals and the remainder of Napoleon's Marshalate. It is the decision whether to commit forces to a situation of overwhelming odds to accomplish a critical mission. This is commander's resolve and the warrior spirit at its finest.

Clearly no one would have faulted Davout had he acted as Bernadotte and not committed his forces against the main Prussian force. Remember Davout's instructions were to fall on the rear of the Prussian army and disrupt his communications. It was Davout's *Coup d'Oeil* and comprehension of Napoleon's operational objectives that allowed him to make such an important decision. It was also his ability to act upon his own faith that his decision to attack would succeed. Upon making this decision it was then his bold and audacious battlefield leadership that was to prevail.

As always, Davout was at the forefront of the battle directing the tactical operations while maintaining an operational perspective. His decision to attack was the single most important factor in the overall French victory. Future battles see Davout's *Coup d'Oeil* develop to a point that rivals if not outstrips the Master himself. It was evident at Auerstaedt as Davout recognized and defeated most of the Prussian Army by himself while Napoleon parried their rear guard at Jena. Even Napoleon could not believe Davout's success. When an officer of Davout's staff approached Napoleon that evening informing him that III Corps defeated 70,000 Prussians, Napoleon remarked that Davout must be seeing double.¹⁴ Davout received the title of "Duke of Auerstaedt" for his overwhelming victory. However, he did not receive the

title until two years after the battle. This delay in awarding of the title may be an indication of Napoleon's jealousy towards Davout. Meanwhile his next opportunity to practice his art of command was not far off.

At the battle of Eylau, deep within Prussia, Davout again came up on the French right to save the army from defeat. Napoleon's deployment was similar to that of Austerlitz with Davout moving from the south to secure the French right flank. However, this time the French northern flank was much less secure. The battle is often referred to as Napoleon's first "non-victory" in battle. However, one can argue that it was in fact a French victory. Suffice to say the French held the field. On the afternoon of 7 February 1807 Marshals Joachim Murat and Nicholas Soult fought an inconclusive battle around the Eylau cemetery. It was clear to Napoleon that he was to face a major action the next day.

Napoleon had only 45,000 men to face the Russians with 67,000. More important, this Russian force was different from that at Austerlitz. Russia had instituted many reforms to include the divisional concept and at Eylau had twice the number of guns as the French. Eylau was a preview of what was to come when the forces opposing France improved the structure of their army.

Unfortunately for the French, it was not to be another Austerlitz. The only part resembling Austerlitz

was the redoubtable Davout's timely arrival and success against the Russian left. The battle began with an artillery exchange. Then Napoleon ordered Soult to conduct a demonstration on the Russian right to draw their attention away from the left flank which was to become the main attack made by Davout. Unfortunately, Soult was aggressively attacked and failed to fully occupy the Russians attention. Next Augereau's Corps was ordered to advance and create another diversion to buy some more time.

Friant's division arrived about this time and Davout immediately committed him to attack. This was followed by the arrival of Morand's division. As Friant pushed forward Davout sent Morand around his left to fill the gap between the right of Napoleon's battle line and Friant's Division. This then provided continuity to the French line and secured the right flank of the entire army. Davout's attack pushed forward despite the fact that Bennigsen had committed his entire reserve.

During the attack on the Russian center Augereau's Corps strayed across the Russian front into their massed artillery battery. This decimated his unit and forced Napoleon to commit Murat's cavalry to stabilize the situation in the center. Murat's gallant charge gained the French time for Davout to bring the remainder of his corps into the battle.

Without hesitation Davout pushed forward rolling up the Russian left flank. After the arrival of Gudin's Division, Davout's III Corps dominated the action. They were able to push Bennigsen's flank rearward until it began to fold back upon itself. Davout was able once again to arrive on the scene, take in the overall scope of the battle and effect the proper commitment of his forces. Until about 4:00 P.M. it appeared that the French would have a resounding victory. However, General Lestocq's Prussian corps appeared and struck Davout in the right flank. Grasping the crucial nature of the situation Davout rode forward and rallied his corps. At this point Davout displayed great personal courage riding up and down in front of his troops under direct enemy fire to steady them. He knew that such conduct was required to forestall a disastrous retreat. Despite their numerical superiority the Russian-Prussian force could not penetrate Davout's line. Davout and III Corps had stood their ground at a critical time suffering casualties totaling over one third of their committed force.¹⁵

Although it did not bring a spectacular victory as at Auerstaedt or Austerlitz, Davout's participation was once again the key to the French success. It was his resolution to achieve victory coupled with his personal and moral courage that enabled III Corps to stand in the face of a superior enemy. It was this desire to win and

refusal to give in to the circumstances that sets Davout apart from his contemporaries.

Davout had turned a French defeat into at least a draw at Eylau. He pushed his corps forward to join the French army at the critical time falling in on their right flank. He knew Napoleon and the French army relied on his arrival. He immediately surveyed the fight and hit the Russians at their most vulnerable point. Once in the fight Davout was there to win. When the situation became critical he exhorted his men to stand and fight stating, "The brave will find a glorious death here, the cowards will visit the deserts of Siberia."¹⁶ This was all his men needed and they continued their successful attack forward. Davout had a winning spirit and refused ever to admit defeat. This attitude was passed on to his soldiers and is essential to the art of command. It would serve him and the French republic well throughout its existence.

Eylau, followed by the French victory of Friedland and the Treaty of Tilsit, left the French in possession of most of Europe. In two short years Davout had established himself as an outstanding commander who had mastered the art of command at the tactical level. He spent the next twenty-two months in relative peace in Poland and Germany while Napoleon turned his attention to the Iberian peninsula. To enforce his economic policies and prevent Portugal from trading with Great Britain Napoleon moved

most of his marshals, generals, the Old Guard, and almost all of the French army to Spain and Portugal.

Davout was left to control all of Central Europe with his 60,000 man corps. He was responsible for training and organizing his III Corps as well as the Polish army. He did this with the same talent and energy he applied to III Corps at the Camp of Bruges.¹⁷ It is in this time period of 1808 and early 1809 that Davout begins to develop his strategic art of command.

Davout's actions at Auerstaedt, Austerlitz, and Eylau served to demonstrate the value of such a man. They also illustrate his tactical brilliance and his art of command. By this time it was already becoming obvious to some that he was the best of Napoleon's marshals.

As asserted earlier, one cannot learn the necessary lessons from the study of a broad sweep of leaders and battles as just done. The art of command should be learned by looking through the eyes of one man in a particular set of circumstances. The brief descriptions of the aforementioned battles were used only as an introduction to the man.

The opening battles of the Austrian campaign in 1809 are an excellent example of an operation seemingly doomed to failure but salvaged by excellent generalship. Both Napoleon and Davout provided that generalship. It was a campaign which required a new method of command by

Napoleon. He could no longer control the entire operational area occupied by his army. Napoleon was forced to rely more than ever before on the initiative, judgement, and tactical abilities of his subordinate commanders.¹⁸ His command had become more decentralized. Marshal Louis Davout would rise above the other marshals and perform well in this new style of warfare and provide the required Generalship.

Napoleon indeed had an impact on the outcome of the campaign of 1809, however, it was Davout who had the greatest influence. At the battles of Abensberg and Eckmuehl, Davout's battlefield vision and decisiveness outshined Napoleon. While at Saint Helena, Napoleon said; "The greatest military maneuvers which I have made, took place at Eckmuehl, and were infinitely superior to those of Marengo."¹⁹ Napoleon did not give Davout the fair amount of credit for this victory but he did make him the Prince of Eckmuehl shortly after the battle. It is through Davout's eyes that we will now learn the art of command and see how it saved the French army in April 1809.

CHAPTER 3

THE AUSTRIANS ARE OUR WORST NEIGHBORS

Military intelligence, as part of the art of command, was often ignored by many of Napoleon's marshals. However, its use is important for the successful execution of battles and campaigns. Intelligence is important throughout all three levels of warfare. It enables the commander to gain knowledge about his enemy and helps him to make correct decisions on the battlefield, and so is an important ingredient in the art of command. Intelligence is knowing what your enemy is doing and how he plans to execute his operations. Desaix was one of the first of the Napoleonic generals to use intelligence and fully appreciate its importance.¹ Davout learned this from Desaix and developed an excellent network and system of intelligence gathering during 1808.

"The Austrians are our worst neighbors" wrote Davout on 15 June 1808.² He wrote this because he knew that the Austrians were preparing for war while talking about peace. Later in August he wrote to Napoleon, "all the measures being taken by the Austrians cause me to believe that they are preparing for war because they want war or because they fear it."³ We see that as early as

June of 1808 Davout realized the Austrians were preparing for war. However, Napoleon brushed these warnings aside and concentrated his efforts on Spain.

Napoleon should not be severely criticized for ignoring the Central European theater. He had been on campaign with the army since 1805 and had many pressing issues to address in France. In addition, events in Spain and Portugal required his undivided attention. He did not totally ignore actions in Central Europe but trusted the situation to Davout. Therefore, Davout continued to monitor both Austrian and Russian movements and intentions during 1808. His operational and strategic information gathering enabled him to predict the Austrian build-up and eventual invasion of Bavaria.

With Napoleon in Spain, Davout was given a great deal of freedom to determine his own course of action. He monitored and tracked all forces that could influence his operations. Davout understood that it was an essential part of his mission to observe all actions by potential adversaries. He made it a point to know his enemies and foresee what actions they might take. His knowledge of potential enemies enabled him to accurately predict actions by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Davout used a combination of spies and patrols to verify and maintain information on the enemy. This information was to play an important role during the following year.

Finally, with Davout's information at hand, Napoleon became worried about aggressive actions by Austria. Trying to avoid war and prevent Austria from conducting any war-like activities, Napoleon sought the assistance of Russia. Since the Treaty of Tilsit Russia was allied with France. However, this alliance was tenuous at best. It had been negotiated immediately following Russia's humiliating defeat at Freidland and left cause for concern. Therefore, Napoleon called for a summit at Erfurt in September of 1808 to further confirm Russia's friendship and support.

At this summit Napoleon courted Tsar Alexander, doing his utmost to impress him, and rekindle their friendship. Finally, he got Alexander to give him a half-hearted promise to come to the aid of France should Austria attack France or any of her possessions. The Emperor left the conference satisfied that the Central European theater was secure. He then based his defense of on this agreement. On paper this looked good but by December the Russians secretly informed the Austrians that they did not intend to honor the treaty.⁴ To monitor the situation in Russia, Davout began to target them for intelligence gathering. He soon became well aware that Russia would not honor the agreement.

What Napoleon failed to realize was that Russia had no desire to help France. Even DeBourrienne points out Napoleon's error in assuming Russian assistance.

Russia was then engaged in war with Sweden and Turkey. She rejoiced to see France again engage in a struggle with Austria, and there was no doubt that she would take advantage of any chances favorable to the latter power to join against France.⁵

This is an interesting criticism of Napoleon from one of his more loyal followers. DeBourrienne was Napoleon's former secretary and wrote an extensive and complementary narrative on Napoleon.

Napoleon also failed to understand that Austria was still a major European power. Austria had a well established government, an army, and the third largest population in Europe. At the same time, Austria was not satisfied with the current situation. Since 1805 she had lost a great deal of territory and prestige to France. Not surprisingly the Austrians had a great deal of hatred for the French, and in particular Napoleon. They had already been forced to accept unfavorable treaties at Pressburg, Campo Formio, and Luneville. To add insult to injury in 1806 Napoleon stripped Francis of his title as the Holy Roman Emperor. Also Napoleon had conquered Austria's beloved capital, Vienna in 1805. So in 1809 with Napoleon tied down on the Iberian Peninsula, Austria saw an opportunity to regain her lost power and prestige. The Emperor, Francis I, decided that a restoration of

Austrian influence in Germany and Italy was essential for her survival.⁶ To accomplish this Austria began as early as 1806 to improve and increase the size of her army.

Austria used the three years since Austerlitz to create an army that became a very potent enemy for Napoleon. A number of authors support the premise that Napoleon began his decline as a general in 1809. He did make more mistakes in this campaign than ever before. However, it is unfair to judge his actions without first examining the Austrian army of 1809. The French were facing a new and different enemy than they had three years earlier. The Austrian army was now a much more powerful and capable force. The Archduke Charles was the architect of this new army.

Charles began to institute reforms in the army formulating the Austrian organization and tactics on the French system. He was the first of the Europeans to do so. He instituted the divisional concept and integrated artillery at the division and corps level. Like the French, Charles also began to use skirmishers in the front of his linear formations to increase depth and flexibility. Although the Austrian Army had employed skirmishers in the past, it was Charles who perfected their tactical integration with regular infantry. Additionally, Charles developed a new philosophy of warfighting. His basic principle was that the army should

protect its communications and "force an enemy to abandon his strategic point" by menacing his rear areas.⁷ This was similar to Napoleon's technique of *Le Manoeuvre a les arriers*. Charles fully believed that to succeed he had to avoid the main force and maneuver to the enemy army rear. In other words the Austrians had fully accepted the idea of maneuver warfare.

Davout had become keenly aware of all these facts during late 1808 and early 1809. He knew of the Austrian reforms and their impending build up of forces. He was also well aware that Austria had established the Landwehr and begun intensified training. This Landwehr, or national guard, enabled Austria to field a much larger army. It was also an indication that Austria was starting to understand the concept of total war. Instead of relying on a permanent dynastic army, Austria was willing to mobilize her general population to defeat France. All this information was relayed on to Napoleon through a series of correspondence. However, the Emperor was too involved in the Spanish affair to devote any attention to Central Europe.

On 12 February 1809 the Aulic Council made the decision to go to war. This council was a group of Austrian diplomats and former military men who were formed to advise the Emperor on matters of state. It was a left over from the Holy Roman Empire and was a conservative

organization, always slow to act. Meddling in his affairs as commander, they served as a great source of frustration for Charles during the campaign.

The Aulic Council's decision to go to war was based on many factors to include the agreement that Russia would remain neutral. They had also secretly received a promise from Prussia to commit forces and the British had promised money to finance the affair.⁸ Moreover, German exiles vowed their support for Austria should they attack the French. These exiles claimed their states would not support France but would rally to the Austrian cause. From Paris, Prince Clemens von Metternich, the Austrian ambassador to France, further fueled the desire for war. He relayed information to the Austrian King indicating that French involvement in Spain would preclude her from stopping an Austrian attack.

The original Austrian plan called for an assault on central Germany out of Bohemia with 200,000 men. This would be supported by a secondary attack south of the Danube and one in Italy. Another corps of 30,000 men would be positioned to threaten Poland. By the end of February the Austrians had positioned six corps in Bohemia, two corps south of the Danube and two corps south of the Alps in Italy. The Austrian plan was to advance and join forces between Ratisbon and Ingolstadt then advance down the Danube toward the Rhine River. However,

in early March Prussia refused to contribute any forces to the coalition. This weakened the Austrian position and forced Charles to change his initial plans. The Aulic Council became worried that without Prussian involvement Charles' plan would leave Vienna open for attack. Meanwhile Davout continued to monitor these Austrian movements into Bohemia and became more convinced of an impending conflict with the Austrians.

Charles wanted to begin his attack in March. Had he done so the French would most likely have not been able to stop him. Although Davout was aware of the Austrian intentions he simply did not have the forces to stop their advance.⁹ However, the Aulic Council again intervened, forcing Charles to change his plans. This caused him to move most of his forces southward across the Bohemian frontier. This new plan called for Charles to move all but two of his corps south of the Danube. Davout detected the movement of thousands of men across his front and immediately informed Napoleon of the situation. Davout then began to reorient his own forces. Davout's operational vision of the Austrian plan proved to be accurate. Had he remained deployed as he was toward the north when Charles attacked, even the slow-moving Austrians could have gained a great deal of success.

Although the decision to attack south of the Danube cost the Austrians a delay, it was their best

course of action. They now had a better and safer base of operations linked by the Danube to Vienna. Charles' army was now closer to Archduke John in Italy and could affect communications in the Tyrol. On the other hand, it gave Davout time to react and reorient his forces toward the south. It also proved beneficial to the French because Charles left two corps north of the Danube. These two Austrian corps would become isolated and unable to effectively participate in the upcoming battles.¹⁰ The Austrian dispositions left 58,000 attacking north of the Danube under Generals Heinrich Bellegarde and Karl Kollowrath. South of the Danube was Charles with about 127,000 men under Generals Friedrich Hohenzollern, Franz Rosenberg, Johannes Lichtenstein, Johann Hiller, Michael Kienmayer and Archduke Louis (see Appendix B, Order of Battle). This new plan required speed and audacity on the part of the Austrian army. A fast attack which could defeat the widely scattered French was essential for their success.

In February after many letters from Davout, Napoleon finally comprehended the threat from Austria. He then began to organize the Army of the Rhine. With over 200,000 men and his best leaders tied down in Spain Napoleon would have to work quickly to gather a force substantial enough to face Austria. Davout's III Corps would form the backbone of this new army. To this he

would add German units, and two more corps under General Nicolas-Charles Oudinot and Marshal Andre Massena.

Davout's command consisted of the divisions of the three "immortals," Gudin, Friant, and Morand, an additional division under St Hilaire, two heavy cavalry divisions under St Sulpice and Montbrun, and one light cavalry division under Jacquinet (see Appendix B, Order of Battle). This amounted to 67,000 men. The divisions of Gudin, Morand, and Friant came to be known as Davout's immortals. They had been together since the Camp of Bruges in 1804 and shared victory with Davout at Austerlitz and Auerstaedt. They were considered "immortal" in the belief that they could not be defeated.

At the beginning of March they were quartered in and around Erfurt and Bamberg. Although III Corps contained many seasoned veterans, it was not the same corps that was at Auerstaedt. It now had many new conscripts from the class of 1809 and most of the junior officers were still fresh from the military academies. Davout had to absorb these new recruits into his seasoned III Corps. Rather than form new inexperienced regiments or brigades Davout effectively combined his seasoned veterans and the new recruits. This allowed the new soldiers to learn their art from the veterans.

Napoleon, after consulting with Davout, planned to make the Danube his main theater of operations. He

believed Prince Eugene and Marshal August-Frederic Marmont could hold the Italian frontier while Prince Poniatowski could contain the threat in Poland. Napoleon would take personal command in the German theater. However, to avoid any pretense of war he would remain in Paris and Berthier would become the nominal commander-in-chief. Berthier would also stay in Strassbourg until the Austrian intentions became clear. Napoleon's goal was to avoid war or any indications that he was preparing for war. With most of the French army in Spain, Napoleon still desired peace. If peace was not possible he wanted to make sure that Austria appeared as the aggressor. If the French initiated the attack their treaty with Russia would no longer be valid. Davout was to remain the commander on the front although subordinated to Berthier. Napoleon was still depending on the Russians to keep their promise.

As late as 1 March, Napoleon wrote to Eugene "We are still on the best of terms with the Russians." He went on to say that "At the first attack of Austria he [Tsar Alexander] will start to come and meet me at the head of his troops."¹¹ Davout knew all too well that this was not true. His intelligence network in Russia suggested that there was no mobilization of Russian forces. Napoleon received this information but chose to ignore the warnings. This is another example of Davout's superbly developed sense. Not only had he identified the

buildup of Austrian forces and their movement south but also he had determined that Russia could not be relied on for any assistance. Strategically he was right, whereas Napoleon had lost sight of the true situation.

According to the plan all forces were to be assembled by 20 March, with the army's center at Donauwoerth. The four divisions of Legrand, Carra St Cyr, Molitar and Boudet were to move from France to Ulm. Davout was to continue to assemble his forces around Bamberg. Bavaria was to assemble her forces around Landshut and the Wurttembergers at Neresheim. On 17 March Berthier was formally appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Army of Germany. Napoleon still believed that Austria would not make war until her ambassador had been withdrawn from Paris or until she had made a formal declaration of war. He also assumed that the Austrians would not begin their attack until late April and the main attack would come north of the Danube.¹² Thus he planned to carry his headquarters forward to Ratisbon. Napoleon was wrong on both accounts.

Davout's vision and analysis of the strategic situation were more accurate than those of the Emperor. Davout's intelligence network provided accurate and timely information. His interpretation of the data then painted a clear picture of the enemy situation. As early as

22 March Davout had sent a message to Napoleon indicating the movement of the Austrians from Bohemia to points south of the Danube. He predicted that the Austrian attack would in fact be two-pronged, consisting of a secondary thrust from Bohemia and the main effort south of the Danube across the Inn River into Bavaria.¹³ On 26 March he relayed to Napoleon, "War is inevitable. The call up of conscripts, correspondence, proclamations, and journal articles are of the same opinion. Also the King of Prussia has returned to his capital."¹⁴

Here Davout shows his strategic capabilities as a commander. His overall monitoring of the situation was excellent. He was able to ascertain what the Austrians were going to do and how they were going to do it. Davout remained in touch with the strategic situation and simultaneously began to formulate his operational and tactical plans. Moreover, he continually kept the Emperor informed of his and the Austrian movements.

To meet the Austrian threat Davout began to deploy his forces without orders from Napoleon. Knowing he had to better position his forces Davout moved south through Ratisbon toward Ingolstadt. As it turned out this was the exact positioning of forces that Napoleon later dictated. Davout's operational vision of the Austrian attack turned out to be correct. He would remain one step ahead of the Austrians throughout the course of the campaign.

Napoleon did not expect the campaign to begin until after 15 April. He believed this because the Austrian government failed to show the normal indications of war. All diplomatic relations remained intact and their ambassador remained in Paris. In addition, Napoleon did not believe that the Austrians were capable of mounting an assault before that time. On 30 March he issued instruction to Berthier about the disposition of forces. Napoleon planned to remain initially on the defensive. After concentrating his forces, he would conduct a quick offensive thrust. Napoleon's order directed that if the attack by the Austrians was to occur before 15 April the concentration of forces was to be around Ingolstadt. Davout was already moving toward that disposition. Napoleon also stipulated that if the attack occurred after the fifteenth then the army was to assemble around Ratisbon.¹⁵ This set of instructions was to cause many problems in the weeks to follow.

The initial disposition of forces in the Danubian theater of operations favored the Austrians in the numbers of infantry and artillery. On 1 April 1809 the French and allied troops in Germany consisted of the following: II Corps under General Nicholas Oudinot (14,000); III Corps under Marshal Davout (60,000); and IV Corps with Marshal Andre Massena as its commander (40,000). The Bavarians were placed under Marshal Francois Joseph Lefebvre. They

were designated VII Corps and consisted of 30,000 men. The Wurttembergers became VIII Corps (12,000) under General Dominique Vandamme. Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte remained in control of the Saxon Corps (19,000), but would take no part in the initial action around Ratisbon.¹⁶ Their dispositions placed Davout between Bayreuth and Ratisbon with Vandamme behind him at Nordlingen. Lefebvre was at Straubing with Oudinot's Corps at Pfaffenhofen. Massena's Corps remained east of Ulm (see Appendix A, Figure 1).

On 3 April, Davout sent a letter to Berthier confirming his earlier report of the Austrian movement south of the Danube. He then began to move his forces further south to Ingolstadt. Three days later he sent another correspondence to Berthier indicating his troop dispositions.¹⁷ He also stated that he felt Charles would attack very soon. Davout could not determine the exact time of the attack. On 7 April he wrote, "One is no longer able to gain Austrian intelligence. All communication has been interrupted The news that circulates strongly supports that hostilities are imminent."¹⁸ F. Lorraine Petre heralds much praise for Davout's actions in early April. He supports the premise that Davout's analysis was accurate and did in fact play a key role in the outcome of the battles.¹⁹

Again, Davout's operational sense of battle was true to form. He detected the Austrian movements and positioned his forces to best meet their attack. Had he not accomplished that, the French Army would have concentrated north of the Danube. Then the lower Bavarian plateau would have been open to attack by the Austrians. This was the first instance in which Davout's insight and actions directly saved the French forces from what may have been defeat.

For the first time in Davout's career he had been a completely independent commander. At Auerstaedt he fought independently from the Emperor but was operationally in the same theater. In Germany in 1808 and 1809 Davout was virtually on his own. Napoleon never directed him to set up and develop an intelligence network. In fact Napoleon had given him little direction in the management of affairs. All the actions taken were the result of Davout's ability to decide what needed to be done.

During a period when most of Napoleon's subordinates did not rely on strategic intelligence gathering, Davout realized its value and understood its importance. He alone made sure that he was always informed and that no actions could take place without his knowledge. This was the mark of an excellent commander. He displayed unique initiative coupled with keen insight

and intelligence at the strategic level of war. Most Marshals would have been happy to sit in Poland and think of ways to make more money. Not Davout, he was keenly aware of his requirements and the importance of maintaining his position in Central Europe.

At the end of this first week in April the French forces were scattered throughout Germany. However, they were beginning to concentrate in anticipation of the Austrian attack. On 9 April the Austrian dispositions were as follows: I and II Reserve Corps, IV, III, VI Corps, 116,000 infantry, 13,000 cavalry and 366 guns poised on the Inn River. The I and II Corps with 44,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry and 136 guns were on the Bohemian frontier. A formidable force prepared to launch into Bavaria and drive the French to the Rhine river. A task they could accomplish and might well have if not for the action of Marshal Louis N. Davout.

CHAPTER 4

THE ARMY MUST BE CONCENTRATED AROUND INGOLSTADT

The first of many opportunities had passed by the Austrians. Charles lost an excellent opportunity when he did not attack in March as originally planned. However, the French dispositions were such that the Austrians could still bring about a resounding victory. Finally, on 10 April the Austrians crossed the border without a formal declaration of war and without any allies. Six corps were now moving directly toward Davout and his III Corps. At this point Davout was not yet prepared for the Austrian attack. He was still moving his forces southward toward the Danube. Davout's analysis was correct, the Austrians' main force attacked south of the river. However, Davout had not yet deployed to meet their attack and was dangerously positioned with his forces stretched from Amberg to Ratisbon.¹

Austrian General Heinrich Bellegarde controlled the two Austrian corps north of the Danube. Charles planned to unite his main army with these forces around Ratisbon or at Kellheim (see Appendix A, Figure 1). It was therefore essential for Charles to move forward and secure either one of these two towns and their bridges

across the Danube. The Austrians also hoped that by crossing into Bavaria and attacking the French, the independent German states would rally to their cause and repatriate their allegiance. However, this only happened in the Tyrol. The actions in the Tyrol were only peripheral and in no way affected Charles' operations in Bavaria.

The week of 10-17 April was marked by French confusion and the slow movement of the Austrians. The Austrians were only able to move at a plodding pace of a mere six to ten miles per day. This slow rate of advance negated the Austrian initiative. The French confusion was the result of conflicting orders from Napoleon and the actions of Berthier. These orders, explained in detail later, caused Berthier to direct the movement and subsequent counter-movement of Davout's Corps between Donauwoerth and Ratisbon.

Even given the slow rate of advance by the Austrians, Charles had many opportunities to destroy the French in detail. Fortunately for the French, Davout was the commander on the ground. He knew the Austrian dispositions and was prepared to meet their onslaught even before Charles crossed the border. This was evident in Davout's southerly movement prior to the Austrian violation of Bavarian territory. However, on the tenth of April Davout was still precariously perched astride the

Danube at Ratisbon. He was well aware that this was not the correct disposition for his forces, and was attempting to hurry his movement to concentrate at Ingolstadt.

Davout, as well as Napoleon, realized that the Ingolstadt position was important at this point. Charles had attacked prior to the French concentration at Ratisbon. Although the Austrian movement was ponderously slow they would still reach Ratisbon before the French could hope to concentrate at that location. So Davout's movement to Ingolstadt was correct in that it allowed the French to concentrate before coming in contact with the Austrians. However, as Berthier did not have Davout's operational vision he dispersed rather than concentrated the French forces in the face of 200,000 advancing Austrians.

So why did Berthier oppose Davout and commit a tactical blunder by dispersing the army? The answer lies in both the problems of the French command structure and Berthier's obscured operational vision. Napoleon was attempting to control the concentration of the French forces from Paris. He was issuing orders to the armies in the field through Berthier who was in Strassbourg. The only way to pass orders was by courier on horseback or through the semaphore telegraph, (the French had installed a visual telegraph system from Paris forward to Strassbourg). On a clear day a message could be

transmitted from Napoleon to Berthier in under three hours. It would then take another two days to get to the front in Germany. Under ideal conditions this was not too bad for 1809. Unfortunately this system was to cause most of the confusion.

Napoleon sent two messages to Berthier on 10 April. These messages were sent before Napoleon learned of the Austrian attack. The first message was dispatched via the telegraph system. In the message Napoleon said; "I think the Emperor of Austria will soon attack . . . and if the enemy attacks before the 15th concentrate the army on Augsburg and Donauwoerth."² This is the same as the Ingolstadt area toward which Davout was moving to at the time the message was dispatched. Later that same day Napoleon dispatched another note carried by horseback. This message was more detailed than the one dispatched by telegraph. In it he again states his desire to assemble the army around Ingolstadt if the Austrians attacked before the fifteenth. However, he added the line "If the enemy makes no move . . . the Duke of Auerstaedt will have his headquarters at Ratisbon, his army will huddle within one day's march of this city and this is under all circumstances."³

By "attack" Napoleon of course meant the strategic advance of the Austrians into Bavaria. He did not mean the tactical engagement of forces. Even Berthier did not

confuse this idea. These messages provided for two scenarios. Scenario one was that the French concentrations should be around Ingolstadt, behind the Lech River, provided the Austrians attack before the fifteenth. Scenario two was that the assembly of the French forces should be around Ratisbon if the Austrians attack after the fifteenth. This disposition made a great deal of sense. Napoleon wanted to concentrate his forces to face the Austrians. The concentration depended on the Austrian date of attack. Napoleon wanted to concentrate at a location out of touch with the enemy. At the same time he wanted this point to be as far forward as possible. If the enemy was late, or moving slowly, that point was to be Ratisbon.⁴ The armies had to concentrate, a fact Berthier missed. Napoleon's normally infallible Chief-of-Staff did not realize that he was separating Davout from the remainder of the French forces around Ingolstadt.

Davout understood Napoleon's concept of concentration prior to the arrival of the enemy. Davout also knew that should the Austrians attack the French before concentration they could defeat each element in detail. It was easy to see that the Emperor wanted a forward concentration of his forces. Davout understood this fact, unfortunately he was no longer the senior man on the scene.

Normally, the message dispatched by telegraph would have arrived before the one by horseback. For reasons unknown this did not come about. Taken out of sequence there may have been some cause for confusion. It must be recalled that the second message received first stated Davout was to have his headquarters at Ratisbon "under all circumstances." Meanwhile Berthier had not yet received either message and was dispatching orders based on Napoleon's plan of 30 March. At this point, Berthier had also departed for the front from Strassbourg. On 11 April Berthier's disposition of forces was correct. Davout was moving south to join forces with Marshal Francois Joseph Lefebvre and Marshal Andre Massena assembling around Augsburg and Ingolstadt. Berthier seems to have kept in mind the Emperor's desire to unite behind the Danube River in case the Austrians attacked before the fifteenth.⁵

Berthier received the second message from the Emperor on 13 April. This was the message dispatched by horseback and contained the confusing phrase that Davout should concentrate at Ratisbon "under all circumstances." Berthier read this literally and ordered Davout back to Ratisbon. At the same time he sent Massena on to Augsburg. Berthier was completely ignoring the fact that the Austrians had attacked before the fifteenth. As such he should have left Davout where he was. Instead Berthier

began to split his army apart. This was a tactical blunder of the first order. This shows that even after thirteen years with the Emperor, Berthier still did not grasp the main principles of tactics and strategy.⁶ Even Jomini stated "twenty campaigns had impressed no comprehension of strategy on Berthier."⁷

Davout reported to Berthier on 12 April that his disposition was now perfect for the advance of the Austrians. He wrote "It is impossible to imagine better disposition of the troops."⁸ Davout went on to say that he saw clearly the intentions of the enemy. He was well aware that Charles was attempting to drive a wedge between his forces and the remainder of the French army. By uniting at Ingolstadt Davout had put his troops in a position to prevent this from happening. Davout knew the desires of the Emperor and could view the strategic and operational situation much better than Berthier. Unfortunately, Berthier was in charge and he read the situation incorrectly. He ordered Davout to Ratisbon and Massena to Augsburg. This separated the two wings of the French army by seventy-five miles in the face of the advance by an enemy twice their size.

Upon receipt of Berthier's orders Davout realized that the disposition was tantamount to committing treason. He immediately protested Berthier's orders. He sent the following message at 7:00 P.M. on 14 April: "It seems to

me that the best maneuver would be to concentrate at Ingolstadt . . . if Your Highness persists in the execution of his orders, I will execute them and fear not the results."⁹ This shows that Davout knew what needed to be done whereas Berthier remained ignorant of the situation. Davout repeated his displeasure with Berthier's orders no less than four times.¹⁰ Davout went on to explain that to concentrate at Ratisbon would be to totally expose his corps to an Austrian attack from both the south and the north. Threatened by 100,000 Austrians on the south and 40,000 the north Davout seemed destined for the same fate as that of General Mack four years earlier at Ulm.¹¹ Fortunately Davout's tactical abilities far exceeded those of General Mack.

Many authors including Davout's English biographer, John G. Gallaher, tout Davout's action in this instance.¹² However, Davout's personality and his enmity toward Berthier certainly did not make the situation any less volatile. Davout was a very stern and stubborn individual. When Davout knew he was correct he would press his point to the extreme as he did with Berthier. Had Davout been less demanding and more sympathetic with the confused Berthier he may well have straightened out the tactical mess before it became a problem. This, however, was not Davout's way of operating. Davout had also developed a certain dislike for Berthier after his

failure to ensure III Corps was properly supported at Auerstaedt. Davout's controlling personality and his distrust of Berthier did nothing to help the tactical problems created by Napoleon's letters and Berthier's failure to adjust.

Davout's intelligence gathering and his ability to synthesize all the information available led him to believe that Charles had a sizeable force north of the river. Davout was correct that Charles could now pinch Davout's exposed corps between his two wings and then turn south to face Massena and Lefebvre and defeat them in detail. Davout foresaw the problems that would be encountered with his positioning at Ratisbon. Davout also understood the necessity to concentrate forces in the face of the enemy and not separate them. This was communicated to his superior, Berthier, who chose to ignore its significance.

Finally on 16 April, Berthier received Napoleon's much belated Paris dispatch. This was the first dispatch sent by semaphore to Strassbourg and then by horseback to the front. This correspondence pointed out that if the attack came before the fifteenth the concentration should be behind the Lech River. However, taken out of order Berthier became even more confused. He still had in his mind that Napoleon wanted Davout at Ratisbon whether or not the Austrians attacked before the fifteenth. So

Berthier chose to overlook this correspondence in its entirety; additionally, he disregarded the sage advice of Marshal Davout. The French army stretched from Ratisbon to Augsburg with only three small Bavarian divisions posted between the two towns.

The Austrians continued to move slowly forward at a rate of eight miles a day. On the sixteenth Charles made contact with the Bavarians at Landshut. The Franco-Bavarian divisions under General Deroy and the Crown Prince of Bavaria began to fall back along the front and Charles took Landshut. The Austrians now had the crossing site over the Isar that they needed. By the end of the day they had one division over the river and four corps ready cross (see Appendix A, Figure 1). Bellegarde and Kollowrat were in the north near Amberg. Charles had 90,000 men, with 20,000 more to his rear, ready to split the French in two. On the seventeenth the initiative remained with the Austrians.

Davout had moved north to occupy Ratisbon and completed his movement on the seventeenth. III Corps now stood alone astride the Danube river, occupying the position dictated by Berthier. That same day Davout wrote to Berthier another letter showing his displeasure with his current positioning. He stated "I fear for the safety of Ingolstadt, Charles is pushing forward and the town is now uncovered. I also have a large enemy force to my

left."¹³ Again Davout had a good appreciation for the big picture. Operationally he knew where the Austrians were and knew best how to defend against their advance. However, at the same time he was well aware that Berthier was in charge and to disobey his orders was not appropriate. Davout would have to make the best of his precarious situation.

During the course of events Napoleon began his trek from Paris to the theater of operations in Germany. He departed on the thirteenth and at five in the morning and by the seventeenth he was in Donauwoerth. By the end of the day he had reviewed the current situation and devised a plan of operations. He first ordered Lefebvre to slow the Austrian advance out of Landshut. Then he ordered Davout to move south and concentrate at Ingolstadt. This was the same disposition that Davout had moved to five days earlier and the same position that he recommended to Berthier. This order confirmed that Davout was correct in his initial decision to move on Ingolstadt.

Napoleon's plan of operations was to take the initiative from Charles and pin his front while he maneuvered against Charles' rear. Initially Napoleon planned to use the eighteenth as a day of preparation and advance to destroy Charles on the nineteenth. This was not a bad plan, however, it was based on bad information. Napoleon thought that the Austrians in the vicinity of

Landshut were only one corps and not four.¹⁴ In fact when he ordered Davout south Napoleon said, "If in your movement you find the enemy in the middle of the column to Landshut and if he is advancing that will be a superb occasion."¹⁵ In essence Napoleon is telling Davout as he moves south to engage the enemy to his front. Had Napoleon known that this enemy was Charles' entire army he would have never given such an order.

Napoleon's plan was to unite Davout and III Corps with Lefebvre and the Bavarians around Abensberg. The town of Abensberg was a pivotal point. Whoever reached this point first could prevent the concentration of the other force. For Davout to reach Abensberg he would have to pass through very difficult terrain. Additionally, before leaving Ratisbon Davout was to blow up the bridge across the Danube.

This requirement was never fully articulated as an important task for Davout to accomplish. However, the town and the bridge were important to the Austrians as they provided the link between Charles' main army and the two corps to the north. Why Davout failed to understand the significance of this bridge is unknown. He was well aware that two Austrian Corps were north of the Danube. It must also have been obvious to Davout that they could easily effect juncture with Charles' main army across this important structure. Davout may have well realized that

there were other bridges across the Danube at Kellheim and Straubing and to destroy all of them would not be possible. So in his mind the destruction of the Ratisbon bridge really would not have mattered greatly. Also the bridge was a very massive stone structure built hundreds of years earlier. It was an impossibility to destroy the bridge and even if a span was dropped it could have been easily repaired. On the other hand Davout may have committed a tactical error.

Massena and Oudinot were to concentrate on Pfaffenhofen. From there they would move toward Landshut and attack Charles' rear. He was asking Davout to execute a march due south exposing his flank to the enemy. This was an enemy of which Napoleon knew little. Additionally, he was unsure of its size or exact positioning. It was a most difficult mission to accomplish. As it happened the concentration did not take place as planned on the eighteenth. Massena was slow to move and never reached Pfaffenhofen. It was also impossible for Davout to collect all of his forces and execute the southern movement in only one day's time. Friant was still twenty miles further north of Ratisbon and St Sulpice another ten miles to the west of the city. These were the dispositions that Berthier had dictated.

While the French were making their concentrations Charles was determined to find Davout's isolated Corps and

destroy him. On the eighteenth Charles ordered four corps to move forward and intercept Davout whom he correctly assumed would be moving south. Charles confirmed Davout's movement when he intercepted a dispatch from Davout to Lefebvre.¹⁶ The Austrian V Corps had the mission to fix Lefebvre at Abensberg and cover Charles' flank. 67,000 Austrians were now heading directly for Davout's forces while Kollowrat and Bellegarde were moving south from Amberg toward Ratisbon.¹⁷ This put Davout in the position he feared most, caught between two wings of the Austrian army; a position he told Berthier five days earlier he would be in if he left Ingolstadt for Ratisbon. The Iron Marshal realized that once again he was on his own to extract himself from a perilous situation.

Davout spent the eighteenth gathering his forces on the southern bank of the Danube and conducting a reconnaissance of his routes south. This reconnaissance proved to be very valuable. Although the roads leading out of Ratisbon seemed perfectly good, Davout's reconnaissance proved otherwise. For the first three miles or so the roads were trafficable. However, they soon turned into a quagmire and resembled only cart paths through the woods. Only one road remained good as it went further south. That road paralleled the river and ran through the Saal defile. This piece of terrain was a critical area. One company could hold up an entire

division if they controlled this area. It was bounded on one side by the swollen Danube River and on the other by precipitous cliffs. Also Charles' forces were much closer to the defile than Davout at Ratisbon.

Davout's thinking now shifted from the operational and strategic mode to the tactical. First, he conducted a thorough reconnaissance that proved very beneficial. He then identified the problem areas and arranged his forces to control them. His initiative and foresight at this point in the campaign were exceptional. He immediately sent a battalion forward to secure and control the defile. This was something Charles should have done the day before. This road was important because it was the only one that would hold III Corps artillery and baggage trains. Had the Austrians secured the defile they could have easily prevented Davout from moving south and overwhelmed his forces at Ratisbon as planned. Again it was Davout's tactical savvy that prevented this from occurring.

Davout left Colonel Coutard and his brigade of 2,000 men at Ratisbon to secure the bridge and prevent the Austrians from crossing. Davout's decision to leave a mere 2,000 men to cover such a key area must be questioned. As stated earlier the bridge at Ratisbon was the most logical crossing point for the two Austrian Corps to the north. Therefore controlling this point was

critical for the French. Napoleon realized this but Davout did not. Davout should either have given the Austrians the bridge or protected it with a more suitable force. As it was Davout was fortunate Coutard held out as long as he did.

Davout then launched his divisions southward in three columns. They departed Ratisbon at 5:00 A.M. on the nineteenth. Davout knew that the Austrians were very close to his left flank. He also knew that true to form the Austrians would not begin their movement until later in the morning. So by leaving at five o'clock he could slip by them before they could detect his movement. At the minimum he hoped to get through the Saal defile before the Austrians could reach that point (see Appendix A, Figure 2).

The western, or right, column was the artillery and baggage trains. This road was near the Danube and was out of supporting distance of his other columns. This was a very risky maneuver, but one that he was forced to take. The next column consisted of the divisions of St Hilaire and Morand. This column moved in the center through Peising to Teugen and Abensberg. The third column of Friant and Gudin was moving closest to the front of the Austrians on the eastern side of III Corps movement (see Appendix A, Figure 2). Montbrun's horse cavalry augmented with infantry screened the eastern or left flank.

Davout's overriding consideration was to join forces with Lefebvre before engaging the enemy.

Charles still had the advantage at this point in the campaign. He had over 67,000 men moving against Davout and the V and II Rese ~~ps~~ ps protecting his flank from Lefebvre's forces. Charles planned to defeat Davout then turn south to defeat Massena. Strategically, the situation would have been desperate for the French had it not been for superior soldiers and Marshal Louis N. Davout.¹⁸

Later that same morning Charles set his three columns into motion in an attempt to intercept Davout's movement. Hohenzollern's III Corps moved toward Saal. Rosenberg's IV Corps supported by twelve grenadier battalions formed the second column and advanced on Dinzing. The third column marched northward on the Ratisbon-Eckmuehl highway.¹⁹ This powerful stream of Austrians soon became three dribbles. Instead of converging on Davout they separated and began to dispatch small detachments. These detachments were sent out to perform various unimportant missions such as garrisoning towns or protecting lines of communications. They were reducing their effective combat power as they moved closer to enemy contact. Instead of having 67,000 men to conduct the attack, they had reduced themselves to less than 38,000 by the time they met Davout.

Throughout these ten days before the first real action Davout performed extremely well. His tactical acumen was obvious. At all times Davout knew the enemy's location and, more important, their intentions. He maintained his intelligence gathering network and interpreted the facts correctly. His initial observations were both accurate and tactically sound. Davout maintained that he should be concentrated at Ingolstadt rather than separated at Ratisbon, and made numerous attempts to convince Berthier that this was the correct disposition. When he finally realized that Berthier could not be convinced he dutifully obeyed his orders and moved on to Ratisbon. Unfortunately this could not be fixed until the Emperor arrived.

Davout continued to remain abreast of the operational and tactical situation before committing his forces to the movement southward. He employed thorough reconnaissance then made his plan. He understood the importance of joining forces with Lefebvre and therefore moved with speed and audacity to effect this linkup. Davout not only saw the situation he envisioned the outcome. Then he had the faith in himself to act according to his vision. All of this foresight, knowledge, and tactical savvy are part of Davout's art of command. Davout's decision regarding the Ratisbon bridge

may be an error. However, it was an aberration from his normally faultless behavior.

At about noon on the nineteenth, Davout and the Archduke Charles were to collide with each other. This battle, fought on two gently rolling ridges, will allow an examination of Davout's tactical art of command. It is known as the battle of the ridgetops or simply Teugen-Hausen.

CHAPTER 5

YOU ONLY HAVE A CURTAIN OF THREE REGIMENTS TO YOUR FRONT

General Bonnal considered Davout's situation on the morning of the nineteenth to be desperate.¹ However, even if Charles could have brought forward all his available troops he would still have had a very difficult fight. The terrain in the area of Teugen-Hausen favored the French style of fighting. The battlefield consisted of two rolling ridges separated by one-thousand meters of open farmers' fields (see Appendix A, Figure 3). The sides were heavily wooded constricting the fields at various points. One road ran through the center connecting the small villages of Teugen and Hausen. This area therefore favored the use of light infantry tactics and skirmishing in which the French excelled.

Davout knew that there was a better than average chance that he would run into the Austrians before he could join forces with Lefebvre. This was one reason for his decision to move in three columns. If he made contact with the Austrians he wanted to do it with the minimum necessary force. At the same time if minimum force got into trouble the other columns remained within

supporting distance. Planning for possible battle, Davout rode in the van of St Hilaire's division. Not only did he perceive the proper movement, his intuition extended through to the outcome of possible contact.

Davout's tactical abilities and his personal leadership came into play as he shortly encountered Charles' Army. Davout believed that a set piece battle against Charles' superior force would be a difficult endeavor. He therefore developed an alternate plan that would force the Austrians to fight the battle on his terms. At eleven o'clock in the morning Davout received word from his scouts that Hohenzollern's column was directly to his front. Davout acted quickly and developed a plan that would eliminate the Austrian threat with the smallest force possible. This plan had to protect the movement of his artillery and baggage advancing through the Saal defile, as well as allow the majority of his forces to effect juncture with Lefebvre (see Appendix A, Figure 2).

Davout developed a tactical plan that would make Charles' attack against him a strike in the air. Montbrun and his cavalry continued to screen Davout's left flank. They would play a critical role and perform in a manner that was simply outstanding. He continued to push his first column of artillery and baggage southward along the river road. Davout then sent the divisions of Morand and

Gudin to support the movement of his artillery and trains. This would enable them to protect the artillery as well as swing the majority of his corps southwestward to join forces with Lefebvre. Davout would then face the bulk of the Austrians with the divisions of St Hilaire and Friant. This was a difficult decision because Davout had now sent seventy percent of his combat power away from the battle. He had two divisions left to face a large Austrian force.

Montbrun was the first unit to contact the Austrians at about 9:00 A.M. He was engaged nearly the entire day in a delaying action with the center Austrian column, under Rosenberg, which was vastly superior in numbers to Montbrun's small column of two-thousand. Luckily Rosenberg had frittered away a large part of his column into several small detachments garrisoning villages and protecting his rear area. By the time they engaged Montbrun, Rosenberg had reduced his force from sixteen battalions to only eight. However, this force was still twice that of Montbrun.² Davout's use of Montbrun proved to be a critical factor in his success. Davout knew that Montbrun was a skilled commander and capable of conducting such an operation with little guidance. In fact, Montbrun would perform similar functions throughout the next three days, continually protecting Davout's flank.

St Hilaire and Friant continued southward in column. Davout directed them through Teugen along the

road toward Hausen. When they moved to the top of the ridge just beyond Teugen they could see the white coated Austrian's to their front. Davout took a great chance by attacking forward with only two divisions of infantry. This column had to fight throughout most of the day with no artillery or cavalry support.

Hohenzollern also knew that Davout was moving down on his flank. He turned his Corps north through the village of Hausen and sent Field Marshal Philip Vukassovich's division forward. They set up just past the woods on the open terrain of the first ridge. Davout realized that Hohenzollern had a superior force and was already in battle formation. Davout's forces were still in column and the regiments were not yet in supporting distances of each other. The conservative course of action available was to set up a defense in front of Teugen

Davout would have none of that, a defense would give the initiative over to the Austrians. He immediately sent the 3rd Ligne forward to halt the Austrian advance. They advanced forward in skirmish order. Davout's Corps (being the last remnant of the Grand Armee unspoiled by Spain) was capable of fighting in this open order.³ Two-thousand French attacking down then uphill against six-thousand Austrians supported by twelve guns could not carry the day, however, they did serve their purpose very

well. They bought Davout the necessary time to bring forward the remainder of his forces.

Davout's fight on this day was not typical of the normal battles of this period in history. Normally units would maneuver, bringing all of their forces together, then fight each other with the forces they had arrayed. This was the way the French achieved victories at Jena, Friedland, and Austerlitz. However, Davout was fighting a new type of warfare, one in which he would be bringing units up from a column and committing them to battle as they arrived. This is a very difficult way to fight a battle even today with all the sophisticated command and control systems the modern commander has available. This type of fighting would only become more widely used as warfare evolved during the latter part of the century.

As the 3rd Ligne fell back Davout followed them up with the 57th Ligne. This was a particularly good unit that had achieved the sobriquet, "Terrible 57th", from their performance in Italy in 1800. The reformed 3rd Ligne and the 10th Legere soon came forward to support the 57th (see Appendix A, Figure 3). A short lull in the action took place as the Austrians began to push forward more forces. Davout took the time to reorganize his forces as the 72nd Ligne arrived in front of Teugen. The French had formed themselves into a "U" shape with the open end facing the Austrians.⁴ Although stabilized, the

French position was far from secure. The Austrians began to receive more reinforcements as Prince Alois Liechtenstein's division arrived. This gave the Austrians an even greater numerical advantage. The Austrian artillery was also taking a particular heavy toll on the French in their exposed positions. The situation called for resolute, bold and audacious actions on the part of Davout. He had already demonstrated these traits by initiating the attack earlier in the day. Now he would have to take similar actions to prevent the Austrians from overrunning his position.

Hohenzollern then released the elite Manfredini Infantry into the attack. He sent them through the woods on the eastern side of the battlefield. Prince Alois Liechtenstein personally led this attack into the flank of the 57th Ligne. To counter this threat Davout launched the 72nd Ligne with General Compans, Chief of Staff for III Corps, at its head. It was common practice for commanders to send units into action with aides or chief-of-staff's at their head. They would do this in critical situations when it was imperative that they achieve victory. The timing of this attack was critical. Davout and Compans timed it perfectly, the 72nd Ligne hit the Austrians just as they were emerging from the woods prior to their full deployment. The Austrians fell back in confusion.

The remainder of the Austrians then pushed forward. These white-coated infantry moved directly into the mouth of the "U" that Davout had created. They were caught in a ferocious cross fire and forced to retreat. Prince Liechtenstein again organized another counter attack force. This force pressed against one of the prongs of the "U" forcing St Hilaire's men to retreat. They were backed up against a swamp in total disorganization when Davout calmly rode over to their location. In his normal confident manner he rallied these men stating, "Today, our lot is to conquer or to die on this ground. Other than this there is neither salvation nor glory for us."⁵ They immediately rallied and attacked forward once again.

At 3:00 in the afternoon Colonel Seruzier, Davout's Chief of Artillery, arrived dragging forward a battery of guns. Davout positioned these guns against the Austrian flank and launched the 57th and 72nd Ligne in a diversionary attack. Simultaneously Friant's fresh division began to arrive and they were immediately committed to the battle. The effect on the Austrians was conclusive. They soon retreated through Hausen beaten again by the French. A thunderstorm combined with the fatigue of the French and Austrians alike ended the fight.

Charles had failed in his original objectives for the day and Davout now held the field, and more important,

controlled the river road. Davout realized that these were not the same Austrians that he had beaten at Ulm and Austerlitz. Their leadership had improved and their soldiers fought with a vigor never before observed. He then knew that the next few days were not going to be easy. The Austrians, too, were impressed with their adversary. Hohenzollern commented that evening that he must have faced at least two corps during the fighting at Teugen-Hausen. In fact he had faced a little more than one division with virtually no artillery.⁶

By the end of the night Davout had achieved his goals for the day. His artillery had arrived safely and he had effected the linkup with Lefebvre's corps. He had managed to maneuver himself south of Charles and defeated the corps that was in his way. He did this with minimal effort and loss of life. Gabriel De Chenier said it best,

The victory of Napoleon was not due to general sacrifice but due to the self-sacrifice of Davout. Which was the result of his boldness to stop the march of the enemy and divide his forces.⁷

Although part of Davout's success was due to the ineffectiveness of the Austrian command, he certainly ensured that III Corps took advantage of every Austrian mistake. Davout had stopped the advance of an entire corps with only one division. Additionally, his movement away from Ratisbon forced Charles' other two corps to strike into the wind.

His tactical leadership was at its finest. Davout was continually at the right place at the right time. He traveled at the head of St Hilaire's division to direct the action. Then, at critical junctures, he was there either to direct the action or rally and reorganize a unit. His organization of the battle and his conduct during the action provide an excellent example of his tactical *coup d'oeil*. First, Davout visualized the battle before it began. Then he visualized what such a victory would look like and what actions were needed to bring about victory. He planned how he was going to phase in the units as they arrived, and what he would do based on the terrain and his reconnaissance.

Although he did not know the exact disposition of the Austrian forces, his route of march and subsequent actions prepared him for any contingency. His decisions were fast, accurate, and clear to those who had to execute them. Davout showed a unique ability to develop the battle in a situation that was extremely fluid. By the end of the day he was able to bring 25,000 troops into action. This is compared to the Austrians who never had more than 17,000 engaged throughout the day, in spite of the fact that in the initial actions they had a three to one advantage over the French. Davout's actions ensured that the Austrians did not interpose themselves between his forces and Lefebvre. Had he not succeeded Charles

would have had Davout's Corps isolated between his forces and Kollowrat to the north.

Thanks to Davout the French forces were now united across a broad front and it was the Austrians who were spread from Landshut to Ratisbon. Napoleon returned his army to the positions planned before Berthier scattered them. Napoleon then felt the climax would occur on 20 April.

Napoleon's plan was for Davout and Lefebvre to hold the Austrians to their front in check. Then Lannes ad-hoc Corps along with the German Corps would smash the Austrian center. Massena's Corps would follow this with a thrust on Landshut. However, this plan was based on the false assumption that Charles' main army was in front of Napoleon blocking the road to Landshut.⁸

Napoleon assumed that after his defeat on the 19th, Charles would retreat on his line of communications through Landshut. He was certain that Charles could not possibly be willing to stand and fight against him. General Bonnal stated "Napoleon's view was obscured by a cloud of pride which led him to overestimate his own strength and underestimate that of the enemy." Napoleon was now splitting his forces which he had just united. Bonnal suggests that this attempt to "hunt two hares at the same time" might have ended the war in Bavaria.⁹

Napoleon's vision of the battlefield was clouded. Many writers support the notion that Napoleon knew he was only facing one wing of the Austrian army. Napoleon also supports this idea in his bulletin following the battle. However, Napoleon's official correspondence indicates that he thought it was the entire Austrian army.¹⁰ Davout knew that Charles' main force was still to his front and not to the south as Napoleon claimed. This fixation with Landshut would hamper Napoleon's tactical decision making for the next two days.

To lead his assault on Landshut, Napoleon placed Marshal Jean Lannes in charge of an ad-hoc corps composed of the division of Gudin and Morand as well as Nansouty's and St Sulpice's Cuirassier Divisions. This left Davout with only two divisions and Montbrun's cavalry brigade for the next three days of fighting. That morning Davout again tried to convince Napoleon that he was still facing the main Austrian army.

Davout's operational and tactical view of the battlefield was again correct. Only this time instead of it just being Berthier who was confused it was the Emperor himself. As Napoleon was transfixed with this push on Landshut it would be up to Davout to hold the main Austrian army in place. He had already saved the French army on the 19th now he was to continue with that mission for the next two days.

Though the actions on 20 April are collectively referred to as the battle of Abensberg, they were however, a series of tactical engagements along a twenty-mile front. Charles' main force remained opposite Davout focused on the capture of Ratisbon. Controlling Ratisbon would enable Charles to unite with Kollowrat to the north and provide the needed reinforcements. Facing the remainder of the French forces was the Austrian left wing under Archduke Ludwig.

The Bavarians began the battle with a weak attack across the Abens River. The Austrian artillery soon checked their advance. The French then began to make further progress to the south. Lannes with his newly formed corps launched an attack along the road toward Rohr (see Appendix A, Figure 4). Simultaneously Vandamme and General Wrede moved forward to the south of Lannes Corps. They pursued the Austrians along a parallel road through Siegenberg and Pfeffenhausen. Lefebvre's Corps supported Davout who remained around Hausen. The movement of the French against Archduke Ludwig proved too much. Easily convinced to retreat, the Hapsburgs headed southwest toward Landshut on the two parallel roads aggressively pursued by the French.

The Austrians did manage to show some enthusiasm during the retreat. Along the road to Rottenberg General Vincent rallied his division to conduct a counterattack

against the French. His troops succeeded in halting their advance for some time but finally succumbed to the disciplined fire of the French. By 10:00 P.M. the Austrians were behind Pfeffenhausen. The Abens position could have been held by conducting a determined defense in the many small towns in the vicinity. Lannes did this near the Granary at Essling and was successful. However, the Austrian leadership was not up to the challenge as the entire Austrian left was driven back.¹¹ The Austrians decided that their best chance for survival lay in their ability to withdraw to Landshut. They could then gather behind the Isar River and set up a defense. By the end of the day Lannes was at Rottenburg, Vandamme at Pfeffenhausen and Massena at Geisenfeld.

The result of the day's action was that Charles, with his right wing consisting of the corps of Hohenzollern, Rosenberg, and Lichtenstein, was cut off from his left. On the morning of 21 April Napoleon wrote to Davout, "The day before yesterday and yesterday were another Jena."¹² This is an interesting statement because it was just like Jena. Napoleon was fighting against the smaller force that the Emperor thought was actually the main army while Davout, like at Auerstaedt, was facing the main Austrian army.

The last of the fighting on the twentieth took place in the city of Ratisbon. The 65th Ligne under

Colonel Coutard remained at Ratisbon to guard the bridge and prevent the Austrians from moving southward. This unit was hand picked by Davout and had a reputation for excellence in combat. Additionally, Colonel Coutard was Davout's cousin and an excellent commander. Unfortunately Coutard's two-thousand men were insufficient for the task at hand. They were unable to blow the bridge so their only recourse was to hold the Austrians off as long as possible. After ten straight hours of fighting Coutard had captured two flags and over four-hundred prisoners. However, in the process he had suffered over fifty percent casualties and was critically short of ammunition.¹³

Davout had not forgotten these brave Frenchmen guarding Ratisbon. In the early morning of April 20 he attempted to resupply Colonel Coutard's force and begged him to hold out to the last. Unfortunately the Austrians captured the ammunition train before it reached Coutard's forces. Coutard was precariously perched between Kollowrath's Corps moving in from the north and Liechtenstein's Corps approaching the city from the south. Facing Kollowrath's forces alone Coutard was outnumbered ten to one. He had managed to hold out until late in the day and through a ruse convinced Kollowrath to agree to a twenty-four-hour truce. However, when Liechtenstein approached from the south he would not honor the truce as it did not apply to his forces. Coutard was then forced

to surrender at 5:00 P.M. Now Charles had the much needed link with Kollowrath's forces to the north; it also meant Davout would be facing five Austrian Corps on the next morning.

The loss of Ratisbon was a key factor in Napoleon's plan for action on the twenty-first. Throughout the night of 20 April and the morning of 21 April Davout sent a series of three messages to Napoleon. In each he reconfirmed the fall of Ratisbon and gave the general locations of Charles' forces. He repeatedly informed the Emperor that Charles' army was to his front and not retreating on Landshut.¹⁴ Unfortunately Napoleon refused to believe anything that indicated Charles was not retreating toward Landshut. Again the superior intellect and intelligence gathering of the Iron Marshal yielded the correct interpretation of the actual situation facing the French on April 21.

Davout's actions on the twentieth were minor and not worth noting. It is not known why Davout remained inactive on the twentieth. Most authorities do not defend or criticize his decision not to fight. They either ignore the fact or simply refer to the fatigue of his men from the battle at Teugen-Hausen. However, had he moved against Charles he may have well prevented the fall of Ratisbon by distracting Liechtenstein's forces moving up from the south. It may be argued that this was Davout's

second tactical error of the campaign. However, his men were exhausted and Napoleon had told him to simply hold what was to his front.

On the next day, Davout was to continue his fight against Charles and Austrian right wing. This time he had only two divisions in his corps. On 21 April Napoleon planned for Davout to continue to Ratisbon and cross the Danube. He was then to push Kollowrath into Bohemia. The Emperor and Vandamme were to finish their pursuit of the Austrian left to Landshut. Massena was to cut off the Austrian retreat at Landshut.

Napoleon's decision to march on Landshut was based on four incorrect assumptions: that on the nineteenth Charles' right wing had been destroyed, that in the battle of Abensberg he had destroyed two corps, that the bridge at Ratisbon had been destroyed, finally that Massena was already at Landshut.¹⁵ To Davout he wrote;

You have but a screen of three regiments before you.
. . . . If you hear cannon fire confronting Lefebvre
you will support him Once your rear is
cleaned up you will march on Ratisbon; You will attack
Bellegarde and Kollowrat. You will pursue and drive
them into the Bohemian Mountains.¹⁶

Davout had more than three regiments to his front. What he had was three corps with two more pouring through Ratisbon to link up with Charles. Davout would continue to save the French army from defeat on the twenty-first.

Napoleon, with the main French army, pushed the Austrian left wing to Landshut. They continued their

pursuit on two parallel roads leading to Landshut and the bridges over the Isar River. Again General Vincent acted admirably holding the French at bay for over three hours. This allowed many Austrians to cross the river and continue their retreat. The scene in and around Landshut was pure chaos as that area had been the forward staging base for the Austrian army. Infantry, cavalry, artillery, and baggage wagons competed for space on the one road leading to the east. The Austrian fire held the French in front of the bridge across the Isar River for a number of hours. Finally at the end of the day Napoleon succeeded in taking Landshut with a *coup de main*.

Meanwhile Charles resolved to fix and destroy Davout's isolated corps to the north. Davout and Lefebvre had about 36,000 men facing Charles with over 75,000. For the third day in a row Davout would have to face these great odds, and the Austrian commander, with his main army.

The actions on the twenty-first show that Davout had great tactical abilities. Unlike at Teugen-Hausen, Charles brought more of his available forces into play in an attempt to defeat the French III Corps. The battles of 21 April were again a series of engagements conducted by subordinate units over an eight mile stretch of land. They do not have a name but are generally referred to as "Davout's running fight" (see Appendix A, Figure 5).

Charles issued orders late on the twentieth to assemble his forces for an eventual attack against Davout. However, Charles had not yet devised a plan for his actions. He would accomplish that plan in the morning as his forces assembled on the battlefield. This proved to be a tactical error on the part of the Austrians. In true form, Davout attacked before Charles could formulate any plan. The decision to attack a force that outnumbered his own by over two to one was again risky. One must remember these troops were not the antiquated Prussians of Auerstaedt or the old Austrian army of 1805. They were a new and well led army that had spent the last three years rebuilding and training.

However, Davout decided that the best way to deceive the Austrians of his numerical weakness was to go on the offensive. By attacking, the Austrians would surely think they were facing a superior French force and not just a few divisions.¹⁷ By doing this Davout hoped that the Austrian commanders would loose their resolve to stand and fight. Hohenzollern was deceived by first Davout's attack and then by the ferociousness of the French infantry. As Davout suspected, Hohenzollern could never imagine such an attack by only two divisions. Davout always made it a point to understand his enemy as well as their leaders. This understanding would play an

important part in Davout's decision making process. On 21 April he made the correct decision.

Davout's actions again resound with moral courage and his refusal ever to admit defeat. His confidence in his units and himself was very high. This enabled him to make such decisions. Had he waited for the Austrians to move first, they most likely would have encircled Davout's forces. He knew the enemy, where he was, and accurately predicted what actions the enemy would take when he advanced against them.

Davout also knew the capabilities of his own units and was confident that they could launch such an attack. He possessed the necessary moral courage and decisiveness to pull off such an attack. He also based his decision on the fact that Napoleon and the rest of the French army were heading off to the south and Landshut. If he remained passive Charles could have moved on Napoleon's rear and flank. Davout knew that he had to prevent this disaster from happening. Thus, in his mind the only recourse was to attack.

Again Davout would be moving forward with his left flank exposed to the Austrians. As on the 19th Davout turned to Montbrun and his cavalry to cover this exposed flank. It was even more critical as Montbrun would be tactically isolated by the terrain and III Corps success depended a great deal on his actions.

The first action of the day occurred around 7:00 A.M. near the village of Languaid (see Appendix A, Figure 5). At that town St Hilaire ran into Hohenzollern's and Rosenberg's lead units. Simultaneously, Lefebvre was moving along a parallel road to the south. As at Teugen-Hausen, Davout was traveling with his lead forces. Davout again controlled the situation and committed the 3rd Ligne and 10th Legere to the fight. They succeeded in pushing the Austrians out of the town. It was this action that convinced the Austrians that they were facing more than a mere two divisions. In fact Rosenberg sent a note to Charles at 8:00 A. M. stating "I am compelled to fall back on Eckmuehl in the face of superior hostile forces."¹⁸

Friant's division moved to the left and engaged Stutterheim's forces near Paering. At this point Davout could no longer view and control the entire battlefield. He had to rely on his subordinates to act in accordance with the instructions he had given them during the previous night. The Austrian command problems soon became evident. Rosenberg and Hohenzollern received three different sets of conflicting orders from Charles. This resulted in Hohenzollern's Corps being spread in a number of different directions. This highlights the difference between the two commanders, Charles and Davout. Charles panicked and created much confusion through misaligned

orders and directions. While Davout remained calm and issued clear orders that enabled his subordinates to respond appropriately.

Davout and Lefebvre continued to push the Austrians back along two parallel routes. Finally near Ober and Unter-Laichling the Austrians decided to stand and fight. Rosenberg stopped in the south with his left flank along the Laber near Eckmuehl. Hohenzollern joined with Rosenberg's right and ran his line about three miles to the north. The Austrians immediately began to prepare a strong defense on good ground. Their lines were on a slight rise in wooded terrain. Rosenberg's southern flank was hinged at a small bald hilltop and extended back toward Eckmuehl. Most important they covered the Eckmuehl-Ratisbon Highway: Charles' key line of retreat to Vienna.

Considering the strong position occupied by the Austrians, Davout thought about remaining on the defense. The Austrians then opened the fight with their artillery and the French responded in kind. The Austrian artillery began to take its toll on St Hilaire's division. This was another time that called for the resolute decisiveness of Davout. He had to make the decision whether to continue the attack or remain on the defense.

Davout rode over to Friant to discuss the situation and determine if an attack was warranted. As he

approached, a shell toppled Friant's horse but did not explode. The General soon regained his composure and was quickly given another mount. Convinced that "the affair had taken on a more serious character" Davout and Friant planned an assault.¹⁹ Unfazed by the cannon fire he ordered Friant and St Hilaire's division to conduct a general attack forward. For the third time in as many days Davout was attacking a force that vastly outnumbered his two small divisions.

This time the Austrians were determined to fight. Charles was present on the scene and showed a considerable amount of leadership and battlefield skills. He even committed the "Archduke Charles Regiment" to the fight when Friant began to make progress in the north. St Hilaire managed to capture Unter-Laichling but was forced to retreat later in the night. The fighting continued until dark but the French were not able to take the Austrian positions. However, they managed to hold on to what they achieved as the day wore to an end. The French fought a series of running battles and skirmishes over about eight miles. They had finally run out of endurance in front of the twin villages of the Laichlings.

Had Davout failed to initiate the attack to hold Charles the results may have been disastrous. During the fight Davout had sent at least six messages to Napoleon informing him that the main army lay to the front of III

Corps. He received no reply from the Emperor. As darkness approached Davout shifted his forces anchoring his northern flank on the heavy woods. He set his southern flank along the Laber River. These movements proved beneficial and set up the fight that was to occur on the following morning (see Appendix A, Figure 6).

Charles had again missed his opportunity to destroy Davout. One may argue that it was Charles' fault that this did not happen. However, Davout actions throughout the day certainly limited what actions Charles could take. Davout again played the critical role in the activities for the day. Although Napoleon's attack at Landshut was successful it does not even compare to what Davout accomplished during the day. Napoleon had attacked a defeated Corps with superior numbers while Davout attacked a force far superior to his own. It was also a force that was still capable of offensive actions and success. The Austrians' actions around Unter-Laichling and in the woods to the north demonstrated that they were still capable of offensive action. Not only could they fight they were prepared to resume the offense in the morning.

This reasoning prompted Davout to write Napoleon during the night stating "If I do not receive any troops and the enemy should march on me, I will do what I can to resist the numbers."²⁰ He went on to explain that the

troops coming from Ratisbon were arriving and that his troops were too fatigued to carry the positions. Davout was now facing an Austrian army that had three times the infantry and artillery he possessed.²¹ These statements show that Davout had a clear grasp of the situation. He was facing a numerically superior force that was occupying a good defensive position. This force's numbers would swell during the night by Kollowrath's Corps arriving from north of the Danube. Bellegarde was not far behind with another 20,000 men.

Napoleon had committed the same mistake he did at Jena. He thought he faced the main force while Davout had "but a screen of three regiments to his front." Such a mistake could have easily spelled disaster to anyone less capable than Davout.²² His duty was simply to contain the Austrian right wing and cover Napoleon's open flank. Had Davout not been able to do this Napoleon would likely have been defeated. Charles could have easily moved southward falling on Napoleon's exposed left flank. If in fact Davout had only three regiments to his front it would have been easy. Instead he had three corps to his front. To prevent the destruction of Napoleon, Davout conducted an all out attack against a superior force.

It is interesting to note that Davout applied most of the principles of war in this fight. He achieved initial surprise by initiating the attack. Rosenberg was

convinced he was being attacked by a superior force. Davout then massed his combat power and pursued the offensive against the Austrian forces. He continued to achieve success until Charles arrived with additional reinforcements to reinforce their defense. Again his judgement had been correct and his orders properly executed. Davout was a superb tactician who could view the battle and instantaneously decide what actions would bring about success. Davout had a perfect record in battle thus far and he was not going to let some Austrian Archduke cause his first defeat.

By the end of the day the French had still not defeated the majority of the Austrian forces. The arrival of Kollowrat's Corps gave added firepower to the Austrians and greatly improved Charles' morale. The situation facing the French was far from secure. Napoleon, with the majority of the French Army lay over twenty miles to the south. Luckily he had sent only Bessieres' cavalry in pursuit of the Austrians across the Isar River at Landshut. He still had all of his infantry and most of the heavy cavalry within striking distance.

Davout and Lefebvre continued to hold their temporary defense throughout the night. The only hope for Davout was to convince Napoleon that he was facing the main Austrian army. After that he would have to persuade Napoleon to move north with the main army. Davout also

realized that if he did induce Napoleon to move it would take at least nine hours for the first troops to arrive. He then had to think of a plan to contain the Austrians until the arrival of the main French army.

CHAPTER 6

THE DUKE OF AUERSTAEDT IS AT GRIPS WITH THE ENEMY

Charles had taken Ratisbon and was determined to attack and destroy Davout at Eckmuehl on the twenty-second. As early as 2:30 P.M. on 21 April, Davout sent Napoleon a report that he was developing the main attack around that village.¹ The Emperor, convinced that Charles would retreat along a line south of the Danube to cover Vienna, continued to ignore Davout. Napoleon was sure that Charles' retreat would run through Landshut or Straubing. Again Davout was more aware of the current situation than Napoleon.

Throughout the remainder of the twenty-first and the morning of the twenty-second Davout sent no less than three messages to Napoleon. Each message was more urgent than the previous one. Davout realized that he was facing Charles who had three times the forces Davout possessed. Also, Austrian reinforcements were now pouring through Ratisbon, making Charles' position even stronger. Davout realized that he could not possibly hold and defeat Charles the next morning. Though Davout never before hesitated to attack forces superior to his own, he was also a realist and knew when not to attack. The success

of Davout and the French Army lay in his ability to convince Napoleon to move north with the remainder of the army. At 11:00 P. M. Davout sent a final, desperate message to Napoleon;

I will hold my positions, I hope, but the troops are too overcome with exhaustion to ever dream of attacking positions with three times the artillery and troops that I have.²

General Henri Pire of Davout's staff carried this message to the Emperor. The combination of the note and Pire's insistence, finally convinced Napoleon that he needed to move north to support Davout.

At 2:30 in the morning on 22 April Napoleon spurred into action. He responded to Davout, "I will be at Eckmuehl and attack the enemy vigorously at three o'clock. I will arrive with 40,000 men."³ His next correspondence was to Berthier detailing out his plan for the movement and subsequent attack. Napoleon followed this with a quick order to Marshal Lannes: "The Duke of Auerstaedt is at grips with the enemy. You are to march on Eckmuehl and attack the enemy on all sides."⁴ This series of correspondences dispatched at three o'clock in the morning set the entire army in motion toward Eckmuehl twenty miles to the north.

Had Davout not persisted in his communications to the Emperor he most likely would have been defeated at Eckmuehl. He had held Charles at bay for three days fighting numerous pitched engagements. His troops were

beginning to feel the fatigue of constant battle. These were the same regiments that fought at Teugen-Hausen, Peising, and Laichling and they were about to fight again at Eckmuehl. Charles, on the other hand, was receiving fresh reinforcements from Kollowrath and Bellegarde who had not yet fought a major action.

Davout still had to contend with the fact that it would take time for the army to move north from Landshut. Therefore, he needed a plan to hold back the Austrians until Napoleon could arrive. As Davout was developing his plan and the Emperor was approaching from the south, Charles too was formulating his plan of operations for the morning. This time Charles was not going to be left standing while Davout took the initiative. Charles still maintained the advantage with 70,000 Austrians facing only 35,000 French. Also, he had 20,000 more men joining him from the north. At ten in the evening on the twenty-first Charles decided he would attack in the morning. He knew Napoleon was at Landshut and he concluded that Davout was totally isolated.

Charles planned to advance with three corps on Davout's left flank around Peising and Abach (see Appendix A, Figure 6). At 6:00 A.M. Kollowrath arrived with 19,000 infantry and an additional 2,000 sabers. This not only increased Charles' strength, it boosted his morale. He was now ready to initiate the attack. Charles had been

mauled by Davout during the past three days and felt he needed overwhelming superiority before he dared to attack. With Kollowrath's forces he now had the superiority in numbers he needed. The force attacking Davout now consisted of over 41 battalions of infantry supported by artillery and cavalry.⁵ Charles issued his orders at 8:00 A.M. on 22 April with the attack to begin at noon.

Davout realized that Napoleon could not possibly arrive until sometime after two o'clock. Therefore, he had to devise some sort of plan to hold the Austrians in check until that time. Again Davout analyzed the situation and was confident Charles would not attack until late in the morning. So Davout decided to hold Charles in place and keep his attention occupied forward in order to enable Napoleon to join the fight undetected from the south. He had to hide Napoleon's movement because Charles would certainly avoid battle if he knew he was about to be attacked by the entire French Army. Therefore Davout initiated the action with minor skirmishing along his entire front which now stretched from Schirling to Saalhaupt. He used his cavalry to maintain contact on his left and eliminate any likelihood of being outflanked in that area, thus he managed to keep the Austrians confused and cautious throughout the morning. As a result the Austrian's could not begin their main assault around 1:30 in the afternoon.

Just as the Austrians began to move, Davout could see the advance guard of Napoleon's forces arriving south of Eckmuehl. They came from Landshut in three columns; the cavalry on the left, the Wurttembergers in the center and the French on the right, with Vandamme in the lead.⁶ Following the lead elements came Lannes and Massena with the heavy cavalry.

Davout then initiated a general advance to distract the Austrian's attention. Montbrun moved forward and successfully drove back every attempt by the Austrians to turn Davout's left flank. Davout then sent forward the 10th Legere who quickly took the village of Unter-Laichling. Lefebvre also advanced with Gudin's division of Lannes' corps on his right. The 10th fought well but ground to a halt around the Eckmuehl-Ratisbon highway. As at Teugen-Hausen, Davout sent General Compans with a regiment into action. The battle raged back and forth in the wooded area above the village of Unter-Laichling until Davout was finally able to pierce Rosenberg's center.

At 2:30 P.M. Napoleon arrived just south of Eckmuehl. From that position he could view most of the battlefield and began issuing orders. He sent Lannes and the Wurttembergers forward through Eckmuehl. Next he assembled the heavy cavalry for an assault on Rosenberg in the center. The Wurttembergers forced the crossing of the Eckmuehl bridge and then began their attack in the town.

They were compelled to fight from house to house due to the Austrian's defenses. After about two hours and some assistance from the French cavalry they were successful.⁷

Lannes' success, and the Wurttemberger's action in the center, forced the Austrians on the French right to fall back on the Laichlings. This meant that Davout was facing most of the Austrians necessitating a change of plans. He was facing the Austrians originally to his front as well as those who had retreated before Lannes and the Wurttembergers. These additional Austrians forced the 10th Regiment from St Hilaire's Division back to the hanging woods above Unter-Laichling losing the ground they had gained earlier. To relieve this pressure Davout directed Friant, who was to St Hilarie's left, to attack in full force. Friant positioned his artillery to support an attack by four infantry regiments. This attack went slowly due to the breastworks the Austrians had thrown up during the night. Finally, the 48th Regiment from Friant's Division stormed the position forcing the Austrians to retreat.

As a result, St Hilaire gained the necessary time to bring up more units to recapture Unter-Laichling. Davout now controlled both villages and the woods beyond them. His quick actions prevented the Austrians from retreating or reassembling their forces once they had broken contact with Lannes and the Wurttembergers. In

effect, Davout's forces became the anvil as Napoleon hammered the Austrians into him. It was a most difficult situation for the Iron Marshal but he and his soldiers performed well. Davout's quick actions enabled III Corps to stabilize the situation and contribute decisively to the defeat of the Austrians.

Only Rosenberg, to Davout's south facing Lefebvre's Bavarian divisions, had achieved any success in the afternoon. During Napoleon's initial advance around one o'clock, Rosenberg had withdrawn his forces to the top of the Bettelberg. This position was very strong and forced the French to attack uphill. He secured this small bald hilltop with sixteen artillery pieces and most of his cavalry, repelling both the Bavarian cavalry and Deroi's infantry.

At about 3:30 P.M. the French heavy cavalry arrived at the base of the Bettelberg. Nansouty and St Sulpice collected over twenty squadrons of cuirassiers. They galloped forward charging the artillery and twenty-two squadrons of the Austrian cavalry defending the hill. Charging uphill against superior odds, the French horseman cleared the Austrians off the top of the hill. With his left pushed back by Lannes, his right defeated by Davout and now his center smashed, Rosenberg began to retreat up the Eckmuehl-Ratisbon highway.⁸

Rosenberg's loss forced Charles to order a retreat northward. Napoleon followed with a general pursuit by the cavalry along the main highway, Lannes following on the east and Davout on the west. Though defeated Charles conducted an excellent rear guard fight which extracted most of the remainder of his army from the battlefield. General Vincent and the Austrian cavalry again performed admirably. The French infantry pursuit stalled around Koeffering as nightfall approached. They had marched twenty miles and then fought a battle over another five miles of hotly contested terrain. They were too fatigued to continue the attack. Napoleon's only recourse was to pursue with the cavalry. The French had taken fifteen flags, 5,000 prisoners and, twelve guns. The Austrians had suffered over 6,000 killed or wounded.⁹

The last action of the day took place at Alt Eglofsheim. General Schneller deployed his cuirassiers to block the French pursuit. General Stutterheim's light cavalry and eighteen guns supported Schneller's cuirassiers. This force amounted to about 3,500 sabers. Nansouty led forward 6,000 horseman.¹⁰ He had a regiment of carabiniers flanked by two of cuirassiers. Behind his line was St Sulpice with more cuirassiers and the German light cavalry on the right flank. The French horse had covered close to thirty miles during the day so they allowed the Austrians to initiate the attack.

The French carabiniers fired a volley and drew sabers. The French and Austrian cuirassiers then met each other in the center. A general melee ensued with the sheer number of the French overwhelming the Austrian horsemen. Another factor contributing to the defeat of the Austrians was that they only wore a front cuirass while the French cuirass protected the front and back. As the horses passed each other during the charge the French simply thrust at the Austrians' sides and rear. At the conclusion of the battle, which lasted all of about ten minutes, there were ten Austrian dead for every Frenchman.¹¹

Davout's men slept where their pursuit ended. They had borne the burden of the heaviest fighting during the last four days and were exhausted. Napoleon's actions and decision to move on Eckmuehl saved the day. Without the entire army, Davout's small corps would have been overwhelmed by sheer numbers alone. However, if not for the perseverance of the redoubtable Davout the victory would not have been possible.

Davout developed a plan to hold the Austrians in the morning and possessed the physical and moral courage to stand and await Napoleon's arrival. Davout was confident he had convinced the Emperor to move and trusted the ability of Lannes and Vandamme to put their forces in motion. He managed to hold his positions until the

arrival of Napoleon. Then, without any consultation with the Emperor, he conducted the initial attack achieving enough success to distract the Austrians. This enabled Lannes and the Wurttembergers to advance on the Austrian left flank. Additionally, Davout's actions in holding the villages of the Laichlings under extreme pressure were another example of his outstanding tactical abilities.

After Davout had received confirmation of Napoleon's movement north he developed a plan based on his vision of the battle. He knew the basic direction of advance and predicted where Napoleon's forces would arrive. He also predicted their approximate time of arrival. His battlefield vision then extended beyond the initial engagement to what actions he had to take throughout the day. Davout then translated this vision into a series of orders to his two divisional commanders, Friant and St Hilaire. Davout then had the moral courage to pursue the execution of his vision. This was evident in his stand at the Laichlings when the Austrians fell back from Lannes' attacks.

Had Davout not held at Laichling the Austrians would have had an exposed French flank to attack. Davout realized that the Austrian's would fall back to the Eckmuehl-Ratisbon highway. This was their only line of retreat and Davout was well aware of that fact from the previous day's fighting. He was also well aware that

Charles would lose his desire to stand and fight once he knew of Napoleon's arrival. With all this in mind, Davout organized his forces, and the ensuing fight, to coerce Charles into action when and where Davout wanted.

Davout's conduct at Auerstaedt had silenced those who opposed his appointment to the marshalate. His actions during April 1809 in Bavaria proved once and for all his value as a marshal of France and corps commander. F. Loraine Petre describes his performance best;

His strategical insight equaled Massena's and it was he who warned Berthier, in vain, that he was off track. Of his conduct on the critical days of the 19th through the 22nd April 1809 it is impossible to speak too highly. He was not afraid to stick to his own opinions even against the Emperor's as to the Austrian movements before and after Eckmuehl.¹²

Davout's actions at Eckmuehl, and the previous four days of fighting earned him the title, "Prince of Eckmuehl."

The fighting did not continue until the morning of 23 April as Napoleon decided not to pursue. Many historians have criticized Napoleon's decision to halt his pursuit at Alt Eglofsheim.¹³ It was indeed a rare instance when Napoleon did not pursue his victories. However, in this case, he was well justified. Most of his infantry and cavalry had marched over twenty-five miles and fought a battle for over nine hours covering another five miles. They had been fighting for the past four days and were exhausted. An Austrian counterattack against such tired troops could have meant a French defeat.

Although the French had won every encounter thus far with the Austrians, Charles was still able to retreat in fairly good order.

Charles managed to get most of his forces across the Danube, leaving a force of about 6,000 men to conduct a rear guard action at Ratisbon. The city, encircled by a large wall, was well suited for defense. Napoleon would have to take the town and the bridge in order to continue his pursuit on the next day. He recognized that he could not conduct a siege because that would allow Charles time to escape. Ratisbon had to be taken by storm. On the twenty-third, Napoleon pushed forward with Lannes' corps in the lead.

Charles' rear guard manned the walls of Ratisbon and repulsed every attack that the French threw at them. The attackers had to traverse a few hundred meters of open ground, cross a large ditch then scale forty foot walls to get at the Austrians. Artillery used against the walls did little to help the French efforts. Finally, in a scene eloquently described in Marbot's memoirs, Lannes grabbed a scaling ladder and headed for the wall himself.¹⁴ Two of the Marshal's aides stopped him and attempted to take the ladder away. Seeing this, his soldiers stormed the walls and carried the city within the next hour.

The French prevailed over the Austrians and the road to Vienna was open once again. However, Charles had managed to escape leaving the first phase of the 1809 campaign without a decisive result, even though during this period the Austrians suffered over 30,000 casualties. This prompted Charles to write the Aulic Council; "If we have another engagement such as this I shall have no army left. I am awaiting negotiations."¹⁵ The Austrians hope of winning a great offensive battle had been ruined. The German states did not rally to the Austrians, Charles failed to isolate and destroy Davout's Corps, and the French now enjoyed the strategic initiative.

Napoleon entered Vienna on 13 May as Charles moved to the north bank of the Danube. A week later Napoleon launched an attack across the Danube. The result was the battle of Aspern-Essling and Napoleon's first defeat. It is interesting to note that Davout did not participate in that battle because the bridge he was to use was destroyed. One can only speculate what would have happened had Davout been present along with Lannes and Massena at Aspern-Essling. However, the world knows what happened when Davout was present on the Marchfield in July: he held the French right which contributed immeasurably to the great victory at Wagram.

Napoleon's campaign of 1809 proved to be his last successful operation. He had once again brought the

Hapsburgs to their knees. Key to this success was France's initial victories on the banks of the Danube in April 1809, victories made possible for the most part, by Davout's generalship and his art of command.

CHAPTER 7

IN BATTLE MEN ARE NOTHING ONE MAN IS EVERYTHING

The title of this chapter, quoted from Napoleon, illustrates the importance of the commander's actions during any campaign in the mind of the Emperor. In the case of the Abensberg-Eckmuehl campaign there can be little doubt as to Davout's contribution at all three levels of warfare. Initially Davout's strategic sense enabled him to predict the Austrian buildup and eventual attack on the tenth. As the operational commander he anticipated the Austrian intentions and properly prepared and positioned his forces. As the tactical commander, Davout skillfully maneuvered his corps on the battlefield, defeating the Austrians in every encounter.

Davout was aware of the necessity to continually monitor the actions of all potential enemies within his area of operations. He set up an intricate intelligence gathering system that enabled him to stay abreast of the current situation and trends within this area. Once Davout assembled this information he developed his own vision of what he thought would unfold in Central Europe during the coming year. His analyses and predictions were critical to the French successes in 1809. Had Davout not

gathered intelligence and correctly predicted the Austrian attack, his forces would most likely have been overrun. With Napoleon and the remainder of the army in Spain the Austrians could have driven to the Rhine unhindered.

As the campaign evolved, Davout's efforts focused more on the operational aspects of the action. In March 1809 Napoleon returned to France from where he directed the strategic campaign in Central Europe. Napoleon was simply too far away to make sound operational decisions. Davout, who remained in theater and abreast of the overall picture, could more easily perform that task. It was Davout who maintained contact with Charles and predicted his movement southward, adjusting forces in the theater to meet this southward movement of the Austrians. Had Davout missed this action he would have been positioned north of the Danube when Charles attacked thus leaving the way to the Rhine River open. His operational vision and foresight again saved the French from possible defeat.

Davout's operational vision was also evident during the week of 10-17 April. He correctly foresaw the joining of his forces with those of Massena south of Ratisbon. This combined force could have defeated Charles on the first day of battle as Napoleon had wished. However, Berthier arrived to take over operational command of all forces in theater, relegating Davout to corps command once again. Unfortunately Berthier's orders and

counter orders did nothing but confuse the situation. As a subordinate, Davout was not able to correct Berthier's deficiencies.

Strategically and operationally Davout had saved the French from possible defeat on two occasions, his actions for the remainder of the first phase of the 1809 campaign were tactical in nature. As a tactical commander he saved the French no less than three more times during the four days of fighting. The first example being the fighting at Teugen-Hausen on the nineteenth.

Davout understood the criticality of joining forces with Lefebvre and the remainder of the French Army. He therefore conducted an economy of force mission to protect his forces and stop the Austrian advance, thus preventing Charles from isolating the two wings of the French Army. Additionally, it enabled Davout to present a solid front to the Austrians. He then defeated an Austrian corps with only one French division. If Charles could have interposed himself between the two wings of the French Army he could possibly have defeated them in detail.

Davout continued to play an important role during the next two days due to Napoleon's fixation with his drive on Landshut. Davout held off the main army while Napoleon chased an already defeated Austrian corps across Bavaria. Although seeing only limited action on the

twentieth Davout's actions on the twenty-first again saved the French army from possible defeat.

On 21 April Davout held most of the Austrian army in check and protected Napoleon's exposed flank. Had Davout failed in this mission Napoleon's forces could have been crushed by an attack of the Austrians from the north. It must be remembered that Napoleon told Davout that he had a "mere three regiments to his front," when in fact it was three corps. Through the correct application of the principles of war Davout was able to box the Austrian army into a corner around Eckmuehl.

Davout's actions on the night of the twenty-first and during the day on the twenty-second were again the saving grace for the French army. His insistence that Napoleon turn north on the twenty-second definitely saved the French army. Charles had three times the numerical strength of Davout and without the remainder of the French army Davout had little hope of winning an all out battle. Davout then positioned his forces to occupy Charles until Napoleon arrived. After three days of fighting he was still able to bring about the defeat of the Austrians and shatter their left and center.

The success of Davout cannot be entirely attributed to his application of the art of command. It was also due to several additional factors to include: the skill and training of his soldiers, good tactical

doctrine, and most importantly the abilities and skill of his subordinate commanders. Davout was blessed with exceptional commanders at the brigade and division level, many of which achieved great rank in the service of France. Such commanders as Colonel Coutard, General

atbrun, General St Hilaire, and General Friant were among the best in the French army. With these assets it would be inappropriate to give all the credit to Louis Davout. Additionally, III Corps was composed of veteran soldiers unspoiled by futile actions in Spain, that could fight well and were willing to give up their lives for France if need be. They were very well trained and skilled at fighting, some being veterans of the campaigns of Austerlitz, Jena-Auerstaedt, and Eylau. However, it was Davout who trained these soldiers and leaders. More significantly, it was Davout that recognized these capabilities and applied them correctly. This recognition and application is also part of Davout's art of command.

Davout's, and III Corps' actions not only insured the defeat of the Austrians in April of 1809 they offer an excellent example of the art of command. This example is presented through Davout's eyes in the dynamics of battle. It is viewed as he progressed from the strategic commander to the tactical master. His actions help to define this very amorphous idea.

Explaining the art of command by listing its attributes would be very convenient. Then all today's leaders and commanders would have to do is simply replicate these attributes. To reduce the art of command to a list of characteristics and attributes, however, does no justice to the topic, nor does it satisfy the goal of this paper. At the same time unless we do list and reexamine some of these attributes of the art of command, its definition can be lost altogether.

In Theorie des Grossen Krieges, Willisen presents an interesting description of the art of command;

The causes of that admiration for great generals which history cherishes lie in the fact that such leaders must have a combination of the qualities which in other men are most readily admired even when present singularly. Head and heart, natural gifts and acquired knowledge, mind and character, coolness and fire, calm and boldness¹

Again, this is a another list but it at least provides a point of departure. What Willisen does tell us is that the art of command does not consist of a singular entity. The art of command is a combination of opposing traits in just the proper balance that leads to success in battle. It is this delicate balance that Louis Davout was able to develop. For practical purposes the art of command can be broken down into two main sub areas. These are *coup d'oeil*, as mentioned earlier, and boldness accompanied by a reflective mind.

Napoleon defines *coup d'oeil*;

The art of war on land is an art of genius, of inspiration. A general never knows anything with certainty, never sees the enemy clearly and never positively knows where he is. It is by the eyes of the mind, by reasoning over the whole, by a species of inspiration that the general sees, knows and judges.²

In essence it is a vision of how the battle will unfold, both from the side of the enemy and ones own side. *Coup d'oeil* is a vision of not only what will take place immediately but a vision that extends throughout the battle or even throughout the campaign. In other words the ability to take in the military situation at a glance and then decide what actions to take. Furthermore it is the ability to recognize the essentials and ignoring all else. It is not some singular entity that few are born with but an attribute that can be learned and developed.

The key to *coup d'oeil* is knowing the enemy, knowing where he is, and knowing what he is going to do. It includes a vision of one's own movements and how the enemy will react to them. An important aspect is not only the ability to gather intelligence on the enemy but the skill to assimilate this information and act. Again it reflects back to vision and the importance of taking in the whole situation and deciding what is significant and that which is not.

Further defined, *coup d'oeil* is the ability to see the grand detail and not get bogged down in the minute, unimportant details. Marshal De Saxe pointed out that,

Very few officers study the grand detail, but spend most of their time exercising the troops, from a weak supposition that the military art consists alone in that branch; when therefore they arrive at the command of armies they are totally perplexed.³

This is one reason so many subordinate commanders prove to be failures when given command of larger units. A few of Napoleon's marshals offer very good examples of this principle. Emmanuel de Grouchy's ability to command a cavalry division was unmatched; however, as a wing commander at Waterloo he was overwhelmed. Ney offers another good example. He persistently allowed his rashness to affect his ability to control more than a small unit with any skill.

Davout's *coup d'oeil* was evident in this example as he constantly understood the actions of the enemy and what must be done to prevent their success. He saw the big picture, and his actions reflected an understanding of this picture as well as a vision of what he should do. Davout's actions at Teugen-Hausen show he knew that potentially he had to fight but at the same time effect a linkup with the remainder of the French Army. He kept this operational vision in perspective when developing his tactical plans. Davout never lost this operational vision throughout the next three days of fighting even though it appeared that Napoleon had. Davout's vision was key to adjusting the French dispositions and creating the circumstances for victory.

Maintaining this vision or *coup d'oeil* requires a certain coolness in battle. During the fighting at Teugen-Hausen Davout received disparate and numerous reports, any one of which could make a less resolute commander panic. Davout's ability to maintain a coolness during action allowed him to maintain his vision. He would not let himself become confused or perplexed by good or bad reports. When he received conflicting reports he would move to the place of action and conduct his own assessment. As Davout's conduct shows, battlefield vision must be tempered by the commander's ability to calmly interpret the facts. Davout displayed a lucid example of this trait when St Hilaire's men panicked at Teugen-Hausen. Napoleon aptly put it into perspective when he said; "A general's mind must in respect of clearness and lucidity resemble the lens of a telescope and never create any mirage."⁴

The second "sub-element" of the art of command as demonstrated by Davout is battlefield leadership, or more precisely, boldness accompanied by a reflective mind. It is simply the boldness or moral courage to act upon one's vision. The reflective mind implies that it is not boldness alone but boldness that is tempered with wisdom and knowledge. Clausewitz refers to this as "Boldness directed by an overruling intelligence."⁵ He points out

that as one rises to positions of greater command the mind and understanding become even more important.⁶

This balance between boldness and intelligence was well summarized by Napoleon:

That which is most desirable, and instantly sets a man apart is that his intelligence or talent, are balanced by his character or courage. If his courage is the greater, a general heedlessly undertakes things beyond his abilities. If on the contrary, his character or courage is less than his intelligence he does not dare carry out his plans.⁷

Herein lies the key to successful battlefield leadership. In essence it is a simple balance among traits. This balance was exemplified by Davout's actions during the four days of fighting at Abensberg-Eckmuehl. His actions on the morning of 21 April provide further evidence. He had the boldness to attack in the face of great odds but did so only after thoroughly analyzing the complete situation. His vision enabled him to interpret the actions of the commanders whom he was facing. He knew they would assume Davout had a superior force if he initiated an attack. Thus, he had the requisite balance between boldness and intelligence.

Boldness is also defined as an unfailing self-image and a refusal to take counsel of one's fears, or simply an internal image of never admitting defeat. Davout refused ever to accept the prospect of defeat. This is differentiated from pertinaciousness in that Davout's refusal to admit defeat was based on his lack of

internal fears rather than obstinacy. It can also mean moral courage. While they are not the same, they are similar. Moral courage is the calmness and quiet resolution of a commander so aptly displayed by the stolid Davout. This moral courage is not a visible type of bravery but a strength within that provides the will to overcome frustration and uncertainty. It enables the commander to stand against anything the enemy can throw at him.⁸

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery said that there are many characteristics that go into making a leader but moral courage is by far the most important. He described it as, ". . . that resolution and that determination which will enable him to stand firm when the issue hangs in balance." He further observed that a battle is really a contest between the wills of the two commanders. If the will of one commander fails then his opponent is bound to win.⁹ In every encounter between Davout and Charles it was Davout's superior strength of will that dominated the action. Charles' will failed at Teugen-Hausen, in front of Peising during the running fight, and especially at Eckmuehl.

Davout's boldness and intelligence were in evidence even before the opening of the action on 19 April. The week before, Berthier panicked and issued a series of orders and counter orders. These directives

conflicted with Davout's vision, which correctly reflected the proper disposition of French forces. Davout remained calm while attempting to convince Berthier of his errors. He never lost his perspective but still executed the orders as expected. When the opportunity arose he had the boldness to voice his opinion on Berthier's mistakes. Also, Davout even had the boldness to confront the Emperor, attempting in his correspondence to convince Napoleon of the true tactical disposition of the Austrians.

Finally, to fully appreciate the art of command one need only to look at Davout's actions during the first day of fighting. His balance between boldness and intelligence coupled with vision was evident at every turn. Davout knew the Austrians would move late and slowly. He was also well aware that by making a firm stand the Austrian commanders would lose their resolution to fight. Once this vision was set in his mind he had the requisite courage to carry out his plan. Davout's moral courage was threatened often throughout the day, as there were two instances where the Austrians almost won the battle. Only Davout's steadfastness and refusal to admit defeat held the French in line.

Possessing and using the art of command does not necessarily mean that every decision made by the commander is correct. One would be hard pressed to recall a leader

who never made a mistake. The key is to not let any mistake override one's thinking. An old poker adage aptly applies, never throw good money after bad. Davout realized that he had made a mistake by not controlling Ratisbon and the bridge over the Danube. However, he did not overreact by splitting his forces or return to Ratisbon to recover the loss of the bridge. Instead, he acknowledged the mistake and remained in control of the situation at hand.

Coup d'oeil, boldness, moral courage, decisiveness and superior intellect: that certainly sounds like a laundry list of terms. Perhaps, however, their strength and definition lies in their practical application in the context of battle. It is not simply the presence of these characteristics, it is their proper balance that counts. Marshal Louis Davout and the battles of Abensberg-Eckmuehl provided a vehicle to examine them in detail.

Before ending this paper one question comes to mind and that is; what was Davout's motivation to become a great commander and display such an art of command as that which has been described? The answer to this question remains in one characteristic or attribute which has not been overlooked but at the same time has not been clearly illustrated up to this point. Although it seems like the art of command has been fully examined and defined, this one characteristic must be considered before coming to

resolution. It is that attribute which really binds all of the others together and makes the art of command truly the art of genius and inspiration. Without this attribute the others would be wasted and never truly emerge as a part of ones personality.

The drive behind Davout's success is not easily determined nor readily apparent. However, this factor is clearly obvious in many of the other marshals. Bernadotte was motivated by his own rather large ego and did everything to make that ego even bigger. Marshal Ney on the other hand was inspired by his own innate desire for glory. Others such as Massena and Augereau were stimulated by their avariciousness. Marshal Jourdan was a true patriot, motivated solely by his dedication to the French empire. Then there is Berthier that seemed to be inspired to greatness simply because of his loyalty and devotion to Napoleon. Do any of these factors apply to Louis Nicholas Davout? If not, what was Davout's motivation and this last and final attribute of the art of command.

Initially Davout was inspired by the French revolution. However, this inspiration quickly waned as he was imprisoned twice by revolutionary authorities. Some believe that part of Davout's drive was his strong ambition. He was happy with his titles and may have even aspired to the crown of Poland in 1808.¹⁰ However, these

too seemed only to be small diversions from his true inspiration. Davout was unlike the other marshals and his motivation was not an external object or desire for wealth and glory.

Davout's motivation was an internalized selfless dedication to his own sense of duty. He did what he was suppose to because he felt it was the right thing to do not because the action would result in personal gain. This is that final attribute that galvanizes the art of command into an art to be emulated. Davout simply did what he thought was correct. He was a very introspective person who cared little of his outward appearance or what others thought about him. He only did what he, himself felt was the right thing to do. In this case the right thing to do was to serve the French republic to the best of his abilities. Davout's unflinching sense of duty was what set him apart from the others and truly made him one of the finest commanders. This was obvious when he once said,

If the Emperor told Maret (Minister of Foreign Affairs) and myself to destroy Paris and everyone in it, Maret would keep the secret, but warn his family. I would not even warn my family for fear the secret might leak out.¹¹

That is an extreme example of Davout's selfless dedication to duty. The art of command coupled with this implacable concept of duty and selfless dedication is that which must be truly admired.

Even if these characteristics and their proper balance show Davout's mastery of the art of command, can they be applied today? If so are 185 year old principles still valid and how does one learn them? Napoleon believed that certain attributes transcend time and that these can be learned through experience and study. He said, "Generalship is acquired only by experience and the study of all great captains."¹² Napoleon himself spent extensive time studying the past great leaders. As have others whom we consider to be great commanders. Napoleon's instructions to his subordinates included the following passage;

Read over and over again the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavus, Tuerene, Eugene and Frederic. Make them your models. This is the only way to become a great general and to master the secrets of the art of war. With your own genius enlightened by this study, you will reject all maxims opposed to these great commanders.¹³

Whereas the corps commander today can no longer view the battlefield as Davout did in 1809, he can still command it using the same principles and the art of command that Davout used.

Although not fully defined, the art of command has been shown in the context of battle. One can derive that insight by studying how a great commander displayed the art of command in the dynamics of battle. As we have by following Louis Nicholas Davout from strategic commander to tactical executer. The events of April 1809 have

helped to provide definition to the art of command and have shown Marshal Davout to be a great commander. Without Davout's abilities during this period in Central Europe the French Army would not have performed as well as they did. It was Davout and this unique ability, the art of command, that made the difference. He continued to display this fully developed art at all three levels of war for the next six years in service to France and Napoleon. His allegiance to both never failed. Davout's performance can be summed up in four words--He was never defeated.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES

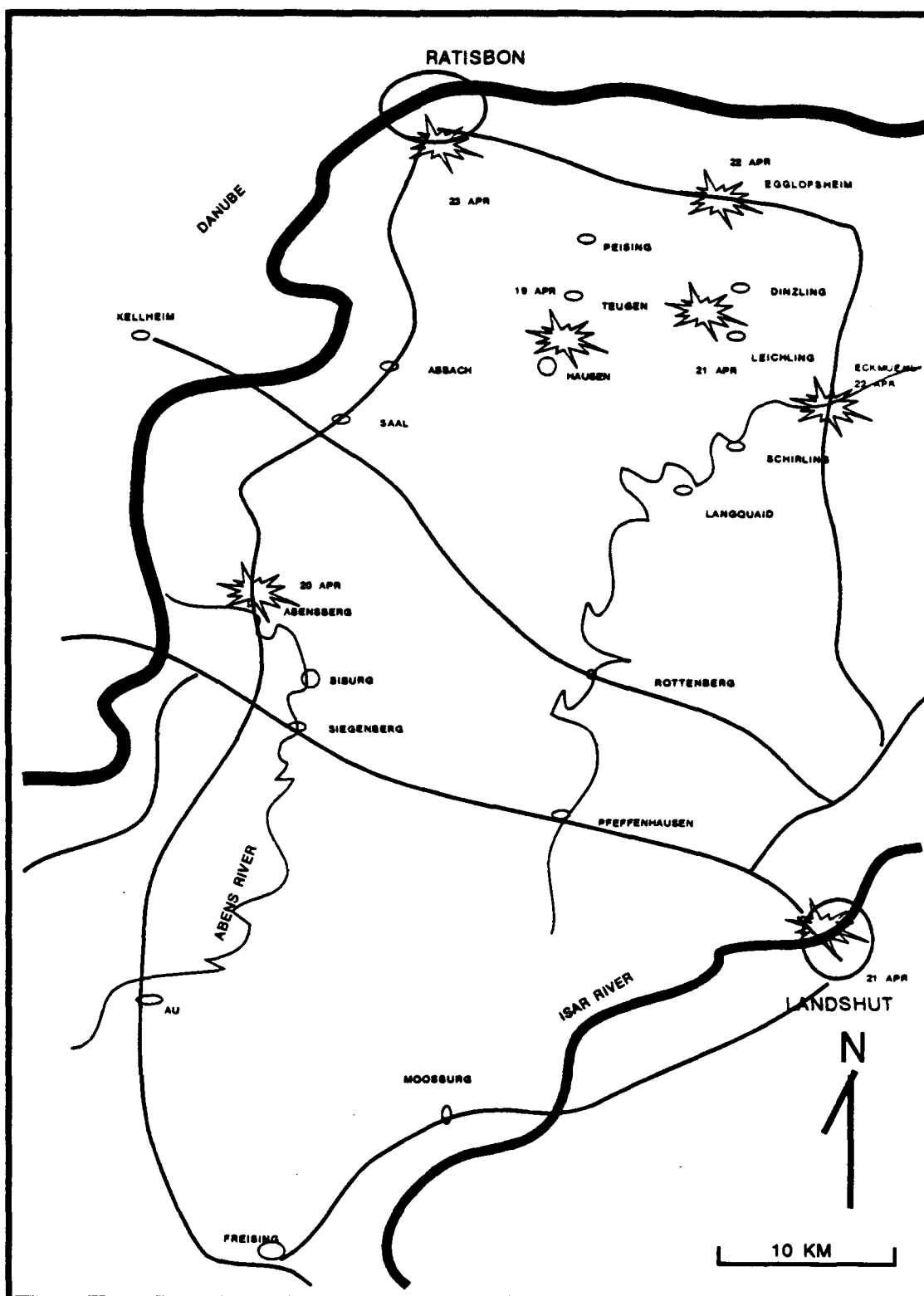


Figure 1. Theater of Operations.

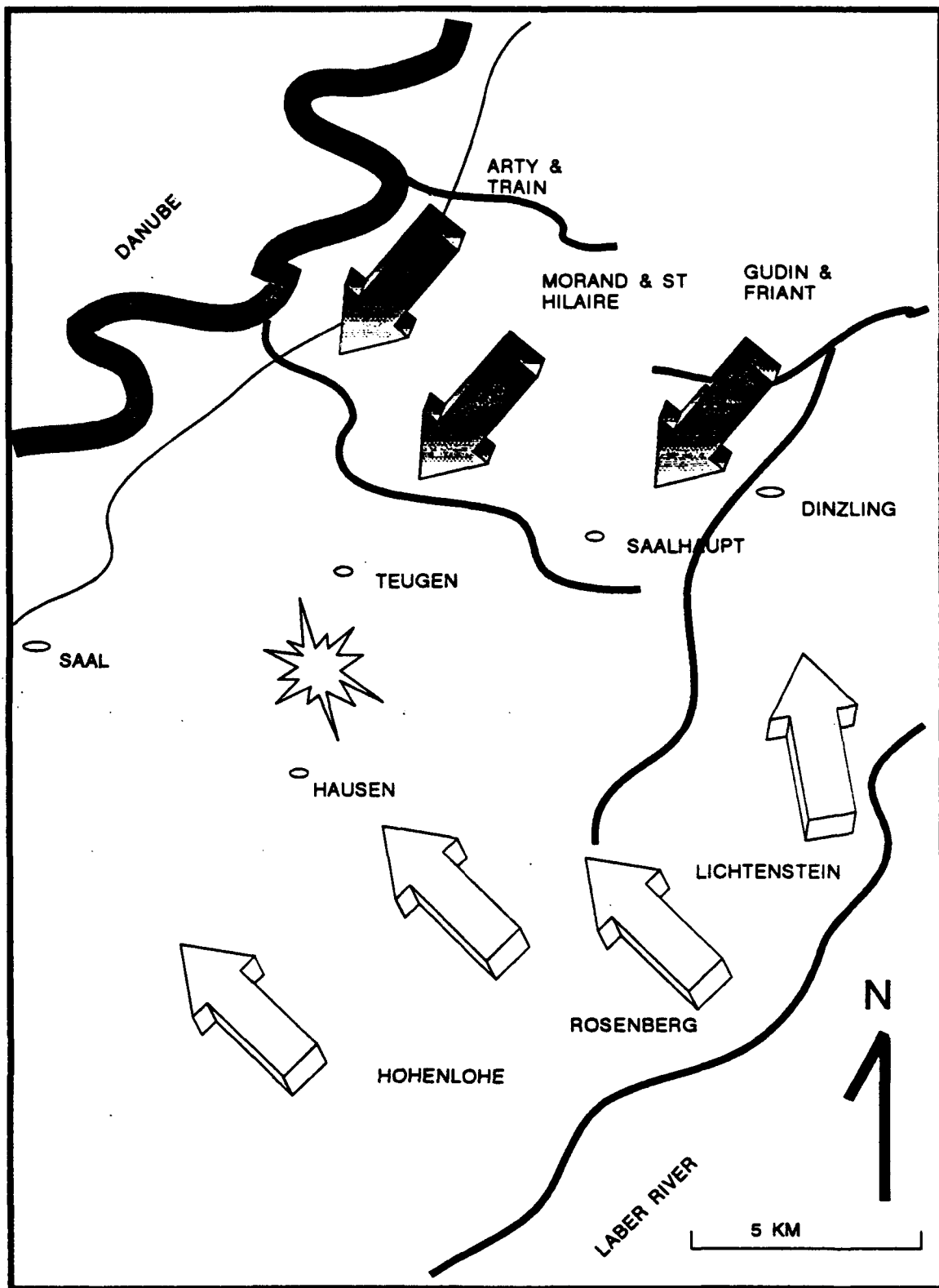


Figure 2. April 19: The Road To War.

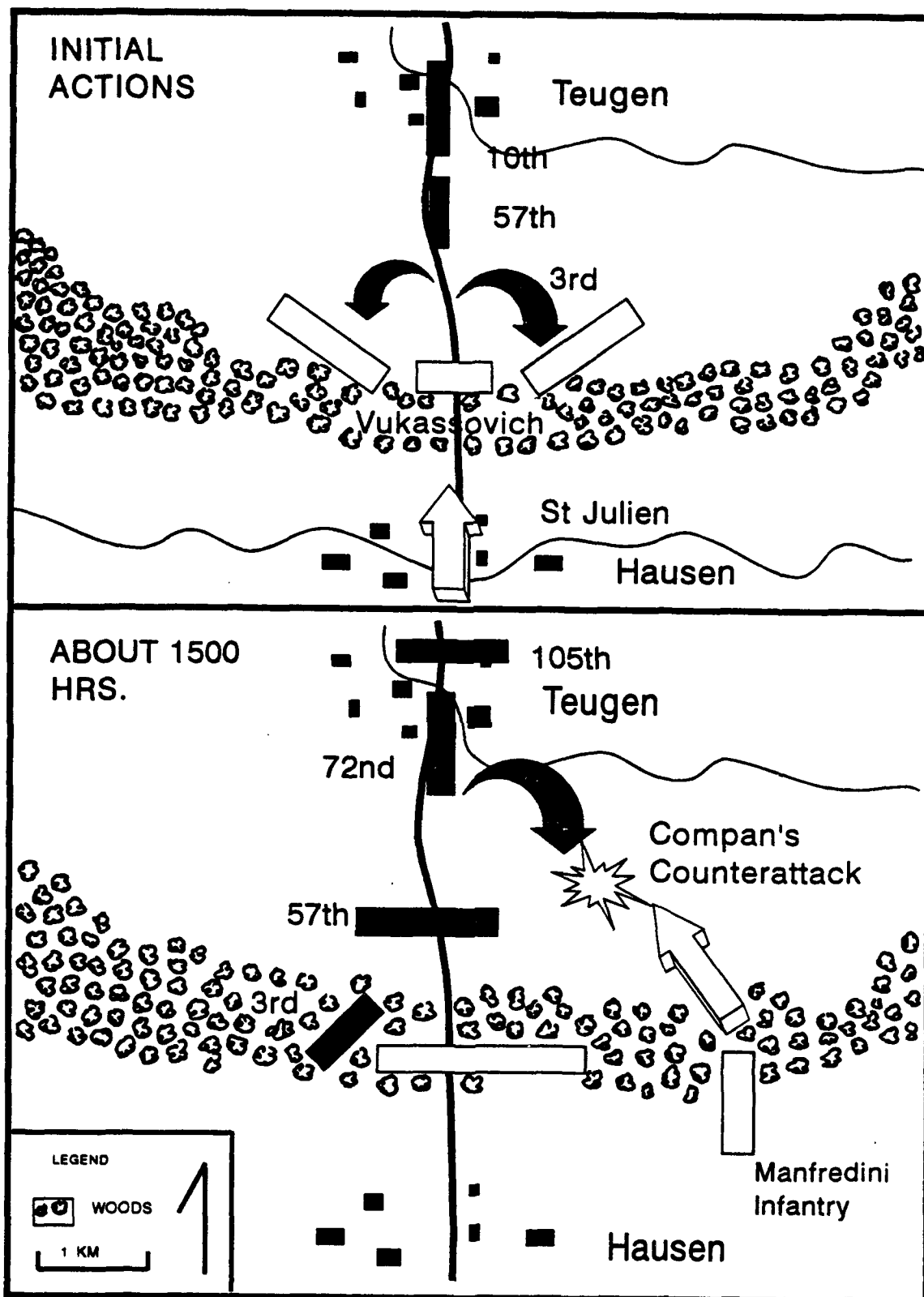


Figure 3. The Battle of Teugen-Hausen.

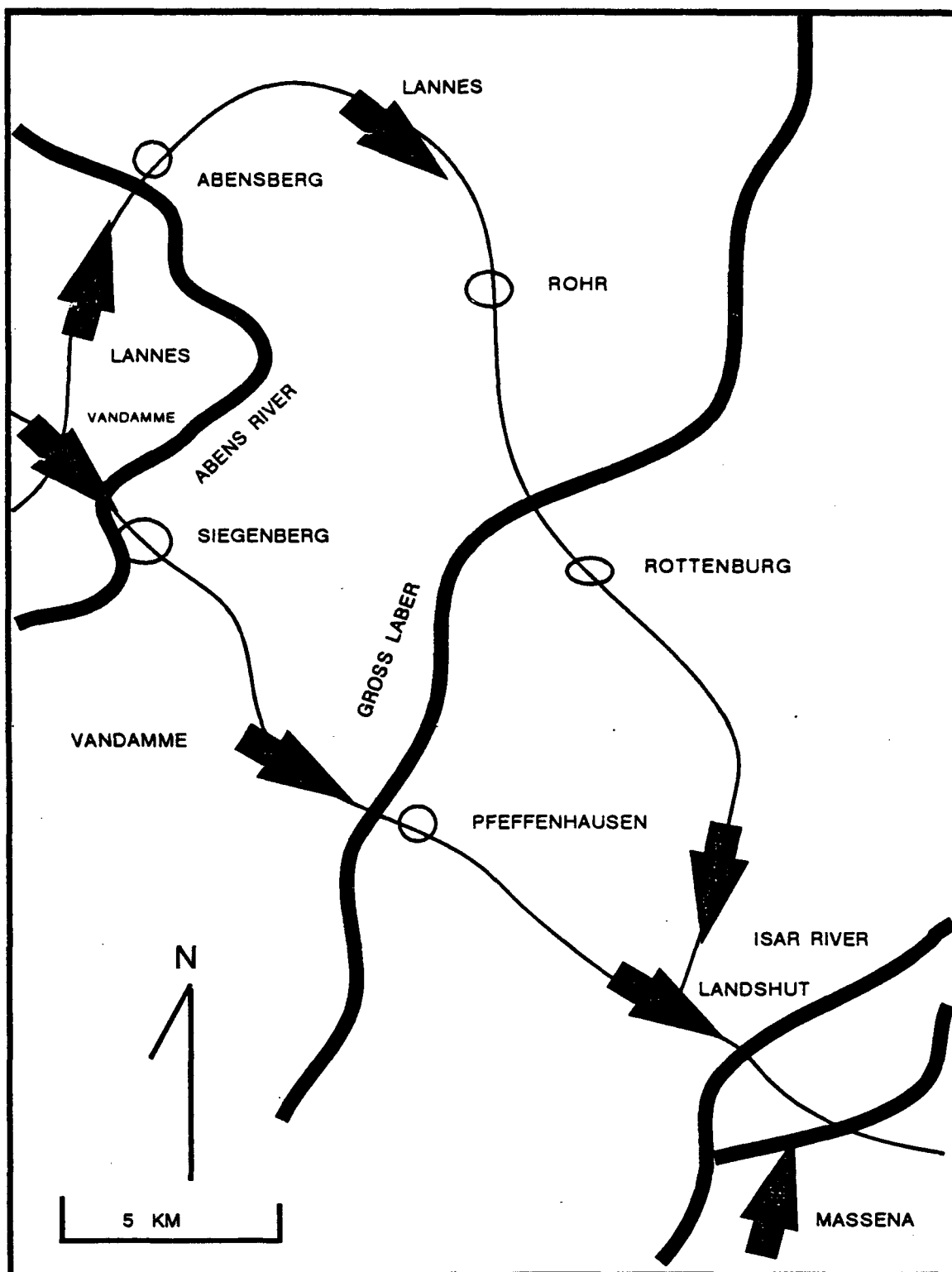


Figure 4. Situation on April 20, 1809.

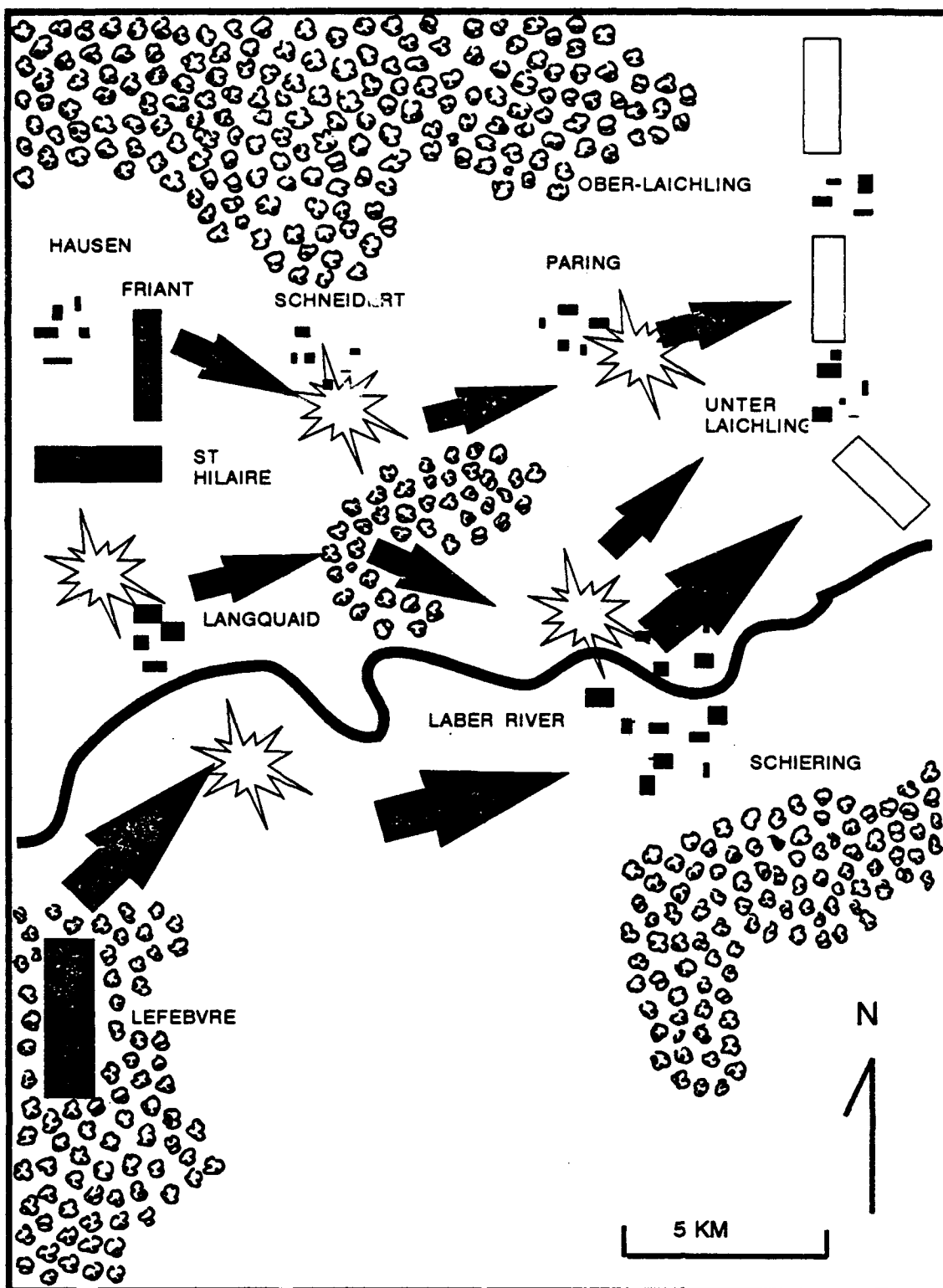


Figure 5. Davout's Running Fight on April 21, 1809.

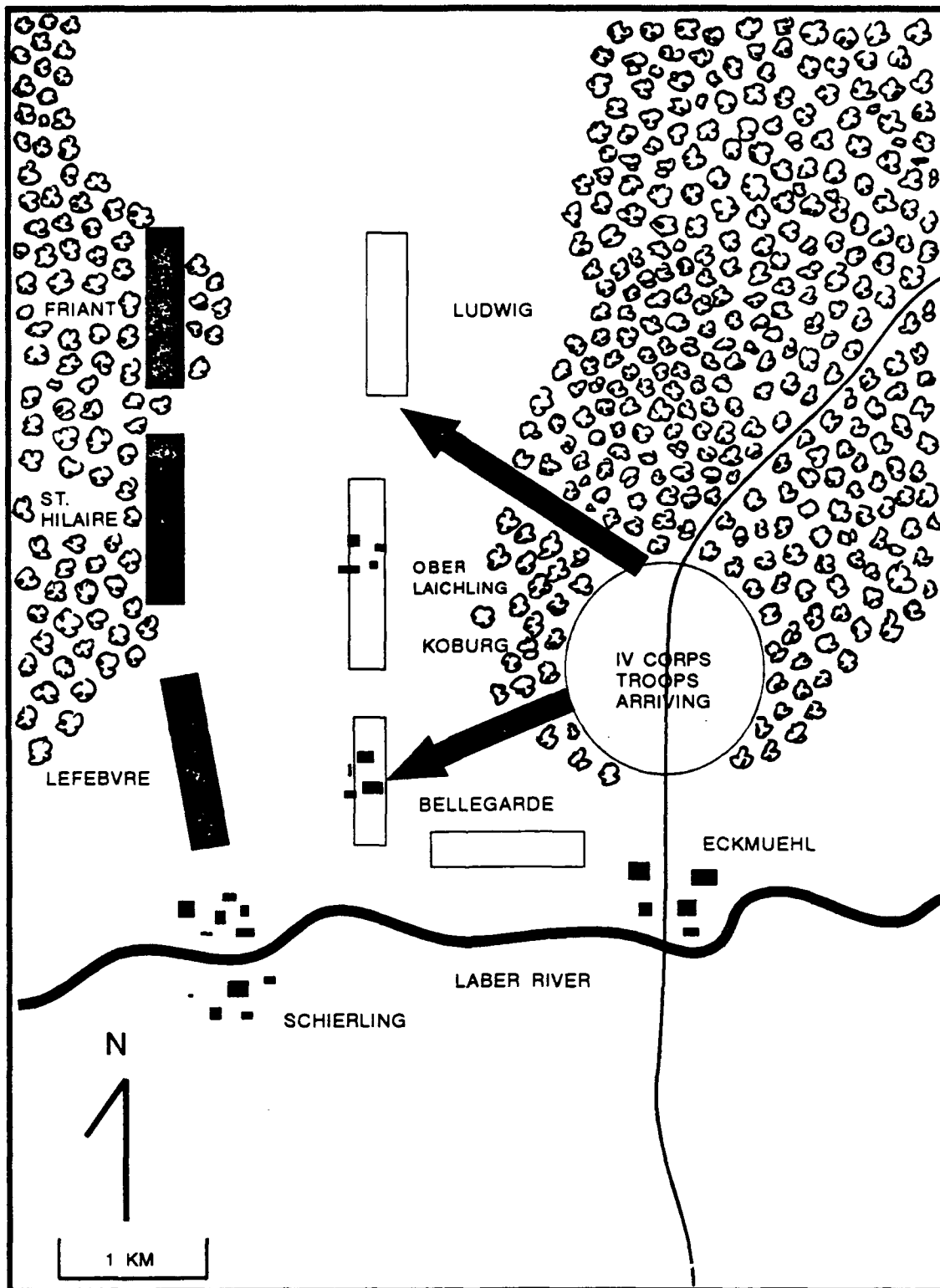


Figure 6. Situation At The End Of The Day, April 21.

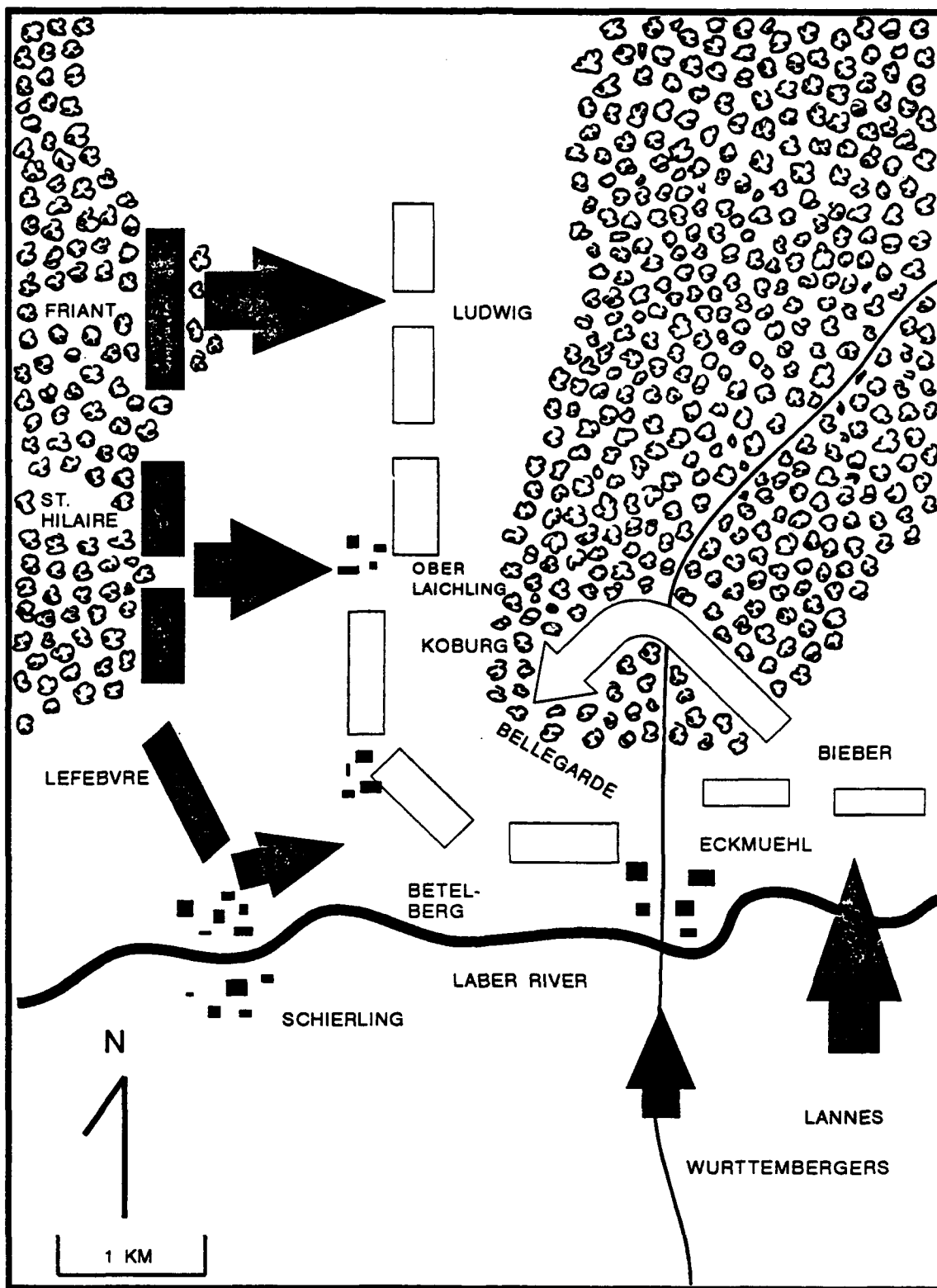


Figure 7. The Battle Of Eckmuehl.

APPENDIX B

ORDER OF BATTLE, APRIL 16, 1809

The French Army of Germany

Commander In Chief: The Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte
Chief Of Staff: Marshal Louis-Alexander Berthier

II Corps: Oudinot (21,292)

1st Division: Tharreau with 3 brigades (7,145)
2nd Division: Claparede with 3 brigades (8,860)
Light Cavalry Brigade: Colbert (2,177)
3rd Heavy Cavalry Division: d'Espagne (3,110)

III Corps: Davout (57,202)

1st Division: Morand (11,065)

13 Legere
17 Ligne
30 Ligne
61 Ligne
65 Ligne

2nd Division: Friant (11,440)

15 Legere
33 Ligne
108 Ligne
111 Ligne
48 Ligne

3rd Division: Gudin (11,543)

7 Legere
12 Ligne
21 Ligne
25 Ligne
85 Ligne

4th Division: St Hilaire (11,330)

10 Legere
3 Ligne
57 Ligne
72 Ligne
105 Ligne

Reserve Division: Demont (3,215)
2nd Heavy Cavalry Division: St Sulpice (3,411)
Light Cavalry Division: Montbrun (5,198)

IV CORPS: Massena (37,263)

1st Division: Legrand with 3 brigades (10,159)
2nd Division: Carra St Cyr with 5 brigades (11,533)
3rd Division: Molitor with 2 brigades (7,155)
4th Division: Boudet with 2 brigades (5,631)
Light Cavalry Division: Marulaz with 3 brigades (2,765)

VII CORPS (Bavarian Army): Lefebvre (26,982)

1st Division: Prince Royal of Bavaria with 3 brigades (8,242)
2nd Division: Wrede with 3 brigades (8,944)
3rd Division: Deroi with 3 brigades (9,796)

WURTTENBERG CORPS: Vandamme (11,134)

Infantry Division: Neubron with 3 brigades (8,920)
Cavalry Division: Woellwarth with 2 brigades (2,214)

SAXON ARMY: Bernadotte (13,840)

1st Division: Zerschwitz with 2 brigades (5,924)
2nd Division: Polenz with 2 brigades (5,356)
Cavalry Division: with 2 brigades (2,040)

The Imperial Army of Austria

Commander In Chief: Archduke Charles (172,534)

1st ARMY CORPS: Bellegarde (27,653)
Division Vogelsang with 2 brigades
Division Ulm with 1 brigade
Division Fresnel with 2 brigades

2nd ARMY CORPS: Kollowrath (28,168)
Division Brady with 2 brigades
Division Treunenfels with 1 brigade
Division Klenau with 2 brigades

3rd ARMY CORPS: Hohenzollern (21,460)
Division Lusignan with 2 brigades
Division Saint Julien with 2 brigades
Division Vukassovich with 2 brigades

4th ARMY CORPS: Rosenberg (15,700)
Division Dedovich with 2 brigades
Division Hohenlohe with 2 brigades
Division Somariva with 2 brigades

5th ARMY CORPS: Archduke Ludwig (25,766)
Division Lindenau with 2 brigades
Division Rembs-Plauen with 2 brigades
Division S. Stekh with 2 brigades

6th ARMY CORPS: Hiller (30,539)
Division Kottulinsky with 2 brigades
Division Jellacic with 2 brigades
Division Karl Vincent with 2 brigades

1st RESERVE CORPS: Johannes Liechtenstein (17,918)
Division Erbprinz Hessen-Homburg with 2 brigades

2nd RESERVE CORPS: Kienmayer with three separate brigades
(5,330)

NOTE: Numbers are approximate and include artillery but not support troops such as engineers or unit trains.¹

APPENDIX C

ORDER OF BATTLE CHANGES ON APRIL 20, 1809

The French Army of Germany

III CORPS: Davout (25,694)
2nd Division: Friant (11,123)
4th Division: St Hilaire (9,630)
Light Cavalry Division: Montbrun (4,941)

AD-HOC CORPS: Lannes (31,276)
1st Division: Morand (11,065)
3rd Division: Gudin (11,463)
Nansouty's Cuirassier Division (5,337)
St Sulpice's Cuirassier Division (3,411)

NOTE: Numbers are approximate and include artillery but not support troops such as engineers or unit trains. The numbers also reflect the losses incurred on April 19.¹

ENDNOTES

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²Brigadier General Thomas R. Phillips, Roots of Strategy (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1985), 7.

³Ibid., 372.

⁴Count Yorck von Wartenburg, Napoleon As a General (London: Keegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, 1902), 36.

Chapter 2

¹David G. Chandler, Napoleon's Marshals (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 94.

²John R. Elting, Swords Around a Throne: Napoleon's Grand Armee (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 133.

³Chandler, 94.

⁴R. F. Delderfield, Napoleon's Marshals (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1962), 4.

⁵Chandler, 98-99.

⁶John G. Gallaher, The Iron Marshal (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976), 107.

⁷Ibid., 107-109.

⁸Alistair Horne, Napoleon Master of Europe 1805-1807 (New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1979), 148.

⁹Ibid., 149.

¹⁰Ibid., 161-162.

¹¹David G. Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon (New York: MacMillan, 1966), 491.

¹²William J. Wood, Leaders and Battles (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1984), 80-81.

¹³Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, 489.

¹⁴Napoleon was positive that he had defeated the main Prussian force. He could not believe that Davout had faced the main Prussian army while he only defeated their rear guard. The comment also refers to Davout's near-sightedness and requirement to wear glasses. This is a true case of Napoleon's jealousy. Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, 488.

¹⁵Gallaher, 148-149.

¹⁶Ibid., 149.

¹⁷Ibid., 160-162.

¹⁸Robert M. Epstein, "Napoleon's Last Victory: 1809 and the Emergence of Modern War" (Manuscript), 9.

¹⁹Theodore Ayrault Dodge, Napoleon, vol. 3 (New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1904), 216.

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¹John R. Elting, Swords Around A Throne: Napoleon's Grande Armee (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 116.

²This is from correspondence number 468 from Davout to Napoleon dated June 15, 1808. Louis N. Davout, Correspondance du Marechal Davout, Prince d'Eckmuehl, vol II, ed. Charles deMazade (Paris: Plon, 1885), 214.

³This is from correspondence number 495 from Davout to Napoleon dated August 25, 1808. *ibid.*, 264.

⁴Robert M. Epstein, "Napoleon's Last Victory: 1809 and the Emergence of Modern War" (Manuscript), 69.

⁵Louis Antoine DeBourrienne, Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1891), 193.

⁶Epstein, 62.

⁷F. von Waldenstaetten, Erherzog Carl; Ausgewaehlte Militaerische Schriften (Berlin, 1882), 16.

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⁹Scott Bowden and Charles Tarbox, Armies on the Danube (Chicago: The Emperor's Press, 1990), 61.

¹⁰F. Loraine Petre, Napoleon and the Archduke Charles (London: John Lane and Company, 1909), 71-72.

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¹²Petre, 65.

¹³This is from correspondence number 625 from Davout to Napoleon dated March 22, 1809. Davout, 440.

¹⁴This is from correspondence number 633 from Davout to Napoleon dated March 26, 1809. Davout, 447.

¹⁵This is from Napoleon's correspondence to Berthier. Napoleon Bonaparte, La Correspondance de Napoleon 1er, vol. 18 (Paris: Imprimerie Imperiale, 1858-1870), 403-406.

¹⁶Bowden and Tarbox, 68-75.

¹⁷This is from Davout's correspondence to Berthier number 647. Davout, 456.

¹⁸This is from correspondence number 649 from Davout to Napoleon dated April 7, 1809. Davout, 458.

¹⁹Petre, 75-76.

Chapter 4

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²This is noted in Napoleon's correspondence to Berthier number 15047 on April 10, 1809. Napoleon Bonaparte, La Correspondance de Napoleon 1er, vol. 18 (Paris: Imprimerie Imperiale, 1858-1870), 537.

³This is noted in Napoleon's correspondence to Berthier number 15048 dated April 10, 1809. *ibid.*, 537-538.

⁴Theodore Ayrault Dodge, Napoleon, vol. 3 (New York: Houghton Miffling and Company, 1904), 155.

⁵*Ibid.*, 152-153.

⁶F. Loraine Petre, Napoleon and the Archduke Charles (London: John Lane and Company, 1909), 81-82.

⁷Dodge, 154.

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⁴Ibid., 88.

⁵Ibid., 91.

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¹⁰David G. Chandler, Napoleon's Marshals (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 109.

¹¹Ibid., 108.

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Appendix B

¹Scott Bowden and Charles Tarbox, Armies on the Danube (Chicago: The Emperor's Press, 1990), 68-83.

Appendix C

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The penultimate work for any research on Napoleon or Napoleonic wars. This is a 32 volume set of books containing all or most all of Napoleon's correspondence. Volume 18 contains all of his published correspondence during the 1809 campaign. Especially important for this thesis are the letters to Davout and Berthier during April 1809.

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_____. The Illustrated Napoleon. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1973.

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This text describes Napoleon's maxims and

provides a good insight into the man. It was useful in developing the definition of the art of command. It provided many good examples and quotations from Napoleon.

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The author gives a brief concise description of Napoleon's campaigns dedicating one chapter to Abensberg-Eckmühl. Although a general work he provides a good description of early events and examples of Davout's experience during the Austrians initial advance.

Montgomery, Bernard Law. A History of Warfare. New York: World Publishing Company, 1968.

A useful text in defining the art of command. Montgomery's interpretation of moral courage was useful in drawing parallels with Davout's and Napoleon's definitions.

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Another marvelous source of information on all aspects of the campaign. He provides a detailed account of events from early March through the battle of Eckmühl in a series of five chapters. The author provides a good account of Davout's actions and the problems he overcame. The author also provides some insights from the Austrian point of view. It is a

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This is a biography on Marshal Berthier. It provides Berthier's point of view during the days preceding the arrival of Napoleon. The author provides a detailed account of the confusing correspondence from the Emperor and justifies some of

Berthier's actions. Also provides a good account of his relationship with Davout, which, up until then was cordial.

Wood, William J. Leaders and Battles. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1984.

The theme of this book is what went on in the minds and hearts of a selected group of military leaders. The authors point of view is the commander and that particular quality of leadership he displayed during a particular instance. This text will help define vision and presence on the battlefield.

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This work is very good and provided a great amount of detail on the period leading up to the fighting. It provides good information on Davout's strategic insight and his relationship with Napoleon. The thesis of the book deals with the entire 1809 campaign and as such proves of little value when analyzing Davout's tactical capabilities.

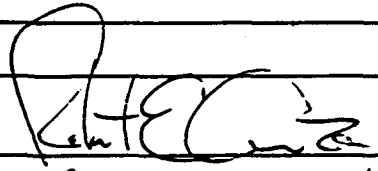
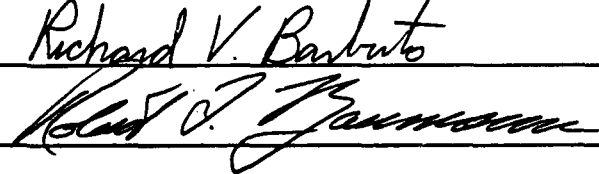
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